

Hardball

Screenplay by

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based on the novel, "Hardball"

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EXT. ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

It's a windy march night in Chicago as CONOR O'NEILL climbs the steps of St. John's church.

He pauses at the top of the stairs to take a long pull off a bottle in a brown bag. He enters the dark church.

INT. ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

CONOR pours himself into the last pew and unhooks the bow-tie of his rented tux. He's more exhausted than any 29 year old needs to be. A PRIEST leaving the church spots Conor and approaches him. The PRIEST is wearing street clothes and carries his formal work clothes on a hanger.

PRIEST

I gotta lock up son.

CONOR nods in understanding while not breaking his drunken stare. The PRIEST senses CONOR's unhappiness.

PRIEST (cont'd)

You looking for faith?

Forgiveness?

CONOR gets up to leave. He looks at the Priest.

CONOR

I'm looking for Milwaukee to
beat the spread.

CONOR leaves the church.

EXT. DUFFY'S BAR - NIGHT

CONOR bolsters his courage by finishing the bagged pint and tossing it in the alley. He exhales before entering.

INT. DUFFY'S BAR - NIGHT

The typical Irish bar is alive with the sounds and smells of basketball and stale beer. Heads turn when they see CONOR enter, obviously an unwelcome regular. The bartender grabs CONOR by the jacket.

BARTENDER

Conor are you nuts?

CONOR pulls free and grabs a bowl of nuts off the bar. CONOR flings the nuts on the ground.

CONOR

These are nuts.

CONOR stumbles into a bar patron who shoves him out of the way. It's clear in the light that CONOR is drunk and probably has been all day. The BARTENDER has caught up to him.

BARTENDER

Duffy's here, you better have his money.

CONOR

I got it.

The BARTENDER looks incredulously at CONOR who fesses up.

CONOR (cont'd)

I'm gonna have it, what's the score?

BARTENDER

You're into Duffy for at least 5 grand, who gave you an account?

CONOR

I laid 6 grand with Barber, to get me even.

CONOR has locked his drunken eyes on the TV above the bar that barks out the Bulls game.

BAR FLY

Bulls by 7.

CONOR

I got Milwaukee gettin'
eleven.

BARTENDER

Two minutes to go.

CONOR

Yeah baby, keep the clock
runnin'.

A young guy wearing an identical tux appears next to
CONOR. This is JIMMY. Behind him are two BRIDE'S
MAIDS in poofy peach satin gowns.

JIMMY

I can't believe you, you
split Mikey's wedding to come
to Duffy's.

CONOR doesn't even acknowledge his fellow groomsman as
he addresses the TV.

CONOR

Stop! What are they fouling
him for?!

JIMMY shakes his head but stays with CONOR. CONOR is
locked on the TV.

CONOR (cont'd)

C'mon there's only a minute
left it's over.

BAR FLY

Jordan's hit 16 free throws
in a row. That's 17.

CONOR

Bulls by nine, hang on. Just
hang on.

DUFFY is a big burly Irish guy who comes out of a back
office lead by the BARTENDER who obviously tipped him
off about CONOR.

DUFFY

You didn't bet the Barber
with my money? Right
O'Neill? You're not that
stupid.

CONOR

Shut up Duffy, in 18 seconds
you'll have your money.

They all study the screen. Jordan steals the ball and
attempts to run the court but is tackled by Ray Allen.

CONOR (cont'd)

That's okay even if he makes
them both, it's eleven. I
push. I'm even.

BAR FLY

Flagrant foul, he shoots one
for that first.

CONOR throws his hands in the air and hollers his
frustration.

CONOR

That's bullshit!

BAR FLY

That's 18 in a row.

We watch the screen now as Jordan is smiling, taunting
the Milwaukee Bucks as he stands on the line. Six
seconds left with two free throws to go and the Bulls
up 10.

JORDAN launches the shot, it hits the front of the
rim, hops over it, hits the back board and falls
through the hoop.

The ugliest free throw in history. CONOR nearly jumps
out of his skin.

CONOR

How the hell did that fall?!

JORDAN laughs at his own luck and resets for his last attempt. He sets, throws, nothing but net. BULLS by 12, the Bucks in-bound the ball and immediately begin shaking hands as they let the last couple of seconds tick off the clock.

CONOR has gone silent as he instinctively starts drinking someone else's scotch off the bar.

CONOR gets shoved by the man he stole the drink from. DUFFY begins to approach him.

CONOR makes his way towards the door.

DUFFY

Grab him!

CONOR rushes out the door and into the street. He takes off but a side door opens and the BARTENDER grabs him.

CONOR

Get off a me.

The BARTENDER squeezes him with his forearm.

CONOR (cont'd)

That's a hairy arm, I bet you
shave your ass.

The BARTENDER punches CONOR in the head with his free hand. CONOR wobbles from the blow but the BARTENDER keeps him standing.

The bar has emptied to the street as DUFFY approaches CONOR. DUFFY clocks CONOR blind side and he drops like a rag doll from the grip of the BARTENDER.

DUFFY

I'm first O'Neill, you pay me
first.

The crowd is silent as they watch the drunk and now injured CONOR attempt to regain his feet. It's like watching a two year old walk as CONOR takes a stumbly step before standing upright. He addresses the assembly.

CONOR

You wanna beat my ass?

CONOR stumbles towards a parked car, he violently punches his hand through the driver side window.

The crowd is motionless as he again turns to them, blood pouring from his hand. He howls now...

CONOR

NO ONE CAN KICK MY ASS BETTER
THAN I CAN!

CONOR careens towards the crowd wildly waving his bloody hand. He suddenly changes course and lowers his head, ramming it through the window of Duffy's bar.

To the gallery's surprise, CONOR rises unsteadily and makes a lame lunge at the crowd before falling almost face first on the pavement.

JIMMY rushes to him and the crowd seems to disperse. DUFFY and the BARTENDER stand over CONOR's body. We hear the sound of sirens growing closer as we fade out.

FADE IN:

INT. CHICAGO POLICE STATION - DAY

The classic jail sound of metal hitting metal wakes CONOR who's been asleep sitting on the floor. He lifts his head from his knees and stares out at a familiar voice.

TICKY

Conor, it's Ticky. IT'S
TICKY!'

TICKY is a thirty-some year old ticket scalper who wears a quilted BULL's jacket and a BULL's National Champs painter's cap backwards.

A COP leads CONOR from his small holding cell. We now see that the blood stains on the raffle of his rented tux shirt match the makeshift bandage on his right hand. The large square bandaid on his forehead doesn't quite cover the scrape that's now marked with dark purple blood crust.

INT. CHICAGO POLICE STATION LOBBY - DAY

The COP pulls CONOR by the handcuffs to a large wooden bench in the lobby. TICKY watches as the COP routinely cuffs CONOR to the iron arm of the bench.

CONOR offers in a weak voice...

CONOR

Ticky, did you call my
sister?

TICKY leans close to CONOR in an effort to hear him.

CONOR (cont'd)

Did you call my sister?

TICKY

Damn, you got zactly's
breath?

CONOR

Zactly's breath?

TICKY

Your breath smells zactly
like your ass. Damn, that's
nasty.

CONOR

Where's my sister?

TICKY

She's comin' to get you, but
came for the tickets.

CONOR

Which ones?

TICKY

You got two pair on the floor
for the Bulls Rockets.

CONOR

Yeah but you're not in on
those remember? I'm gonna
hawk those myself, the game's
not till 7.

TICKY

It's 5.

CONOR

What?

TICKY

Just tell me where they are.

CONOR

Shit, under the
uh...religious statue on my
dresser.

TICKY's already leaving.

CONOR (cont'd)

Wait, Ticky I want 1200,
Ticky!

CONOR slumps against the wall, he pulls his head back
in pain. We hear the sound of pointy heels clicking
pertly an the ground.

KERRY O'NEILL appears with her older fiancée FRANK
TORTORICI. KERRY is 23 going on 40 with over done
nails and jewelry.

FRANK is 40 going on 60 with a nebulous connection to
the construction business in urban Chicago. KERRY
stares disapprovingly at her older brother.

KERRY

This is gonna cost Frank
eight hundred and fifty
dollars.

(commanding Frank)

Frankie go pay the guy.

FRANK jumps to obey KERRY's command.

CONOR

Frank, I really-

KERRY

This is the last time, you're
scarin' me Conor. You're
just like Dad it breaks my
heart -

CONOR

I'm not just like Dad!

KERRY

Yeah?! Duffy called the
house today and said you
smashed up his bar sounds
like dad to me!

CONOR

Kerry -

KERRY

How many tickets you gonna
scalp to pay for that? Huh?
You'll be scalping tickets
for Barney and Friends on
ice, I swear to God.

KERRY starts walking away as the COP returns with
FRANK to uncuff CONOR from the bench.

EXT. BRICK APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

We see CONOR get out of FRANK's late model Buick and
make his way up the stoop of an apartment building in
Rogers Park. An extremely modest neighborhood that
sets the border between the exquisite Gold Coast and
the ghetto ghost town of the Cabrini Green housing
projects.

INT. CONOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We hear the shower running as we pan the small one bedroom apartment. A cheap lamp lights the statue of Mary Magdalen standing on the desk. An old wooden color console TV playing a basketball game lights the rest of the cluttered room.

A double mattress on the floor is at home with the sneakers and other clothes that take up most of the walking space.

A Julius Erving poster inhabits the otherwise sparse walls. It appears as though CONOR has lived here a long time with no attempts to decorate. The shower stops and we can now hear the sound of the TV playing a post game show.

CONOR steps from the bathroom wearing a CUBS beach towel around his waist, obviously a give away from a promotional day at Wrigley. CONOR holds a hand towel to the cut on his forehead.

The doorbell rings. CONOR is immediately wary, he grabs an aluminum softball bat and steps to the side of the door.

CONOR

Yeah?

TICKY

It's Ticky, let me in.

CONOR tosses the bat silently on the bed and begins unlocking the door.

CONOR

Ticky, thank God, I really need that money...

(as he opens the door)

How much did you get for the tickets?

CONOR opens the door to see TICKY get shoved aside by TWO GUYS. They immediately pin the toweled CONOR against the wall.

BARBER'S SON
O'Neill, you remember me?

TICKY
They grabbed me outside the
United Center-

CONOR
Barber's son.

BARBER'S SON
O'Neill, do you even remember
making that call from Michael
Pistone's wedding?

CONOR
Get off a me.

BARBER'S SON
You spoke to me, and you said
"It's O'Neill number 55
what's my limit?" I checked
number 55 and I saw it had a
six grand limit.

CONOR shoves him but BARBER'S SON slams him harder
against the wall.

BARBER'S SON
I took your six grand on
Milwaukee and it went down so
I asked my dad about O'Neill
on account 55 and he said the
guy on that account died six
months ago.

CONOR
Tell the Barber-

BARBER'S SON
You bet six grand on your
dead father's account, and
now you owe my very alive,
very pissed off father 6600.

BARBER'S SON pins him further up the wall.

CONOR

C'mon let me down I'm in a
towel would you relax, I'm
not goin' anywhere.

BARBER'S SON lets him down but stands in his face.

CONOR (cont'd)

I'm gonna pay him, Ticky give
him the 1200 from tonight and
well go from there.

TICKY looks to CONOR with an apologetic smile.

TICKY

I rolled it on the Bulls
tonight on my own number with
Duffy.

CONOR

What?

TICKY

I was gonna give 'ya the 2400
when it covered.

BARBER'S SON

Bulls won by three, spread
was five, same old stories
with you guys, if this, if
that...forget it, I need some
money.

CONOR

Here I'll give you everything
I got.

CONOR pulls a crinkled hand of bills from his rented
tux pants. The other thug, GINO, counts it.

GINO

47 dollars.

BARBER'S SON now grabs the bat and swings it against
the wall. It makes an easy gash, he continues talking
as if nothing just happened.

BARBER'S SON

Tell me what to do?

CONOR

Either I'll get a loan and pay someone else the juice every week or you can put me on a payment and I'll pay you the juice, you tell me.

BARBER'S son thinks it over, he grabs the bills from the other THUG.

BARBER'S SON

You owe 6600, you pay me...5700 a week until I say stop.

CONOR

That's ridiculous, 400.

BARBER'S SON silently accepts his counter offer and then points the bat at him.

BARBER'S SON

Bring it to the barber shop, but don't make me come back up here. I'm serious, please don't make me come back here.

The BARBER'S SON'S plea seems soft but deadly serious. They leave. TICKY turns to CONOR who waves his hands making him leave with out saying a word. CONOR shuts and locks his door.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

The business district teems with the foot traffic of well dressed professionals. CONOR sifts through this stream in casual clothes and a fishing hat properly angled to cover the bandaged gash on his forehead. He pauses to look up the face of the tall bank building he's about to enter. He goes in.

INT. MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT - DAY

CONOR looks a bit out of place in the reception area of this white collar money circus. A CUTE RECEPTIONIST blushes for him as he approaches her.

CONOR

I'm Conor O'Neill, I have a 11:30 with James Devlin.

CUTE RECEPTIONIST

Does he know what it's regarding?

CONOR

The purchase of Wrigley field and the firing of sassy receptionists who wear aerobic sneakers to work and think that guys in fishing hats are sexy but dangerous.

CUTE RECEPTIONIST

(completely thrown)

Just a minute.

(into headset)

Mr. O'Neill is here for his 11:30 with Mr. Devlin. Ok, yes.

(to Conor)

Right down that corridor Mr. O'Neill.

CONOR walks in the direction her hand is pointing.

INT. JIMMY DEVLIN' S OFFICE - DAY

We recognize the man behind the desk as JIMMY, the other groomsman in a tux at Duffy's bar. He now wears a serious, conservative business suit complete with suspenders. JIMMY leaves CONOR standing in the doorway off his glass walled office. CONOR feels self-conscious with his fishing hat and bandages. JIMMY gets off the phone.

JIMMY

Mr. O'Neill, on time for your
11:30, uncommon for you, it
must be important.

CONOR

Yeah, Jimmy, I'm sorry about
the other night after the
wedding...

CONOR waits for JIMMY to jump in, he doesn't.

CONOR (cont'd)

At Duffy's y'know, I was
slightly over-served and
uh...

JIMMY continues to smile smugly at CONOR who we begin
to feel sweating.

CONOR (cont'd)

I wanted to apologize.

JIMMY

Is that why you came down
here?

CONOR

No, I mean yes, it is but I
also came because of what
happened.

JIMMY

What happened?

CONOR

You know the bet I had went
down, and I busted up Duffy's
bar a little and I uh kinda
dug myself a big hole.

JIMMY

Yeah, I would imagine.

CONOR

So what d'ya think?

JIMMY

About what?

CONOR sighs and shifts his feet, he is burning in shame.

CONOR

Can you help me out?

JIMMY

Help you with what?

CONOR

Jimmy, you know why I came down here.

JIMMY

I need to hear you say it so
I get it loud and clean

CONOR digs deep and lays out what's left of his pride.

CONOR

Can you lend me 12 grand?

JIMMY lets the moment resonate.

JIMMY

You need to bury your father again?

CONOR

What?!

JIMMY

Did you dig the guy up?

CONOR

You're sick.

JIMMY

Me?! Five months ago you're in here cryin' for 5 grand to bury your old man. I talked to Scott Mahoney at Mikey's

wedding seems he also lent
you 5 grand to bury the guy.

CONOR

I'm gonna pay Mahoney back -

JIMMY

I don't care how much you owe
Mahoney -

CONOR

It's just right now I'm
really up against it with
Duffy and the Barber -

JIMMY

And I really don't give a
shit how much you owe the
bookies -

CONOR starts out.

JIMMY (cont'd)

Wait, come back in.

CONOR does.

JIMMY (cont'd)

Close the door. What's with
you? You're the only one
left at Duffy's. I'm gone,
Mikey's gone, Mahoney. What
are you doin'? Hangin'
around with Ticky Tobin
scalpin' tickets and bettin'
games? Selfish, I can't
believe I'm gonna do this for
you. This is the last time.

JIMMY starts writing a check.

CONOR

(relieved)

I'm done betting and I swear
I'm gonna pay you back-

JIMMY

No you're not, you never do,
so don't even say it. You
never follow through on
anything.

CONOR

Who said that? Mahoney?

JIMMY hands him a check, CONOR snatches it and studies
the amount.

JIMMY

This might actually help you.

CONOR

This is only 500 bucks.

JIMMY

I know, you're gonna coach a
kids baseball team with me.

CONOR

Jimmy you don't understand
how serious my situation is -

JIMMY

I'm gonna pay you 500 a week
for the next 10 weeks, that's
week one.

CONOR has no choice in the matter.

CONOR

Jimmy I ain't good with kids.

JIMMY

I do this to give something
back to the community. You
don't wanna do it, gimme the
check back.

CONOR stands in the doorway, he's got no choice.

JIMMY

I'll see you at the field
tomorrow, 3:30.

CONOR
Where is it?

JIMMY's now rushing him out.

JIMMY
That field on 1150 Carson,
3:30.

CONOR's face goes blank.

CONOR
That's really South on Carson
are you sure it's-

JIMMY
Yeah, 1150 Carson it's behind
the Oscar Meyer plant.

JIMMY pushes him out the door, CONOR talks through the glass wall.

CONOR
No, the only thing behind the
Oscar Meyer plant is Cabrini
Green. The projects.

JIMMY has waved his last goodbye with a smile as he's jumped on a phone call. JIMMY pulls the blinds and CONOR looks around to see the office smiling at him. He realizes now that 500 a week might be a billion dollars short.

