WE ARE MARSHALL

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EXT. HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA (PRESENT DAY) - DAY

The peaks of the Appalachians loom above the town.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
Along its 900 mile journey from Pittsburgh to the Mississippi, the Ohio River passes through the town of Huntington, West Virginia.

EXT. OHIO RIVER - DAY

The river. Ohio on the north. West Virginia on the south.

BIG CONCRETE WALLS hold back the water.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
It’s a big river in the middle of a smallish town, and sometimes, during the rainy season, it overflows its banks.

EXT. STEEL MILL - DAY

The rusty hulk stands in the midday sun.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
A long time ago, when it got really bad, the town built flood walls to stem the tide.

EXT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT ON FIFTH - DAY

Waitresses in crisp white uniforms serve steak and spaghetti to lawyers and businessmen on their lunch break.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
And it worked. We’ve gone years without a flood.

EXT. THE CAMPUS OF MARSHALL UNIVERSITY - DAY

Brick buildings surround a quiet green quad.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
So long in fact, some people forget we ever had one. They forget it’s even possible.
EXT. FRONT OF CAMPUS - DAY

In stark contrast, hundreds of people stand silently around a large, flowing FOUNTAIN.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
But it is. Believe me. The water can rise up...

A WREATH is placed before it.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.) (cont’d)
And sweep away everything you know.

Someone flips a switch and the water slowly stops flowing. Silence fills the air.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

CRUNCH. A QUARTERBACK IN GREEN releases the ball just before he’s sandwiched by two TACKLERS IN PURPLE.

SUPER: NOVEMBER 14th, 1970 -- GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

8,000 people are on their feet. A RECEIVER IN GREEN streaks down the sidelines, diving to catch the ball inbounds at the 25 yard line.

THE SCOREBOARD reads EAST CAROLINA PIRATES 17, VISITORS 14.

It’s the FOURTH QUARTER. The clock ticks down -- 0:21... 0:20...0:19...

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
First down! But the clock keeps ticking.

INT. PRESS BOX, GREENVILLE - DAY

GENE MOREHOUSE stands, excited, microphone in hand.

GENE MOREHOUSE
If they’re gonna get another play off, the Herd had better hurry.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

The home crowd HUSHES. The QUARTERBACK (#7) stumbles to his feet, then screams at his team to hurry to the line as THE CLOCK ticks away -- 0:14...0:13...0:12...
ON THE SIDELINES, RICK TOLLEY (the coach of the visiting Marshall Thundering Herd) is frantic, his face flushing.

RICK TOLLEY
Call it in, Red, goddammit, call it in!

ASSISTANT COACH RED DAWSON grabs a RECEIVER on the sideline.

RED DAWSON
77 Split option. You got it? 77 Split option. Go go go!

The receiver runs onto the field. There’s no time for a huddle so he just screams it.

RECEIVER
Malta, you’re out! 77 split option! 77 split option!

Red’s hands tighten into fists.

RED DAWSON
Guys! Snap it, guys, snap it!

THE CLOCK keeps ticking -- 0:05...0:04...0:03...

The line sets their feet. The QB gets in position. The crowd murmurs nervously.

On the sideline, ANNIE CANTRELL (head Marshall cheerleader) tenses, too caught up in the game to do any cheering.

And then, right as the ball is about to be hiked...

CLOSE ON RED’S FACE...

As it registers everything we don’t see -- the snap -- the blitz -- the scramble -- the pass -- and then --

The crowd roars. Red’s shoulders sag. His eyes close. Cut all AMBIENT SOUND.

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
And now the clock hits all zeroes. The Greenville faithful are already on their feet.

A view from the Appalachians of the city lit up at dusk.
GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
...so there it is, it’s all over. Marshall loses a tough one, 17-14 to the East Carolina Pirates.

INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT - DAY

The crowded restaurant sits still for a moment, bummed.

Behind the counter, PAUL GRIFFIN sighs, taking the loss as if he’d played the game himself.

CAROL DAWSON (Red’s young wife) smiles ruefully at Paul from her counter seat.

CAROL DAWSON
There goes date night.

Paul sets a consolation beer down in front of her.

CAROL DAWSON (cont’d)
Tolley’ll have Red in the film room ‘til dawn, I bet.

PAUL GRIFFIN
He’d better. Your husband hasn’t figured out a way to beat the 3-4 all year.

He gives Carol a teasing smile.

Just then, SUE GRIFFIN comes out of the back carrying an egg carton with only one egg.

SUE GRIFFIN
Paul? You got any idea how to make a three-egg omelette with one egg?

Paul rolls his eyes and turns.

SUE GRIFFIN (cont’d)
I can’t find the cartons from Wednesday’s shipment.

PAUL GRIFFIN
I had Chris put them in the storeroom. And since you’re wondering? He finished with six tackles and a sack.

SUE GRIFFIN
I’d be proud of my boy if he carried the dirty towels, but this remains one sad omelette.
Paul puts an arm around his wife and they head back to the kitchen, passing...

A WALL OF MEMORABILIA DEDICATED TO THE EXPLOITS OF CHRIS GRIFFIN, MARSHALL LINEBACKER.

The radio still plays:

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
-so the boys in green will return
to Huntington for the season finale
against Ohio on Saturday.

INT. MARSHALL STUDENT CENTER - DUSK

NATE RUFFIN (20, black, with a soft cast on his arm) and TOM BOGDAN (20, white, middle America), both in Marshall Varsity Football jackets, sit near a radio.

A few freshmen players sit around them...at a respectful distance.

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
And if they’ve got any hope of salvaging their season, and their pride, then next week’s a must win.

REGGIE OLIVER, a black baby-faced freshman, impatiently holds a tin foil antenna.

REGGIE OLIVER
Man, that was ugly.

He lets his antenna drop, massaging his sore arm. The radio signal goes FUZZY.

Nate glares at him. He hollers over his shoulder.

NATE RUFFIN
Hey, Wes?

Behind him, two other varsity players -- WES HICKMAN (on crutches) and FELIX JORDAN (arm in a sling) -- play pool.

WES HICKMAN
Yeah?

NATE RUFFIN
You hear anyone tell the Freshman he could put the antenna down?

Reggie freezes.

WES HICKMAN
No. Why do you ask?
Reggie immediately lifts the antenna back in the air.

NATE RUFFIN
Nevermind. No reason.

Felix Jordan tries to shoot with his bad arm, but miscues. He throws his stick down and walks away.

Tom Bogdan checks his watch, then slaps Nate’s shoulder.

TOM BOGDAN
You still want to go?

NATE RUFFIN
Better than hanging round here.

They head for the door.

REGGIE OLIVER
Where you guys going?

NATE RUFFIN
(to Tom)
You hear something?

TOM BOGDAN
I think it’s the radio.

NATE RUFFIN
Yeah, you’re probably right.

Once they disappear, Reggie turns to see the other freshman staring at him holding the antenna.

He lets it drop.

REGGIE OLIVER
Man, this is bullsh-

INT. LOCKER ROOM, GREENVILLE - DAY

THE PLAYERS KNEEL as the TEAM CHAPLAIN finishes a prayer. *

TEAM CHAPLAIN
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. *

Coach Tolley walks in, trailed by assistant coaches Red Dawson and DEKE BRACKETT (older, with a paunch).

RICK TOLLEY
Fellas. You gave a good effort today. But let me be clear about this -- a good effort is not enough.
Tolley paces in front of them.

RICK TOLLEY (cont’d)
Now I’m proud of you. But I will not accept losing with you. Because there’s only one thing they judge us on. There’s only one thing people remember. And it ain’t how we play the game.

He turns and heads toward the door.

RICK TOLLEY (cont’d)
Plane leaves in an hour. We’ll be home by eight. Plenty of time for ya’ll do to whatever ya’ll do on a Saturday night. Tomorrow’s yours, so enjoy it. Because Monday’s mine, and it’s gonna be hell.

He walks out. The room lets out a collective GROAN.

19 INT. GENE MOREHOUSE’S LIVING ROOM, HUNTINGTON - DAY

Five of Gene’s SIX CHILDREN watch TV.

The sixth, nine-year-old KEITH, holes up with his transistor radio. His dad’s voice comes in loud and clear.

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
...you have to wonder if the confusion on Marshall’s sideline at the end of the game won’t make that target on Coach Tolley’s back just a little bit bigger.

Their mother, LINDA, enters, wearing an apron.

LINDA MOREHOUSE
I’m not gonna ask you guys again.

The other kids jump up and trudge toward the dining room. But Keith stubbornly hangs back.

KEITH
Just a few more seconds. Dad’s not off yet.

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
As usual, we’ll start our exclusive coverage here at three...
LINDA MOREHOUSE
You know he’ll still be droning on about that game when he gets home tonight. Let’s go.

Before she can reach him, Keith clutches his radio and rolls under the couch, just out of her reach.

INT. PRESS BOX, GREENVILLE - DAY

A tired looking GENE MOREHOUSE wraps up his broadcast.

GENE MOREHOUSE
Until next week, then, for WGRN and Marshall University, I’m Gene Morehouse. Goodnight...

INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM (UNDER THE COUCH) - DAY

Where Keith Morehouse mouths along...

GENE MOREHOUSE (O.S.)
...and go Herd.

Keith smiles, then switches off the radio just as his mother drags him out by the foot.

EXT. DOWNTOWN HUNTINGTON - NIGHT

Nate Ruffin and Tom Bogdan walk down 5th Avenue. At the movie theater (the marquee reads M.A.S.H.), the lone TICKET TAKER catches sight of the Marshall players.

TICKET TAKER
East Carolina? I mean, I can understand giving up 300 yards to Bowling Green. But East Carolina!? My grandma plays tighter D...and she’s only got one leg!

Nate gives the Ticket Taker a withering look as he pays for his ticket.

NATE RUFFIN
We’ll be sure to look for her at tryouts next spring. *

The Ticket Taker glances at Nate’s cast, shamefaced, then looks at Bogdan.

TICKET TAKER
You hurt, too?
For a moment, BOGDAN FREEZES.

But then Nate grabs their change and heads inside.

NATE RUFFIN
Come on, man. We’re missing the previews.

Bogdan shrugs at the Ticket Taker and follows Nate.

TICKET TAKER
I’ll still be there Saturday! Go Herd!

INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT – DAY

Paul Griffin waits on several well-dressed BOOSTERS, including LLOYD BOONE.

LLOYD BOONE
I would’ve thought you’d make the trip for this one, Paul.

PAUL GRIFFIN
I was gonna. Already had the cooler in the car. Then Annie got me at a weak moment...

LLOYD BOONE
You’re a soft touch.

PAUL GRIFFIN
No, I’m just a future father-in-law.

SUDDENLY, A WELL DRESSED MAN, SCHOOL PRESIDENT DONALD DEDMON, slaps him on the shoulder.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
And a darned attractive waitress.

Paul grins.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
Are you bribing my Board of Governors with free pie again?

PAUL GRIFFIN
If I had that in mind, there’d be ice cream on top.

He waves Dedmon into his seat.
PAUL GRIFFIN (cont’d)
Mr. President, I believe the chair is yours.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I understand our boys didn’t fare so well today.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Had a shot at the end, there.
Black, two sugars?

Dedmon nods. Paul moves on, passing three firemen eating at the counter.

FIREMAN
Your boy looked good today, Paul. You must be proud.

Before Paul can respond, Sue puts an omelette down in front of the fireman.

SUE GRIFFIN
Six tackles and one sack, you bet we are.

24 EXT. GREENVILLE AIRPORT - NIGHT
A Southern Airlines DC9 sits on the runway. A stewardess opens the plane door. Two chartered buses pull up.

The marching band tunes up. 75 or so boosters watch as the coaches and team spill off the bus.

ONE BOOSTER converses quietly with another.

BOOSTER
I just don’t think Tolley knows how manage the close games, that’s all.

As Tolley approaches, the boosters change their tune, bursting into applause and the “We Are Marshall” chant.

Red Dawson and Deke Brackett trail behind.

DEKE BRACKETT
You really think I should ask?

RED DAWSON
Don’t see how it can hurt.

Tolley shakes some hands, including the booster’s. He glances sideways at Red and Deke.
RICK TOLLEY
(under his breath)
They'd give a standing “O” to a pig right before they stuck him on the spit.

DEKE BRACKETT
Listen, Rick, about this recruiting trip. I got it on good authority the Davis kid’s already in West Virginia’s pocket-

RICK TOLLEY
We’re not giving up on any of the recruits, Deke.

DEKE BRACKETT
I’m not saying give up on him. I just-

Just then, TOLLEY SPOTS THE THREE TUSCALOOSA BOYS (all big, all black) huddling around a pay phone. Their ringleader, BOBBY DELANY, whispers into the receiver.

RICK TOLLEY
You’ll excuse me, gentlemen.

Without waiting for a reply, he heads off to investigate.

DEKE BRACKETT
All right, then. Thanks for listening.

25 At the pay phone, Bobby grins at his cohorts.

BOBBY DELANY
(into phone)
I just need a favor, Reggie, not your damn life story...What? Whatever, Pabst is fine. Just make sure you get at least a case.

Suddenly, the other Tuscaloosa Boys scatter.

A hand taps Bobby on the shoulder. Bobby shakes it off. The hand taps again. Bobby spins, annoyed.

BOBBY DELANY (cont’d)
What is it, godda--
(sees Tolley)
-da-at’s right, Reggie. Carry the two and divide by the...sum of the...parts.

He hangs up the phone and gives Tolley his best smile.
BOBBY DELANY (cont’d)
Boy’s just hopeless at math.

As Tolley starts to unload on him...

THREE CHEERLEADERS squeeze into an idling MID-60’s CORVAIR. KATIE (THE DRIVER) yells:

KATIE
Annie! Hurry up, we gotta go!

Across the lot...ANNIE CANTRELL kisses her boyfriend, CHRIS GRIFFIN. She waves her friends off.

ANNIE CANTRELL
Do you want to talk about the game?

CHRIS GRIFFIN
Not even a little bit.

They kiss...

ANNIE CANTRELL
Neither do I.

They kiss some more...

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
But you were great.

And some more...

CHRIS GRIFFIN
Did you take your passport picture this morning?

ANNIE CANTRELL
How could I? I was driving down here...

CHRIS GRIFFIN
Annie.

She levels with him.

ANNIE CANTRELL
I want my hair to be longer.

He looks at her sternly, then breaks.

CHRIS GRIFFIN
You could be bald and I’d still marry you. In London, Paris, or Huntington, West Virginia.
ANNIE CANTRELL
Paris, please. But with longer hair.

CHRIS GRIFFIN
Yes, ma'am.

They kiss one last time, then:

RICK TOLLEY (O.S.)
Griffin! Get over here!

Chris smiles at her...

CHRIS GRIFFIN
Race you back.

...then RUNS for the plane.

Annie sprints over to the cheerleaders and jumps in as they pull away, passing right by...

28 RED AND DEKE, HEADING FOR THE PLANE.

RED DAWSON
So what’s this concert you’re missing?

DEKE BRACKETT
Sally’s piano recital. She’s playing Minuet in G. Tell you the truth, she kinda just bangs on the keys, don’t sound like anything. But she’s cute up there, and it’s the kinda stuff I missed the first time around with my boys.

Red sees the players start to board.

RED DAWSON
Guess that’s my cue.

DEKE SAGS, RESIGNED TO HIS FATE.

DEKE BRACKETT
Y’all have a good flight now.

Red watches him walk away, alone. He closes his eyes -- he doesn’t believe he’s about to do this.

RED DAWSON
Deke? Deke!

Deke stops and looks back at Red.
Yeah?

Tell you what. Take my seat.

No, you go-

I’m serious. Gimme your keys, I’ll go see the Davis kid.

Now don’t tease me here, Red.

Red takes the keys from Deke’s hand.

Go on. It’s Minuet in G.