EXT. CABRINI GREFN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

CARSON FIELD is surrounded by the ugly buildings of the failing Cabrini housing projects. The neighborhood looks and feels as dangerous as it is. A ghost town of unemployment, people stay off the streets day or night.

CONOR makes his way across the beaten grass of Cabrini Baseball field. He wears an old Cubs hat as the only modification from his typical outfit that consists of work pants and black shoes.

It's still cool in March so his leather coat is appropriate. He sees a group of kids near a worn back stop with a wooden set of bleachers nearby. CONOR makes his way to the group but opts for a spot on the bleachers when he doesn't see JIMMY.

We get a closer look at the kids who all appear to be between 9 and 12. There's probably 7 kids total who are all actively doing something counter productive. A little kid chases a tall skinny kid. Another kid just listens to a walkman as he slowly rocks, while another kid holds court with a tattered blue aluminum bat.

Suddenly a 1998 BMW pulls up behind the backstop, the kids run to surround it. It's JIMMY.

EXT. JIMMY'S BMW - DAY

Our 7 kids are awed with JIMMY's car. JIMMY tries to "shoo" them away in attempts to prevent little fingerprints on what is a glass-like finish to the car. We also see a woman in the passenger seat, it's the CUTE RECEPTIONIST from Morgan Stanley. ALONZO, the kid with the blue bat, leans in the window.

ALONZO

Check out coach Jimmy's whip,
damn this shit is pimped.

JIMMY

Please guys, don't touch the
car, it's new. Please you'll
ruin the wax.

A heavy set kid named CALVERT shoves ALONZO out of the way.

CALVERT

Yo coach Jimmy, here's my
extra inhaler.

CALVERT begins to hand JIMMY a collection of stuff.

CALVERT (cont'd)
Here's my sugar babies for
when my blood needs sugar, my
mama says I do better when my
blood's got sugar and -

JIMMY
What's your name again?

CALVERT
Calvert Jefferson Tibbs,
coach Jimmy but -

JIMMY
Everybody listen!

The kids get quiet as JIMMY speaks.

JIMMY (cont'd)
The guy behind you is Coach
Conor, he's taking over the
day to day operations.

CONOR steps closer when he hears his name.

CONOR
What?

The tall thin kid pipes up.

MAURICE
That bummy guy's coach?

JIMMY
Coach Conor I just stopped by
to give you the equipment.

JIMMY pushes a button and the trunk pops open. The
kids scramble for the worn army bags full of bats,
balls and gloves.

CONOR
Jimmy I can't do this by
myself -

JIMMY

Here's the roster and
schedule. I'm goin' to the
New York office for three
weeks, a training seminar.

CONOR

How my gonna get my money?

JIMMY is already pulling away, CONOR jogs alongside
the car. JIMMY offers out the window...

JIMMY

Ellen will have your check
every Monday.

JIMMY motions to ELLEN, the CUTE RECEPTIONIST sitting
in the passenger seat. She smiles.

JIMMY zooms off, raising dust from the dry lot behind
the backstop. CONOR stands amidst the swirling dust
and swirling kids.

EXT. DUGOUT - DAY

CONOR has somehow managed to corral all 7 boys into
the graffiti laden dugout. He attempts to take roll.

CONOR

Alonzo Ray Peetes?

The kid with the blue bat responds.

ALONZO

What's up motherfucka?

The kids laugh at his funny delivery.

CONOR

What position do you play?

ALONZO

Big Willie.

More laughs.

ALONZO (cont'd)
Whatever, back catcher,
center field, I got mad
power. I pound it to the
gate yo.

He exchanges a hard hand slap with MAURICE the tall
lanky kid. These boys are obviously the alpha males.

CONOR
Frederick Payne the second?

No response as the kids all point to the short stocky
kid listening to his walkman.

CONOR (cont'd)
What position does he play?

CALVERT
He says he can pitch, coach
Conor, but might pitch too.

CONOR
What's your name?

CALVERT
Calvert Jefferson Tibbs, my
mama says I could play
anywhere, what with my asthma
and all I should probably
play first. I gotta keep my
sugar up too. Y'know my mama
says that some boys just
plain big boned -

ALONZO
And some boys just plain fat
ass.

Again ALONZO exchanges slaps with MAURICE. The kids
laugh.

Suddenly they get quiet as two men are standing behind
CONOR. One is MATT HYLAND, a white yuppie dressed in
clean coaching clothes. The other is AL CARTER a
black man in a sweat suit and dress shoes. They wait
for CONOR to turn around.

MATT HYLAND

Hi, Matt Hyland head of the coaches committee, are you the Kikuyus?

CONOR

What?

ALONZO jumps up.

ALONZO

Yeah bitch, we the Kikuyus, whassup?

AL CARTER

(checking his pad)

Where's James Devlin from Morgan Stanley?

CONOR

He's the head coach I'm assisting him, he has business out of town.

MATT HYLAND

Well, you've got what? Six or seven kids here? You gotta be able to field a team or the league will drop you.

CONOR could care less.

CONOR

I'll tell Jimmy that-

MATT HYLAND

This is Al Carter he's the commissioner of the league.

AL CARTER

Last year was a mess we had to cancel games because we'd show up and the other team would have five kids. Waste of everybody's time.

MATT HYLAND

We just wanna save everyone
alotta trouble, if you can't
field a team, drop out.

CONOR stares incredulously at the two politicians
attempting to leverage him out of a situation he has
no interest in being in.

AL CARTER

Talk to Jimmy Devlin and
Morgan Stanley and submit a
roster by Friday.

AL CARTER and MATT HYLAND saunter off proud of their
stance. CONOR looks back to the seven KIKUYUS who
have heard and understand their fate. CALVERT pipes
up.

CALVERT

Tiki and Ray-Ray wanna play.

CONOR fumbles with his sheet, he struggles to read the
names.

CONOR

Is that Tirakian Evans and
Raymont Bennet?

CALVERT

Yeah, Coach Conor 'dat Tiki
and Ray-Ray, but Missus
Wilkes ain't never gonna let
them play.

The kids explode in impersonations of MRS. WILKES, who
from these impressions is a mean woman.

CONOR

Who's Mrs. Wilkes?

ALONZO

She teach fifth grade at
Immaculate Conception -

CALVERT

She's real mean Coach -

MAURICE

She's a old nasty lady who
tell your moms everything
'bout what homework you don't
do, she called my moms every
night last year.

CONOR

And she won't let these guys
play?

CALVERT

Coach Conor she told they
moms that they can't play
ball until they do these book
reports.

ALONZO

I can tell ya, Tiki ain't
doin' shit.

MAURICE

Ray-Ray neither, yo. Them
motherfuckas is like, "quit
that noise bitch".

CONOR raises his bandaged hand in an attempt for
control.

CONOR

Can we try to cool it on the
use of "Motherfuckers" and
"bitch".

The kids get quiet for a second. CONOR stares at his
roster thinking.

CONOR

Where's Immaculate
Conception? Maybe I should
try to talk to Mrs. Wilkes.

FREDDY who has been silent the whole time pipes way
up.

FREDDY

NOOO!

They all turn to FREDDY who takes off his head phones and then very earnestly offers.

FREDDY (cont'd)

No Coach, that bitch is one mean old motherfucka.

The team laughs at FREDDY's disregard for the "Motherfucker" ban.

CONOR

Alright, umh... well I gotta talk to Coach Devlin and figure this out.

The sound of unbelievably heavy bass emanates from a '83 Monte Carlo that slowly prowls through the lot behind the backstop. The players on the field all stand still and watch it pass.

CONOR notes the reaction from the team.

ALONZO

Coach it's gettin' dark, we gotta go soon.

CONOR

Who's in that car.

ALONZO

They "folks", they local, it's cool.

CONOR

Folks?

ALONZO

Yeah, "folks", they ain't the problem, "Disciples", they the problem.

CONOR absorbs this information before addressing the team. He tries to organize the next practice as the kids are antsy to leave.

CONOR

Umh...Thursday at four
o'clock here.

The kids have already broken into small factions as
they map out their routes home.

MAURICE

Yo Lonzo, how you goin'?

ALONZO

Up Carson, to Division then
across Beaumont then 27th
back to Carson at Cabrini.

MAURICE

I was gonna go down Carson
and through the school yard
back to Cabrini.

FREDDY

My mom's meetin' me at Pizza
pizza, I'm not walking by
myself.

CALVERT nervously runs to catch FREDDY.

CALVERT

Freddy, wait up, I wanna go
with you to Pizza pizza.

CONOR curiously watches as the kids attack the
darkening landscape with military efficiency.

Three separate groups tight together, trying to get
safely back to the Cabrini Projects.

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - NIGHT

ALONZO and MAURICE walk shoulder to shoulder up CARSON
street overly aware of everyone they see.

MAURICE

Wanna just cut up 25th?

ALONZO

Whatever, I don't always walk
the folks loop, fuck the
Disciples.

A volley of gun fire is heard a few blocks away, the
boys stop for one second.

ALONZO AND MAURICE

Glock, nine millimeter.

The boys continue to walk, shoulders closer trying not
to appear scared.

ALONZO

You know about my Ka-rah-tay
right?

MAURICE

You mean karate?

ALONZO

Nah, it's Ka-rah-tay, I
learned it from my cousin who
was in Japan in the Army.

MAURICE's silence is a tacit acceptance of ALONZO's
lie.

ALONZO (cont'd)

Lightning quick.

ALONZO stops in his tracks and slaps MAURICE in the
chest. MAURICE stops walking. ALONZO assumes a pose
placing his hands by his ears like claws, eyes bugged
wide open and standing on one foot.

ALONZO (cont'd)

This is the tiger, no man can defend himself from the
fury of a well trained ka-rah-tay tiger man.

MAURICE nods his head wanting desperately to believe
that ALONZO really has uncontrollable deadly martial
arts skills.

MAURICE

Yeah Lonzo, the tiger, I
heard a that.

ALONZO retracts his pose as if coming out of a trance.

ALONZO

Yeah, I only use the tiger
when I fight like a dozen
guys.

MAURICE

Yeah that's right.

ALONZO

More than that I use the
bear.

MAURICE

Right...

(a beat)

What's the bear again?

MAURICE looks to ALONZO who we get the feeling has
exhausted his ka-rah-tay repertoire.

ALONZO

I can't show you, secret code
of ka-rah-tay honor.

MAURICE

That's cool.

The boys have continued down the street and have come
to CARSON and 24th Street. We can see the tall
buildings of the Cabrini Green Housing Project two
short blocks away.

Just as they're about to cross 24 they see a gang of
teenagers wearing an assortment of Georgetown Hoya
gear; Starter pullovers, wool caps, baseball hats.

Without speaking ALONZO and MAURICE put their heads
down and continue quickly up CARSON Ave.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN PROJECTS - NIGHT

A 1978 Toyota Celica pulls up to the curb and CALVERT gets out and we can see FREDDY and FREDDY'S MOM in the car. FREDDY'S MOM hands a small pizza box out the window.

CALVERT

Thanks ma'am, I'll finish it tonight.

The car pulls away and CALVERT studies the four dimly lit buildings arranged in a U-shaped courtyard. He fixes on the entrance to an orange high rise 100 yards away.

Jamaican music floats out of a distant window and a group of older men drink from bottles in bags at a picnic table.

The asphalt circle in the middle of the four buildings is dark but we can see shadows of people moving around.

Groups of young men stand on the sidewalk. Some slowly troll on B.M.X bikes watching every car for brake lights. If a car slows down they circle for a sale.

CALVERT begins to walk towards the orange building, his breath is labored by asthma and fear. He sees a shadow out of the corner of his eye and he instinctively runs toward the nearest building.

CALVERT busts through the lobby door of a blue building and presses his chubby frame against the cinder block wall. He pulls out his inhaler and takes two quick hits.

The flame of a lighter illuminates the otherwise dark stairwell as a rail thin woman lights the end of what used to be the plastic tube of a bic pen.

We now see that there's a guy with her and CALVERT goes through a door to the hallway of the first floor of the building.

CALVERT continues down the hallway and we see the doors of different apartments left open.

The sound of T.V.'s squawking and babies crying accompany the toys and kids that litter the thin hall. CALVERT gets to the other end of the hall and goes in to the stairwell. CALVERT steps over a sleeping body and again ventures outside.

CALVERT again fixes on the entrance to the orange building that is now only 20 yards away.

He takes one more hit from his inhaler and sprints as best he can to the steps of the orange building.

CALVERT bursts through the door of the orange building and immediately bounds up the stairs. He turns the corner and THREE YOUNG MEN are standing around a small radio listening to hip-hop music and sharing a 40 ounce malt liquor. CALVERT passes them with his head down and the boys don't even acknowledge him. CALVERT uses the key hanging by a shoestring around his neck to open apartment 207.

EXT. CHICAGO CIVIC CENTER - DAY

TICKY and CONOR are scalping tickets in what appears to be a dead market. Other scalpers laze about and compete for the same sales. TICKY and CONOR are mid-conversation.

CONOR

What?

TICKY

Nothing.

CONOR

Fuck you.

TICKY

I just can't believe you're going to some school in the projects to beg some old nun for ball players?

A HEAVY SET MAN in a Blackhawks jacket approaches them.

HEAVY SET MAN

I need three in the blues for 50.

CONOR

(to the man)

Fuck you 85,

(to Ticky)

I got no choice Jimmy's payin' my juice with Duffy, if I don't field a team the league drops us, I don't get my money.

The HEAVY SET MAN re-approaches.

HEAVY SET MAN

I got 65 take it or leave it.

TICKY

You take it, and shove it up your ass -

CONOR

Yeah, 85 you fat fucker.

(to Ticky)

These kids are scary, they all live in Cabrini, they got gangs, I gotta get out.

TICKY

Yeah, you gotta get out, Cabrini's a shithole those kids are killers. They'll kill ya, maybe not today but-

CONOR

Could you tap your mom for a coupla bucks 'till I can-

TICKY

Mom's not havin' it, she cut
me off.

HEAVY SET MAN makes a last effort.

HEAVY SET MAN

C'mon guys it's my kid's
birthday, 70 for the three in
the blues.

CONOR

Would you kiss my ass
already? Can't you see we're
tryin' to figure somethin'
out here? I feel like
smackin' you in the head, I
do.

TICKY

Gimme 75.

The HEAVY SET MAN digs deep, obviously going over his
budget.

HEAVY SET MAN

Jesus, I heard that Baby Bop
ain't even in this show.

CONOR

Why don't you not worry about
Baby Bop.

TICKY peels off the three tickets from an efficiently
arranged wad.

CONOR (cont'd)

I'll give you a baby bop in
the head.

The HEAVY SET MAN scampers away, his illegal
transaction complete. CONOR reflects to TICKY.

CONOR (cont'd)

What's Baby Bop?

TICKY
Well Barney's the big
dinosaur right?

CONOR
Yeah.

TICKY and CONOR start walking towards the Civic Center, we begin pulling back to a wide shot.

TICKY
Well Baby Bop is like this
fuckin' uh, what d'ya call
it...baby purple dinosaur.

CONOR
No shit, dinosaurs on ice.

TICKY
And they skate around with
that broad from the Olympics
with the horsey face?

As we go wider we see the marquee for the Civic Center. It reads, "Barney and Friends on Ice".

INT. TRAIN - DAY

The train thins as it continues south to Cabrini. We watch CONOR who tries not to make eye contact with the other passengers who all appear to be going nowhere in particular.

EXT. THE "EL" PLATFORM CABRINI STATION - DAY

CONOR exits the train and lights a cigarette. He goes down the steps of the platform. He looks out of place.

EXT. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

CONOR takes a moment to bolster his courage. He takes in the sights and sounds of the playground that is

overrun with boys and girls screaming with after school energy. He heads inside.

INT. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - DAY

CONOR stands awkwardly in the doorway of the office waiting to be noticed. Finally an older woman wearing a large sweater and a large cross addresses him from behind a desk.

SISTER MOLINA

Can I help you?

CONOR

I'm Conor O'Neill.

SISTER MOLINA

I'm Sister Molina.

CONOR

I'm here to see Sister Wilkes? I called earlier.

SISTER MOLINA pauses before sharing a huge grin.

SISTER MOLINA

Sister Wilkes, of course, Sister Wilkes has the last room on this hall to the left.

CONOR pauses to take in the Cheshire cat's grin that SISTER MOLINA can't help. CONOR leaves the Office.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

CONOR slowly walks the hall preparing for his encounter with SISTER WILKES. He gets to the last door, it's closed but a stenciled sign reads "Wilkes". CONOR breathes, then knocks.

VOICE (O.S.)

Yes?

CONOR speaks to the door.

CONOR

Sister Wilkes, I'm Conor
O'Neill I wanted to talk to
you about...

Suddenly the door is thrust open. Due to fire codes
the classroom doors open out and CONOR gets whacked in
the head as he stumbles to get out of the way.

An attractive young woman stands in the doorway
looking at CONOR who is collecting his wits and his
Cubs hat from the floor.

CONOR (cont'd)

It's okay, it's just my head.

ELIZABETH

Who are you looking for?

CONOR

Sister Wilkes.

ELIZABETH

I'm Miss Wilkes.

CONOR is confused and treads lightly.

CONOR

Do you teach here?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

CONOR

I was expecting an older
woman.

CONOR hunches over slightly mimicking the kids
impressions of Miss Wilkes. ELIZABETH doesn't smile.

ELIZABETH

I'm not a nun.

CONOR

Thank God... I mean that's
great... or not.

ELIZABETH

Well?

CONOR pulls a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket and reads...

CONOR

Is Tirakian Evans and Raymont Bennett in your class?

She corrects his grammar.

ELIZABETH

Are they in my class? Yes they are in my class.

CONOR

I need them to play baseball for the Kikuyus little league team.

ELIZABETH

You should take that up with their mothers.

CONOR

But the kids told me -

ELIZABETH

Yes, both mothers agreed that the boys need to read one book before playing baseball this spring.

CONOR

Hey, I got no problem with that. Reading's real good... for kids.

ELIZABETH studies CONOR'S casual outfit.

ELIZABETH

You work for Morgan Stanley?

CONOR

(defiantly lying)

Yes.

ELIZABETH fights off a smile. She knows he's lying but there's something noble and charming about his style.

ELIZABETH

What deal did you blow?

CONOR

What?

ELIZABETH

I'm sure you're not coaching this team by choice.

CONOR

(more lying)

My associate James Devlin is in New York for three weeks so I volunteered to help out.

(even bigger lie)

I would have loved to coach this team. I was away on business in... Canada the day... Mr. Morgan and... Mr. Stanley chose the coach.

ELIZABETH

(goes along with it)

Canada? Was it nice?

CONOR

(struggling)

Lovely, I was in the... umh... business part... the whole time though.

ELIZABETH

Well it's great you teach them baseball but unfortunate that no one spends time helping them to read.

She begins to shut the door. CONOR jumps in.

CONOR

Listen, I'm Conor.

He waits for her reply, finally she gives in.

ELIZABETH

Elizabeth.

CONOR

I'm only helping out with the team for two weeks but I'm willing to get together with you and help with the boys. Why don't we exchange numbers and-

ELIZABETH

Better yet, I'll give you the books the boys are supposed to read and you can read them and talk to Tirakian and Raymont about their reports.

CONOR has no choice but to withstand the challenge.

CONOR

God, that would be... great.
Good idea.

ELIZABETH hands him a couple of tattered paperbacks. CONOR smiles as ELIZABETH closes the door. What a tangled web he's woven.

INT. DUFFY'S BAR - NIGHT

The usual Wednesday night crowd inhabits Duffy's. A college basketball game holds the attention of the barflies and the BARTENDER we remember from the opening scene.

TICKY sits at a stool near a familiar window that's boarded up. CONOR enters and slams the paperbacks on the bar.

CONOR

(to the bartender)
Gimme a bat and a ball.

TICKY

Conor O'Neill, coach of the
crack babies.

CONOR

Fuck you.

TICKY

Do you realize that that's
all you ever say to me, "fuck
you". Hey Conor, "fuck
you". Wanna go to the game?
"Fuck you". Hey Conor fuck
you, "fuck you".

The BARTENDER stares him down.

BARTENDER

O'Neill, Duffy's here. Tell
me you got his money.

CONOR

Listen "no neck", what's your
name again?

BARTENDER

Peter.

CONOR

Good Peter, "fuck you", go
get Duffy.

The BARTENDER glares at CONOR before going into the
back room. CONOR turns to TICKY.

CONOR (cont'd)

I can't coach that team, I
gotta get out. I'm serious,
I'm bailin' out.

TICKY

How did it go with the nuns?
Did you tell them "fuck you?"

CONOR remembers ELIZABETH.

CONOR
God, she was beautiful.

TICKY
You picked up a nun?

CONOR
Ticky... "Fuck you".

TICKY
You still want you're half of
the Blackhawks seats I got?

CONOR
(remembering)
Yeah, where are they?

TICKY
I'm gettin' 'em tomorrow.

CONOR
Bring 'em to the little
league field on Carson
tomorrow before five.

TICKY
The field in Cabrini?
CONOR grabs TICKY's shoulder.

CONOR
Don't screw me Ticky, I'm not
in the mood right now. I
need that money.

TICKY
I'll be there at 5.

DUFFY carries a bat as he approaches CONOR. CONOR
grabs the paperbacks as he stands.

CONOR (cont'd)
Easy slugger, alright, relax.

DUFFY
You got some cabbage for me?

CONOR
Can we talk outside? Without
the bat?

DUFFY studies CONOR's face which appears genuine. He hands the bat to the BARTENDER and follows CONOR outside.

EXT. DUFFY'S BAR - NIGHT

CONOR and DUFFY stand on the sidewalk. CONOR shuffles his feet, his head is down as he begins...

CONOR

Duffy, you knew my dad... and I wouldn't be callin' in a favor if I wasn't completely racked.

DUFFY

You smashed up my bar.

CONOR

You know that I will pay it all back, I just need time.

DUFFY

It ain't my money. I can't carry you this time. It's six grand of somebody else's money. Somebody who didn't know your father and doesn't give a fuck about you or me, nothing.

CONOR

I'll help run the book, take bets, I'll bring in business.

DUFFY gets quiet, he's completely backed down. A beat then...

DUFFY

Nah, it's no good. Listen, I gave 'm your name 'cause I couldn't carry it.

CONOR
(laughing)
What? Some goombahs gonna
come break my thumb?

DUFFY's quiet, shakes his head. CONOR gets scared.

CONOR (cont'd)
Duffy, I'm desperate, I'm
coaching a little league team
in the projects for a guy
who's payin' me 500 a week...
but I'm payin' the Barber
off, what should I do? Should
I tell the Barber "fuck off"?
Should I start payin' you 250
every week?

DUFFY looks at CONOR.

DUFFY
Keep payin' the Barber, and
don't come around here unless
you got the money.

DUFFY walks back into the bar. CONOR looks to the sky
for help.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

ALONZO catches for CONOR who's halfheartedly hitting
infield practice.

CONOR is agitated as he attempts the appearance of
holding a practice. He continually checks his watch
and scours the landscape for TICKY.

No sign of TICKY, but a serious looking black woman
accompanies three young black boys.

ALONZO
Yo coach, when we gonna hit?

CONOR likes the idea of not having to hit ground
balls.

CONOR
(calls out to Louis)
What's your name again?

ALONZO
That's Louis.

CONOR
Louis, pitch batting
practice.

CONOR walks to the bleachers as LOUIS grabs a few tattered balls and storms the mound.

ALONZO runs to the equipment and returns with his beat up blue softball bat.

ALONZO
You bustas betta back the
hell up, Ima pound this shit
to the gate.

ALONZO does a practice swing "ritual" that rivals the flashiest in Major League Baseball.

LOUIS throws a soft floater that ALONZO whiffs at. The team starts busting on ALONZO with a chorus of, "Shit the wind just picked up" and "yo you feel that breeze?"

EXT. BLEACHERS - DAY

CONOR talks with the woman and the boys.

PEARLA EVANS
I'm Pearla Evans and this
one's Tirakian. She places
her hand an the tallest boy's
head.

PEARLA EVANS (cont'd)
This is my youngest, Jarius -

The small boy pipes up.

G-BABY

Evy body call me G-Baby, so-

With a raise of her hand G-BABY ceases talking, PEARLA is living up to her stern reputation.

PEARLA continues...

PEARLA EVANS

This is my sister's boy
Raymont and I spoke to Miss
Wilkes at the school and she
said you agreed to help these
boys with their assignments
so they could play ball.

CONOR

Oh... yeah... well that was
before I had this business
trip to -

PEARLA EVANS

Miss Wilkes said she had a
good feeling about you so I
figured I'd give it a try.

CONOR smiles at the news.

CONOR

Miss Wilkes said that?

PEARLA EVANS

No, actually she said she had
a good feeling about them all
playing ball but I'm tell you
now Mr...?

CONOR

Conor O'Neill.

PEARLA EVANS

O'Neill, you don't help these
boys and they don't do this
work. Hell will be paid with
your ass.

The boys begin to giggle and with a look PEARLA EVANS silences them.

PEARLA EVANS (cont'd)

I trust I can reach you at
Morgan Stanley to plan a
tutoring session?

CONOR

Uh... yes, of course anytime.

PEARLA EVANS

Good, go on boys.

The boys join their friends on the field as PEARLA leaves.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - LATER THAT DAY

CONOR blows into his hands as he sits on the bleachers watching the debacle that batting practice has become. He checks his watch -- its 6:15 and no sign of TICKY.

CONOR

(sotto)

C'mon Ticky you're killin'
me.

CALVERT comes wheezing up to CONOR.

CALVERT

Coach Conor, we usually quit
at 5:30 and my mama needs me
home we eat around six
thirty-

CONOR cuts him off short.

CONOR

Calvin, we'll be done soon,
I'll let you know.

CALVERT

I'm Calvert, Calvert
Jefferson Tibbs.

CALVERT walks away defeated.

THE FIELD

MAURICE bats as a laboring LOUIS still pitches.

G-BABY and another boy are sitting near second base playing with the dirt. ALONZO calls from the outfield.

ALONZO

C'mon Maurice, whack that
shit to the gate!

LOUIS is exhausted as he winds up and throws a pitch that hits MAURICE in the thigh.

MAURICE drops the bat and rushes the mound. He begins posturing with LOUIS.

MAURICE

Whassup mothafucka? Huh?
Roll up bitch. Roll up!

The kids crowd the mound wanting a fight. No unity, just thirsty for blood.

G-BABY

C'mon Louis you bitch, throw
down.

ALONZO

Yo Maurice drop his ass like
a bad habit.

CONOR has gotten there in time to realize that they would probably posture for a few days before they would actually throw a punch.

CONOR

Alright, that's it. It's
6:30. Practice Saturday
1:00. The boys react to the
time with alarm as they
scramble to form allegiances
for the walk home.

CALVERT runs to catch up with CONOR. He looks scared.

CALVERT
Coach Conor can I walk with
you?

CONOR
No, umh... I'm not goin' that
way, sorry.

CALVERT's eyes are wide in disappointed fear as he
rushes off to collect his stuff.

CONOR realizes that the boys are already packed into
small groups and scurrying across the park in
different directions.

CALVERT struggles with his heavy knapsack. Candy
spills out as he tries to hoist it onto his shoulder.
He panics as he collects the candy, trying to catch up
with someone to walk home with.

TICKY pulls up in a 1984 Buick Regal and CONOR rushes
towards him. We can hear CONOR yelling about how late
TICKY was, but we stay with...

CALVERT lifts the knapsack and he can't get it on to
his shoulder. CALVERT half carries and half drags it
along the ground as he heads towards the ever
darkening streets around the park.

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - NIGHT

The night has fallen like rain on CALVERT who still
struggles with his fear and his back pack.

He's alone as he walks slowly towards the lights of
the Cabrini Projects.

ANOTHER STREET - SAME NIGHT

ALONZO walks with TIKI and G-BABY as they cautiously
take a circuitous route to Cabrini.

ALONZO

Y'all's cool wit me, I know
ka-rah-tay.

TIKI

You mean karate and all that?

ALONZO

It's pronounced kah-rah-tay.

TIKI

You know that judo and shit?

ALONZO

Hell yes.

G-BABY

Bullshit mothafucka, I could
kick your monkey ass.

ALONZO stops walking for a second and TIKI and G-BABY
continue two steps before stopping to look back.

ALONZO

I'm gonna forget you said
that.

ALONZO buries the insult in the interest of getting
home.

ANOTHER STREET - SAME NIGHT

CALVERT has literally come to a crossroads as he
stares down a dim street. He looks the other way and
sees an OLDER MAN in a long coat who wobbles as he
walks. CALVERT can't decide which way to go, the man
looks harmless enough. He begins down that street.

CALVERT gets an uneasy feeling. Acting on instinct,
he quickly turns around and heads the other way. He
cuts through the playground of a nursery school.

The knapsack is feeling lighter as he can see the
street lamp of 26th and Cabrini about 40 yards away.
He begins to walk casually and his breathing has
subsided.

SUDDENLY he's knocked to the ground and two young KIDS are on him immediately. The KIDS try to pull CALVERT's knap sack away but CALVERT got tangled in the straps when he fell.

CALVERT

Take it! Just take it!

CALVERT is trying to free himself from the bag as the two KIDS continue to wrestle with it.

One of the KIDS whacks CALVERT in the head and he goes down flat. The other kid starts kicking CALVERT in an attempt to make him roll over.

In a defensive reflex, CALVERT assumes the fetal position. As he curls up the knap sack comes free and one of the KIDS takes off with it.

The other kid kicks CALVERT who has begun to hyperventilate causing an asthma attack. The strange barking noise coming from CALVERT's straining lungs upsets the remaining kid. The KID levels one last kick to CALVERT's head before taking off.

CALVERT falls slowly to his back and his breathing calms as he loses consciousness.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Calvert's mother LENORA TIBBS, a large woman in black tights, is talking to ELIZABETH in the hall outside CALVERT's room. CONOR catches them mid-conversation.

LENORA TIBBS

Girl you can bet my big black
butt Ima' call the league and
raise hell, but I gots to
have a cigarette.

CONOR approaches ELIZABETH.

CONOR

Is he okay?

ELIZABETH

Why did you keep them so late?!

LENORA TIBBS jump in.

LENORA TIBBS

Who are you?

CONOR

I'm the coach, Conor O'Neill.

LENORA TIBBS

I should beat your butt, I called you at Morgan Stanley and at first some little girl didn't even know who you were! Then some man named Devlin got on the phone and told me you were outta the office today. You in Lenora's dog house now!

CONOR

Please take my home number.

CONOR scrambles for a piece of paper and a pen.

CONOR (cont'd)

Always call my house, don't bother with Morgan Stanley they never know where I am.

LENORA studies CONOR with a suspicious eye as she accepts the number.

LENORA TIBBS

Boy, Ima' have a cigarette then we gonna talk. You can't have them boys down there after dark. Thank Jesus for Calvert's strength. But I should still beat your butt. That smell? That might be a lawsuit.

LENORA goes for a smoke and ELIZABETH turns to CONOR.

ELIZABETH

You really blew it.

CONOR

I'm sorry, can you help me
here?

A NURSE comes out of CALVERT's room.

NURSE

You guys should go in there,
he's wondering where everyone
went?

CONOR and ELIZABETH go in to CALVERT's room.

INT. CALVERT'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

CALVERT sits upright with an oxygen tube running into
his nose. He has a fat lip and a scrape on his
forehead, but all things considered he seems okay.

CONOR

Calvert, I'm sorry, I should
have called practice as soon
as it got dark.

CALVERT doesn't look at CONOR.

CONOR (cont'd)

I just came by because... as
soon as you're ready, we
expect you back.

No response.

CONOR (cont'd)

And I needed to know what
number uniform you wanted?

CALVERT

You're never gonna stay being
our coach.

CONOR tries to dodge the truth.

CONOR
At least till Coach Jimmy
comes back from New York.

LEENORA rushes in.

LENORA TIBBS
So how's my baby doin'?

CONOR starts to slip out.

LENORA TIBBS (cont'd)
Where you goin'?

CALVERT
52 Coach.

They all look to CALVERT who fixes on CONOR.

CALVERT (cont'd)
I want number 52, like Sosa.

CONOR waves to CALVERT who just saved his hide. CONOR
leaves.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

CONOR shows up a few minutes late as the players are
already trying to kill each other.

ALONZO and TIKI are squared off.

ALONZO
Pay up bitch.

TIKI
Kiss my ass mothakucka!

CONOR jumps between the players and amidst the growing
mob that again just wants to see blood.

CONOR
Cool it.

CONOR shoves ALONZO away from TIKI.

CONOR (cont'd)
What's goin' on?

G-BABY steps into the middle to explain.

G-BABY
Alright, lemme break it down
right quick. Lonzo said he
could catch any high pop
anybody could throw. Tiki
say "bullshit you a busta".
Lonzo say, "roll up bitch".
Tiki say "I'll give you all
my gum if you can catch this
ball." He threw it, Lonzo
caught it. Lonzo say, "pay
me motha fucka", Tiki say,
"You a cheatin' bitch", no
wait, Tiki say, "You a mocha
fuckin' cheatin ass bitch".
Then Lonzo say -

CONOR
I got it, okay. I want
everybody to take a position,
infield, outfield, let's go.

The players argue their way to their positions.

INFIELD - DAY

CONOR hits a grounder that goes through FREDDY's legs,
TIKI leads the team in teasing him.

CONOR hits a fly ball that LOUIS charges in for only
to watch it sail over his head. Again TIKI volleys
insults at him and the team joins in. CONOR hits a
hard line drive right at TIKI that he jumps out of the
way of. The team is silent. CONOR stops.

CONOR
What happened?

The team is silent.

CONOR (cont'd)
Tiki just jumped out of the
way like a baby, why's
everyone so quiet about it?

MORE silence.

CONOR (cont'd)
What's up Tiki, you scared of
the ball?

TIKI glares at CONOR but says nothing.

CONOR (cont'd)
New rule, no one can say
anything bad to anyone else
on the field. Got it?

Silence suggests acceptance as CONOR continues with
infield practice. The practice is silent as players
do a bit better without the fear of ridicule from
their teammates. CONOR stops again.

CONOR (cont'd)
What? If you can't talk shit
you got nothing to say? New
rule you can only say good
things to each other on the
field.

CONOR continues infield and the players remain silent.

CONOR (cont'd)
Let me hear some positive
chatter.

CONOR hits a ground ball to RAY-RAY who scoops it up
and tosses it to ALONZO who's catching for CONOR.

We hear a faint chorus of "Nice play Ray-Ray" and "Way
to go Ray"...