Deke doesn’t have to be told twice. He sprints for the plane, making it inside just as...

THE STEWARDESS CLOSES THE DOOR.

The DC 9 takes off into the evening sky.

Red stands at the pay phone, receiver to his ear, watching them go.

The phone RINGS as the plane gets smaller on the horizon.

Red sighs, hangs up, and dials another number.

THE PHONE RINGS, startling DORIS STILLWELL (old and tiny) away from Let’s Make A Deal on her black & white TV.

She hobbles over to the phone while Monty Hall shows door number one to a young woman dressed as a cat.

Oh no, never pick door number one. (into phone)
Good evening?

Hey Doris, Red Dawson calling from Greenville. Can I trouble you to look and see if Carol’s home?
Doris barely takes her eyes off the TV, just pulls the curtain to peek at the house next door. All is dark.

DORIS
Sure doesn’t look like it, Red.

RED DAWSON (O.S.)
Yeah, that’s what I thought. Could you do me a big favor then and leave her a message for me? Tell her I’m going to Virginia on a recruiting trip and I won’t be home until tomorrow evening. Tell her I’m sorry, it’s just...well, they asked me to do it, so I did.

DORIS
(fixated on the TV)
Okay, you’ll be back tomorrow evening, got it.

RED DAWSON (O.S.)
Thanks, Doris. Have a good night.

Doris hangs up and heads back to her chair, watching the cat woman ponder her choice on the TV.

DORIS
Trust me girl, pick number three.

Outside Doris’ window, RAINDROPS begin to ping against the glass. THUNDER RUMBLES in the distance.

INT. CHEERLEADER’S CAR - NIGHT
Katie the Driver turns on her wipers against the rain.

The other two cheerleaders (JULIE AND JANE) grill Annie.

JANE
Are you coming tomorrow? *

ANNIE CANTRELL *

Where? *

JULIE *
The soccer team’s having a barbecue. *

ANNIE CANTRELL *
I can’t. I’ve gotta work breakfast if I want to see Chris in the afternoon. *

The girls sigh.
KATIE

Sounds like a fair trade to me.

They laugh. Annie leans her head against the window, staring up at the cloudy sky.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Chris Griffin stares out the window, looking for Annie through the dark floor of clouds.

A hand taps him on the shoulder. He looks up to see Rick Tolley passing by.

RICK TOLLEY

Good effort today, Griffin.

Chris nods. Tolley makes his way through the plane. All around him, the plane bustles with life.

A player leans over his seat, goofing with a teammate. Tolley gives him a good-natured shove.

RICK TOLLEY (cont’d)

Could’ve used a little of that hustle on the field.

The player grins. Tolley moves on, trading jokes and hellos. He comes upon Gene Morehouse.

RICK TOLLEY (cont’d)

Hey there, Gene. I know this might sound weird, but would you do me a favor and scratch my back? ‘Cause the giant target on there’s really starting to itch.

GENE MOREHOUSE

You know you can’t believe everything you hear on the radio, Coach.

Tolley chuckles and keeps moving, finally making it to the front.

INTERCOM

This is Captain Dettro speaking. Looks like we made good time in spite of the weather, so if everyone could return to their seats and prepare for landing, we’ll be on the ground shortly.

Tolley turns and looks over his team and his coaches.
RICK TOLLEY

You heard the captain, boys. Let’s straighten those ties and give ‘em all a big smile. Looks like we’re home.

He sits.

STAY ON THE SHOT for a long beat.

AND THEN A HUGE BUMP SHAKES THE PLANE.

CUT TO BLACK.

HOLD ON IT A LONG TIME.

SILENCE...until, in the distance, THE MONKEES’s ”DAYDREAM BELIEVER” begins to play.

36 EXT. VIRGINIA ROAD – NIGHT

Red drives Deke’s ’67 Chevy down the empty two-lane highway, tapping to the song on the radio.

He passes a sign: ‘WELCOME TO VIRGINIA.’

37 Red pulls into a lonely gas station, stopping at the only pump.

AN OLD ATTENDANT sits on a rocking chair, eating boiled peanuts and listening to A SMALL RADIO. He moseys over.

ATTENDANT

Fill ’er up for ya?

Red nods and gets out to stretch his legs. He notices two crock pots of peanuts on a window sill.

RADIO

-which comes at a time when the state department reports increased war activity. At least 44 US fatalities in the past week-

RED DAWSON

Those peanuts look pretty good. Lemme get a batch of them, too.

RADIO

-while in other news the Cambodian government has charged four family members of a former US Chief of State with subversion-

ATTENDANT

Sure, 50 cents, just help yourself. Regular’s on the left, cajun’s on the right.
RADIO
-and we’re getting word across the wire just now that an airplane has crashed in Huntington, West Virginia. No details yet on-

Red scoops himself some peanuts.

RED DAWSON
Wait, what did that say?

RADIO
-those and other top stories of the hour right now on CBS radio.

ATTENDANT
Dunno, wasn’t listening. That’ll be an even five, gas ‘n’ nuts.

Red absently hands him the money.

RADIO
Good evening. We’ll update the situation in Huntington as more details are released, but first-

Red just blinks. The announcer goes into a Vietnam story.

ATTENDANT
Son? You okay?

Red drops his peanuts and runs for his car.

INT. CHEERLEADERS’ CAR - NIGHT

The girls sing along to the radio.

CHEERLEADERS
“Cheer up Sleepy Jean! -- Oh what can it mean! -- To a Daydream Believer and a Homecoming Queen --”

Suddenly, a local station jingle interrupts the song.

RADIO
This is a WGNT special report...

EXT. OPEN ROAD - NIGHT

The brakelights flash. The Corvair SLOWS TO A STOP on the side of the road.

*
40 INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT, OFFICE - NIGHT

Sue Griffin goes over the books. THE PHONE RINGS.

SUE GRIFFIN
Paul? You wanna get that?

But it keeps RINGING. She rolls her eyes, walks over and snaps up the receiver.

41 INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Paul Griffin walks Carol Dawson to the door of the nearly empty restaurant.

PAUL GRIFFIN
You have a good night, now. Red needs any pointers on picking up the blitz, you have him give me a call.

Suddenly, SUE CRIES OUT from the back. Carol and Paul pause.

42 INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The M.A.S.H. football scene flickers off and the lights come up. The audience boos.

The Ticket Taker appears in the doorway, looking shaken.

Nate and Bogdan stare at him from their seats, confused.

43 INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Keith and the other Morehouse kids sit packed on the couch, watching The Newlywed Game. Their mother knits in a chair.

Suddenly, text scrolls across the bottom of the TV screen: “PLANE DOWN AT TRI-STATE AIRPORT; DETAILS TO COME.”

Keith reads the scroll, confused. He looks at his brothers and sisters. No one makes a sound until their Mom happens to look up from her knitting...

AND MOANS. Suddenly, six voices begin talking at once.

44 INT. DORIS STILLWELL’S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The same show and the same text play on Doris’ screen. But the only sound is snoring...
Doris lies asleep in her armchair, out like a light.

45

EXT. DOWNTOWN HUNTINGTON - NIGHT

Reggie Oliver walks out of a LIQUOR STORE with A CASE OF
PABST BLUE RIBBON.

* A FIRE TRUCK ROARS BY.

Reggie watches it pass without much interest.

But then another SIREN SCREAMS. A police car flashes by. Then another. Then an ambulance and one more fire truck.

Across the street...Nate and Bogdan flag down a pick-up outside the theater.

NATE RUFFIN

Hey, you going to the airp-

MAN IN TRUCK

Get in.

They jump in the back of the truck and squeal down the road.

46

EXT. STATE ROAD 64 - NIGHT

Fire trucks and police cars crowd the shoulder. Traffic jams in both directions.

Past the road, the heavily-treed terrain slopes steeply down. Despite the rain, the unmistakable hue of FIRE seeps through the brush.

Nate and Bogdan arrive in their truck, jumping out to join A CROWD already gathered behind emergency ropes.

The Griffins stand with Carol Dawson. Wes Hickman and Felix Jordan huddle together. Nate hurries over.

NATE RUFFIN

Have they said anything?

They shake their heads. Nate ducks under the ropes, but a RESCUE WORKER notices him.

RESCUE WORKER

Get back behind the ropes.

NATE RUFFIN

C’mon, give us something here. At least tell us which airline it is.
The rescue worker just looks back at Nate, sincere and sad.

RESCUE WORKER
If we knew, believe me, we’d tell you.

NATE RUFFIN
How do you not know? Just look on the front of the damn plane.

RESCUE WORKER
Son...there isn’t any front of the plane anymore.

Nate stares, stunned. The Rescue Worker heads down the slope, where he confers with a Fireman.

The Fireman holds something up to the Rescuer:

A CHARRED BUT STILL ALL-TOO-GREEN MARSHALL PLAYBOOK.

The crowd stares as they all process this horrible confirmation.

At first, there is silence. Then slowly, a few of the women start to SOB. Others SCREAM.

Carol Dawson blinks, too stunned to move. Tom Bogdan goes limp. Nate Ruffin staggers to the Rescue Worker.

NATE RUFFIN
Are there...there could be survivors, right?

The Rescue Worker answers by not answering. Nate closes his eyes, then just sits down in the dirt.

Sue trembles as Paul slowly walks up the hill toward her.

SUE GRIFFIN
No. Don’t say it. Don’t say it because it isn’t true. It’s just not.

Paul wraps his arms around her as she breaks.

PAUL GRIFFIN
They’re gone, Sue. They’re all gone.

Next to them, Carol Dawson stands frozen.

After a moment, she turns and walks away.

ACROSS THE WAY, A CADILLAC noses around the barriers. A POLICE OFFICER waves the car back.
POLICE OFFICER
Sir! Turn the vehicle around.
This whole area’s closed.

The driver’s side window rolls down. President Dedmon looks out, stone-faced. The cop turns and shouts.

POLICE OFFICER (cont’d)
Okay, let this one by!

Dedmon parks and steps out of the car. He walks through the crowd, down the embankment, past the trees...

AND THERE’S THE PLANE. Or what’s left of it. Dedmon squints from the heat.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
My god in heaven...

CHIEF BEN WELLES appears behind him. Dedmon composes himself, then turns to survey the crowd -- all in shock, all huddled together outside the ropes, soaked by the rain.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
I—I think we need to get all these people home.

Chief Welles nods somberly but still touches Dedmon’s arm.

CHIEF WELLES
Don? We’re still going to need help...identifying the bodies.

Dedmon pauses, the idea making his stomach turn. Before he can respond, a voice speaks up behind them.

NATE RUFFIN (O.S.)
We’ll do it.

They turn to find Nate and Tom walking slowly down the slope, Bogdan looking a little hesitant.

Dedmon starts to shake his head, but Nate interrupts.

NATE RUFFIN (cont’d)
What, would you rather do it? Or do you wanna go get one of them?

He points to the shattered crowd then heads for the crash. *

Bogdan doesn’t move...until Nate shoots him a sharp look and he reluctantly follows.

Dedmon just watches them go. *
Reggie Oliver walks slowly up to the building, alone. He opens the doors to find...

The center is crowded with students and townspeople. They whispers in huddled groups, sharing information.

A GIRL looks up and stops talking, stunned by the presence of a player.

Reggie takes a seat in back. He stares up at THE ROUGH-HEWN CROSS.

Nate and Bogdan stand in the fire glare.

Rescue Workers carry a bodybag up to Bogdan. They unzip it. He looks in. He speaks in a small, resigned voice.

TOM BOGDAN
Nick DeAngelis.

A Paramedic writes the name in chalk.

Nearby, Nate stares into another bodybag, his face a mask.

NATE RUFFIN
I’m...not sure.

RESCUE WORKER
Okay. Another unidentified here.

Nate watches the Workers carry the bodybag to a growing line of black bags.

The Workers unzip another bag in front of Bogdan.

HOLD ON Bogdan as he goes pale. After a long moment, he walks away and leans his head against a tree.

Nate sees, but doesn’t go over to help. Instead, he turns back to the body in front of him.

NATE RUFFIN
How am I supposed to tell?

The Rescue Worker just nods and takes the body away. But another bag is quickly carried in.
President Dedmon and the Griffins watch the scene, their eyes bloodshot, their faces numb.

A tire squeal draws their attention to the road, where...THE CHEERLEADERS’ CAR PULLS UP.

Annie jumps out, the other girls close behind.

Annie hurries down the hill, frantic.

Paul restrains her before she can see.

ANNIE CANTRELL
Where is he? Where’s Chris?

Paul just holds her.

At that moment, Nate walks up, pale.

NATE RUFFIN
Mr. And Mrs. Griffin...

They turn to him...and know what this means.

Paul holds back a struggling Annie.

Sue swallows and walks down the hill.

She reaches a bodybag, marked with white chalk letters: GRIFFIN. A rescue worker stands by.

Nate nods at him.

CLOSE ON SUE’S FACE...as we hear the ZIP...and she reacts, falling to her knees.

Carol lies fetal on the bed, sobbing into a pillow.

Finally, she pulls the pillow off her head, trying to catch her ragged breath.

Just then, A DOOR OPENS downstairs.

She freezes.

FOOTSTEPS clunk in the foyer.

Carol gets up and walks hesitantly to the bedroom door.

She hears the sound of a SUITCASE dropping to the floor.

She steps into the hall and sprints to the staircase, looking down to see...
RED, exhausted, standing in the downstairs hall. He sees the shock on her face and grimaces.

RED DAWSON

You didn’t get my message.

Carol flies downstairs and jumps on him, sobbing. They stand there for a long time, neither wanting to move.

DIP TO BLACK.

54  EXT. HUNTINGTON - DAWN  54

All is dark and quiet. In the east, the sun somehow begins to rise once again, and day slowly breaks over the city.

55  EXT. STATE ROAD 64 - DAWN  55

The crash site still smolders. Rescue workers still work the wreckage.

On the hill, Red Dawson sits alone, watching through the smoke and haze, his eyes bloodshot, his face numb.

56  EXT. MARSHALL DORMITORY - DAY  56

Sun shines on the brick building, inappropriately bright.

57  INT. DORMITORY HALLWAY - DAY  57

The hallway lies silent. The doors to certain rooms hang open, the occupants never to return.

58  INT. REGGIE’S ROOM - DAY  58

PAN OVER: THREE BEDS, still made, unslept in.

In a FOURTH BED, Reggie Oliver just stares.

A CASE OF PABST BLUE RIBBON sits unopened on the dresser.

59  INT. NATE’S ROOM - DAY  59

Nate lies in bed, awake. After a long moment, he heads to the sink for a glass of water.

In the mirror, he sees Bogdan, also wide awake.
TOM BOGDAN
I keep thinking if I can just fall asleep, everyone will be here again when I wake back up.

Nate grimaces, but doesn’t respond.

FELIX JORDAN (O.S.)
Hey.

They turn to see Felix slumped in the doorway. He sinks into a chair, unbidden.

Nate just stares at him, something running through his head.

NATE RUFFIN
How many of us are left?

TOM BOGDAN
What?

Bogdan and Felix look up at Nate. He stares back at them, suddenly determined.

EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY

Red pulls into the driveway and gets out, haggard.

He stops at the front stoop, staring at THE MORNING PAPER: "MARSHALL TEAM, COACHES, FANS DIE IN PLANE CRASH. 75 BELIEVED ON BOARD."

RED DAWSON
Oh, Jesus.

There, halfway down the page, next to a list of the dead, is RED’S PICTURE.

INT. LENGYEL HOUSE, WOOSTER, OHIO - DAY

SANDY LENGYEL stares down at THE WOOSTER DAILY RECORD: "TRAGEDY IN WEST VIRGINIA."

She wipes away a tear.

SANDY LENGYEL
Jack, have you seen this?

JACK LENGYEL stands at the kitchen window, watching his kids play on the lawn. He nods.
JACK LENGYEL
I don’t know how you get over
something like that.

Sandy hugs him.

61  EXT. CAMPUS GREEN - DAY
A few students huddle around, quietly mourning.

At the CENTRAL FOUNTAIN, a GIRL IN HER PAJAMAS cries on the
shoulder of a CONSOLING GUY. Suddenly, he sees something
and lifts her chin.

NATE, BOGDAN AND THE OTHER SURVIVING VARSITY PLAYERS walk
across the quad, each dressed in his letterman jacket.

They move with purpose, Nate leading the way. Everyone
knows who they are. Everyone watches where they’re going.

62  INT. DEDMON’S OUTER OFFICE - DAY
DEDMON’S SECRETARY looks up, her breath catching as...

Nate leads his teammates through the door.

Without a word, she flips a switch on her desk.

SECRETARY
President Dedmon? There’s some
players here to see you.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (V.O.)
I’m sorry, players?
(beat)
Hold on, I’ll be right out.

Dedmon steps out, taking a beat as he sees the boys.
Before he can speak, Nate steps forward.

NATE RUFFIN
Sir? We want to play next week
against Ohio.

He points at the others.

NATE RUFFIN (cont’d)
All of us’ll play iron man on both
sides. We’re only two short.
We’ll play ’em nine on eleven.

Dedmon breathes hard and glances away. When he finally
looks back at Nate, his eyes are misty.
You boys have a lot of heart. I’m proud of you. Your teammates would be proud of you. But this...

It’s what we gotta do, sir.

Son, even if there were enough of you, it would never work. Think about it, you’re injured.

He looks them over: Nate in a cast, two others on crutches. Dedmon sadly shakes his head.

And that’s the only reason you’re alive right now.

Bogdan stares at the floor.

But we are alive, sir. And we want to finish our season. We want to finish their season.

Dedmon puts his arm around Nate.

This school...this town...we’ve all been dealt a serious blow. No one more than you boys. But now is not the time for football. Now’s the time to grieve, and then, God willing, to heal.

Nate opens his mouth to speak, but Dedmon stops him.

There’ll be plenty of football games to be played in the future. But right now we’ve got 75 funerals to put on, all over the country. You want to do something for your teammates? Spread out. Represent the team and the school at as many as you can. Go stand up tall in front of those families and tell them what it really means to be a Marshall football player. I promise you, there’s no better way to honor them than that.

Dedmon heads back into his office. The players all turn to Nate, who just looks away.
BEGIN THE FUNERAL MONTAGE -- (MUSIC: SAM COOKE’S “A CHANGE IS GONNA COME.”)

63  OMITTED

64  EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

Nate Ruffin, in a suit and tie, walks out alone and places the ball on a tee on the 20 yard line.

He turns to face...

4,000 PEOPLE PACKING THE STANDS.

PASTOR (O.S.)

Today is not a welcome day.

Dedmon, Red, Coach Mickey Jackson, and the players gather on the field.

Annie and the cheerleaders stand in black dresses in front of the bleachers.

The crowd sits absolutely silent, waiting for a kickoff that will never come.

65  INT. PRESS BOX - DAY

Keith Morehouse curls beneath his father’s chair in the broadcast booth. He stares vacantly.

66  EXT. HUNTINGTON STREETS - DAY

Flags are lowered to half-staff.

PASTOR (O.S.)

The sun is not kind.

Businesses sit deserted. ‘CLOSED’ signs hang in almost every window.

67  EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

A traffic light turns from yellow to red.

A HEARSE comes to a stop.

PASTOR (O.S.)

And the shadow offers us no comfort.
At the intersection, ANOTHER HEARSE drives through.

68    INT. FIRST CHURCH, TOLLEY FUNERAL – DAY

A picture of Coach Tolley rests on a closed coffin.

HIS WIDOW sits up front with Carol Dawson and the other COACHES’ WIDOWS.

    PASTOR (O.S.)
    Clocks tick, but time does not pass.

Red, Dedmon, Nate and the rest of the players sit stoically behind them.

69    INT. SECOND CHURCH, BRACKETT FUNERAL – DAY

Deke Brackett is laid to rest. Red and Carol Dawson sit with Deke’s LARGE FAMILY up front.

A little girl in a black dress plays the piano.

    PASTOR (O.S.)
    With every breath, we feel we are stealing the air meant for someone younger and finer.

The congregation rises for a HYMN. At the very back, Nate Ruffin and a few of the other players stand up to sing.

70    INT. DEDMON’S OFFICE – DAY

An exhausted President Dedmon opens up the newspaper. The headline reads, “KNEE SURGEON IDENTIFIES TWO MORE BODIES.”

A BOX ON THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE LISTS THE DAY’S FUNERALS.

    PASTOR (O.S.)
    Our child gave to us. With his laughter and his smile and his work and his passion.

Dedmon takes out a marker and begins circling the funerals he’ll be able to make.

71    INT. THIRD CHURCH, TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA – DAY

THREE CASKETS rest side by side.

*
PASTOR (O.S.)
With his friendship. And with his love.

Reggie Oliver sits with THREE SETS OF GRIEVING PARENTS at the front of the church.

A door opens in back and people turn to see...

Red Dawson and Nate Ruffin, both wet from the rain. They quietly take seats in the last row.

72  EXT. FIRST HUNTINGTON GRAVEYARD - DAY

Linda Morehouse stands in a veil next to her six kids.

PASTOR (O.S.)
So let us not mourn him. Let us remember him. Let us celebrate him.

The mourners (including Nate and Bogdan) bow their heads.

Linda watches her six children cross themselves. She breaks down.

73  EXT. SECOND HUNTINGTON GRAVEYARD - DAY

Annie Cantrell twists a funeral program in her black-gloved hands. She stands beneath a tree, at a distance from... 

Chris Griffin’s burial. THE PASTOR reads at the graveside.

PASTOR
Let us treasure the memory of our boy, our friend, our Chris. Surely he was one of God’s dearest creations. Amen.

Sue Griffin sobs into her husband’s coat. Paul, red-eyed, stares straight ahead.

Wes Hickman and Felix Jordan unroll Chris’ football jersey over his coffin.

They step back and join Red and Nate as the casket is lowered into the ground.

Sue verges on collapse. Paul turns her from the grave and leads her away.

As they pass President Dedmon, PAUL MEETS HIS EYE, WITH AN INTENSE LOOK.
At the grave, a funeral attendant somberly scoops a shovelful of dirt into the hole.

INT. LENGYEL HOUSE, WOOSTER, OHIO - DAY

Jack Lengyel, in a Wooster College polo shirt, absently scoops coffee into a coffee maker.

He looks over to the breakfast table where Sandy tries to corral their three kids. Unsuccessfully. He smiles.

JACK LENGYEL
Hey, honey? You ever been to Huntington?

SANDY LENGYEL
Mouth closed, Peter, thank you.
(to Jack)
What, Jack?

Lengyel slides the filter into the coffee maker, and joins his family at the table.

JACK LENGYEL
Nothing. Just thinking out loud.

He takes a bite of cereal, then makes eye contact with his son. Jack opens his mouth and shows Peter his food.

Peter giggles. Sandy sighs.

EXT. MARSHALL CAMPUS - DAY

Dedmon and Paul Griffin watch as students make their way to class.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Have you mentioned this to any of the other board members?

PAUL GRIFFIN
A few. Most of them would rather not think about it.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I can understand that sentiment.

PAUL GRIFFIN
It just doesn’t make sense to rush right back into it, you know? So many of our boosters were on that plane...
Paul’s voice wavers. Dedmon puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont’d)
And we’d have to start all over again from scratch. For what? My God, do we even have the energy? We sure don’t have the resources or the manpower.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I know all the reasons to suspend the program, Paul. I’m just surprised to hear them coming from you.

Paul looks him in the eye and sighs.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Sue’s having a real hard time. And more football just isn’t going to help. It wouldn’t be a game anymore. It’d only be a weekly reminder of what we’ve lost. I don’t see how that would do anyone in this town any good.

Dedmon surveys his campus.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I’ll call a board meeting. You draw up a proposal. Let’s see if we can’t lock up the votes sooner rather than later.

Out on the quad, a girl hugs BIG EDDIE CARTER.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
Jesus. Somebody’s going to have to tell them.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The six remaining varsity players and Reggie sit on benches.

President Dedmon stands stiffly in front of them. His overcoat lies folded neatly on a chair.

He seems out of place surrounded by lockers and athletic tape.

Move around the room. The players react as if they’ve been punched in the gut. Betrayed.
All except Tom Bogdan, who looks, if anything, relieved.

Finally, Nate Ruffin stands.

NATE RUFFIN
You can’t end football.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
We’re not talking about ending the program. We’re talking about suspending it. All of your scholarships will still be honored. We’re just going to take a collective breath, as a town, and figure out the proper course of action-

NATE RUFFIN
The proper course of action is to bring the program back. Sir. Right now. Right away.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I certainly understand your position. And I will personally pass on your concerns to the board before they make their decision.

NATE RUFFIN
How about you let me pass on my concerns myself?

Dedmon picks up his coat.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Unfortunately, Board of Governors meetings are, and always have been, closed door.

NATE RUFFIN
Well, you better just open that door up then, huh?

Dedmon steels himself.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I know you’re upset, son, but don’t speak to me like I’m one of your... cronies.

Nate glares, furious. Dedmon pauses, teetering on the brink of anger. He manages to collect himself.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
You’ve been through a lot in a short time.
PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont'd)

But I'm afraid it's out of my hands.

(to the team)
I'm sorry.

With that, Dedmon turns and walks out.

NATE RUFFIN
Hold on! This isn't right! Get the hell back here!

Nate tries to follow, but Eddie grabs his shoulder. Nate tries to slap it away, but Eddie won't budge.

INT. MARSHALL STUDENT CENTER - DAY

Moments later, Nate, Reggie, Felix and Bogdan burst in.

NATE RUFFIN
Reg, you and Felix find everybody you can, and tell 'em to meet up in the lobby at five.

REGGIE OLIVER
You want the freshman?

NATE RUFFIN
Freshman, everybody. Tell 'em five o'clock. Tell 'em anybody wants to keep playing, they'll be there.

Felix and Reggie peel off.

TOM GRABS NATE BY THE ELBOW.

TOM BOGDAN
Nate, hold on. Some of the guys...

(he sighs)
Some of 'em are kinda...wavering.

NATE RUFFIN
What do you mean, wavering? What are you talking about? Who's wavering?

Bogdan doesn't answer, refusing to make eye contact.

NATE RUFFIN (cont’d)
Tom?

Bogdan finally looks up at Nate.

TOM BOGDAN
I overslept. That's why I wasn't on the plane. My back is fine.
NATE RUFFIN
What?

TOM BOGDAN
It was Steve Sullivan’s birthday.
We were out all night.
(tearing up)
If I had woken up five minutes
earlier, I would’ve been with them.
They were counting on me...

Tom breathes raspily through his tears.

TOM BOGDAN (cont’d)
I’m only alive because I let them
down. I’m not even supposed to be
here...

Nate stares as Tom breaks down, collapsing into a chair.
Nate shakes, overwhelmed with pain and anger.
Finally, he just walks away, leaving Tom crying alone.

77A  EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY
Nate KNOCKS at the door. There’s no answer.

77B  INT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY
Red sits on the steps, looking at the door.
NATE RUFFIN (O.S.)
Coach Dawson?
Red rubs his face.
Finally, the knocking stops.

77C  EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY
Nate shakes his head and walks away.

78  EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD - DAY
Red walks out his backdoor.
PULL BACK just as he swings up a SLEDGEHAMMER and SMASHES
IT into the side of A DILAPIDATED TIN SHED.

79  OMITTED
EXT. CAMPUS GREEN - DAY

Eddie Carter and Felix Jordan hand out fliers to the passing students. Felix hands out his last two.

FELIX JORDAN
You think we got a chance, man?

Eddie doesn’t answer. He just stares across the quad at Nate coming out of a classroom, talking earnestly with a STUDENT IN A SPORTCOAT.

Eddie turns to Felix and shrugs, hopeful.

INT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY

A RADIO on the kitchen table blares Hank Williams. Carol makes tuna salad. She wipes her hands and clicks off the radio.

Only now can we hear THE BANGING FROM OUTSIDE.

She smiles tightly and opens the window.

CAROL DAWSON
Red! Lunch is ready!

She stands in the kitchen, listening to the banging...finally...stop.

Somewhere, A GAVEL BANGS...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dedmon calls to order a meeting of the Marshall faculty and Board. As the 35 or so people take their seats, a nervous buzz courses through the room.

Paul Griffin sits quietly, his face drawn.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
All right. There’s only one piece of business on the docket tonight, so what I’d like to do is-

Just then, THE DOOR OPENS and Nate Ruffin walks in.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
This is a private meeting, young man, I think I made myself clear-
But Dedmon is interrupted by THE STUDENT IN THE SPORTCOAT.

PAT PINSON
Actually, sir, Mr. Ruffin is here
as my guest. And as student body
representative to the board, I’d
like to motion that he be provided
an opportunity to speak.

Dedmon glares at him, then glances at Lloyd Boone.

Boone shrugs. Dedmon looks to Paul.

PAUL GRIFFIN
(begrudgingly)
I guess he’s got a right.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Fine. Your time starts now, Mr.
Ruffin.

Nate steps to the podium. The Board members look up at
him, expectant.

But Nate doesn’t say anything.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
If you have something to say,
son...

Nate still doesn’t move. Then, finally, he steps away from
the podium.

NATE RUFIN
You know what? Nah.

Nate heads back toward the door. Paul Griffin looks up,
suddenly hopeful...

UNTIL NATE STOPS BY THE WINDOW.

NATE RUFIN (cont’d)
I ain’t got nothing to say....

He opens the curtain that runs the length of the room.

NATE RUFIN (cont’d)
But they do.

Nate pushes open the large double windows with his cast so
that the board members are looking down upon:

OVER A THOUSAND STUDENTS filling up all corners of the
campus green. In the front, Eddie, Reggie, Felix, Wes and
the cheerleaders lead the crowd in chanting, as one voice:
CROWD
We are...Marshall!
We are...Marshall!
We are...Marshall!

As most of the board members rush to look out at the gathered crowd, we move in...

ON NATE, puffed up with pride...

CROWD (cont’d)
We are...Marshall!

ON DEDMON, struggling to keep his emotions in check...

CROWD (cont’d)
We are...Marshall!

ON PAUL GRIFFIN, stone-faced. Defeated.

CROWD (cont’d)
We are...Marshall!

83 INT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY

Red and Carol eat lunch at the table.

CROWD (O.S.)
We are...Marshall!

Carol drops her fork. She looks up at her husband...who *barely eats*, ignoring the noise.

Suddenly, the chant turns into a ROAR.

84 EXT. CAMPUS GREEN - DAY

THE CROWD CELEBRATES. Players beam, students shout.

ANNIE CANTRELL stands to the side, expressionless. *

Finally, she just turns and walks away. *

85 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Paul Griffin gathers his things and heads for the door, brushing past...

Don Dedmon.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Paul...
But Griffin just walks out.

Dedmon sighs and looks over at...

NATE, still standing at the window, watching the crowd.

NATE RUFFIN
It’s the right thing to do, sir.
You won’t regret this.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Mr. Ruffin, do you have any idea
how long the road’s going to be?
We don’t have a team. We don’t
have a staff. We don’t even have a
damn athletic director.
(reeling himself in)
May he rest in peace. Under the
best of circumstances, it takes
years to build a program. We’ve
got months. There are so many
loose ends, I don’t know where to
start.

Nate nods, trying to look thoughtful.

NATE RUFFIN
Well, maybe you ought to start with
a coach.

EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD - DAY

A distant doorbell RINGS.

Red raises up a roof beam and nails it into place.