CONOR (cont'd)
That's it guys, little
louder.

We watch as the cheers get louder and more comfortable as it, appears that the players only needed an excuse to be supportive of each other.

LOUIS gets bopped on the head and everyone is silent before ALONZO offers...

ALONZO

Way to use your head Louis,
alright.

Practice lightens up as the players continue to laugh and cheer each other on. We see the seeds of a team.

DUGOUT - LATER

CONOR speaks to the team after practice.

CONOR

Alright, so you all have
probably heard what happened
to Calvert.

ALONZO

Fat ass got beat down.

RAY-RAY

He got jacked up yo, these
four GD's had him pinned and
one was gonna smoke him...

RAY-RAY acts out his story using FREDDY as CALVERT.

RAY-RAY (cont'd)

He put the tech nine to his
head and he pulled the
trigger and... click it
jammed.

TIKI jumps in with his version.

TIKI

Bullshit yo, all six of 'em
had glocks and they took
turns beatin' black down with

they guns, like "Bap! Bap!
Bap!".

MAURICE

Yeah, my cousin seen 'em, all
his teeth knocked out and one
eye was hangin' out all
like... Ahhhhh!

MAURICE parades down the dugout like a toothless freak
with an eye hanging out.

CONOR

Okay, listen he's gonna be
fine, but it was my fault and
I'm sorry. I gotta make sure
we're outta here before dark.
We're gonna work out a
carpool to take people home.

CONOR starts to hand out packets to each player. The
kids start tearing through the pages looking for the
schedule.

TIKI

We play the Man dicks first?
What kinda name is the Man
dicks?

CONOR

It's Mandikes, every team in
the league is named after a
tribe in Africa.

MAURICE

April 24th, winner group A
plays winner group B in
the... Championship.

G-BABY

Yo mothafucka we goin' to the
ship.

ALONZO and MAURICE exchange hand slaps, that starts a
chant of "We goin' to the Ship".

CONOR can't help but smile at their spirit.

EXT. CIVIC CENTER - NIGHT

TICKY is scalping tickets for a Blackhawks game. A purple 1996 Buick Roadmaster Stationwagon, complete with wood paneling, drives up to the curb. CONOR gets out.

TICKY

Nice wheels soccer mom.

CONOR

Fuck you.

TICKY

Really what's with the wagon?

CONOR

The suits at Morgan Stanley took shit for one of the kids gettin' beat up on his way home so they lent me this car to care 'em home.

TICKY

Who got beat up?

Two STRAIGHT LACED TEENAGERS are nervously waiting for TICKY's attention.

CONOR

Calvert Jefferson Tibbs.

TICKY

Oh, that's the fat kid right?

CONOR

Yeah, the fat kid. How'd you know?

TICKY

You've told me about every kid on the team. Well, that's shitty, I hate when people fuck with kids.

With that TICKY finally addresses the two kids nearby.

TICKY (cont'd)
How can I help you fellas?

STRAIGHT LACED KID#1
Mister you just sold us
tickets to last night's game.

Like a reflex, TICKY grabs inside his vest as if for a gun. He accompanies this move with a scary verbal assault.

TICKY
GET OUTTA HERE! DON'T MAKE
ME SHOOT YOU! WHEN A MAN
NEEDS CRACK A MAN NEEDS
CRACK!

The STRAIGHT LACED KIDS immediately bolt in fear.

CONOR shakes his head at TICKY.

CONOR
You're unbelievable. How we
doin' today?

TICKY
We?... We aren't doin' so
good. San Jose's not such a
hot ticket.

CONOR
Did the bulls cover last
night?

TICKY
Yup, they won by 9.

CONOR
Shit, I couldn't get any
action. I need to find
someone who'll take a big
bet.

TICKY
Fink's minimum bet is two
grand.

CONOR

The guy in the firehouse?

TICKY

Yeah Fink the guy above the
firehouse, why?

CONOR

I hate this life Ticky, I
gotta get out. I just need
to be right once, y'know?
One big bet to get me even,
get me out.

TICKY

You want out?

CONOR

Out. No more fuckin'
bookies, no more coachin'
this bullshit team for
Jimmy. I don't have the
stomach for this life
anymore.

TICKY

You're down like 11 grand.

CONOR

I wanna lay 12 g's.

TICKY

12 grand? On what?

CONOR

Bulls have never lost at home
to Miami.

TICKY stops scanning for sales to look CONOR in the
eye.

TICKY

You're serious about this.

CONOR

They play Miami on the 26th.

TICKY

You shouldn't do this.

CONOR

I don't have a choice. Take
me to meet Fink.

TICKY looks at CONOR and then stares blankly into the
pre-game hockey crowd.

TICKY

Okay, I'll take you to see
Fink.

CONOR und TICKY exchange quiet head nods, already
feeling the tension of the twelve thousand dollar bet.

MONTAGE OF CONOR'S ROUTINE

The Rolling Stones, "Heartbreaker" helps to narrate
CONOR's weekly routine. We see CONOR pull clothes off
the floor and onto his body. He stumbles out of his
apartment building, affixing dark shades as the light
of day hurts our evening dweller.

CONOR leaves his shades on inside the Morgan Stanley
building as he collects his check from the CUTE
RECEPTIONIST. CONOR lunges at her just to scare her,
she jumps about ten feet.

He laughs as he goes on with his day.

CONOR stands in line at a check cashing store in a
strip mall. He appears at home with other customers
who no longer maintain legitimate bank accounts. He
cashes his check.

CONOR strolls into the BARBER SHOP and the collection
of men stand and surround him.

CONOR pulls out an envelope and presents it to the
BARBER'S SON and everyone relaxes.

CONOR's not the most welcome person at the shop but
they're happy to see some money.

CONOR stands outside a pizza window counting the loose change and few single dollars he's got. He buys one slice and a single beer with not much money to spare.

The Rolling Stones continue to serenade CONOR as he ends up back in his tiny apartment eating the day's only meal.

INT. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

ELIZABETH has begun the day's lesson. We see that TIKI, RAY-RAY, CALVERT and ALONZO are all in her class. CALVERT is standing by his chair reading an essay about his experience.

CALVERT

Four Spanish men with hiking boots had surrounded me close. I could tell they were "banditos" because they had taco breath and they called me "hombre". I spun around to hit the biggest one. I punched him in the gut and as he was falling he grabbed my backpack. I said, "Stop, you banditos I don't want to have to hit anyone else." But because they were Spanish they didn't understand me. Two more jumped me and I kicked one of them in his...

(embarrassed to read "nuts")

...in the...

(improvises)

...between his legs. He went down but two more kept comin'. And I was madder. Real madder, real real mad, and the madder I got the stronger I got. So I tied up in a hand lock with a bandito just like when "Stone Cold Steve Austin" on Monday Nitro

of the World Wrestling
Federation ties up with some
busta that you know he's
gonna beat down. My mouth
banged on his head and that
was where I got my fat lip.

(Calvert smiles
before...)

The end.

ALONZO

Where'd you get yo fat butt?

The class giggles until ELIZABETH scolds ALONZO.

ELIZABETH

Alonzo, enough.

(praising Calvert)

Very Nice Calvert, excellent
use of first person
narrative. You're story was
very descriptive, I felt
scared of the banditos.

ELIZABETH is looking at CALVERT's essay as she
continues.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Does anyone remember what we
call the device Calvert uses
when he compares...

ELIZABETH realizes the kids are all looking at the
open door. She looks to find...

CONOR standing in the doorway with a large gray wool
suit jacket and white polo shirt with a tie. He also
wears gray dress pants that don't match his jacket and
are short enough to show off his white tube socks and
deck shoes. An old plastic and chrome brief case
rounds out his attempt to appear as if he just came
from the office.

CONOR

Miss Wilkes.

ELIZABETH

Mr. O'Neill. Fresh from the office?

The kids giggle at CONOR's appearance. RAY-RAY pipes up.

RAY-RAY

Yo Coach wassup with them pants? Expecting a flood?

CONOR

I thought today was the day Tiki and Ray-Ray were going to talk about a "Wrinkle in Time" and I came down to help out.

ELIZABETH smiles, admiring the effort.

ELIZABETH

That's correct. Everyone this is Mr. O'Neill who coaches a baseball team that some of our young men play on and he has taken time out of his busy day to help out.

CONOR

A Wrinkle in Time is an important book and I like it very much.

CONOR places his briefcase on a small desk and opens it upside down causing the contents to spill out. The only things in the briefcase were a copy of Sports Illustrated, cigarettes, a brush, "A Wrinkle in Time" and some chewing gum.

The kids laugh and ELIZABETH smiles as CONOR scrambles for damage control.

INT. CLASS ROOM - LATER

The kids seem to be relatively interested in the discussion as RAY-RAY holds forth in opposition to a point.

RAY-RAY

I'm just sayin' it ain't like that. Fantasy ain't reality. I like to read stuff that's real.

ELIZABETH

Give me an example.

RAY-RAY

Michael Jordan's book.

ELIZABETH

That was a biography, that's the real story of his life. This is fiction, the story is made up, it's meant to entertain you, to make you think.

RAY-RAY nods his head in understanding. ELIZABETH turns to TIKI.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Tirakian you've been silent the whole time. All you'll say is you didn't like it.

TIKI

That's right.

ELIZABETH

If you can't say more than that I'm gonna have to assume you still haven't read it and your mom will want me to call her.

CONOR shares an uncomfortable look with ELIZABETH. We focus now on TIKI who looks nervous.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Did you read this book?

TIKI

Yes.

ELIZABETH

Tell me something about it.

TIKI

It was booty.

A small laugh from the class attempts to break the tension.

ELIZABETH

Okay, I'll talk to your mom tonight.

ELIZABETH starts towards her desk, TIKI pipes up.

TIKI

That girl Meg is dumb.

ELIZABETH turns to him.

TIKI (cont'd)

Cause she think her dads
comin' back from wherever.
And I think that's a stupid
thing to believe in. That
girl and her moms both
trippin' cause where
I'm from... ain't nobody's
father come back.

It is silent as TIKI's truthful interpretation is understood.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

We can see the opposing team warming up on the field that has been freshly lined with chalk and slightly groomed for the first game. The MANDIKES are wearing black and yellow uniforms that are complete with stirrup socks and matching undershirts.

JIMMY drives up in his BMW and jumps out, leaving the car running. He grabs a tattered cardboard box from the back seat and hustles towards the KIKUYUS dugout.

KIKUYUS DUGOUT

JIMMY hands CONOR a box and an envelope.

JIMMY

Here you go buddy, the uniforms and next week's check. Good luck today.

CONOR

I take it your not stayin'.

JIMMY

Can't, sorry next time.

JIMMY scampers back to his car

CONOR

Thanks, thanks for giving back to the community!... dickhead.

CONOR stands at the mouth of the dugout holding a tattered cardboard box. He reaches in and begins to hand old blue tee shirts and hats to the players. They react to the worn, cheaply printed shirts that read "Morgan Stanley Kikuyus".

ALONZO

I want number 7.

CONOR

Just take a shirt that fits and pass them down.

G-BABY holds a shirt to his face.

G-BABY

This shirt smells like my grandma.

CALVERT joins the team in the dug out.

CONOR

Good to see you Calvert, who's got number 12.

MAURICE fires it at CONOR who hands it to CALVERT.

CONOR (cont'd)
Calvert this is the biggest
shirt, everybody, they go up
in size from 1 to 12. 1 to 4
are small 5 to 8 are medium,
6 to 9 are large so on.

MAURICE
Yo I need a shirt.

CONOR
Who's got number 11?

G-BABY
I got it.

CONOR
Give it to Maurice.

G-BABY
But where's my shirt?

CONOR does a quick count to realize that there is 13
players, he already knows there are only 12 shirts.

CONOR
G-Baby c'mere I wanna talk to
you. Everybody play catch in
the outfield.

The players bound out to the field pairing up for
catch.

G-BABY mopes over to CONOR who bends down to talk to
him.

CONOR (cont'd)
How old are you?

G-BABY
I'll be nine in October.

CONOR

You're supposed to be nine
before August to play in the
league.

G-BABY, who's always tough, begins to cry.

CONOR (cont'd)

But there's only 12 uniforms
and 13 players so, I gotta
give the guys who are old
enough first pick.

G-BABY nods his head, trying to compose himself as
tears stream down his face.

G-BABY

But I'm on the team right?

CONOR

Hell yes mothafucka.

G-BABY smiles at CONOR's intentionally funny use of
"mothafucka". G-BABY tries to rebound quickly by
grabbing his glove and running towards the outfield.

CONOR watches him go and then looks up to see PEARLA
EVANS staring at him from the bleachers. CONOR stares
back.

INT. DUGOUT - MINUTES LATER

CONOR reads the line-up off the back of a torn piece
of a cigarette carton-

CONOR

Ray-Ray you're up first and
playing shortstop, Alonzo you
bat second and you're gonna
start as pitcher, Freddy
third base -

ALONZO springs up.

ALONZO

I told you I'm the best
player on the team.

TIKI

We gonna get bitch slapped
with you pitchin' them cream
puffs over the plate.

ALONZO

You wanna set it off right
here?

ALONZO steps to TIKI who stands up proving his size
advantage over ALONZO's big mouth.

TIKI

Nigga please, I beg you, go
for yours.

TIKI begins shoving ALONZO back with his chest.

The rest of the KIKUYUS start goading both boys in an
attempt to incite a fight. A lack of unity prevails
as CONOR pulls them apart.

CONOR

Save it for the game, let's
go. Ray-Ray's up, Alonzo's
on deck.

ALONZO walks to the on-deck circle staring at TIKI,
refusing to back down.

FIELD

The opposing MANDIKES move the ball smoothly around
the infield, warming up. CONOR looks to see about 8
parents in the bleachers behind the MANDIKES bench.

CONOR turns to the KIKUYUS side to see PEARLA EVANS on
the top bench of the bleachers and two teenage girls
sharing a cigarette oblivious to the game.

FIRST PITCH is a smoking fastball right down the
plate, RAY-RAY jumps out of the batter's box. The

umpire hollers, "Strike one!", and things get worse from there.

MONTAGE OF THE MANDIKES SLAUGHTER OF THE KIKUYUS

RAY-RAY, ALONZO and FREDDY all strike out on three pitches.

ALONZO walks the bases loaded and then starts finding the plate only to see the MANDIKES nailing the ball through the infield and over the heads of the outfielders.

CONOR shuffles nervously, checks his watch, he is embarrassed by his team's obvious lack of practice.

A MANDIKE player hits a screaming ground ball to third that FREDDY makes a miraculously lucky play on.

FREDDY immediately throws the ball back to ALONZO on the pitcher's mound as if he were in batting practice.

ALONZO throws the ball over CALVERT's head and into right field and the circus of errors and fighting begins.

BASEBALL GAME - LATER

TIKI bats with a determined face, the pitch, he swings and hits a long shot into right field. He admires it before running to first. TIKI runs straight at first base and stops to look for the ball.

When TIKI realizes that the outfielder is running after it he heads for second.

CONOR

Go Tiki! Keep Goin!

TIKI makes it home well before the ball is retrieved and the KIKUYUS score their first run.

CONOR gives him a hand slap and a few other players offer halfhearted shakes as well. It's obvious this

team is still more interested in individual performance.

LATER

A small MANDIKE player is called out on strikes and the KIKUYUS shuffle in to bat for the top of the sixth.

The MANDIKE COACH approaches CONOR.

MANDIKE COACH

I guess that's it, I mean the league says we're not supposed to start an inning after 6:30.

CONOR

Really?

MANDIKE COACH

Well yeah it's 6:37 and we're up 16 to 1 so...

CONOR

That's cool, thanks.

KIKUYUS BENCH

The finger pointing is rampant as the disappointed tempers of the KIKUYUS are flaring.

RAY-RAY

Freddy don't even know where to throw the ball.

ALONZO

Shut up Ray-Ray, least he ran after it when it went by, shit went through your legs like 5 times.

TIKI

Lonzo you a little bitch, least you throw like one.

ALONZO grabs TIKI's hat off his head and throws it in his face. TIKI shoves ALONZO against the fence. The team cheers for blood as ALONZO jumps at TIKI and they tie up in headlocks and begin the mean choreography of a twelve year old fight for pride.

CONOR returns to see the melee and immediately tears TIKI off of ALONZO who was beginning to lose the fight. TIKI stands and steps away from CONOR and the team.

TIKI (cont'd)
Fuck all y'all, you suck.

CONOR
Tiki your close to bein' done.

TIKI
Nah, Fuck you, I'm done. I 'm out, this team sucks.

TIKI throws his hat at ALONZO as a parting gesture before walking away.

CONOR spies the faces of the defeated team and in a weak moment attempts to swing morale.

CONOR
Anybody hungry? How' bout pizza?

The team is interested but needs the magic phrase.

CONOR (cont'd)
I'm payin'.

The boys erupt with "hell yeah's", G-BABY announces...

G-BABY
I'm down with that shit mothafucka.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - DAY

The KIKUYUS have overtaken two booths near the back of the store. ALONZO continues to roust FREDDY for his mistakes and we still see a great deal of finger pointing and name calling.

ALONZO

If this was a team with try-outs, me Maurice and Tiki would be the only ones would make it.

RAY-RAY

Dat's bullshit, I'd make it, I ain't no busta.

ALONZO

You ain't got skills like Reese and me, we best on the team.

ALONZO exchanges a hand slap with MAURICE, who's quiet as usual.