He glances up to see President Dedmon crossing the yard.

Red grimaces. He turns and nods evenly.

RED DAWSON
Don.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Hey, Red. What’re you working on
there?

Red fits another piece of plywood into place and starts
nailing it in.

RED DAWSON
I’ve been promising Carol a new
shed for a while now, and I
dunno...no time like the present, I
guess.
Dedmon waits for Red to finish hammering. But he doesn’t.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
(raising his voice)
So. Got an offer for you, Red.

Red stops nailing but doesn’t look up.

RED DAWSON
I was afraid you might.

INT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY
Carol looks out from the kitchen window to see Dedmon dip his head and listen to Red turn him down.

EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - DAY
Dedmon walks to his car.

CAROL DAWSON (O.S.)
It’s always been his dream to have his own team.

He looks up to see Carol standing on the porch.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
That’s not quite how he put it.

CAROL DAWSON
Red’s... got his own way of dealing with things.
(at a loss)
I’m just happy he’s alive.

They both listen to the faint hammering in the distance.
Dedmon nods, understanding.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
If it had been me... I don’t know how I’d even make it out of bed in the morning.

Dedmon opens his car door, then fixes Carol with a look.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
Let him build a hundred sheds.

BEGIN COACH SEARCH MONTAGE:
EXT. OLD MAIN - DAY
Dedmon shakes hands with A FAT COACH. The coach nods sympathetically and walks away.

INT. NATE’S ROOM - DAY
Nate frowns at a headline: “MARTINELLI PASSES ON COACHING JOB.”

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY
Dedmon points out the facilities to AN OLD COACH. The coach looks dour.

INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT - DAY
Paul reads the paper at the counter: “FLANAGAN STAYS AT STATE.”
He glances up to see ANNIE COMING IN FOR WORK, WEARING AN OVERSIZED LETTERMAN’S JACKET.
On the breast, it reads, “GRIFFIN, #55.”
She hangs up the jacket and puts on her apron.

EXT. OLD MAIN - DAY
Dedmon smiles and shakes hands with COACH DICK BESTWICK.

89 INT. DEDMON’S OUTER OFFICE - DAY 89

“BESTWICK QUITS -- HERD UNATTENDED -- MARSHALL RENews SEARCH FOR HEAD COACH.”
Dedmon’s secretary scans the newspaper.
A tired Dedmon steps out of his office.
SECRETARY
Any luck?
He hands her a LIST. All three names on it have been crossed out.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
We’re going to need a longer list.
He walks over to a coffee pot and pours himself a cup.
SECRETARY
Actually, I did get a call this morning. Hold on...here we are. From a Jack Lengyel at the College of Wooster. Said he wants to interview.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Where in the world is Wooster?

She holds out the phone message.

SECRETARY
Does it really matter?

EXT. LENGYEL HOUSE, WOOSTER, OHIO - DAY

A boy fixes a FULL-SIZED FOOTBALL HELMET onto his small head. He growls, then gets down in a three-point stance.

Jack Lengyel holds a football in front of him.

JACK LENGYEL
* Remember, stay low to the ground.
* Keep your knees high.

The boy nods, the big helmet shaking up and down.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.) (cont’d)
Seventeen-razor...hut...hut...
hike!

The boy bolts from his stance and charges at his dad.

Lengyel hands off the ball. His son lowers his head and RUNS STRAIGHT INTO A TREE.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
First down!

Jack smiles over to...DEDMON, sitting speechless on the porch.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Is he all right?

JACK LENGYEL
Sure, he is. You all right, 32?

The boy leaps up, beaming.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Good for now. Go kill your brother.
Jack joins Dedmon on the porch.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Leaves a little bit to be desired in the execution, but that play there, that’s exactly why we switched to the nickel. Now I know the nickel package sounds counter-intuitive in such a run-heavy league-

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Jack, I’m sorry, but I don’t have the faintest clue what a nickel package is.

JACK LENGYEL
Really? Oh, it’s just a basic defensive scheme where you put-

PRESIDENT DEDMON
You don’t understand. I don’t care what a nickel package is. I’m actually quite confident that I’m a better man not knowing what it is.

JACK LENGYEL
Okay, um...we’ll have to agree to disagree there, but-

PRESIDENT DEDMON
You’ve got a nice house here, Jack. And Wooster sure looks like a good little town. Seems a lot like Huntington.

JACK LENGYEL
I’ll take your word for that.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
You know, you’re the first person I’ve interviewed who isn’t an alumnus.

JACK LENGYEL
That right?

PRESIDENT DEDMON
And since you called us, well, excuse me for being blunt, but I have to ask...

He leans in.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
What’s your angle, Jack?
JACK LENGYEL

My angle?

PRESIDENT DEDMON

If you’re just in it for press...I mean, if you’re thinking of taking advantage of the unfortunate spotlight we might get next season-

JACK LENGYEL

I don’t care about press, Don.

Lengyel takes a sip of his tea, eyeing Dedmon coolly.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

Then what is it? You seem like a decent guy, but you’re a perfect stranger. You’ve got no ties to Marshall. Why do you want this job?

Lengyel doesn’t appear to be listening. His attention is drawn to his children on the far side of the yard.

JACK LENGYEL

Son, don’t put that in your mouth. Just put it down. Put it down!

PRESIDENT DEDMON

It’s not an outrageous question.

JACK LENGYEL

What’s he gonna do now, put it in his pants? Don’t put it in your -- shit, he put it in his pants.

Lengyel grins over at Dedmon...but Dedmon’s not smiling.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)

Sorry. What were you saying?

PRESIDENT DEDMON

I was just wondering, Mr. Lengyel, if you gave this any thought at all before you had me drive 200 miles out here to see you.

JACK LENGYEL

A little bit, yeah.

Dedmon stares for a long moment. Finally, he presses himself up off his knees.
PRESIDENT DEDMON

Please thank your wife for the dinner, but it’s getting late. I have a long drive.

Dedmon shakes Jack’s hand and heads for his car.

Lengyel looks after him a moment before calling out.

JACK LENGYEL

You wanna know why I picked up the phone? Is that it?

Dedmon turns.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)

It’s not gonna be complicated.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

I’ve had four months of complicated. I just need honest.

Lengyel looks out to the yard where his wife plays with their three kids.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)

When I heard about it...your situation...the only thing that went through my mind was the four of them.

Dedmon watches the kids tumble through the grass.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)

I just thought about how much they mean to me. How bad it’d hurt if I lost them. And then I thought about a team, and a school, and a town that's hurting real bad...and I thought, hell...maybe I can help.

He takes a sip of his tea and shrugs one last time.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)

So, I picked up the phone. I guess that’s the only real “why” I got.

Dedmon looks at him, suddenly feeling like a shit.

INT. MARSHALL PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

SUPER: MARCH 17, 1971

Lengyel, in a loud plaid suit, sits in front of a microphone and a Marshall tableau.
Reporters, townspeople and students pack the banner-strewn room.

ERNIE SALVATORE of the Herald raises his hand.

ERNIE SALVATORE
Realistically, Coach, what are your expectations for the season?

JACK LENGYEL
My expectations? I expect to struggle. We got a lot of tough teams on the schedule. Morehead and Xavier right out of the gate. There’s an excellent chance we start 0 and 2, so I’d just as soon not weigh ourselves down with expectations.

The crowd MURMURS, not exactly fired up.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Anyone else? Okay, then, thanks-

PAUL GRIFFIN (O.S.)
I’ve got a question.

The reporters turn to see Paul Griffin standing in the back of the room. Lengyel peers out at him.

JACK LENGYEL
Yes, sir.

PAUL GRIFFIN
I was just wondering what a Division III coach with a .500 record can offer a Division I school like Marshall?

Dedmon steps out of the wings.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Paul, that’s not exactly-

JACK LENGYEL
No, it’s a fair question.

He fixes Paul with a look.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
I will admit, my resumé is slim compared to some other coaches. And I’ll admit that this job is big step for me. It’s an honor, you want to know the truth.
Paul folds his arms.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
But I will also tell you this. I
don’t coach football to be honored.
I don’t expect miracles, and I
ain’t no magician. I play to win,
and I win more than I lose. Any
promises beyond that...well, let’s
just wait and see.

He looks over at Dedmon who gestures for him to get off.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Thanks gentlemen. See you out
there.

Lengyel meets Dedmon in the wings.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Well, that coulda gone smoother.
You think it’s the suit?

(PRESIDENT DEDMON)
(deadpan)
Not a chance.

Lengyel looks down at his jacket, then takes it off.

JACK LENGYEL
Let’s go meet the team.

92 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Nate (his cast now gone), Reggie and the other players wait
in the locker room. Only Bogdan is missing.

The door at the far end opens. Everybody looks up as
Dedmon walks in, followed by Lengyel.

Lengyel stands in front of the team for a long moment, just
studying them. Finally,

JACK LENGYEL
Gentlemen, I’m Jack Lengyel. In
order to stay on this team, you
gotta give me three things. Your
eyes, your ears, and every drop of
blood in your body. You got any
other uses for those particular
parts, this locker room ain’t the
place for you.

Nate nods, impressed.
Lengyel spots the Coaches’ Room.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d) (to Dedmon)
That my office?

Dedmon nods. Jack looks at the team.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Right. Seniors, move your lockers down there near me. First from the door on down.

REGGIE OLIVER
Coach. That was Bobby Delany’s locker.

Lengyel takes a beat, looking at Reggie.

JACK LENGYEL
I said Seniors next to my office, and I meant it. Spring ball starts Monday, six a.m. You’ll want to run some on your own before that. We’ll be in light pads to start, but it won’t stay that way.

He nods at all of them.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
See you then.

He turns and walks out the door, shooting a smile at Dedmon as he leaves.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
I like ‘em. I’m just gonna need 55 more of them.

INT. STADIUM, HALLWAY – DAY
Dedmon follows Lengyel out.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Well, we’ve got a healthy recruiting budget-

JACK LENGYEL
I’m gonna need more than that. I’m gonna need freshmen.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Jack, I may not know football, but I have dealt with the NCAA. They like their rules.
And the biggest one is freshmen are not allowed to play intercollegiate athletics.

JACK LENGYEL
That’s why you’re gonna get them to make an exception.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
How am I supposed to-

JACK LENGYEL
Explain it to them. We would like to field a team. We don’t have enough players to do that. They can help us get more players, faster. Simple as that.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Simple as that.

JACK LENGYEL
It’s the only way we’ll be even halfway competitive in recruiting.

Dedmon shakes his head.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
My youngest crapped his pants yesterday.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Well, that happens-

JACK LENGYEL
He’s four. Sandy was out so I had to clean him up. When she got home, I told her what happened, she couldn’t believe it. I said I know, the kid’s four, he shouldn’t be doing that anymore. She said no, not that, I can’t believe after all these years you finally changed a diaper.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Congratulations.

JACK LENGYEL
There’s a first time for everything, Don.

Dedmon thinks for a long time. Finally, he nods.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I’ll make some calls. Let’s take a swing at it.
Lengyel grins.

JACK LENGYEL
Look who’s getting sporty.

EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD - DAY
Red bangs away on a two-by-four.

Down below, Jack Lengyel stares up at him.

JACK LENGYEL
Now what do you call those thingies? Up there on the roof?

RED DAWSON
Shingles.

JACK LENGYEL
No shit? They don’t look like shingles, they look like...
something else.

RED DAWSON
Nope. They’re shingles.

I saw you guys play once.

JACK LENGYEL
Did we win?

RED DAWSON
It was the Ashland game.

JACK LENGYEL
That’d be a no, then.

RED DAWSON
You guys looked good ‘til the fourth quarter. Probably should’ve gone to the nickel.

Jack keeps his smile to himself.

JACK LENGYEL
I met your team today. That’s a tough little group.

Red nods, but just keeps hammering.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
I was thinking I could use somebody who knows them. I’m gonna be making a lot of changes. Might be easier coming from a familiar face.
RED DAWSON
You asking me to block for you, Jack?

Jack just smiles, offering Red his hand.

JACK LENGYEL
Just putting it out there, Red. If you got better things to do, I’d certainly understand.

Red watches him go.

INT. NATE’S ROOM – DAY

Tom Bogdan lies in bed with a book. He tries to read a page, but finds himself just staring.

Suddenly, Nate slams through the door.

NATE RUFFIN
Tell me that you forgot we were meeting the coach today.

Tom takes a breath, putting his book down.

TOM BOGDAN
I didn’t forget.

NATE RUFFIN
So? What’d you do, oversleep?

Bogdan winces, but doesn’t lash out. He just sits up.

TOM BOGDAN
I can’t do it, man.

NATE RUFFIN
Do what?

TOM BOGDAN
Football.

Nate stares at Tom.

NATE RUFFIN
Like hell you can’t. Football’s all we got.

Tom rubs his face, broken. Nate leans in close, pleading.

NATE RUFFIN (cont’d)
I need you with me, man. It’s on us. We got to be the ones to step up.
Tom just shakes his head.

TOM BOGDAN
It’s just not in me anymore.

Without another word, Nate walks over to Bogdan’s closet, pulls out a suitcase, and flings it on the bed.

NATE RUFFIN
Then pack up your things. This dorm’s for football players.

TOM BOGDAN
Nate-

NATE RUFFIN
And you haven’t been one for a long time.

TOM BOGDAN
Nate, listen-

NATE RUFFIN
No. I don’t have to. I know what I know.

He storms off.

NATE RUFFIN (cont’d)
And it ain’t you.

Bogdan stares at the book in his hands...then throws it across the room.

95A   EXT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT, REAR – DAY
CLOSE ON: A BOOK, “FRANCE ON $3 A DAY!”
Annie stares at it a moment, then throws it in the dumpster.
She follows it with a stack of TRAVEL BROCHURES.
Then she turns for the diner.

96    EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD – NIGHT
Red Dawson stands inside the skeletal frame of his shed, looking up at the huge winter moon.

CAROL DAWSON (O.S.)
Looks good.
Red turns to see Carol, bundled in a sweater, stepping inside the shed.

   CAROL DAWSON (cont’d)
   It’s really coming along.

Red looks around at his handiwork.

   RED DAWSON
   What if it stayed like this for a while?

She tightens her sweater against the cold.

   CAROL DAWSON
   That’d be fine. No hurry.

   RED DAWSON
   Unless you really need it.

   CAROL DAWSON
   Red, what I need...

She smiles, wrapping her arms around him.

   CAROL DAWSON (cont’d)
   Is not a shed.

They hold each other, the wind blowing through the unfinished walls.

As we pull back...

   CAROL DAWSON (cont’d)
   Now, a gazebo, that would be nice.

INT. COACHES’ OFFICE - DAY

Dedmon’s secretary flicks on the light, showing Lengyel in.

The room has been cleaned since the crash, all of Tolley’s personal effects sent away.

   SECRETARY
   President Dedmon says you can remodel if you want. Just tell me what you need.

Lengyel sits behind the desk, then clicks open his briefcase. He pulls out TWO FRAMED PICTURES:

One of him, his wife, and his three children. Another of him and his father on the sidelines of a game.
He sets down a nameplate on the front of the desk: “COACH LENGYEL.” He smiles **at her.**

**JACK LENGYEL**
All set. Thank you, Marie.

She nods and leaves.

Lengyel pulls out a notebook but can’t find a pen.
He checks a drawer. Nothing. He slides out the writing board...and just stops.

There, taped to the metal, is COACH TOLLEY’S PRACTICE SCHEDULE. Handwritten notes fill the margins.

Taped next to the schedule is a Polaroid of a golden retriever.

Lengyel blinks. Then...

**RED DAWSON (O.S.)**
Okay. I’ll give you one year.

In the blurry background, Red appears in the doorway.

Lengyel smiles, but doesn’t look up.

**JACK LENGYEL**
Well, if that’s all the time we got, we’d better get a move on.

He slides the writing board closed.

BEGIN THE RECRUITING MONTAGE -- *(Music: The Zombies’ “THIS WILL BE OUR YEAR.”)*

**98**  INT. COACHES’ OFFICE - DAY

*Lengyel shakes hands with A BLACK MAN IN MARSHALL SWEATS,* **Mickey Jackson**

**LENGYEL, RED and MICKEY INTERVIEW COACHES.** They look over resumes, talk strategy. They shake hands with several new hires.

**99**  INT. DEDMON’S OFFICE - DAY

Dedmon works the phone, cajoling members of the NCAA.

Finally, he nods and hangs up. **REJECTED.**
INT. COACHES’ OFFICE - DAY

THE WALL OF LENGYEL’S OFFICE is covered with names. This is the RECRUITING WALL, a wish list for every position.

At the top of the quarterback list is:
1) Jake Gibbs, East Fairmont High.

EXT. FAIRMONT HIGH FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

JAKE GIBBS throws perfect spiral after perfect spiral, putting on an exhibition for scouts on the sidelines.

Lengyel jots down a quick note in his notebook, impressed.

Next to him THREE COACHES in West Virginia sweatshirts jot notes. Lengyel eyes them, then tries to out-jot them.

EXT. AIRPORT, TARMAC - DAY

Lengyel kisses Sandy goodbye and boards a plane.

INT. AIRPORT, HALLWAY - DAY

Lengyel runs down the hallway of another airport, late for another plane.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS TERMINAL - DAY

Red kisses Carol, then boards a...Greyhound Bus. No planes for him these days.

INT. KITCHEN, TAMPA, FLORIDA - DAY

Red sits across the breakfast table from a mother and father.

RED DAWSON
Now, I know some other schools have been here to see you. I’m just hoping Stevie hasn’t made up his mind, yet.

STEVIE’S MOTHER
That boy takes an hour and half to get dressed in the morning. Ain’t no way he’s made up his mind.

(she looks up)
And here he is.
Stevie comes down the stairs wearing a red GEORGIA BULLDOGS sweatshirt, sweatpants and matching hat.

Red sags.

106  INT. COACHES’ OFFICE - DAY

BACK AT THE RECRUITING WALL, Red crosses out “Stevie Shaw, Robinson Senior High.”

Lengyel walks in and motions for the marker. He crosses out Jake Gibbs’ name and writes three letters: W.V.U.

107  TIME LAPSE -- as more names get crossed off the chart.  107

108  INT. DEDMON’S OFFICE - DAY  108

Dedmon’s secretary hands him a letter. The return address clearly reads: “National Collegiate Athletic Association, Indianapolis, Indiana.”

He unfolds the letter and reads: “REJECTED.”

108A  EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY  108A *

Lengyel, Red and Dedmon meet at the 50-yard line. *

PRESIDENT DEDMON *
How are we doing? *

RED DAWSON *
West Virginia should be very *
competitive next year. *

JACK LENGYEL *
You? *

PRESIDENT DEDMON *
I wish I had something encouraging. *
Every call, every letter just *
bounces off a big fat NCAA wall. *

Lengyel looks at his president. *

JACK LENGYEL *
You married, Don? *

PRESIDENT DEDMON *
Fifteen years.
JACK LENGYEL
I’m betting you didn’t ask her over the phone. And I’m damn sure she didn’t say yes in a letter.

Dedmon looks Lengyel in the eye.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
No. As a matter of fact, I took Bea out in a rowboat. At sunset.

Lengyel smiles at Red.

JACK LENGYEL
The great romantic.

109  EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY
Lengyel catches some baseball players leaving the dugout.

110  INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY
While the Marshall basketball team scrimmages, Red approaches the coach on the sideline.

111  EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY
Lengyel instructs A GANGLY SOCCER PLAYER (BILL SHALHOOP) in the fine art of field goal kicking.

112  INT. NATE’S ROOM - NIGHT
Bogdan’s things are gone. Nate does bench-presses on the spare bed.

His arm still clearly hurts.

113  EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT
NCAA PRESIDENT MARTIN SHUMER, a fat man in a three-piece suit, walks to his Lincoln. He digs for his keys.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (O.S.)
President Shumer?

Shumer turns to see Dedmon getting out of his Cadillac.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
I’m Don Dedmon. From Marshall.

Shumer takes in Dedmon’s haggard face and wrinkled suit.
MARTIN SHUMER
Don. What are you doing in Indianapolis?

Dedmon pulls the “REJECTED” LETTER from his back pocket.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I appreciate that there are channels for this sort of thing. I appreciate that there are procedures.

He holds out the letter.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
But there are a lot of people back in Huntington who need help. They’re counting on me to get it for them. And they’re running out of time.

Dedmon clears his throat.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
That’s why I look the way I do. That’s why I’ve been in my car all night. That’s what I’m doing in Indianapolis. And I’ll be damned if I’m going to let the rules send me home empty handed.

Shumer blinks, stunned.

114 INT. COACHES’ OFFICE - DAY

Lengyel crosses out another name on the recruiting wall. He and Red just stare, deflated.

Dedmon walks in. They look at him.

He slowly breaks into a big smile.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Jack, you son of a gun. Guess who’s gonna change our diaper.

Lengyel grins, immediately getting it. Red looks at them both as if they’ve lost their minds.

115 INT. KITCHEN, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

Red and Jack sit across the table from high school senior LUCAS BOOTH and his FATHER.
MR. BOOTH

RED DAWSON
Yeah, but the thing is-

MR. BOOTH
Now I’m sorry for your loss and all, but I gotta think about my boy’s long-term career here.

JACK LENGYEL
So are we. That’s why we’re offering Lucas something other schools can’t -- immediate, substantial playing time as a freshman.

RED DAWSON
He goes anywhere else, he’s gonna spend a quarter of his collegiate career just twiddling his thumbs.

JACK LENGYEL
(directly to Lucas)
But you come to us, you’re gonna start, you’re gonna star, and you’re gonna do ‘em both this year.

Booth makes eye contact with his Dad, then nods thoughtfully.

116 INT. COACHES’ OFFICE - DAY

Red, fatigued but grinning, CIRCLES Lucas Booth’s name on the recruiting board.

The rest of the receivers are crossed out. Three have W.V.U. scribbled next to them.

PULL OUT to see the whole wall. While the majority have been scratched, here and there a circled name stands out.

Red and Lengyel stare up at the wall, satisfied.

JACK LENGYEL
All right. Now, we’re getting somewhere.
INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Morehouse kids watch TV. Linda Morehouse appears in the doorway.

LINDA MOREHOUSE
Who wants mac and cheese?

The kids head for the table. Linda counts them as they pass: three, four, five...

She looks around, then under the couch.

LINDA MOREHOUSE (cont’d)
Okay, where’s Keith?

EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - DAY

Keith climbs over the gate, drops to the ground and sneaks through the concourse.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM, TUNNEL - DAY

Keith creeps up until he can just see...

THE NEW MARSHALL TEAM, practicing.

He grins, taking them all in.

Suddenly, a figure appears behind him. Keith freezes, waiting to be thrown out.

But TOM BOGDAN just nods and stands next to him.

They turn their attention to the field.

A WHISTLE BLOWS.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

PRACTICE.

Linebackers shuffle around cones. Some STUMBLE.

Linemen smash into blocking sleds. Some MISS.

Running backs high-step through ropes. Some FALL.

ON THE SIDELINE, Lengyel and Red watch as...

Reggie and a FRESHMAN QUARTERBACK drop back, side by side.
They throw simultaneous passes to the sidelines.

**JACK LENGYEL**
I want to name a number one by the
day of the week.

Over and over, the two quarterbacks look evenly matched.

**RED DAWSON**
Speaking for the defense, it would
be a lot harder to scheme for
Reggie Oliver.

**JACK LENGYEL**
You sure you’re just speaking for
the defense?

**RED DAWSON**
Returning guys should be beaten
out. Not demoted.

Reggie throws another strike to a receiver. Lengyel nods
thoughtfully.

**JACK LENGYEL**
Then it’s his to lose.

Lengyel blows his whistle, tugs on his shirt, and points
out at Reggie.

Mickey Jackson tosses Reggie a RED JERSEY.

Reggie smiles and puts it on.

**ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FIELD...**

The linebackers get ready for a sideline drill.

Lengyel hands a ball to DOUG LISZT, a freshman running
back.

**JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)**
Set...GO.

Liszttakes a 45° angle toward the sideline...

WHERE NATE RUFFIN BLASTS HIM OUT OF BOUNDS.

Lengyel blows his whistle.

Lisztt scrambled to his feet.

**DOUG LISZT**
What the hell was that? I’m out.
NATE RUFFIN
Your ass is out when I say it is.

Red pulls Nate away. He lowers his voice.

RED DAWSON
You want to take it easy? The kid’s gotta last four years.

Nate hides a smile.

125 BACK ON OFFENSE...

Lengyel and Mickey Jackson watch Reggie lead the team.

He hands off to an UNDERIZED FULLBACK who promptly fumbles the ball.

MICKEY JACKSON
Boy acts like he’s never seen a football before.

JACK LENGYEL
He hasn’t. I got that kid out of Chess Club.

LENGYEL SIGNALS IN A PLAY. Reggie nods.

126 IN THE HUDDLE...

REGGIE OLIVER
Red-Pass-60-Right. On two.

Reggie eyeballs Lucas Booth.

REGGIE OLIVER (cont’d)
Get there.

LUCAS BOOTH
Man, I’m always there.

They break the huddle. Reggie looks poised.

He snaps the ball, pumps left, then fires a strike to Lucas Booth on the slant...

But the ball passes inches in front of Booth’s fingertips.

He swats at the air, frustrated.

127 LATER...

As Reggie walks off the field, helmet in hand, Lucas Booth runs by him.
LUCAS BOOTH (cont’d)
Wouldn’t mind you tossing a few my way.

REGGIE OLIVER
Soon as you learn the difference between a flag and a post, freshman.

128 INT. COACHES’ OFFICE - DAY

Lengyel walks into a meeting of HIS ASSISTANT COACHES.

A TEAM MANAGER hands him a playbook, but Lengyel just tosses it in the trash.

JACK LENGYEL
What? You really think these boys are ready for flea-flickers and dime blitizes?

Lengyel points at a complicated play on THE CHALKBOARD.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
We’ve been at it for two weeks and the only thing we’ve learned is that our guys are too small, too slow and too young to run the stuff we’re all used to running.

He goes to his desk and starts squeezing A TENNIS BALL.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
What’s the simplest offense y’all have used that still won you a ball game?
(off their silence)
Don’t all talk at once. Mick?

Lengyel tosses the tennis ball to Mickey Jackson.

MICKEY JACKSON
I’ll always vote for a plain old I-formation.

JACK LENGYEL
Come on, you’ve seen our guys, we’d get killed in the I. What else? Something other defenses haven’t seen a hundred times.

RED DAWSON
There’s always the Veer...
JACK LENGYEL
The Veer? Where’ve I heard of that? Mickey, hand him the ball.

With a sideways glance, Mickey tosses Red the tennis ball.

RED DAWSON
West Virginia runs it. They pretty much trademarked it. It’s built for teams that don’t have much of a front line.

JACK LENGYEL
Well, we certainly qualify. You got a folder on it somewhere?

RED DAWSON
You know West Virginia...

JACK LENGYEL
Not really. But I suppose I’ll find out when we stop in tomorrow.

Red and the other coaches gape.

RED DAWSON
Jack, that’s insane. We’re rivals. We show up in Morgantown unannounced, what do you expect them to do -- invite us to lunch and hand over their playbook?

Lengyel grins at Red as he walks out.

JACK LENGYEL
They don’t have to buy us lunch.

129 INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT - DAY

Sue Griffin wipes down the counter.

Annie carries in a tray of clean coffee cups. She eyes the bustling diner.

SUE GRIFFIN
Annie. Isn’t it about time for your break, sweetheart?

ANNIE CANTRELL
I’m all right. I mean...

Annie picks up A BIN OF DIRTY DISHES.
ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
I guess I’d really rather not take one.

Just then, the bell above the door rings. Annie looks up...and freezes.

Sue turns to see...

Eddie Carter and Wes Hickman standing there in their Marshall jackets.

Lucas Booth and Doug Liszt wait nervously outside.

EDDIE CARTER
Afternoon, Mrs. Griffin.

WES HICKMAN
We were wondering...if you had room for...there are four of us-

EDDIE CARTER
We really missed your pancakes, ma’am.

Sue looks at the boys’ faces.

After a long moment, she smiles tightly.

SUE GRIFFIN
Marshall players are always welcome here. Good to have you back.

The boys smile. They wave the other players inside.

Annie stands at the counter, watching.

Her hand shakes just slightly.

OMITTED

INT. W.V.U. COACH’S OUTER OFFICE – DAY

Red and Lengyel sit in the waiting room, reading old Sports Illustrateds.

RED DAWSON
Jack, I really don’t think this is your best idea.

JACK LENGYEL
You’re right. My best idea was calling a double-reverse against Tulane.
He smiles at the STERN SECRETARY, then turns back to Red. *

**JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)** *

If we walk out of here with a play, *
you owe me a steak. *

A door opens and BOBBY BOWDEN, WEST VIRGINIA’S COACH steps out. Fleshy and well-dressed, he doesn’t smile.

**BOBBY BOWDEN**

Red. Good to see you again. *

(then, to Jack) *

And you must be— *

**JACK LENGYEL** *

(sticks out his hand) *

Jack Lengyel. Thanks for meeting with us. *

**BOBBY BOWDEN** *

Bobby Bowden. Not a problem. *

But Lengyel keeps pumping his hand until it gets awkward.

**BOBBY BOWDEN (cont’d)** *

Gonna need that hand. Playing a little golf later. *

Lengyel smiles and lets go.

**JACK LENGYEL** *

Bobby, I’ll get right to the point. *

Red winces, but Lengyel keeps on.

**JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)** *

I understand you run the Veer. *

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**OMITTED** *

132 132

**INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT - DAY** 133

Annie carefully pours four waters, staring down at the glasses. *

**WES HICKMAN** *

Hey, Annie. How you doing? *

Finally, she takes a breath, gathers herself, and carries the tray to THE FOUR MARSHALL PLAYERS *

She doesn’t look at them as she rests their glasses down. *
ANNIE CANTRELL
Good. Real good.

Annie pulls out her pad and looks up.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
We’ve got a special today-

She stops, staring awkwardly at Doug Liszt.

He stares back, confused.

DOUG LISZT
Hi.

She doesn’t respond. She just stares at Doug’s jacket.

And the number 55.

EDDIE CARTER
Annie, are you-

But Annie just runs for the kitchen, her breath coming in gulps and gasps.

Sue watches sadly from the counter. Then she straightens her apron and walks over to the booth.

SUE GRIFFIN
Sorry about that.

Lucas Booth opens his mouth, but EDDIE SILENCES HIM WITH A LOOK.

SUE GRIFFIN (cont’d)
Now, I bet you’re hungry. Coach been running you hard?

DOUG LISZT
(groans)
We’re still doing two-a-days.

She catches sight of his number...and smiles.

SUE GRIFFIN
That’ll stop by September. Got to keep you fresh for the opener.
On one side of the room sits a Library of Binders -- on the other, rows of film canisters.

Bobby Bowden
Help yourself. Playbooks are over there. Scouting reports and game film right there. If you need anything copied, see Kitty down the hall.

Red stares from the shelves to Bowden.

Red Dawson
Are you serious?

Bobby Bowden
We're not playing y'all this season, so hell, have at it.

Bowden heads for the door.

Bobby Bowden (cont'd)
Just put everything back after you're through.

Bobby closes the door behind him.

Lengyel grins at Red.

Jack Lengyel
Maybe a big porterhouse. Medium rare.