G-BABY

And that black and yellow team just beat our ass. You the best on a team that sucks. That ain't shit.

ALONZO levels a look at G-BABY that's meant to intimidate. G-BABY returns it, never one to back down.

PIZZA COUNTER

CONOR looks nervously at the cash register and the growing number of sodas being placed on a tray.

PIZZA GUY

Three large pie, nine sodas,
44.65.

CONOR recounts the 18 dollars in his hand, he pulls some tickets out of his bill fold.

CONOR
You like hockey? Blackhawks
fans?

The black PIZZA GUY stares at CONOR.

PIZZA GUY
Sure, I take the wife and
kids to the Negro Hockey Hall
of Fame every year.

The other black PIZZA GUY has a laugh at CONOR's
expense.

CONOR
What?

PIZZA GUY
How many black hawks are
there? Shouldn't they be
called the white hawks?

OTHER PIZZA GUY
Yeah, we just worry bout all
the brothers playin' hockey,
cause God forbid the ice melt
you know niggas can't swim.

The two PIZZA GUYS have successfully cracked
themselves up and left CONOR feeling like an ass who
still only has 18 dollars to pay for a 44 dollar tab.

CONOR
I'll give you two loge seats
for the Bulls-Mavericks on
Sunday.

The PIZZA GUY composes himself and examines the
tickets.

PIZZA GUY
For the pizza?

CONOR (defeated)
Yeah.

PIZZA GUY

Done deal.

CONOR struggles with the soda tray as the other PIZZA GUY makes a last jab.

OTHER PIZZA GUY

I'll throw on pepperoni for
two more seats for our girls.

PIZZA SHOP - LATER

The kids are quieter now that they're stuffed with
pizza and soda.

RAY-RAY

If I get a homerun next game,
you gotta buy me pizza again.

G-BABY

Nah, every run I score I get
one slice.

CONOR seems preoccupied as he stares out the window.

ALONZO

You bustas trippin' only me
gettin' pizza every game.
MVP, most valuable pizza
eater.

FREDDY speaks, a country never heard from.

FREDDY

I should be pitcher.

CONOR turns to the rarely heard voice.

CONOR

You wanna pitch Freddy?

FREDDY

Yes sir.

CONOR smiles at the only respect he's been paid in
years.

CONOR

You can pitch on Wednesday.

FREDDY smiles as he puts his headphones on. MAURICE weighs in.

MAURICE

Coach, do we have any chance of gettin' trophies this year?

CONOR pulls the rolled up paperwork from his pocket, he examines it.

CONOR

There are... 8 teams in the league, we play everyone twice and then it looks like... yeah, the top four teams make the playoffs. Yeah, we gotta win more games then we lose.

MAURICE

Then we could go to the 'ship?

CONOR

We could.

RAY-RAY

We goin' to the ship! We goin' to the ship!

RAY-RAY gets up and creates a dance move to go with his chant, the other KIKUYUS join him.

CONOR smiles at their youthful optimism as he thinks of his own sinking ship.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN PROJECTS - NIGHT

CONOR's Stationwagon trolls along Lafayette Street in front of the familiar quad of buildings that most of his players live in.

INT. STATIONWAGON - NIGHT

Inside the wagon we see an exhausted CONOR sitting with his lone passenger ALONZO.

CONOR

All right Lonzo, this is it
right?

ALONZO stares at his building which is in the center of the quad, 150 yards away. With his hand on the door handle, ALONZO watches the midweek night life of Cabrini and turns to CONOR-

ALONZO

Don't you wanna see my house?

CONOR senses ALONZO's fear and complies by turning the car off and getting out.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN PROJECTS - NIGHT

CONOR feels a strange fear of exposure walking on the vast concrete lawn towards ALONZO's building which now appears to be getting farther away.

A strange noise is followed by laughter as they occasionally pass the ghost-like face of an evening dweller.

Guys drink out of bags and a girl in her 20's strolls by appearing lost as she carries a pair of plastic white pumps.

CONOR and ALONZO finally reach the entrance to the building.

INT. CABRINI PROJECTS BUILDING - NIGHT

CONOR squints from the shocking contrast from the black night to the blinding yellow of the cheap buzzing halogen tubes that light the thin hallway. CONOR is a step behind ALONZO who moves by instinct over the toys and around the shopping carts that clutter the hall. The paper thin carpet doesn't

muffle the sounds of the TV's that baby-sit the kids in each apartment.

CONOR's curiosity has him peering into each open apartment as he makes his way down the hall. He notices something similar in each apartment. He stops. ALONZO eventually looks back.

ALONZO

What?

CONOR

Everyone is sittin' on the floor.

ALONZO

You stay below the window.

ALONZO stands in his open doorway waiting to say good-bye.

CONOR

What?

ALONZO

Bullets.

CONOR emits a small astonished laugh.

CONOR

What d'ya do around here for fun?

ALONZO

Play baseball with you.

CONOR absorbs the compliment, ALONZO goes inside.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

CONOR nervously counts the numbers of KIKUYUS who have shown up for their second game.

CONOR

Okay we got exactly nine guys today, everybody plays.

FIELD

The opposing team is the Continental Bank BANTUS.
They wear red and white uniforms as they warm up.

RAY-RAY

Yo Coach, I could pitch? You
know I got mad skills right?

CONOR

Freddy's gonna start today.

We see FREDDY intently listening to his walkman and
swaying to the music. CONOR offers him the brand new
game ball.

CONOR (cont'd)

You ready Freddy?

FREDDY smiles as he palms the game ball, still lost in
his music. CONOR lifts off the headphones.

CONOR (cont'd)

You want me to hold your
walkman.

FREDDY smiles and shakes his head, "no". CONOR shrugs.

BANTU GAME

The BANTU pitcher is a tall skinny kid with no
control. He immediately walks the first four
KIKUYUS giving them their first lead of the season.

ALONZO pokes a grounder over first base and turns it
into a "homerun" when the BANTU's make two throwing
errors.

MAURICE follows with a legitimate drive over the left
fielder's head that allows him to jog around to score.

GAME - LATER

With the score 7-0 KIKUYUS, FREDDY takes the mound for
the first time. FREDDY's walkman is clipped to the

waistband of his baggy jeans. The headphones are wrapped over his hat that's tightly pulled down, almost covering his eyes.

The BANTUS laugh at FREDDY who occasionally dances to the song only he can hear. He is oblivious to the BANTUS mockery as he sets to face the first batter.

After a high, fluid leg kick delivery, FREDDY fires the first pitch down the heart of the plate - strike one. He is magnificent. FREDDY strikes out the side on 11 pitches.

CONOR smiles with pride as he exchanges a hand slap with the almost embarrassed FREDDY who quietly takes his seat on the bench.

BANTUS GAME - LATER

FREDDY continues to amaze as the BANTUS prove that the only thing they had going for them were those red and white uniforms. The KIKUYUS win it going away, the team is in high spirits as they sing the obligatory "2-4-6-8" chant to the humiliated BANTUS.

EXT. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

CONOR stands by the stationwagon as he sorts through the after school throng of kids leaving school.

ALONZO, RAY-RAY and CALVERT walk with ELIZABETH towards the car. CONOR waves from the curb.

The boys wear their KIKUYUS hats with pride as they fight for the front seat. CONOR smiles at ELIZABETH.

CONOR

We won our last game.

ELIZABETH

I heard, 9 to 3 over the Bantus.

CONOR is self-conscious about his pride and reels it in.

CONOR

Yeah, I'm just tryin' to help
out until my colleague
returns from New York.

ELIZABETH

That's great of you to take
time out.

CONOR

Listen, why don't we have
dinner tonight? I mean what
good is an expense account if
you don't get to pad it once
in a while?

ELIZABETH

I can't - it's a school
night. Another time.

CONOR

After our game On Saturday?

ELIZABETH

Saturday?

CONOR

Boys would love to see you
there.

ELIZABETH smiles at this sweet but obvious
manipulation.

ELIZABETH

Maybe.

CONOR

Okay.

CONOR returns the smile and hops in the wagon as
ELIZABETH walks away. CALVERT pipes up.

CALVERT

Coach, you're not really
tryin' to get wit' Miss
Wilkes are you?

CONOR looks at the expectant faces.

CONOR

No, why?

RAY-RAY

Good, cause I already tried,
and she ain't havin' it.

ALONZO

Yeah, me too. She dissed me.

CONOR hides his smile, these guys are serious.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The KIKUYUS wait to take the infield against the MAU MAUS. We see that the MAU MAUS suffer from the same uniform problem that the KIKUYUS do. The MAU MAUS wear black hats and black tee shirts that we can tell don't match. Some have numbers and some don't.

G-BABY

Look at these bustas, them
shirts is a joke.

MAURICE slowly swings a bat.

MAURICE

Ima' whack that shit to the
gate yo.

ALONZO

Word 'bee, these mothafuckas
is soft.

CONOR interrupts the major league confidence.

CONOR

Okay, the Mau Maus are 0 and
2 and have only scored three
runs.

RAY-RAY

Yo Coach, I could pitch?

CONOR

Yeah Ray-Ray you pitch, we need to save Freddy for Saturday. Everybody else know where they're playin'?

The KIKUYUS start to take the field. CONOR yells towards the outfield.

CONOR (cont'd)

Louis you're in left field.
(a beat)
The other left field.

G-BABY stands next to CONOR waiting for his attention.

G-BABY

Tiki wanna come back.

G-BABY motions towards the bleachers where we see TIKI sitting with a hooded sweatshirt pulled over his head.

G-BABY (cont'd)

But I need to renegotiate his contract.

CONOR

What are the terms.

G-BABY

Tiki wants you to tell Alonzo that Tiki's the best player, 2... only he gets pizza after each homerun he hits. 3... if he whacks it out the gate he gets a whole pizza to take home.

CONOR looks at G-BABY and then at TIKI.

CONOR

When the season's over we'll vote on who's the best player. He can have the same pizza bonuses as everyone else. If he hits it over the fence I'll buy him a pizza.

G-BABY responds with his best business air.

G-BABY
Okay, let me discuss the
negotiations with my client.

G-BABY rushes to the bleachers as we cut in to....

MAU MAUS GAME IN PROGRESS

RAY-RAY doesn't throw nearly as hard as FREDDY but he does manage to throw strikes. He works his way out of a bases loaded jam with a pop up to CALVERT at first. CALVERT baskets the ball no problem.

MAURICE and ALONZO take turns clearing the bases with hard hit ground balls that make their way through the outfield.

KIKUYU DUGOUT - LATER

With the sky darkening and the game well in hand CONOR relaxes against a dugout pole. TIKI approaches.

TIKI
Wassup, Coach.

CONOR
Tirakian, I spoke to your
agent.

TIKI
I could come back?

CONOR
If you apologize to the team
and you and Alonzo work it
out. If the team's alright
with it I'm alright with it.

TIKI nods.

KIKUYUS BENCH

The KIKUYUS again rejoice in "2-4-6-8" as the MAU MAUS went down without a fight. CONOR rounds the team up after the cheer.

CONOR

Listen, Tiki and I talked and he wants to come back. I said it was up to the team, but I wanna take a vote. All in favor?

EVERYONE but ALONZO raises his hand.

CONOR (cont'd)

Alonzo, Tiki is prepared to shake hands with you and move on. Are you willing?

TIKI appears and stares down ALONZO.

TIKI

Sorry Lonzo.

ALONZO

We won two games with out him.

The TEAM jumps an ALONZO with yells of "C'mon Man", and "Tiki's back". "Cool out Lonzo".

ALONZO puts out his hand and TIKI slaps it, a truce.

EXT. LOCAL CHICAGO FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

TICKY is smoking a cigarette, waiting for CONOR who pulls up in the stationwagon. CONOR gets out.

TICKY

It's ten to 8, what happened to 7 o'clock?

CONOR

Fuck you Ticky, I'm really not in the mood.

TICKY

Why don't you ask my nuts
what kind a mood they're in
out here huh? It must be
forty degrees.

They head inside the building.

INT. FINK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Two guys sit in an old office with three TV's. FINK is a man in his sixties with smooth skin and a shiny bald head wreathed with white hair. ED is a younger and taller man.

FINK

Ticky, this is Ed.

TICKY is quick to shake ED's hand out of respect.

TICKY

This is Conor O'Neill, he
wanted to meet you.

FINK nods as he has already sized CONOR up.

FINK

Whaddya do for money?

CONOR

I'm a trader at Morgan
Stanley.

FINK

Bullshit. First lie.

TICKY laughs to offset the uneasiness.

FINK (cont'd)

I don't care what you do for
money. I just need to know
you're gonna have it when I
need it.

CONOR

I gotta '97 Buick out there
that's worth 15 grand.

FINK pauses to reassess.

FINK

You gonna try to beat me one
time? So you can pay off
whoever else you owe?

CONOR

I wanna make a big bet.

FINK

How big?

CONOR

12 grand.

FINK nods in understanding.

FINK

And...

CONOR

And if I win I wanna get
paid, no pressure to keep
bettin' it.

FINK looks at ED.

FINK

This guy's too serious.

CONOR

Fuck you.

ED gets out of his chair, FINK slowly rises putting a
hand in ED's direction to subdue him.

FINK

I got a handful of clients,
they lay a hundred grand a
weekend. They're not
emotional about it.

CONOR

I can cover it.

FINK

You seem too emotional about
this 12 grand. Desperate.

CONOR

Fuck you .

FINK looks at TICKY.

FINK

What is it with him and the
"fuck you"?

TICKY

That's his thing - he always
says, "fuck you".

CONOR

Ticky, let's go.

FINK

Don't you want your number?

CONOR

You gonna take my bet?

FINK

Ed, what's the next number?

ED

27.

FINK

You're account 27 when you
call in and your handle
is....?

CONOR

Kikuyus.

FINK

What? Kikuyus?

CONOR

Kikuyus.

FINK

Ed you got it?

ED

Kikuyus, yup.

ED has logged the information
in a tiny ledger.

FINK

Kikuyus. You're a strange
kid. I'm interested to see
what happens with you.

FINK has gotten up and approached CONOR. He hands him
a business card

FINK (cont'd)

Here's the business line.

FINK sizes him up one more time, he then stares out
the window.

FINK (cont'd)

That wagon have power seats?

FINK looks to see TICKY and CONOR closing the door
behind them.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The KIKUYUS are cruising to another victory, this time
against the PYGMIES. The PYGMIES wear nice green and
black uniforms. The PYGMY players appear noticeably
bigger than the KIKUYUS, but they can't catch up to
FREDDY's fast ball.

We watch FREDDY as his high leg kick is getting more
fluid and he continues to listen to the walkman
attached to his belt occasionally pausing to hear the
music that focuses him.

KIKUYUS BENCH

CONOR shakes his head in awe of FREDDY's prowess. He
turns to G-BABY.

CONOR

What does he listen to?

G-BABY

Same song over and over.

CONOR

What is it?

G-BABY

Big Poppa by Notorious B, I,
G.

CONOR stares blankly.

CONOR

How does it go.

G-BABY

(sings)

I love it when you call me
big Poppa,

(he waves his hands
above his head)

Wave your hands in the air if
you're a true player.

Cause I see some ladies
tonight that should be
havin' my baby, baby.

CONOR stares at G-BABY as if he just recited Arabic.
Conor looks towards the pitcher's mound.

PITCHER'S MOUND

FREDDY pauses between pitches, listens to the music
and does a subtle stretch that allows him to wave his
hands in the air just like G-BABY has done.

KIKUYUS BENCH

CONOR nods his head with remote understanding.

FREDDY strikes out the side to end the game. The
KIKUYUS crowd which has grown to almost ten, cheers

the victory. We see ELIZABETH clapping her support, CONOR is stopped by her presence. She waves to him, he smiles.

KIKUYUS BENCH

CONOR plays the role of COACH with new zeal.

CONOR

We're 6 and 3, big game on
Wednesday. Practice tomorrow
3:30. Also, you guys should
continue to ask people to
come to the games. Home team
crowds help. Okay, let's
cheer the Pygmies. 2,4,6,8-

The KIKUYUS join CONOR in the requisite cheer. CONOR locks eyes with ELIZABETH who smiles wide at him. She is taken with the sight of him helping the kids.

After the cheer CONOR grabs FREDDY.

CONOR (cont'd)

Freddy, could I borrow your
tape?

FREDDY pulls it out of his bag and hands it to him.

FREDDY

Coach you could have it, I
got two more just in case.

CONOR tousles his hair as he sees ELIZABETH standing next to him. FREDDY takes off to join his friends, ELIZABETH remains.

ELIZABETH

You're really great with
them.

CONOR continues to lay it on thick.

CONOR

They're great kids, I feel
blessed.

ELIZABETH momentarily pauses, "blessed" is pushing it.

ELIZABETH

I wanted to talk to you,
would you like to get a late
lunch?

CONOR decides to push his luck.

CONOR

I always take the kids for
pizza after the game. Just
them and me.

ALONZO overhears this lie and is about to bust him on
it.

ALONZO

You always what?!

CONOR steps in front of ALONZO and redirects the
conversation.

CONOR

Dinner would be better,
there's a bar that's got good
food on the corner of 6th and
Elston... 7:00?

She can't figure out if she was just scammed or not.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, okay 6th and Elston
7:00.

CONOR smiles as he gently shoves ALONZO out of the
way, preventing him from disclosing his scam.

CONOR

Everyone in the car we're
goin' for pizza like we
always do!

The KIKUYUS turn to CONOR with surprise as ELIZABETH
smiles suspiciously before walking away.