INT. REGGIE'S ROOM - DAY

Reggie lifts a barbell, staring out the window.

The case of beer still sits unopened on the dresser.

Doug Liszt (O.S.)
Got your burger, Reg.

Reggie turns to see Doug holding a Paul's take-out bag.

Reggie Oliver
Chili on the fries?

Doug Liszt
(a little nervous)
They were out.

Reggie Oliver
Oh, come on, freshman. Gonna be a rough year if that's the best you can do.
Reggie turns back to the window, finishing his set.

REGGIE OLIVER (cont’d)
Put it on the desk.

Doug puts the burger on the desk. Behind him, MORE FRESHMAN walk in (including tight end ALAN GREEN).

ALAN GREEN (O.S.)
Hey, sweet.

Suddenly, the sound of a BEER OPENING cuts through the room.

Reggie freezes…and turns. Doug sees it, too.

DOUG LISZT
Oh, shit.

Alan stands next to the open case, a foaming Pabst in his hand.

ALAN GREEN
What?

REGGIE STARES FOR A LONG MOMENT.

Finally, he blinks.

REGGIE OLIVER
Toss me one of them, man.

The tension breaks. Alan tosses Reggie a beer.

137 INT. W.V.U. MOUNTAINEERS RESOURCE ROOM – DAY

Red makes notes from a playbook. Lengyel pages through black & white game photos. He taps the picture.

JACK LENGYEL
Well, that ain’t dumb.

Just then, TWO REALLY HUGE W.V.U. PLAYERS barge in, carrying their helmets. They see Lengyel and Red.

W.V.U. PLAYER
Oh, sorry. We thought coach was in here.

BOBBY BOWDEN (O.S.)
What do you need, Butler?

They turn to see Bowden in the doorway. As the players huddle with their coach…
SOMETHING CATCHES RED’S EYE. He nudges Jack and points to the back of the players’ helmets...

Where a large GREEN MARSHALL CROSS has been painted on the West Virginia gold.

Bowden sees them and nods.

BOBBY BOWDEN (cont’d)
Colors clash like hell, don’t they?

RED DAWSON
Bobby, I...

BOBBY BOWDEN
It’s nothing. We just wanted to honor ‘em.

Red looks down, gathering himself. Lengyel sees how moved both men are.

JACK LENGYEL
Bobby, I don’t know how to thank you.

BOBBY BOWDEN
Enjoy it, now. You’re on the schedule next year.

He puts his hands in his pockets, winking.

BOBBY BOWDEN (cont’d)
I’m a lot less friendly on the field.

138 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

THE BALL IS SNAPPED.

Reggie sprints to the right, followed by a tailback. But instead of pitching, he heads upfield, where he’s immediately tackled.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)
Time!

Lengyel grimaces as he trots over to Reggie.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
So?

REGGIE OLIVER
I committed before the backer did. He sat on me, I shoulda pitched it.
JACK LENGYEL
Right. Fine. Go again.

Reggie runs a hand over his tired face.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
You all right?

REGGIE OLIVER
Just got a headache.

Jack eyes him, understanding.

JACK LENGYEL
Oh, I know those headaches. Try two aspirin with a glass of orange juice. Chase it with a little honey.

Lengyel heads back to the sidelines.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
And, next time, save the headaches for the offseason.

LATER...

Reggie sweeps to the right, ducks a blitz, then hurls a bullet to Lucas Booth who takes off downfield...

UNTIL HE’S TACKLED BY NATE, who lands hard on his arm.

Nate grimaces, the injury still troubling him.

But the coaches clap from the sideline, enthused.

RED DAWSON
Not bad, not bad. Let’s go again.

Lucas Booth and Nate walk back to their huddles

LUCAS BOOTH
(muttering)
Dumbass doesn’t know where to put the ball.

NATE RUFFIN
What? You bitchin’?

LUCAS BOOTH
Not to you.

NATE RUFFIN
You wanna go play somewhere else, freshman?
Booth glares and lines back up.

140 The ball’s hiked. Reggie rolls right and pitches it to the tailback, who breaks through the line into the open field. *

JACK LENGYEL
(applauding)
All right, all right! If I didn’t know better, I’d say that looks a little like the Veer!

Red nods, half-amazed.

RED DAWSON
Looked a lot like it.

Jack grins at him.

ERNIE SALVATORE sidles up next to him.

ERNIE SALVATORE
They don’t look half bad, Coach.

Lengyel shrugs, modest.

ERNIE SALVATORE (cont’d)
I was fooling around with some numbers last night. Do you know the average age of a starter in college football these days?
(off another shrug)
20 years, ten months. Do you know the average age of yours? 18 years, seven months.

JACK LENGYEL
Yeah, well, that’s us. The Young Thundering Herd.

Salvatore grins and scribbles that into his notebook.

ERNIE SALVATORE
Mind if I use that?

JACK LENGYEL
Go ahead. Hell, I’m making T-shirts.

141 EXT. CAMPUS NEWSPAPER STAND - DAY

CLOSE ON: The Huntington Herald -- “Court Bars NY Times From Publishing Pentagon Papers.”

YOUNG THUNDERING HERD TO ROAM AGAIN
Lengyel sets lineup, tweaks offense
JACK LENGYEL GRABS A COPY OF THE PAPER. He sees the headline and smiles to himself.

CLOSE ON: The Charleston Gazette -- “Ratified: National Voting Age Now 18.”

**MARSHALL SCHEDULE RELEASED**
Season kicks off at Morehead St.
First home game Sept. 25th against Xavier

PAUL GRIFFIN BUYS THIS COPY. He quickly flips to the voting article.

CLOSE ON: Marshall U’s The Parthenon -- “Nixon Issues 90143 Day Tax Freeze.”

**“WE’LL BE COMPETITIVE”**
Lengyel promises sound fundamentals

EDDIE CARTER SNAPS IT UP. The front of his shirt reads, “1971.” The back reads, “THE YOUNG THUNDERING HERD.”

CLOSE ON: The Huntington Herald -- “South Korea To Withdraw 48,000 Troops From Vietnam.”

**MARSHALL READY FOR THEIR CLOSE-UP?**
National press descend on Huntington
Ticket sales swell

A STOCKY FRESHMAN GRABS THIS COPY. A banner hangs over the crowded campus green: “WELCOME FUTURE CLASS OF 1975.”


**REBIRTH**
Football returns tonight against Morehead St.
Thousands set to make the trip to Kentucky

EXT. STATE ROAD 64 - DAY
The Marshall bus rolls down the highway...
FOLLOWED BY CAR AFTER CAR cutting a path through eastern Kentucky.

INT. MARSHALL BUS - DAY
Doug Liszt drums on the back of Lucas Booth’s seat. Booth squirts him with water. Other players laugh and chatter.
The mood changes as WE TRACK THROUGH THE BUS...
In the back, Nate, Eddie, Reggie, Felix, Wes and the other returning players sit, focused and somber.
INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Linda comes in and sees...

Keith sitting on the couch, staring at his switched-off radio.

Linda walks over and touches his head.

LINDA MOREHOUSE
It’s okay, sweetie. Go ahead and listen.

He smiles and switches it on.

EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY - DAY

The fans file in to the small stadium, nearly filling it to capacity.

Nervous, Carol Dawson and Sandy Lengyel take their seats in the stands.

INT. VISITOR’S LOCKER ROOM, JAYNE STADIUM - DAY

The Marshall players sit silently, dressed and ready.

THE DOOR OPENS. Lengyel enters, followed by Red and the other coaches.

Lengyel stares at his players for a long moment. Then he pulls a slip of paper out of his pocket.

JACK LENGYEL
Got a letter here I wanna read. It says: “Good luck tonight. Friends across the land will be rooting for you, but whatever the season brings, you’ve already won your greatest victory by putting the 1971 varsity on the field.”

Lengyel folds up the paper and puts it back in his pocket.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
It’s signed Richard Nixon, President, United States of America.

Again, he stares at his team. Determined faces. Anxious ones. Somber ones.

Finally, Lengyel sticks his hand out.
JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)

In here.

Nate Ruffin jumps up and puts his hand on top, and the others follow. Seventy hands squeeze together in a circle.

Lengyel looks at his team.

*Play hard. Play smart. Play to win.*

He looks over at Nate...WHO LETS OUT A BATTLE CRY.

THE OTHER PLAYERS JOIN HIM IN A ROAR.

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151 OMITTED

152 EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY – DAY

Nate bursts out of the locker room, leading his troops toward the field.

But when they reach the edge of the grass, he stops.

On the other side of the stadium, Morehead State is making their entrance, too.

The PA ANNOUNCER introduces the Morehead Eagles. The home crowd stands to clap for their team.

But when MOREHEAD STATE’S COACH sees the Marshall team, he looks up to the press box and points over at them.

*PA ANNOUNCER (O.S.)*

And then, ladies and gentlemen,
please welcome tonight’s opponent,
the Thundering Herd of Marshall.

THE MARSHALL FANS go wild.

153 ERNIE SALVATORE turns to PRESIDENT DEDMON.

ERNIE SALVATORE

Never thought I’d hear those words again.

Dedmon yells to make himself heard.

PRESIDENT DEDMON

“That which sounds in my ear will echo in my heart.”

Salvatore looks at him blankly.
PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)

Lord Byron.

ERNIE SALVATORE

Don. I know you haven’t been to one of these in a while, but trust me, a football game is no place to quote Byron.

154  INT. CAR – DAY

The crowd roars over A TINNY CAR RADIO.

Tom Bogdan listen in his parked car.

155  INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT – DAY

At the end of the counter, two old men lean in to hear the game on the radio.

Just as the crowd noise grows louder...

Paul Griffin turns the dial to Hank Williams.

The old men wilt.

156  EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY – DAY

BILL SHALHOOP, Marshall’s gangly kicker, places the football on the tee and steps off his approach.

The sun sets behind him, casting a glow over the field.

FINALLY, THE WHISTLE BLOWS.

Shalhoop steps forward…and CONNECTS.

THE BALL soars up until it crests…and starts to fall to the earth...

TIME CUT:

157  EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY – NIGHT

Where a Morehead State player plucks it out of the air and flies downfield.

IT’S NIGHT NOW. THE STADIUM LIGHTS GLOW BRIGHT WHITE.

The Morehead Player dodges one tackler, then another. He gains momentum as the yard markers fly under his feet.
But Nate Ruffin is waiting. Nate anticipates his angle, turns on the speed, and moves in for the tackle...

BUT HE’S CLIPPED ON HIS BAD ARM by a blocker. He sprawls to the ground.

ON THE SIDELINES, Red slams his clipboard.

RED DAWSON
Flag, ref! Where’s the flag!

The Morehead Player blows by Wes Hickman, loping into the END ZONE for a touchdown.

THE SCOREBOARD flips to 25-6, Morehead State, with less than two minutes left in the third quarter. The crowd roars their approval.

ON THE SIDELINE, a tired Hickman trots over to Lengyel.

WES HICKMAN
He’s too fast, coach.
(gasping for breath)
I’m sorry.

Lengyel pats him on the back.

IN THE MARSHALL SECTION, Dedmon and the other faithful watch as A TRAINER hurries onto the field.

Nate waves him away. With a wince, he gets to his feet.

INT. MOREHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY
Keith applauds Nate’s effort. Linda smiles sadly.

EXT. JAYNE STADIUM, MOREHEAD, KENTUCKY - DAY
Reggie looks over the line of scrimmage and sees a defense he likes. He calls out to Lucas Booth in the slot:

REGGIE OLIVER
Three-two-Houston! Three-two-Houston!

But Lucas Booth doesn’t hear him.

The play clock winds down. The ball is snapped.

Reggie drops back quickly and fires over the middle... RIGHT INTO THE ARMS OF A DEFENDER. Interception.
Lengyel looks to the heavens.

Walking off the field, Reggie corrals Booth.

REGGIE OLIVER (cont’d)
What are you running?

LUCAS BOOTH
I’m running Razor-

REGGIE OLIVER
I called out of that.

LUCAS BOOTH
Just run the play.

LATER...

A MOREHEAD RECEIVER CATCHES THE BALL FOR A 20-YARD GAIN.

Lengyel looks to Red.

JACK LENGYEL
Red, let’s go to cover two.

Red just stares at the field, FROZEN.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Red!

Red does nothing. Jack grabs a defensive back.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Cover two, Double Eagle. Go!

Lengyel slaps the player on the butt and sends him out.

Red just stands there, miserable.

Lengyel looks down the sidelines at his players.

They’re all miserable.

Shell-shocked.

Out of their league.

Lengyel just watches the clock tick down.

OMITTED

INT. VISITOR’S LOCKER ROOM, JAYNE STADIUM – NIGHT

The players trudge in, pulling off their jerseys.
Doug Liszt tosses his jersey to the ground in frustration.

*NATE RUFIN (O.S.)*

Pick that up.

Liszt turns to find *Nate* glowering behind him.

*DOUG LISZT*

What? My jersey?

*NATE RUFIN* *

It’s not your jersey, it’s Bobby Delany’s jersey. Now pick it up.

Liszt stares at *Nate* a long time.

The locker room stands still.

*DOUG LISZT*

I’m sorry...

*Nate* nods and eases up...

*DOUG LISZT (cont’d)*

But I came here to play ball.

He looks at the other players.

*DOUG LISZT (cont’d)*

All of us did. And, yeah, I knew what this team was about, and I’m gonna honor tradition, and be just as respectful as I can be. But I’m also gonna play. *Me.* For me. Not for somebody else. *I’m* the one playing ball for Marshall now. *I’m* number 47...

He points at the sweaty uniform.

*DOUG LISZT (cont’d)*

And that’s my jersey. And it’s staying right there.

MANY OF THE FRESHMAN NOD, their thoughts finally being expressed.

Doug turns and opens his locker.

The tension dissipates. The other players turn to their lockers...

*But Nate just stares at Liszt’s back.*

*He rushes forward and JACKS DOUG AGAINST THE LOCKERS.*
Liszt and Nate roll around on the floor for a few moments before RED and LENGYEL can pull them apart.

Red holds down Liszt. Lengyel drags Nate away.

174 INT. JAYNE STADIUM, TRAINER’S ROOM – NIGHT

Lengyel throws Nate against the training table.
Nate just stares defiantly at him, his lip bleeding.
Lengyel stares right back.
After a long moment...

JACK LENGYEL
You’re bleeding.

Nate wipes the blood from his lip.

NATE RUFIN
So?

JACK LENGYEL
Thought you’d want to know.

Lengyel turns for the door.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
That’s what you wanted, wasn’t it?

Lengyel exits, leaving Nate Ruffin standing alone in the trainer’s room, bleeding.

174A INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT – NIGHT

Paul marries half-full ketchups. He looks up as TWO MEN WALK IN.

MAN #1
That was a goddamn disgrace.

MAN #2
That’s what you get, hiring a glorified high school coach.

MAN #1
Just a damn shame, is what it is.

Paul scowls over to where...

LLOYD BOONE sits at the counter, equally glum.
INT. JACK LENGYEL’S STUDY - NIGHT

Lengyel sits alone at his desk, flipping through his playbook.

Finally, he just closes it, dispirited.

SANDY LENGYEL (O.S.)
You can’t unlose the game, Jack.

He looks up to see Sandy in the doorway.

JACK LENGYEL
I don’t know what happened. I’ve never been beaten that bad before.

She rubs his shoulders, teasing.

SANDY LENGYEL
What about the Ashland game?

He smiles ruefully, kissing her.

EXT. THE OHIO RIVER - DAY

WATER FLOWS BENEATH THE IRON BRIDGE.

Dedmon stands on THE FLOOD WALL, watching the current suck and swirl.

PAUL GRIFFIN (O.S.)
You know, some people didn’t think we needed those walls.

Dedmon turns to see Paul approaching.

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont’d)
But after the flood didn’t come, they understood. Building ‘em was the right thing to do.