FINNEGAN'S PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT

FINNEGAN'S is a big step above DUFFY'S but it's really just an Irish pub that's been updated to a sports bar with waitresses and food service. CONOR stands against a brass railing studying one of the 20 TV's on the wall. The TV is blasting out the Detroit Pistons - New York Knicks game.

ELIZABETH enters this world for the first time. She takes in the bar to realize the only women in there are waitresses with short skirts and low cut tee shirts. Men in business suits with absent ties are drinking draft beer and studying TV's with more than a fan's interest.

ELIZABETH spots CONOR and approaches him.

ELIZABETH

Conor?

CONOR seems startled by her appearance as he's obviously lost in the world of basketball betting. He tries to focus.

CONOR

Hey, uh...let's eat. Why don't we sit...

CONOR locates a tiny table in the immediate proximity that retains a bird's eye view of the game he's watching. ELIZABETH quietly accepts the strained conditions and sits opposite the preoccupied CONOR.

ELIZABETH

So, I wanted to talk to you.

CONOR

Yeah, I wanted to talk to you-

(suddenly to the TV)

THAT WAS A FOUL! THAT'S BULLSHIT!

ELIZABETH is put off by CONOR's lack of concern for their date, she regrets having come.

CONOR returns to her.

CONOR (cont'd)
So, do you wanna drink?

ELIZABETH
No.

CONOR
What's wrong? I come here
all the time with the guys I
work with.

ELIZABETH
Really?

CONOR
Yeah, that's a nice -
(again to the TV)
TRAVELLING! TRAVELLING!
GOOD CALL! GOOD CALL!
(back to her)
What were you saying?

ELIZABETH
Nothing, you were about to
tell me exactly what you do.

CONOR senses her hostility and focuses to spin his
lies.

CONOR
Foreign trade.

ELIZABETH
Right, that fast paced
Canadian market.

CONOR calls her on her sarcasm.

CONOR
What are you saying?

ELIZABETH
I know you don't work at
Morgan Stanley.

CONOR

I'm not a regular employee of
Mr.-

ELIZABETH

Please! From the minute I
laid eyes on you I knew you
didn't work there and I don't
care, I'm here because -

CONOR can't help but check the TV. He reacts to a
score...

CONOR

KNICKS BY 4, 2 MINUTES TO GO!

ELIZABETH gets up and walks out of the bar. CONOR
finishes checking his scores before turning back to
see her leaving.

EXT. FINNEGANS PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT

CONOR rushes out, beer in hand, to catch ELIZABETH.

CONOR

Hey! Come back here.

ELIZABETH stops and faces CONOR. CONOR vents his
life's frustration with the people who judge him.

CONOR

Why'd you come here? To bust
me in the lie about where I
work? You win.

ELIZABETH

I came to talk to you?

CONOR

Bullshit.

ELIZABETH

What do you know?

CONOR

I know that I don't have a job and that I scalp tickets for money with a guy named Ticky who still lives with his mother.

ELIZABETH

You coach kids that I teach so we have a common interest.

CONOR angrily lights a cigarette.

CONOR

I get paid under the table to coach that team. And I only do that cause I'm in a big hole with two bookies who are lookin' to kill me.

CONOR studies her unflinching face.

CONOR

What?

ELIZABETH

Nothing.

CONOR

You know all this?

ELIZABETH

I spoke to Jimmy Devlin after Calvert got beat up, he told me -

CONOR

You just think I'm a joke.

ELIZABETH

No.

CONOR

It's people like me that make people like you feel better about your tiny life.

ELIZABETH

Fuck you.

CONOR

Fuck me?! That's my line.
Fuck you. You're ridiculous.

CONOR is stunned by her toughness.

ELIZABETH

This is unbelievable, I can't
believe I came down here for
this.

CONOR

Why did you come? If you
know I'm a liar? You don't
trust me.

ELIZABETH looks him dead in the eyes.

ELIZABETH

They do.

CONOR

What?

ELIZABETH

Those kids trust you and they
don't trust anybody.

CONOR looks down the street.

CONOR

So what? I'm done with that.
Shit, who cares? I gotta
plan to get me out.

ELIZABETH

I just came to see what they
see, because they're never
wrong.

CONOR starts laughing at her melodramatics.

CONOR

God you're dramatic.

CONOR mocks her by throwing his arms outstretched and spinning around.

CONOR (cont'd)

Take a good look... see what they see!

ELIZABETH

I came to talk to you about a job.

CONOR

Well unless it pays 12 grand an hour I'm not interested.

CONOR goes back in to the bar.

EXT. FLEMINGS FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

CONOR stands with TICKY who is dressed in a dark suit with an overcoat eyeing each mourner who comes up the walkway.

CONOR

No, I'm telling you, Freddy pitches with his walkman on! He stands on the mound listening to his walkman.

CONOR laughs as he imitates FREDDY rocking to his music.

CONOR (cont'd)

And Tiki is a monster at the plate, a natural, I'm tellin' you.

TICKY

Don't get wrapped up in this team.

CONOR

I'm not.

TICKY

Did you bone the nun?

CONOR
She's not a nun!

TICKY
Whatever.

CONOR
Nah, that's not gonna work
out.

TICKY
Good, now maybe you can start
tryin' to sell some tickets.

CONOR
Yeah.

TICKY
Don't yeah me, I've been
carryin' you on my back the
last coupla weeks. Did you
miss a payment with the
Barber?

CONOR
Yeah I did. I shined him
this week.

TICKY
That goofy kid Gino came into
Duffy's askin' for you. I'm
worried about you. We're
partners and I'm doin'
everything. I know you're
sweatin' the bookies right
now but you're asleep at the
wheel.

A handful of GRIEVING WOMEN make their way up the
steps, TICKY solemnly approaches them.

TICKY (cont'd)
Mrs. Calagieri, I'm sorry for
your loss -- I was a friend
of your husband's, I was -

The YOUNGEST of the women turns to TICKY.

YOUNGEST GRIEVER

None of us is Marie
Caligieri.

TICKY

My mistake.

The MOURNERS continue on. TICKY continues.

TICKY

I mean we're partners right?
I'm invested in this thing
with you.

CONOR

I just gotta lay the 12 grand
with Fink and win. If I could
just win that 12 g's I'm
tellin' ya I would be set.
Either way I gotta quit
coachin' but if I win I'm
set.

TICKY

Let's just get you past Fink
then we'll both be set. You
cover against Miami and we
can really get goin' with
this thing.

Another group of MOURNERS makes its way up the
walkway. TICKY approaches an older woman.

TICKY (cont'd)

Marie? Marie Caligieri?

The older woman turns to TICKY.

MARIE CALIGIERI

Yes?

TICKY

I'm so sorry for your loss.

MARIE CALIGIERI throws her arms around TICKY and wails
in sorrow. TICKY hangs on uncomfortably.

TICKY (cont'd)
I knew your husband for
years.

MARIE CALIGIERI
He was a great man.

TICKY
Yes, he was a great man. And
he had great season tickets
for the Bulls and the Bears.

MARIE CALIGIERI
What?!

TICKY
Marie, his season tickets for
the -

MARIE smacks TICKY in the head, TICKY reels from the
blow. Two other women hold MARIE back.

MARIE CALIGIERI
He left those tickets to his
nephew you low life.

Oblivious to MARIE's pain, TICKY expresses his own.

TICKY
Shit! That screwy bastard!

MARIE CALIGIERI
What? What did you say?
C'mere so I can poke you in
the eye!

The women pull MARIE away. TICKY faces CONOR in
frustration.

CONOR
I think that went well.

TICKY heads towards the car, pulling off his tie.

EXT. CONOR'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

CONOR locks the stationwagon and begins walking down the block towards his building. Out of instinct he looks around. The lights of a parked car go on. CONOR straightens up and begins walking with casual purpose down the street.

CONOR takes out his keys and walks past his house and crosses the street. He takes a few steps up the stoop of a small apartment building and fumbles with his keys as if about to enter the building.

CONOR turns to see the car idling by the curb, the BARBER'S SON gets out of the car. CONOR pretends to see him for the first time. He acts flustered as he puts his keys in his pocket and takes off sprinting down the block.

The BARBER'S SON takes a few steps towards him and then yells to the car.

BARBER'S SON
Get him, Gino, go!

GINO is the thinner of the two guys and he sets out on a dead run to catch CONOR.

ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

CONOR comes flying around the corner and leaps to grab the fire escape, he misses. CONOR stands below it panting, exhausted. He looks up at the lowest rung of the metal ladder that must be just under ten feet off the ground. He leaps flat footed and misses again.

STREET OUTSIDE THE ALLEY - SAME TIME

GINO surveys the dark street for sound or movement, he approaches the alley and stops.

ALLEY - SAME TIME

CONOR takes a few steps out of the alley and sees GINO from behind, he quietly scurries back in to the dead-end alley.

CONOR has regained his breath and takes a few steps backwards. He sizes up the jump and takes two graceful steps and leaps with one hand outstretched and grabs the rung.

CONOR swings silently, struggling to maintain his grip. He slowly pulls his second hand to the rung and now rests as he is firmly attached with both hands. He begins to pull himself up the ladder toward the window on the first floor.

INT. CONOR'S APARTEMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

From the first floor hallway we see a window open and a slow breeze blowing an old yellowed curtain into the hall. CONOR's foot comes through the window first, followed gracefully with the rest of his body. Once inside he quietly closes the window and heads down the hall to the stairs.

INT. CONOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

CONOR enters the apartment and crouches to the floor without turning on the light. He crawls his way to the window and peers sideways to the street.

EXT. STREET BELOW - NIGHT

Through the window we see that GINO has returned to keep the BARBER'S SON company as he stakes out the small building across the street that CONOR appeared to be trying to enter.

CONOR pulls himself to the wall and rests. Sweat accompanies the rise and fall of his shoulders as his breath continues to attempt to right itself.

CONOR pulls the phone to him using the phone line attached to the jack next to him on the ground. He dials.

CONOR
Account 27, Kikuyus, yeah.
What's the line on the Bulls
tomorrow night against Miami.
(he listens)
Gimme twelve grand on the
Bulls minus 6. Wait...

We watch CONOR chew his finger in a gambler's moment of indecision. His faith waivers...

CONOR
I'll take Miami and the 6
points. Yeah twelve
thousand.

CONOR hangs up the phone and remains seated on the floor of his dark apartment, breathing.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Game day against the IBOS is met with more than normal tension as CONOR is distracted by the twelve thousand dollar bet he has riding on the Miami Heat tonight. TICKY appears behind the fence.

TICKY
Conor.

CONOR turns to see TICKY.

CONOR
Hey.

TICKY
Did you play it?

CONOR
Yeah.

TICKY
Twelve grand?

CONOR

Twelve grand.

TICKY

How many points are you giving?

CONOR

I'm getting 6.

TICKY stops the quick exchange to absorb this information.

TICKY

You took Miami?! Are you on crack?! You got a death ish?! You laid twelve grand against the Bulls?! Oh my God this is -

CONOR

Shut up Ticky! I'm under alotta pressure right now, I need you to support me!

CONOR struggles with the desperate look of a gambler on his last run. TICKY sees his pain and backs off.

FIELD

MATT HYLAND is the coach of the undefeated IBOS and he strides with smug confidence to the KIKUYUS dugout.

MATT HYLAND

Coach, can I have a word.

CONOR steps away from the fence and meets MATT near home plate. The UMPIRE and AL CARTER are standing in postures suggesting a summit. AL CARTER extends an official hand.

AL CARTER

Al Carter, league's commissioner.

CONOR

We met.

MATT HYLAND

Coach we're all concerned
about the age of a few of the
boys an your team.

AL CARTER

Can you produce birth
certificates for your
players.

CONOR sorts through the disorganized folder he carries
KIKUYUS paperwork in.

CONOR

All I got is what Coach James
Devlin from Morgan Stanley
gave me.

MATT HYLAND points out the certificates with the ease
of a man who has put many coaches through this test.

MATT HYLAND

Here they are.

AL CARTER

What're the names of those
two boys at third base.

THIRD BASE

We see MAURICE and ALONZO standing next to each other
laughing at CALVERT who they keep throwing short hops
to.

HOME PLATE SUMMIT

CONOR turns to the summit.

CONOR

Alonzo and Maurice.

MATT HYLAND is scrutinizing a specific birth certificate, he holds it up to the light.

MATT HYLAND

Which one is Maurice?

CONOR

The kid in the grey sweats.

MATT HYLAND

This birth certificate's been altered.

CONOR

What?

MATT HYLAND

The 9 has been changed to a 3.

They all huddle around the birth certificate. We see that the number has been crudely reworked.

UMPIRE

You gotta be born before September of '86.

AL CARTER

Well, the kid is out of the league and the Kikuyus are on suspension. Next violation could lead to being dropped.

CONOR

Look, what are you guys the gestapo?

MATT HYLAND

What's the point of this league? To teach kids that lying is okay if you can get away with it?

CONOR

I think these kids have
slightly bigger problems to
deal with than forged birth
certificates.

CONOR has squared to MATT HYLAND suggesting a
confrontation. AL CARTER sides with MATT.

AL CARTER

I don't know where Morgan
Stanley got you from but I
can tell you that if they
wanna stay in this league
they gotta follow the by-
laws. The kid goes, now.

CONOR stares in slack-jawed awe of the little league
bureaucracy. He doesn't need this shit, not today.

KIKUYUS BENCH

CONOR is now pissed and distracted as he finishes
announcing the line up.

CONOR

- Calvert bats 7th plays
first base, Freddy pitches
and bats 8th and Louis
you play right field and bat
9th.

The KIKUYUS begin to take the field, MAURICE appears
before CONOR.

MAURICE

Why I ain't playin', you mad
at me?

CONOR

Maurice the other coach-

MAURICE

Cuz I'm sorry 'bout shovin'
Ray-Ray, I just wanna play.

CONOR can't believe how difficult this is.

CONOR

Listen, they know that you
changed your birth
certificate. I can't let you
play.

The quiet, stoic MAURICE begins to break down.

MAURICE

But my moms said it was okay,
that she would tell them if
they asked that I was born
earlier. She said it was
okay.

CONOR

There's nothin' I can do
Maurice, why don't you just
sit down and watch the -

MAURICE takes off running so incredibly fast that it
draws the attention of everyone at the field. We
watch as MAURICE disappears into the horizon of right
field.

GAME - LATER

FREDDY has completed his warm-ups and the first batter
steps in the box. FREDDY adjusts his head phones and
sways to the music only he can hear. He fires the
first pitch past a swinging IBO player.

The KIKUYU infield responds with proud shouts for
FREDDY's dominance. Whoosh, strike two, strike three.
The ball gets tossed around the infield.

MATT HYLAND and AL CARTER have reconvened behind home
plate with the UMPIRE.

CONOR storms out of the dugout to see what the
conference is about.

HOME PLATE

AL CARTER is nodding his head in agreement with MATT HYLAND who is casually pleading his case. The UMPIRE obviously sides with the guys who sign his check.

CONOR

What now?

MATT HYLAND

Coach we're just in agreement that the pitcher can't wear the headphones.

AL CARTER

Matt makes a good point about safety.

CONOR

C'mon, you're kidding me right?

MATT HYLAND

It would be terrible for the kid to get hurt because he couldn't hear a dangerous situation.

UMPIRE

He's gotta lose the headphones.

CONOR turns to the field and starts calling out to his players.

CONOR

Bring it in you guys! Bring it in!

CONOR waves the players in to a circle at home plate.

MATT HYLAND

What are you doing?

CONOR

I want you guys to explain to them why they lost Maurice and why Freddy can't wear headphones.

The KIKUYUS have gathered at home plate.

CONOR (cont'd)

And why the IBOS and the PYGMIES have nice uniforms and we have shitty Tee shirts.

AL CARTER

Easy coach, you're already on a warning.

CONOR turns in frustration and addresses the KIKUYUS.

CONOR

This is the commissioner and this is the coach of the goofiest team in the league and they kicked Maurice off the team because he was born two weeks late and they're makin' Freddy take his head phones off.

AL CARTER

Fellas you understand that everyone has to follow the same rules.

The KIKUYUS stand stunned at the news of MAURICE's departure. G-BABY blurts out an unclear protest.

G-BABY

That some weak ass bullshit, you bitch ass mothafucking bustas.

The KIKUYUS giggle, MATT HYLAND steps in and tries to intimidate G-BABY.

MATT HYLAND

What did you say?

G-BABY cowers a little as MATT has stepped close to him, CONOR takes another step to MATT.

CONOR

I believe he said "That is some weak ass bullshit" and then he referred to you and the commissioner as "Bitch ass motherfucking bustas".

MATT is shocked at CONOR's retell.

CONOR (cont'd)

Was that it G-Baby?

G-BABY smiles and nods.

G-BABY

Yeah, that's it.

CONOR

Yeah, and I agree with him -- you are a bit of a bitch ass motherfucking busta.

The KIKUYUS giggle and MATT steps into CONOR's face. CONOR smiles, dying for an excuse to blow off some of his pre-bet tension. AL CARTER pulls CONOR away from MATT

AL CARTER

You are on thin ice pal, I can have you removed from this league.

CONOR

This is my last game. I quit.

The KIKUYUS react with, "What?" and "What he say?"

CONOR (cont'd)

I'm out, I got business out of town.

AL CARTER changes course.

AL CARTER

Alright listen, Kikuyus back
on the field.

(to Freddy)

Son, no head phones. Coaches
back to the dugouts.