Dedmon eyes Paul’s stone face.

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont’d)
The board voted you out this morning.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I don’t understand.

PAUL GRIFFIN
This town needs to get it’s dignity back, and the only way we’re gonna do that is with a clean slate.
PRESIDENT DEDMON
There is no one who values the reputation of this town more than I do-

PAUL GRIFFIN
If you did, you’d know how humiliating yesterday was. That game was a travesty. It should’ve never happened.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
Damn it, I work for the students. And when 3,000 of them get together to speak in one voice, I’m obligated to listen.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Don...this town can’t survive any more of your obligations.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
This isn’t about the town, Paul.

Paul turns to leave, but Dedmon grabs his arm.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
It’s not about football or me or embarrassing the university.

Paul pulls himself away. Dedmon fixes him with a look.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
You lost a son. And until you find the strength to face that pain, none of this is going to get any better.

Paul walks away, leaving Dedmon alone on the flood wall.

PRESIDENT DEDMON (cont’d)
No matter how many presidents you fire.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

RED BLOWS HIS WHISTLE HARD.

RED DAWSON
Not good enough! Run it again!

REGGIE sees Lucas Booth break free, but hesitates just long enough for the pass to be batted down. Lucas scowls.

ON THE SIDELINES, Lengyel makes a note on his clipboard.
EDDIE CARTER tackles Doug Liszt hard. Eddie sticks his hand out to help him up, but Liszt ignores it, scowling.

Freshman Tight End ALAN GREEN catches the ball downfield. Nate slams him, then falls to the grass, gripping his arm.

ALAN GREEN
You all right?

Nate struggles to his feet.

NATE RUFFIN
I’m fine. Let’s go again.

REGGIE fires a pass. It flies through Lucas’ hands, bouncing on the field. Reggie shakes his head.

Alan and Nate collide again. His arm twisted weirdly, Nate looks up at Alan from the ground.

NATE RUFFIN (cont’d)
That the best you got?

ON THE SIDELINES, Red frowns.

LUCAS goes deep, laying out for a ball Reggie throws just out of his reach.

Another freshman helps Lucas Booth up.

ALAN catches the ball downfield, with only Nate left to beat...

Right before they collide, Nate drops his right shoulder safely back, then brings his left forearm around for a hard shot at Alan’s neck.

Alan crumples to the ground.

FED UP, RED DAWSON STALKS OVER TO NATE. He grabs his helmet and shoves him so hard that Nate loses his balance and falls over a bench.

Red glares down, wild-eyed.

RED DAWSON
What the hell is the matter with you, Nate?

Nate just looks up at him, stunned that Red, of all people, is acting like this.

NATE RUFFIN
I was just trying to protect my arm—
RED DAWSON
Bullshit! You think you’re the only one who’s got a right to be pissed off? You think you’re the only one who’s had it rough?

All the players stare at Red. He looks around at them.

RED DAWSON (cont’d)
All of you! You’re acting like goddamn children!

EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - DAY
Red stomps towards his car. Lengyel runs out after him.

JACK LENGYEL
Red!

Red stops and turns.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
What happened? Forget your lunch?

RED DAWSON
What are we doing here, Jack? I’m serious. What are we actually doing here?

JACK LENGYEL
Getting ready for Xavier.

RED DAWSON
Really, ‘cause it seems a lot more like Bloody Knuckles. I mean, come on, we’re not helping them. We’re bringing out the worst in them. And for what? So we can collect pity applause in front of every college in the conference?

Lengyel just takes it.

RED DAWSON (cont’d)
You didn’t know Rick Tolley. I did. And you know what he said to us, on the actual day he died? He said there’s only one thing they judge us on. There’s only one thing that counts. Winning. Nothing else matters.

Red stares at Lengyel, challenging him.
RED DAWSON (cont’d)  
So what did we do? How did we  
honor their memory? We put  
together a team that doesn’t win.  
That can’t win. Not this week, not  
this season. Maybe not ever.  

Red gets in his car. He looks up at Lengyel.  

RED DAWSON (cont’d)  
We’re not honoring them, Jack.  
We’re disgracing them.  

Lengyel watches him drive off.  

INT. TRAINING ROOM – NIGHT  

Nate sits alone in a whirlpool tub, nursing his arm. His  
eyelids droop.  

Lengyel’s voice echoes from the hallway.  

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)  
How’s Meadows?  

MICKEY JACKSON (O.S.)  
A little tape, a little aspirin,  
he’ll be ready.  

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)  
All right, he’s in at corner.  
Linebacker?  

MICKEY JACKSON (O.S.)  
That’d be Ruffin.  

Nate suddenly perks up, listening.  

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)  
How’s the arm?  

MICKEY JACKSON (O.S.)  
Not great. I’d sit him.  

Nate flushes with anger. He pushes himself up to confront  
them. BUT HIS ARM GIVES OUT AND HE TUMBLES BACK.  

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)  
He ain’t gonna like that.  

MICKEY JACKSON (O.S.)  
He ain’t gonna like learning to  
write with his other hand either,  
but that’s what he’s looking at, he  
keeps going.
The coaches’ voices fade down the hall.

Pain and frustration twitch on Nate’s face. Tears leak from his eyes. He tries to stop it, but they come harder.

Other players walk in, talking and laughing.

Nate ducks down under the water, unable to control his raging emotions.

More players file in. He stays submerged, holding his breath, his body shaking from the sobs, his tears mixing with the water around him.

INT. COACHES’ OFFICE - DAY

Early morning. Lengyel stares at a play on the blackboard.

He erases an arrow, makes another.

NATE RUFFIN (O.S.)

Don’t bench me.

Nate stands in the doorway, looking like hell.

JACK LENGYEL

Jesus, Nate. Have you even slept?

NATE RUFFIN

Not now. Not before Saturday.

JACK LENGYEL

Son, your arm...the rest’ll do you good.

NATE RUFFIN

No, sir. No, it won’t.

He rubs his head, tortured.

NATE RUFFIN (cont’d)

Football’s all I got. And it’s all I got to give. You understand that?

JACK LENGYEL

You’ve given an awful lot already. There’s no shame in looking after yourself.

NATE RUFFIN

I don’t need looking after. I need to play.

Nate looks around, grasping for the words.
NATE RUFFIN (cont’d)
If I don’t, then I’m not...

JACK LENGYEL
What? Worthy?

NATE RUFFIN
I gotta see it through for them.

Nate starts to break down.

NATE RUFFIN (cont'd)
The guys, man...they left it in my hands...

JACK LENGYEL
No, they didn’t, Nate.
(softly)
They just left.

Nate stares at Lengyel, his mouth open, his eyes red.

NATE RUFFIN
But why? Why?

Lengyel holds him as he weeps.

JACK LENGYEL
I don’t know, Nate. I really don’t.

EXT. DOWNTOWN HUNTINGTON - NIGHT
A cardboard sign droops in a dark store window: “GO HERD.”
Jack Lengyel stares from the empty sidewalk.
Finally, he turns up his collar and walks away.

INT. PAUL’S RESTAURANT - NIGHT
Paul stands at the counter, going over the receipts.
The bell over the door rings. Paul doesn’t look up.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Just about closed. Sorry.

JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)
My wife tells me you got the best apple pie in Huntington.

Paul looks up see Lengyel standing in the doorway. He stares at him a long time. Finally...
PAUL GRIFFIN
It depends on the apples.

Lengyel nods at a stool.

JACK LENGYEL
Mind if I try?

Paul shrugs. Lengyel sits.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
I heard Don Dedmon lost his job this week. That’s too bad.

Paul slides him a slice of pie.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Times are hard.

Paul wipes off the counter, keeping busy.

PAUL GRIFFIN (cont’d)
He’s more than qualified. He’ll find a place.

JACK LENGYEL
Wish I could say the same about myself. After Morehead, though, I’ll tell you-

Paul throws down his rag.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Do you even know what you’re embarrassing? The history? The legacy?

JACK LENGYEL
I never thought that doing my best would be an embarrassment, sir. I’m sorry if you feel it is.

PAUL GRIFFIN
Well, I do.

Lengyel puts a few dollars on the counter and stands.

JACK LENGYEL
My wife was right. That’s good pie.

He walks toward the door, then stops and turns. He meets Paul’s gaze.
JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
You asked if I knew the legacy. I do. Chris Griffin, number 55. Starting Outside Linebacker. 72 tackles, 6 sacks, 2 interceptions last year. M.V.P. his sophomore season. Sure would have like to have met him.

Paul just stands at the counter.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
I don’t have all the answers, Mr. Griffin. But I’ll take all the help I can get. The door’s always open.

He leaves.

178 INT. MARSHALL CHRISTIAN CENTER - NIGHT

The center stands quiet and empty.

The door opens with a sigh. Lengyel steps inside.

He stares reluctantly at the cross.

JACK LENGYEL
Um...hi. I just thought I’d check in.

He glances around nervously, then back up at the cross.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
‘Cause I gotta say, you’re either making things awful hard down here...or you’re not lifting a finger to make ‘em easier.

He runs his hand through his hair.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
These people need something. And they act like I’m supposed to have it...

Lengyel looks down at his feet, then back up at the cross.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
I mean, it’s still a game, right?

Silence.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Isn’t it?
EXT. MARSHALL CHRISTIAN CENTER - NIGHT

Lengyel steps outside and finds...

Annie Cantrell, sitting on a bench, looking up at the stained-glass window.

She meets his eyes.

ANNIE CANTRELL
Did you get any answers?

Lengyel looks at her, a tiny girl bundled in AN OVERSIZED VARSITY JACKET.

JACK LENGYEL
I don’t know.
(beat)
But there’s no charge for asking.

He turns up his collar and heads down the path.

Finally, Annie stands...and goes in.

EXT. HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA - DAY

Dawn breaks over the city.

EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - DAWN

The stadium stands oddly majestic, surrounded by empty parking lots.

INT. DAWSON HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Carol sleepily rolls over to realize Red’s not in bed.

EXT. DAWSON HOUSE, BACK YARD - DAY

Red stands in the morning light, staring at his half-finished shed.

INT. JACK LENGYEL’S STUDY - DAY

Lengyel packs his playbook into his briefcase.

PETER LENGYEL (O.S.)
Remember, stay low to the ground...
Lengyel turns to see little Peter standing there in his pajamas, holding a poptart.

PETER LENGYEL (cont’d)
And keep your knees high.

He does a little high-stepping. Lengyel grins.

EXT. SPRING HILL CEMETERY - DAY

THE OBELISK memorializing the bodies of the six unidentified players gleams in the morning sun.

A RUMBLING interrupts the serenity.

A BUS pull up the circular path. The doors open and Lengyel steps out.

Then Nate Ruffin exits the bus, trailed by player after player.

The team silently gathers around the memorial to pay their respects.

Finally, RED STEPS OUT and stands apart from the team.

Lengyel walks over and stands beside him.

JACK LENGYEL
He was right.

RED DAWSON
Who?

JACK LENGYEL
Tolley. Winning is everything. Every coach who’s worth a damn believes those words. It doesn’t matter what city, doesn’t matter what sport. Except here. And except now.

He stares out at his team, their heads bowed.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Marshall’s different. We’re different. When I got here, I didn’t think so, but I was wrong. I’m telling you, for the first time in my life -- hell, maybe for the first time in the history of sports -- it really doesn’t matter if we win or lose. How we play the game, that’s out the window, too. All that matters is that we play.
The team starts to head back to the bus.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
That we step onto the field and keep this program alive. 'Cause if it dies, it’ll never come back. And this town, this school and these boys will be the lesser for it.

He smiles.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
And who knows? One day -- not today and not tomorrow, not this season or the next either -- but one day, if we do our jobs right, things'll be different. One day, down the road, we'll wake up and be like every other team, in every other sport, in every other city, where winning is everything and nothing else matters. And when that day comes, well...that's when we'll honor them.

Lengyel claps Red on the shoulder and heads for the bus.

Finally, with a last look at the obelisk, Red follows.

197 EXT. HUNTINGTON STREETS - DAY
Cars jam the streets of downtown. Crowds cluster on the sidewalks, all heading toward...

198 EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - DAY
Cars fill the lot. News crews set up.
Tailgaters light barbecues. Scalpers hawk tickets.

199 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY
Fans pack the bleachers. A buzz of anticipation floats through the crowd.

The P.A. system crackles.

P.A. ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ladies and Gentlemen, here they are...your Young Thundering Herd!
The team BURSTS out of the tunnel. All 16,159 fans leap their feet.

THE ROAR IS OVERWHELMING.

The players run across the field, soaking in the applause.

Red jogs alongside, head down, subdued.

On the sidelines, Nate looks to Lengyel. Lengyel nods. 201

Nate smiles and straps on his helmet.

Shalhoop sets the ball on the tee.

The crowd noise builds to a crescendo.

The ref blows his WHISTLE.

Shalhoop steps forward and CONNECTS...

THE FOOTBALL soars up until it crests.

CRAWFORD, (#19, Xavier’s best player) plucks it out of the air and flies downfield.

NATE RUFFIN SWOOPS IN AND LAYS HIM OUT. THE CROWD ROARS.

Nate’s arm is clearly tender, but he barely notices.

On the sidelines, Lengyel calls over Reggie and Lucas Booth.

JACK LENGYEL
(watching the game)
Lucas, what color is your helmet?

LUCAS BOOTH
(confused)
Green.

REGGIE OLIVER

Green.

JACK LENGYEL
What do you know? You two are on the same team.

He finally looks at them.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Now how ‘bout you play like it?

They nod, chastened.
PLAY STARTS IN EARNEST...

Xavier sacks Reggie.

Nate hits #19 hard, causing him to drop an easy pass.

Xavier punts.

Marshall punts.

The scoreboard at the end of the first quarter reads:

**MARSHALL 0, VISITORS 0.**

IN THE SECOND QUARTER...


And then a big hit from Nate knocks the ball loose. Marshall recovers.

THE CROWD ROARS. But then they see Nate rolling on the ground.

Just like last game, a trainer runs out, but again, Nate waves him away.

Red meets him at the sideline.

**RED DAWSON**

Let’s take a look at that shoulder-

**NATE RUFFIN**

Not until halftime.

**RED DAWSON**

Nate, it could be serious-

**NATE RUFFIN**

Not until halftime.

Red just shakes his head.

ON THE FIELD...Marshall looks at 4th down on Xavier’s yard line.

Lengyel and Red glance back at Shalhoop.

**JACK LENGYEL**

What the hell. Let’s give him a shot.

Shalhoop, runs nervously onto the field.

Reggie eyes him warily, but gets in position.

Shalhoop steps off his approach. The crowd quiets.
The ball is hiked. It’s high but Reggie corrals it.
Shalhoop steps forward, kicks, and watches...
THE BALL SPLIT THE UPRIGHTS BEAUTIFULLY.
THE CROWD ERUPTS.

216 The scoreboard reads: MARSHALL 3, VISITORS 0.

217 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY
The players steam into the locker room, cautiously hopeful.

217A INT. COACHES’ OFFICE - DAY
Lengyel opens his door and STOPS.
There, staring through the glass at the team...
STANDS PAUL GRIFFIN.
Lengyel steps up behind him.

   JACK LENGYEL
   Look at ‘em. You’d think we were
   winning this game or something.

   PAUL GRIFFIN
   I wish this thing had gone away. I
   think it would’ve been easier. I
   still think that...

   He turns to look at Lengyel.

   PAUL GRIFFIN (cont’d)
   But maybe it’s not about what’s
   easier.

217B INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY
A trainer retapes Reggie’s ankle.

   JACK LENGYEL (O.S.)
   Guys, huddle up.

Reggie and the trainer look up to see LENGYEL STANDING WITH
PAUL GRIFFIN.

   JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
   Mr. Griffin here would like to say
   a few words to you.
The players quiet down.  

Paul stands there for a moment, awkward. Finally:

**PAUL GRIFFIN**

Some of you knew my son. Some of you...never got the chance. That’s a shame, because I know Chris would have liked you all. A whole lot.

He looks out at them.

**PAUL GRIFFIN (cont’d)**

What’s more, he would have wanted you to win. (beat)

And so do I.

He nods, finished.

**JACK LENGYEL**

All right. In here.

Lengyel sticks his hand out. All the players slap their hands on top of his. Paul Griffin’s is the last.

Lengyel eyes Paul, then announces to his team:

**JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)**

Gentlemen, the funerals end today.

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218  **EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY**  218

THE PLAYERS STORM OUT OF THE TUNNEL.

THE CROWD ROARS.

219  Nate jogs out, grimacing with every step, his arm taped 219

Red catches up to him. Nate barely looks over.

**NATE RUFFIN**

I’m fine.

Red stops him by the bench.

**RED DAWSON**

You’re sitting.

**NATE RUFFIN**

I’m the only one who can cover 19.
We Are Marshall - Markus & McFeely  2/22/06  98.

**RED DAWSON**

Nineteen’s got six catches for 95 yards, and most of those are because he knows you can’t go to your right.

He rests a hand on Nate’s shoulder.

**RED DAWSON (cont’d)**

Nate. You’ve done enough. All this...

He gestures at the roaring stadium.

**RED DAWSON (cont’d)**

Is because you never stopped pushing. But now you can.

Red heads off.

Nate sinks into the bench, finally stopping.

220 ON THE FIELD, the Xavier kicker launches the ball high in the air...

221 EXT. THE OHIO RIVER - DAY

Sue Griffin sits alone at a bench overlooking the river.
She pulls her coat tight against the wind.

Annie Cantrell sits down wordlessly, still wearing Chris’ jacket.

**ANNIE CANTRELL**

Sorry I’m late.

**SUE GRIFFIN**

I don’t mind waiting.

They stare out at the river and the bridge. Finally, Sue reaches into her purse.

**SUE GRIFFIN (cont’d)**

I found this in the dumpster.

She holds out Annie’s book, “FRANCE ON $3 A DAY!”

**SUE GRIFFIN (cont’d)**

It had some eggshell on it, but it’s still good.

Annie bites her lip.
ANNIE CANTRELL
We were suppose to go in June.
Paris. Maybe London, too if we
saved enough.

Tears well in Annie’s eyes. She turns away.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
That’s not going to happen anymore.

SUE GRIFFIN
Why not?

ANNIE CANTRELL
Because it was all about us.
Starting our lives together. What
do I have to start now? Nothing.
He was all I had.

Annie breaks down, inconsolable.

Sue rubs her back.

SUE GRIFFIN
I know, sweetheart, I know.
Believe me, if I go a half hour
without crying, I feel guilty.
This is going to take both of us a
long, long time.

She takes Annie by the shoulders and turns her.

SUE GRIFFIN (cont’d)
But it has to start.

Tears stream down Annie’s face.

ANNIE CANTRELL
What’s the point?

SUE GRIFFIN
The point is life.

She wraps the girl in her arms.

SUE GRIFFIN (cont’d)
I know you loved Chris. And he
loved you. But don’t let his dying
stop you from living.

They hold each other.
EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

CRAWFORD (Xavier’s #19) fields a punt, weaves through four tacklers, and takes it into the end zone.


The crowd DEFLATES. A LOT OF THEM SIT DOWN for the first time since the half.

In the middle of the stands...TOM BOGDAN can’t believe what he’s seeing. He jumps up and shouts.

TOM BOGDAN

COME ONNNNNNNN! Get up! Get back on your feet! Let’s go Marshall!

And sure enough, he guilts the fans back up.

3:39 LEFT AND TICKING...

ON THE FIELD, Marshall goes three and out.

IN THE STANDS, President Dedmon leans forward in his seat.

ON THE FIELD, Xavier punts, giving Marshall the ball back on their own 40.

THE CLOCK stops with 1:18 to go.

MARSHALL BEGINS TO MARCH...

Reggie hands off to DOUG LISZT for a big gain.

Reggie hits Lucas Booth for another 20 yards.

Reggie scurries through a hole, going deep in Xavier territory.

THE CLOCK stops for the 1st down, 0:37 seconds left.

Suddenly, Marshall’s only 12 yards from the end zone.

Lengyel signals in a play.

The ball is snapped. Reggie looks off a receiver, but...

A LINEBACKER BLINDSIDES HIM.

The ball slips free. It rolls across the grass...
236  EXT. GRIFFIN BACK YARD - DAY

Sue Griffin hacks at the weeds around her azaleas. A shadow passes over her. She looks up to see...

Paul, carrying a hoe and a bag of topsoil. He smiles.

PAN ACROSS THE YARD to where...

CHRIS’ VARSITY JACKET hangs on a lawn chair.

237  EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

Reggie crawls out from under an Xavier player...reaches as far as he can...and pulls the ball into his chest.

237A  INT. CAR - DAY

Annie steps on the gas, headed out of town.

She smiles through her tears.

238  EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

ON THE SIDELINE, Nate Ruffin breathes a sigh of relief.

Lengyel checks the scoreboard as the clock ticks under 30 seconds. He motions for his final TIMEOUT.

The team huddles around Lengyel and Red.

JACK LENGYEL
Guys, here we go. Z fly 41 out.
(to Booth)
You get open...
(to Reggie)
And you get it there.

Lucas and Reggie eye each other. They nod.

239  IN THE STANDS, Ernie Salvatore looks to see if anyone’s watching -- then he blesses himself.

240  THE WHISTLE BLOWS. Reggie leads his team onto the field.

THE BALL IS SNAPPED.

241  IN THE STANDS, Bogdan shuts his eyes, unable to watch.

242  Reggie rolls out, just as TWO XAVIER LINEBACKERS BLITZ through the line.
He reverses direction and takes off across the field, trying to outrun them.

Lengyel’s eyes practically pop out of his sockets.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Get outta bounds!

Lucas Booth sees what’s happening and runs toward the ball as if he’s gonna tackle Reggie himself.

LUCAS BOOTH
Get outta bounds!

IN THE STANDS, Keith Morehouse climbs atop his brother.

KEITH MOREHOUSE
Get outta bounds!

Reggie sprints for the sideline... only a few more feet... But he’s tripped up by an Xavier player, and he falls face first, less than two feet from the boundary line.

SO THE CLOCK TICKS DOWN... 0:20... 0:19... 0:18... And Marshall is out of timeouts.

THE SIDELINE EXPLODES.

RED DAWSON
Set up, set up! Get back, get back!

JACK LENGYEL
513 bootleg screen! 513 bootleg screen, go! Booth, you’re out!

Lengyel checks the clock -- 0:13... 0:12...

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Shit, Booth, you’re in, you’re in!

ON THE FIELD, confusion reigns.

ON THE SIDELINES, Lengyel almost can’t watch.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)
Just snap it, for Chrissakes! Snap it snap it snap it!

IN THE STANDS, Carol, Sandy, Dedmon, Bogdan, and every single one of the Morehouses all yell.

CROWD
Snap it! Snap it!
THE CLOCK ticks down... 0:04... 0:03... 0:02...

ON THE FIELD, Reggie hurries everyone to the line. He checks the clock, and the ball is snapped...

JUST BEFORE IT REACHES 0:00.

Reggie rolls RIGHT. His tailback is covered, and here comes the blitz.

He looks down the MIDDLE, no one open...

Then LEFT, where LUCAS BOOTH breaks free from his man and streaks toward the end zone.

Reggie sets his feet... and THROWS THE BALL.

BUT WE CUT AWAY.

TO RED. He sees everything we can’t.

BEHIND HIM, the players on the sideline twist with anticipation.

But Red’s face is unreadable. He watches the play unfold without moving a muscle.

TIME SEEMS TO STAND STILL.

Then the players around him tense...

AND SUDDENLY ERUPT. THEIR ARMS FLY IN THE AIR.

Booth has made the catch.

MARSHALL HAS WON.

But Red doesn’t move. He doesn’t even flinch.

IN THE STANDS, though, it’s bedlam. Fans leap over the bleachers, flooding the field.

REGGIE OLIVER sinks to the ground as players pile on him.

BILL SHALHOOP puts his helmet on and runs out on the field.

JACK LENGYEL, grinning ear to ear, hurries to grab him.

JACK LENGYEL
Bill, Bill, the game’s over. You don’t need to kick any more.

Bill takes off his helmet. The crowd knocks him down.

BENEATH THE PILE, Reggie grins at Lucas Booth.
NATE RUFFIN gets swept up in the moment, grabbing hold of anybody he can find, until he comes face to face with:

TOM BOGDAN. Bogdan looks back at him, unsure...

But Nate doesn’t hesitate, pulling Tom into a bear hug. Tom tries to hold it together.

ON THE XAVIER SIDELINE, the visitors quietly watch the celebration.

AT THE 50, DOUG LISZT shakes hands with CRAWFORD (#19).

CRAWFORD

Good game.

DOUG LISZT

Did you leave it all out there?

CRAWFORD

Only way I know how to play.

CAROL DAWSON finds her husband on the sidelines. She embraces him, but he still appears numb.

CAROL DAWSON

Red, what is it?

Red glances around at the 14,000 people now on the field.

RED DAWSON

Yeah...I dunno. I guess I’m just afraid this’ll all be for nothing.

CAROL DAWSON

My God! Look around you! How in the world could this ever be for nothing?

A REFEREE makes his way over to Lengyel.

REFEREE

You want the game ball, Coach?

JACK LENGYEL

Yeah...

He spots someone in the crowd.

JACK LENGYEL (cont’d)

I do.

Lengyel takes the ball and heads off, passing right by Lucas Booth...by Reggie Oliver...even by Nate Ruffin...

Until he arrives in front of the bleachers, where
DON DEDMON quietly watches the commotion.

Lengyel holds out the ball. Dedmon looks at him, puzzled.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
What’s this?

JACK LENGYEL
Little tradition we have, Don. At the end of the game, we give the game ball to the player who most deserves it.

PRESIDENT DEDMON
I’m not a player.

JACK LENGYEL
Hey, we’re Marshall. We’ll take anybody.

He winks. Dedmon smiles...and takes the ball.

266 266
INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

A celebration rages. Champagne pours over jubilant players.

In the corner, Red sits quietly, taking it all in.

267 267
TIME LAPSE...

The celebration ebbs and flows, and gradually breaks up.

But through it all, Red remains rooted in the same spot, the same distant smile on his face, until...

268
He’s the only one left in the room. The place is strewn with uniforms, sticky from beer and champagne.

THE DOOR OPENS. AN OLDER JANITOR quietly starts to clean the place up.

Red snaps back to reality, and looks around for a clock.

RED DAWSON
You got the time, by any chance?

JANITOR
Oh, lemme see...quarter past 10.

Red jumps up and hurries out of the room.
INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM, HALLWAY - NIGHT

The hallway lies deserted, too...except for Carol, sitting against the wall.

She smiles at Red as he rushes over.

RED DAWSON
God, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to keep you waiting, I just-

CAROL DAWSON
Red. You didn’t keep me waiting.

She takes him by the hand and pulls him down the hall.

CAROL DAWSON (cont’d)
Come here.

A quiet buzz grows louder as they walk toward the field.

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

When they emerge from the tunnel, Red stops short.

Even though the lights have been shut off for hours...

THOUSANDS OF FANS REMAIN.

CAROL DAWSON
Nobody here wants to go home, either.

People mill about the bleachers. Some play touch football on the grass. And some stand alone, just staring at the scoreboard.

But no one has left.

FINALLY, RED’S EYES WELL UP WITH TEARS.

ANNIE CANTRELL (V.O.)
Marshall would only win one more game that season.

As Carol pulls Red towards the field...

A SNAPSHOT is taken of him.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
Red Dawson kept his word, and left the team at the end of the year. He never returned to football.
Today, he owns a construction company in Huntington.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
Donald Dedmon stepped down as school president in the fall of 1971.

A SNAPSHOT of President Dedmon, alone in the stands, clutching onto the football that Lengyel gave him.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
But football remained.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE WHOLE STADIUM, swarming with people, alive in the darkness.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
Nate Ruffin graduated in 1972. He moved to Virginia and went to work for a first amendment advocacy group.

A SNAPSHOT of Nate, among his teammates.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
Reggie Oliver started every game at quarterback for the Thundering Herd until he graduated in 1973. He returned to the program in 1982 as an assistant, and now coaches high school football in Ohio. In 1984, he was inducted into the Marshall Athletic Hall of Fame.

A SNAPSHOT of Reggie.

Jack Lengyel resigned as head coach in 1974 with a record of 9-33. He went on to become Athletic Director for the University of Missouri, Fresno State, and the Naval Academy.

A SNAPSHOT of Lengyel, with Sandy on the field.

TIME LAPSE OF THE STADIUM -- as night turns into day, and gradually, the building begins to age. Entire weeks fly past in the blink of an eye...

Marshall lost more football games in the 70's than any other program in the nation.

WHOLE SEASONS GO BY NOW. Crowds gradually dwindle.
ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
The team was so bad that a petition circulated around campus, requesting football be dropped altogether.

Buildings pop up around the stadium.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
But the families of the crash victims protested. They did not want to see the legacies of their sons, husbands and fathers disappear.

Through it all, though, the crowds in the stadium never disappear entirely...

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
And so, football remained.

TO ONE GAME IN PARTICULAR. The stadium is half full -- team is on the field. Marshall’s running back leaps his way into the end zone. The crowd rises to their feet.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
On November 17, 1984, the Thundering Herd beat Eastern Tennessee State to finish the season 6-5. It was their first winning record in 20 years.

The fans return en masse. The stadium grows, too. More bleachers here, another deck there.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
They haven’t had another losing season since.

Skyboxes are added -- brand new seats throughout. It’s standing room only.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
Since 1990, Marshall has won more games than any other team in college football.

TO A COLD NOVEMBER AFTERNOON IN 1997 -- where Marshall’s quarterback (#10) looks downfield for a receiver.

TRACK THROUGH THE CROWD TO THE NEW PRESS BOX, and focus in on a television analyst, calling the play live.
KEITH MOREHOUSE
Pennington throws up the right side
to Moss -- who snags it -- who
breaks free -- who’s got one man to
beat -- who’s in the end zone!
Touchdown, Randy Moss!

THE CROWD ROARS. The announcer can barely contain his excitement.

ANNIE CANTRELL
Gene Morehouse's son Keith followed
his father into broadcasting. And
he’s been on hand for every single
Herd victory since.

281 EXT. FRONT OF CAMPUS - PRESENT DAY

A small crowd gathers on a warm spring day around the DRY FOUNTAIN.

The real Red and Carol Dawson are here. So are the real Jack and Sandy Lengyel, along with Ernie Salvatore, Reggie Oliver, Eddie Carter, and the rest of the 1971 team.

The current President of Marshall, STEPHEN KOPP, nods to someone offscreen...

And the fountain springs back to life once again.

282 EXT. SPRING HILL CEMETERY - PRESENT DAY

The memorial obelisk still cuts up into the sky.

ANNIE CANTRELL
In 2001, after a prolonged illness,
Nate Ruffin finally succumbed to
leukemia at his home in Arlington,
Virginia.

An elegant black woman (SHARON) lays down a bouquet of flowers. Her two grown children (GREG and SHONTE) stand beside her.

ANNIE CANTRELL (cont’d)
He would return to Huntington one
last time.

TRACK THROUGH THE STADIUM -- over the new million dollar turf -- past the state-of-the-art luxury boxes -- to the north end zone, where a small, inauspicious green banner hangs.

From the ashes, we rose.
We are Marshall.

CROWD (O.S.)
WE ARE...MARSHALL!

The banner rustles in the breeze.

FADE OUT.