MATT, AL and the UMPIRE walk away. CONOR turns to see
the KIKUYUS staring at him. Their faces register the
disappointment of CONOR's pending departure.

CONOR

C'mon let's go. Get out
there.

The KIKUYUS still stare. He loses it...

CONOR (cont'd)

What did you expect?! That I
was gonna coach this team for
the whole year?!

These words fall like daggers on the already depleted
spirits of the KIKUYUS. The players slowly wander
back to their positions.

GAME - LATER

FREDDY is nervous and wild as he walks in two runs.
The IBOS show no mercy as MATT HYLAND encourages the
IBOS to taunt FREDDY. FREDDY is defenseless and his
confidence is shot.

FREDDY begins to aim the ball slowly. The IBOS now
start to crank it all over the field. The rout is on.

KIKUYUS BENCH

CONOR talks with TICKY through the fence.

TICKY

You guys suck.

CONOR

Whatever, I just quit.

TICKY

I'll see ya' at the game.

TICKY walks away as CONOR checks his watch. A nervous chill shoots down CONOR's spine as the bet is only a few hours away.

GAME - LATER

The IBOS scream a mean spirited rendition of the "2,4,6,8" song, quickly followed by an equally smug chant of "Who's gonna knock you out? IBOS gonna knock you out!".

The KIKUYUS mill slowly through the dugout. They just got creamed by the IBOS and CONOR just quit. The players appear abandoned and humiliated.

CONOR is hustling to collect the equipment, obviously needing to get out of there. CALVERT breaks the silence.

CALVERT

Next practice is Saturday
right? 11:00? Someone gonna
be here right?

CONOR responds diplomatically.

CONOR

Yeah, I'll make sure
someone's here for practice
on Saturday.

ALONZO

Yo coach you could ride us
home right?

CONOR stops for a second and looks into the defeated faces. He checks his watch, debates and then...

CONOR

You guys are on your own
tonight. It's early still so
go straight home.

CONOR continues to pack the equipment.

EXT. UNITED CENTER - NIGHT

CONOR shuffles through the scalping scene, he finds
TICKY who is mid-transaction.

TICKY

250 for the pair.

BUYER

First quarter's almost over.

TICKY

Look pal I'm not emotional
about this shit, you're
standing here with a Miami
Jersey and a dorky Dolphin
hat. You got 250 or I walk
and I guarantee you they
won't last to that hot dog
stand.

The BUYER is moved by TICKY's pitch and hands over the
money. CONOR admires TICKY savvy.

CONOR

That was nice, how you doin'?

TICKY

Not bad, floors went for a
grand, even the singles. I
might eat ten mezzanine but I
can live.

CONOR

What's the score?

TICKY

It's close, they're trading baskets. I didn't save any good pairs I didn't think you'd want to -

CONOR

No, I'm gonna watch through the glass.

EXT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

CONOR and TICKY stand outside the large plate glass window of a sports bar attached to the UNITED CENTER. Being outside allows them the freedom to yell and move around without hassle from the owner or patrons.

CONOR paces and then looks in with TICKY to see the action.

BIG SCREEN TV

Through the glass we watch a big screen TV that shows the game to have a strange, slow quality. MIAMI, the team in black, in-bounds the ball and a guy takes a shot at the buzzer. It misses.

CONOR AND TICKY OUTSIDE THE BAR

CONOR and TICKY are frozen in their stances until the shot misses. CONOR explodes with emotion.

CONOR

SHIT! Hardaway is ice cold.

TICKY

It's alright, one quarter to go Bulls are winning by 3 points and you're gettin' six.

CONOR

Ticky, beware the sleeping giant. You know it, you were here the night Tommy and me had won four grand on the Bear's game... but we bet the whole thing against the Bulls giving 9.

TICKY reflects on the pain.

TICKY

Yeah, the sleeping giant scored 21 in the fourth quarter.

CONOR is white with fear as feeding on his own adrenaline has made him woozy.

CONOR

I don't know what I'm gonna do Ticky.

TICKY

You're gonna ride this bitch out, if you catch it we go to Duffy's and stick his nose in shit.

CONOR is staring off.

CONOR

If it goes down, I gotta leave.

TICKY

Where you gonna go?

CONOR

Got a cousin in Boston.

TICKY

Yeah?

CONOR

Paints cars.

TICKY

You can't stiff Fink.

CONOR

Nah, Fink gets the car, Jimmy
and his company gets the
"fuck you".

CONOR is noticeably shaken, TICKY tries to cheer him.

TICKY

C'mon man, you're up right
now, ride it out.

TICKY checks the game through the glass. CONOR widens
his stance for balance.

WE DISSOLVE THROUGH THE GLASS TO LATER IN THE GAME

We again watch the game through the soft haze of the
plate glass window. The players appear slow but
frantic, with less than 30 seconds to go, the game is
tied. A tall white guy throws up a long awkward shot.
TICKY's voice narrates the action.

TICKY

Kukoc throws up a prayer...
it's good, holy shit! Holy
Shit!

CONOR (O.S.)

Should I look? Should I look?

TICKY

NO! NO! You're not looking
is working, keep not looking!

We see CONOR hunched over staring at the ground, fully
engaged in the betting man's lucky, "Not watching
ritual".

CONOR

How much time is left?

TICKY

Eleven seconds left, Bulls by two, Miami has the ball at half court they're comin' offa' twenty second time out.

CONOR

Oh God Ticky am I outta the woods?

TICKY

Miami will shoot the three to try an' win it. They're on the road that's a rule -- never go to overtime on the road. If they make it you win, if they miss it you win.

CONOR yells at the ground.

CONOR

What's happening?!

A FAMILY walks past slowing slightly to observe CONOR who appears rabid as he continues to scream and plead with the ground while pacing in circles.

CONOR (cont'd)

Talk to me, what's happening?! Oh God never again Ticky, NEVER AGAIN!

The FAMILY rushes off as TICKY begins to narrate.

TICKY

Mashburn is taking the ball from the ref... inbounds to Brown... they're trying to foul him he passes to Hardaway.

CONOR can't resist, he jumps up and presses his face to the glass.

TICKY

Hardaway jumps behind the
three point arc... shoots...
it's.. OFF! He missed!...
Mourning tips it... it's
good!

CONOR

What?!

TICKY

Mourning tipped it in off the
glass with no time left.

CONOR

Tied up? Tied up?!

TICKY has fallen silent, he breathes heavy trying to
regulate his heart as he utters the fatal words...

TICKY

Overtime.

CONOR

Overtime, I'm fucked.

CONOR rests his burning forehead against the cool
glass of the window. He closes his eyes trying to
accept the 5 minutes of prolonged torture...

MINUTES LATER

CONOR leans his back against the glass as TICKY
narrates in a solemn voice.

TICKY

Uhm, Miami has the ball with
24 seconds down by 8, wait
Pippen steals, fouled.
Shooting two.

CONOR

What am I gonna do Tick?

TICKY avoids the question by continuing to narrate the game. Like a death sentence read by a judge he drones on.

TICKY

Pippen hits the second, Hulls
by 10. 15 seconds left.

CONOR begins to lose it, the reality of his situation coupled with his crashing adrenaline causes a rush of emotion.

CONOR

My God Ticky, I was down 11
grand before I made this bet.

TICKY

Hardaway drives untouched,
lay up. Hulls by 8.

CONOR

When this bet misses I'm down
over 24 grand with the vig.

CONOR turns away as his emotions start to get the best of him. CONOR begins to slide down the wall of glass, he sits on the ground. TICKY continues in monotone.

TICKY (cont'd)

Bulls with the ball 9 seconds
left they pass around the
trap, long pass... Ope picked
off...

TICKY's hand grabs CONOR's shoulder for unity. He pulls him up.

TICKY

Hardaway at half court...

CONOR and TICKY both lean into the glass watching the last shot.

BIG SCREEN TV

We see the final shot floating through the air with incredible arc, nearly straight up.

CONOR AND TICKY OUTSIDE THE BAR

We watch them frozen against the glass, we await an outburst telling the result.

TICKY

IT'S GOOD! IT'S GOOD!

TICKY screams and yells and runs around in circles,

CONOR studies the screen trying to find the score.

CONOR

ARE YOU SURE WHAT'S THE FINAL
SCORE?!

TICKY

BULLS BY FIVE YOU COVERED!
YOU COVERED! TWELVE G'S
BABY!

CONOR shoots his arms up in a "V" as if he just floored the champ. TICKY embraces CONOR and lifts him as if he were his corner man. They circle the asphalt outside the window triumphant for once.

INT. DUFFY' S BAR - NIGHT

A mellow Thursday night crowd is disturbed by the raucous entry of CONOR and TICKY who are well on their way to a "fall down drunk".

CONOR

(drunkenly sings)

I love it when you call me
big Pa-Pa
wave your hands in the air-

CONOR looks at TICKY who shoots his hands above his head.

CONOR (cont'd)

If you's a true playa'...'
cause I see some ladies
tonight that should be havin'
my baby...

TICKY (sings)

Baby!

TICKY and CONOR continue to sing and dance. DUFFY comes out of his office with a "Racing Form" in his hand.

DUFFY

You should take this party
somewhere else.

TICKY

Kiss our ass Duffy, he beat
Fink tonight for twelve
grand.

CONOR smiles in triumph.

DUFFY

You got my 6 grand?

CONOR

Tomorrow.

TICKY

Put in this tape.

TICKY hands a tape over the bar, PETER the bartender accepts it. With a nod from DUFFY, PETER puts it in.

The NOTORIOUS B.I.G.'s Big Poppa starts pumping out of the stereo. The few patrons look up trying to figure out if they're still in the same bar.

TICKY downs a shot while dancing. CONOR has retired to a seat at the bar. DUFFY stands on the other side studying him.

DUFFY

So you beat Fink for 12
large?

CONOR

Yeah.

DUFFY

Now what?

CONOR

I dunno.

TICKY jumps in.

TICKY

Whaddya mean you don't know?
We're rollin' it on the Bulls
Saturday night.

CONOR looks to DUFFY for his approval about letting his money ride.

DUFFY

Let me know, I'll take that action on Ticky's number if you wanna play it.

TICKY

We'll bet it with Fink.
Bulls didn't cover tonight,
they got Vancouver on
Saturday, they'll cover. 24
grand.

CONOR

Yeah, 24 grand.

DUFFY stops the tape. He studies CONOR before pushing his buttons.

DUFFY

Then what? You think you won
the game of life? What next?
Huh?

CONOR stands drunk, unsteady. He stares at DUFFY who just asked CONOR the question he has no answer for.

CONOR

I don't know.

DUFFY

If you win that? Whaddya'
gonna do with your life?
(laughing)
Coach little league baseball
for black kids?

CONOR

I DON'T KNOW!... I dunno
Duffy, maybe I'm just a loser
right? Not like you Mister
Big Time huh? I'm just a
loser.

DUFFY

Get 'outta here you're
startin' to sound like your
father.

CONOR lunges across the bar, TICKY and the bartender
grab CONOR and pull him towards the door...

CONOR

So what?! I am my father!
He gambled, lost it all -

DUFFY

Go home-

CONOR

Gambled away his family. I
got nobody to lose Duffy!
Nobody to gamble away!

The whole bar is looking at him now. CONOR has calmed
and now stands by the door about to leave.

CONOR (cont'd)

You tell me Duffy, what am I
supposed to do? Huh? What
would my dad do?!

DUFFY

Okay, O'Neill, bring me my
money tomorrow. Night night,
time for beddy bye.

The BARFLIES giggle. CONOR turns in the doorway and
steps back towards the bar as something doesn't sit
right.

CONOR

Don't talk down to me, maybe
I will coach baseball, MAYBE
I WILL, YOU DON'T SHIT ABOUT
THOSE KIDS! YOU DON'T KNOW
SHIT!

TICKY pulls CONOR outside.

EXT. DUFFY'S BAR - NIGHT

TICKY is holding CONOR who is still trying to fight
his way back into the bar.

CONOR is beginning to break down as his drunkenness
has mixed strangely with his adrenaline crash. He
stops fighting and stares at TICKY.

CONOR

I don't know why, but
coaching was the best thing I
ever did. It made me feel
good.

TICKY tries to put an arm around CONOR. CONOR shoves
him away and stumbles into the night.

INT. CONOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

CONOR stares out the window of his apartment listening
to a local sports radio show naming the pitching
match-ups for Major League Baseball games around the
league.

RADIO

Mets are at Houston, I love
all these non-division games.
It's gonna be a beautiful day
at Wrigley today, I dunno
about beautiful for the
cubbies, Maddux back to the
scene of the crime against
Wood? Forget it, anyway...

CONOR picks up two stacks of bills and thumbs through them. A knock at the door causes CONOR to slip one stack in his pocket and another under the radio. CONOR grabs the bat and stands to the side of the door.

CONOR

Yeah?

TICKY

It's Ticky?

CONOR doesn't respond.

TICKY (cont'd)

I'm alone, I promise. I'll take off my crusty underwear and stand naked in your hallway to prove it.

CONOR still doesn't move.

TICKY (cont'd)

Fine I'm gonna lay on the ground and slide my nuts under your door until you let me in.

CONOR opens the door with bat in hand. TICKY stands there alone. CONOR moves to let him in.

CONOR

I paid Duffy, we're square.

TICKY (cont'd)

Did you call Fink? Are we down on the Bulls? How many points are we givin'?

CONOR

Fink wants to see that I still have his money.

TICKY

Great let's go by there and
flash 'em some cabbage and
bet the 12 grand like we
said.

CONOR is quiet and TICKY senses something...

TICKY (cont'd)

What's with you, we're gonna
do this right?

CONOR

Yeah, okay... I just gotta go
by the field in Cabrini.

TICKY

Jesus Christ I thought you
quit?

CONOR snaps.

CONOR

I QUIT! YOU BET YOUR ASS I
QUIT!

(composes himself)

I gotta drop the equipment
off.

INT. STATIONWAGON - DAY

CONOR continues to listen to the radio. A Cubs pre-
game show hypes the match-ups between the hall-of-
famer Greg Maddux and rookie phenom Carey Woods.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The stationwagon pulls up behind the Backstop and we
can see that the KIKUYUS are arriving for practice.
CONOR jumps out of the car and grabs the equipment bag
and runs to the dugout for a quick drop off.

FIELD

The KIKUYUS gather around CONOR as he starts to leave.

TIKI

You here to tell us you quit?

ALONZO

That's old news.

CONOR surveys their faces, all are emotionless except G-BABY who can't help but smile, happy to see CONOR. CONOR explains.

CONOR

I left a message for Coach Jimmy that I was just gonna drop off the equipment today, he should be here any minute.

The KIKUYUS stare at him, they know JIMMY will never show. No one will. CONOR can no longer look them in the face. The car horn blasts.

TICKY

TICKY is standing outside the car smoking a cigarette. He continues to reach through the window, sounding the horn in frustration.

CONOR starts walking back to the car.

TIKI

Yeah, keep goin', sucka'!

CALVERT

Yeah, we goin' to the ship by ourself!

CAR

CONOR returns to the car and looks at TICKY.

CONOR

I can't bet the 12 grand.

TICKY

Fine, I understand. We should just bet 6 grand and wait till -

CONOR

No, I can't.

Off camera we hear ALONZO yell...

ALONZO

Get your bummy ass outta here! We a betta team with out you anyway!

CONOR storms back to the KIKUYUS. The players are a little scared of CONOR's energy.

CONOR

HAH! I'm not even listening to you... So go 'head, good luck on your own. Call me when you get to the "ship" without me.

CONOR storms away again. The KIKUYUS exchange looks of confusion as CONOR continues to argue with himself.

CONOR (cont'd)

I'm so glad I'm done with this. So, good luck... HAH! See you later.

CONOR again reaches his car.

TICKY

Can we please go, if Fink think's we're comin' we should at least stop by, if we don't wanna bet it we don't...

TICKY realizes he's talking to himself as CONOR has stormed back towards the players.

PLAYERS

CONOR again stands angry before the KIKUYUS.

CONOR

How many you guys ever been
to Wrigley field to see the
Cubs play?

The KIKUYUS don't move, an admission that none of them
has.

CONOR (cont'd)

HAH! That's what I thought!
You guys will never be a team
until you see it played
right!

CONOR picks up the equipment bag and walks back to the
car in disgust. The KIKUYUS watch in confusion.

CAR

CONOR returns to the car and TICKY makes a soft plea.

TICKY

Listen, you're stressed out.
Let's grab a bite, we can
call Fink and lay the bet.

CONOR

I'M OUT TICKY! YOU HEAR ME?!
I'M OUT!

We see in CONOR the exhausted relief of a man who just
exorcised a demon. He softly adds...

CONOR

I'm done. I'm done with all
that.

TICKY is silent a moment before continuing with his
quest.

TICKY

Well then you gotta call Fink
for me, you can't just
dissolve a partnership like
that I mean -

CONOR yells to the KIKUYUS...

CONOR (cont'd)

Let's go! Get in the car,
the game starts in 20
minutes.

The kids rush the wagon pushing TICKY out of the way
as LOUIS and FREDDY jump in the front seat. The rest
of the kids dive in all the other doors and through
the large window at the rear. CONOR has the car
started and is backing up as TICKY runs along side.

TICKY

This is against everything
that's right.

CONOR zooms away, the car packed with screaming
KIKUYUS. TICKY shakes his head and waves his arms
pissed off for the minute it takes him to realize he's
not in Kansas anymore.

He looks nervously around before trying to figure his
safest route home.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

The stadium is swarming with fans trying to get in.
CONOR has the kids in a tight circle, he counts heads
as he approaches the mayhem.

CONOR makes eye contact with a YOUNG SCALPER.

YOUNG SCALPER

What?

CONOR

12 seats.

TICKY
Bleachers? Upper deck?

CONOR
Field boxes over the Cubs
dugout.

YOUNG SCALPER
(laughing)
Yeah that's possible, even if
they existed that would cost
1500.

CONOR
I'll give you \$1200.

CONOR flashes a stack of bills from his pocket. The
YOUNG SCALPER sets off into the crowd.

The KIKUYUS are remarkably well behaved as they all
stare in awe at the beautiful old ball park.

G-BABY
It looks small from the
train, but up close it's big.

We see Wrigley from a low angle, the eyes of a child.
The ball park is gorgeous.

THE YOUNG SCALPER returns with a triumphant smile and
shows CONOR a stack of tickets.

CONOR examines them like a pro and hands the YOUNG
SCALPER a fold of bills.

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

CONOR escorts the KIKUYUS through the inside ramps of
Wrigley. The boys move slowly, their senses are
overloaded with new sounds and sights. They hand
their tickets to a young stern USHER with a suit
jacket who examines them and then the tickets. He
shakes his head... unhooks a rope...

USHER

Right this way gentlemen.

FIELD

We see the dream like green of the playing field that dances like magic in the minds of the boys seeing it for the first time. CONOR is stopped in his tracks. The majesty of the color and precision of the beautiful landscape reminds him that you never get used to the brilliance of a major league field.

BOX SEATS

The USHER leads the KIKUYUS to the three boxes that border the Cubs' dugout. The kids respectfully take their seats, still awed by the experience.

ALONZO points to a guy picking up a bat a few feet from them.

ALONZO

Check it out, it's Sammy Sosa
yo.

The KIKUYUS all rush to that corner of the dugout and begin trying to get the player's attention. They all call, "Hey Sammy" and "Sosa over here!". We see that the back of the players jersey reads BB denoting "bat boy", but the KIKUYUS remain clueless. Except for CALVERT...

CALVERT

That ain't Sosa.

The KIKUYUS jump on CALVERT, yelling at him to "shut up", "It's Sosa!". CALVERT walks away from that corner of the dugout.

Suddenly we see CALVERT's eyes go wide... SAMMY SOSA is standing right in front of him talking with the batting coach. CALVERT's mouth goes immediately dry and speech is impossible.

SAMMY SOSA sees CALVERT who musters a small wave. SAMMY smiles and waves back as he continues talking with the batting coach. The rest of the KIKUYUS now see SAMMY and crowd near CALVERT's seat. They call

out, "Sammy whassup'" and they shake clenched fists at him.

SAMMY smiles and approaches the KIKUYUS. He offers his clenched fist and exchanges "pounds" with the kids who in this moment have died and gone to heaven.

CONOR smiles bigger than we've ever seen as he watches the boys interact with Chicago's greatest slugger.

CUBS GAME - MONTAGE

The boys eat and spill ice cream, soda and hot dogs as they continually leave their seats to cheer the Cubs who are having an uncharacteristically offensive day against MADDUX.

We watch them sing "Take me out to the Ball game" during the seventh inning stretch.

CONOR joins in the somewhat hokey but cool tradition.

The game ends and fans fill the aisles to go home. Never wanting to leave, the boys hang over the dugout and call out to their favorite players of the day.

CONOR sits by himself staring into center field wearing a truly satisfied smile.

INT. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

CONOR waves to SISTER MOLINA as he passes her office en route to ELIZABETH's class.

The kids have long since gone home and CONOR again finds himself outside ELIZABETH's closed door. He knocks and then waits for a response.

CONOR suddenly remembers something and jumps out of the way just as the door swings open. ELIZABETH stands in the door way.

CONOR
Missed me.

ELIZABETH

Conor O'Neill.

CONOR

I wanted to apologize for the other night, I was wrong.

ELIZABETH

I heard about the Cubs game.

CONOR

Yeah?

ELIZABETH

Do you have any idea how much that meant to them?

CONOR quietly accepts the praise, then...

CONOR

I was thinking about how you knew before dinner the other night that I didn't really work with Jimmy and them and that I had a big gambling debt and... If you were there to offer me a job... it might still stand.

ELIZABETH

You're not here to ask me out again?

CONOR tries to read her, he guesses.

CONOR

Uh... no?

ELIZABETH

Okay.

CONOR

Am I s'posed to be?

ELIZABETH

We need a physical activities coordinator.

CONOR

You and me?

ELIZABETH

(she laughs)

No, the school. Someone to
organize games, sports,
supervise recess we'd love to
get a guy because -

CONOR

I think you like me.

ELIZABETH

What?

CONOR

I just got this gut feeling
when you laughed before --
you were looking right at me.

They stare at each other, ELIZABETH offers...

ELIZABETH

Are you interested?

CONOR

In the job?

ELIZABETH breaks the stare by laughing, CONOR starts
laughing too.

CONOR

What are we talking about
here?! I'm interested, I'm
interested in anything
I'm supposed to be interested
in.

They both laugh as we see them in a long shot from
down the hallway. The sun threatens its early
departure as the long shadows of early spring cast a
hopeful light.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

A fresh energy surrounds the KIKUYUS as news of their trip to Wrigley has spread through the league. The boys are warming up for a game against the BAKONGOS as CONOR is approached by AL CARTER and MATT HYLAND.

CONOR

Afternoon gentlemen.

AL CARTEER

I heard you took your team to a Cubs game.

CONOR

Yeah, that's right.

AL CARTER

I didn't see any paperwork, signatures of consent from the parents or-

CONOR

It was a spur of the moment thing.

MATT HYLAND

I thought you were quitting.

CONOR

I decided coaching was more important.

AL CARTER

I could toss you out, you're on a suspension. But I guess you only got two games left.

CONOR

Three, counting the Championship.

MATT HYLAND

You'd have to win both games to make the championship.

CONOR

We can beat these guys.

AL CARTER and MATT HYLAND exchange smirks of disbelief. MATT offers...

MATT HYLAND

Even if you find a way to win today, you gotta play us again Saturday, we're undefeated.

CONOR

Yeah, and after we beat you we play for the championship.

CONOR walks away.

BAKONGOS GAME

Emotions run high on both sides as the game is incredibly close. The BAKONGOS COACH argues a call at home place.

CONOR yells at the infield ump for missing a call at first base.

STANDS

The stands behind the KIKUYUS are almost full with about thirty fans. The KIKUYUS' fans are invested in every play of this game, the tension continues to build.

DUGOUT

CONOR addresses the boys who seem tired and drained from the high intensity this game has assumed.

CONOR

Okay this is it, last licks, we're down 9 to 8. We've got Alonzo -

We see ALONZO holding a bat with his game face on.

CONOR

Ray-Ray-

RAY-RAY who kisses the gold cross around his neck before looking to the heavens for support.

CONOR

Freddy -

FREDDY smiles, lost in the world of his walkman.

CONOR

After that is Louis, Tiki and Calvert -

We find CALVERT furiously sucking on his inhaler. CALVERT raises his arm as a sign of "I'm okay".

GAME - LATER

The BAKONGO pitcher fires a third strike past ALONZO, one out.

RAY-RAY takes four straight pitches for a walk.

CONOR grabs FREDDY.

CONOR

Don't swing until you look over here and I nod "yes". Okay?

FREDDY takes four straight pitches, he goes to first sending RAY-RAY to second.

LOUIS approaches CONOR and awaits his orders.

CONOR (cont'd)

Don't swing until you look over here and I nod "yes". Okay?

LOUIS watches two balls go by, he looks to CONOR who shakes his head "No".

LOUIS watches two strikes go by and looks to CONOR.

CONOR

Obviously struggles but shakes his head "No".

LOUIS takes ball three, full count. He again looks to CONOR.

CONOR

Takes a moment before shaking his head "No."

LOUIS waits for the pitch, he let's it go... BALL FOUR. Bases loaded and TIKI steps to CONOR.

CONOR

Don't swing until you look
over here and I nod "yes".
Okay?

TIKI stares at CONOR and then out towards the loaded bases. CONOR nervously shakes TIKI.

CONOR (cont'd)

Tiki, did you hear me?

TIKI gives a halfhearted nod as he steps to the plate.

TIKI

TIKI watches two balls go by, checking with CONOR each time. Both times CONOR shakes, "No" to TIKI's dismay.

At 2 and 0 TIKI looks to CONOR who shakes "No". TIKI awaits the next pitch and swings hitting a feeble pop up right to the pitcher who catches it making the second out.

TIKI returns to the dugout as CONOR stares at him with disgust for his disrespect. CONOR tries to go on.

CONOR

Okay, two down who's up?

CONOR looks to the bench to see CALVERT attached to his inhaler looking exhausted but stable. CALVERT's mom rubs his shoulders from over the short fence separating the players from the stands. CALVERT

shakes his head "No" in an effort to communicate his inability to bat.

CONOR looks down the bench to see his only sub, G-BABY staring at him.

CONOR (cont'd)
G-Baby you're up.

G-BABY fearlessly grabs a bat and a helmet and is running toward home plate as CONOR goes to the ump to announce the substitution.

HOME PLATE

CONOR is met by the BAKONGO COACH who is curious about the potential "ringer" being brought in at the last minute.

CONOR
Blue, I've got Jarius Evans
batting for Calvert Tibbs.

BAKONGO COACH
Wait Sir, I need to find
Evans on my roster -

The BAKONGO COACH is about to raise a stink until he sees the diminutive G-BABY.

BAKONGO COACH (cont'd)
Oh, Okay, he's here... Jarius
Evans.

The BAKONGO players throw taunts like, "that bat's bigger than him" "Robbie just throw it in", "He too scared to swing".

CONOR pulls G-BABY from the batter's box where he's already dug himself in.

CONOR
Listen I don't want you to
swing until you look over
here and I nod my head "yes".
Okay?

G-BABY

I ain't no busta coach.

CONOR

I know, I had those guys
takin' pitches too, so just
look to me for a sign.

G-BABY nods as he goes back to the batter's box.

GAME - LATER

G-BABY watches the first two balls go by and smiles at the prospect of a walk. CONOR smiles shaking his head "No" after each pitch.

The BAKONGO pitcher fires a pitch as hard as he can that G-BABY has to fall backwards to avoid getting hit by. BALL THREE.

G-BABY nervously resets in the box as the BAKONGO pitcher now throws the ball softly over the plate for strike one. CONOR shakes "No".

The next pitch comes quickly right over the plate, "Strike Two!" The BAKONGO PITCHER has his confidence back. The BAKONGO COACH joins the BAKONGO players in reminding the pitcher that, "One more just like that and we go to the playoffs". "Right over the plate and sit him down".

CONOR approaches the plate.

CONOR

Time out Blue.

G-BABY walks to CONOR who kneels down to see him eye to eye.

CONOR (cont'd)

Listen, you can swing if you
want but you don't have to.
Okay, if you go down looking
none of us care. You hear
me? You get back in there

and you do what you think is
best.

G-BABY nods, too focused on his own adrenaline to hear what CONOR just said.

G-BABY digs in and faces his fate. The BAKONGO pitcher sets and fires a pitch toward the plate. G-BABY swings late but catches enough of the ball to send it towards first base. The FIRST BASEMAN heads towards the line extending his glove towards the ground. The ball sneaks just inside first base and beyond the reach of the FIRST BASEMAN's glove.

G-BABY instinctively sprints towards first base and as he sees the ball rolling into right field he extends his arms above his head.

CONOR's hands shoot above his head and the KIKUYUS meet at home plate as FREDDY and RAY-RAY score to win the game. G-BABY gets swamped by the KIKUYUS.

MONTAGE OF CONOR'S ROUTINE

The Rolling Stones, "Gimme Shelter" accompanies CONOR on today's errands.

We see CONOR roll out of his apartment his hair freshly slicked from a hot shower. He jumps in his car.

CONOR approaches the CUTE RECEPTIONIST at Morgan Stanley who hands him a check, he smiles and leaves.

CONOR pulls up to the BARBER SHOP and hops out. Inside the barber shop he gets playfully shoved around by the guys hanging around. BARBER is a huge fat man in a comfortable chair.

CONOR respectfully hands him an envelope. BARBER nods and CONOR leaves.

CONOR loads four boxes of liquor into the stationwagon. DUFFY jokes with CONOR as their differences appear settled.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The KIKUYUS stand along the fence of their dugout watching with fear as the undefeated IBOS warm up. The IBOS are a well oiled machine as they fire the ball around the field with drilled precision. CONOR interrupts them.

CONOR

What's everybody looking at?

CONOR stands at the mouth of the dugout holding the boxes of booze he got from DUFFY'S.

CONOR (cont'd)

Listen up, I need you guys to sit down.

The team sits on the bench as CONOR begins.

CONOR (cont'd)

You guys made me proud against the Bakongos. Not because you won, but because you played like a team. And because you played like a team I thought you should look like a team.

CONOR opens the first box of booze and pulls out a brand new crisp white jersey with Kelley green piping. The boys are silenced by the beauty of the lettering that reads "KIKUYUS" on the front. CONOR turns the jersey around to see that it reads "TIBBS" with number 52 on it. A Kelly green shamrock and a scripted "Duffy's Tavern" monicker adorns the right sleeve.

CONOR (CONT'D)

Calvert, I believe this is yours.

Like Knights of the round table the players stand when their name is called and accept their uniform with the pride of royal order.

ALONZO has pulled open the other boxes revealing pants, socks, hats and green Nike cleats of varying size.

IBOS DUGOUT

MATT HYLAND gives orders to his quiet team that is terrified by their overbearing coach.

MATT HYLAND

...And if you don't know what to do look at me for a sign or instruction. I'll always make the call. You got that?

We hear the sound of commotion building in the KIKUYU dugout. The IBOS stand up to the fence of their dugout to see...

KIKUYUS DUGOUT

With no shame the KIKUYUS have begun to strip in broad daylight, anxious to transform into baseball players.

STANDS

CONOR looks to see the stands filling up. DUFFY arrives with his wife. ELIZABETH sits with a few of the mothers. ELIZABETH and CONOR exchange smiles.

KIKUYUS DUGOUT

The KIKUYUS stand in front of their dugout subtly preening and fixing each other's uniforms.

They try to mask their pride, but we can tell that they look at themselves differently.

RAY-RAY wears a batting helmet and grabs a bat as he's up first.

GAME - LATER

TIKI hits a bases loaded grounder up the middle and we see the KIKUYUS ride their new confidence to an early 4 run lead.

GAME - LATER

The IBOS have picked up steam as their pitcher continues to mow down the KIKUYUS in order. We feel the momentum shift as the IBOS get louder with their chant of "Who's gonna knock you out? Ibos gonna knock you out!"

The last inning ALONZO pitches in to a jam and CONOR barks the umpire as he approaches the mound.

CONOR
Pitching change, third base
in to pitch.

We see FREDDY cowering at third base afraid to pitch. CONOR gets to the mound and ALONZO happily gives up the ball in the tense situation. FREDDY has arrived at the mound and looks at CONOR with abject fear.

CONOR (cont'd)
Listen Freddy, we're up 4 to
2. You get one guy out we go
to the 'ship.

FREDDY
I can't pitch, they're really
gonna sweat me. They gonna
yell and then I can't think.

CONOR
You're in charge out here,
don't rush. You can hear Big
Poppa in your head, right?

FREDDY
Yeah, just sometimes I lose
the rhythm.

CONOR

It's okay just relax and take
a minute to get it back when
you need to. Freddy, you're
great. I'm not worried.

FREDDY smiles at CONOR's confident remarks. CONOR
leaves the mound.

GAME - LATER

FREDDY winds up and throws, BALL FOUR, he walks in a
run. The score is now 4 to 3 and the KIKUYUS cling to
a one run lead. FREDDY is coming apart at the seams
as the IBOS continue to increase the volume and energy
of their chants.

FREDDY is near tears as he waits for the next IBO to
step in to the box. CONOR stands in front of the
KIKUYU dugout slowly waving his arms above his head.
He begins saying something...

FIELD

The KIKUYU players all look to CONOR to try and figure
out what he's saying. FREDDY holds the ball studying
him.

CONOR

CONOR is getting loud enough for us to hear him as he
stands unabashedly grooving back and forth.

CONOR

(singing)

I love it when you call me
big Poppa,
wave your hands in the air if
you's a true playa...
cuz I see some ladies tonight
that should be havin' my
baby, baby!

CALVERT immediately catches on and throws his hands above his head and begins singing along to the chorus of Big Poppa.

ALONZO catches on and smiles as he turns to communicate the song to TIKI in center field.

RAY-RAY has the catcher's mask in his hand and stands on home plate conducting the whole team who has now caught on.

The whole KIKUYU team is singing Notorious B.I.G.'s song.

FREDDY smiles at CONOR before rolling his head to the well synchronized chorus.

The IBO players are silenced as they listen and watch the KIKUYUS sing. For them there's something haunting about the smooth sound of the chorus of twelve year old voices.

FREDDY focuses on homeplate and delivers three quick strikes to end the game.

The KIKUYUS meet at the mound and toss FREDDY around as they all chant, "We goin' to the ship!"

CONOR is content to watch from the dugout as the boys celebrate as a team.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN PROJECTS - NIGHT

CONOR pulls up to the curb of one of the Cabrini "quads". TIKI and G-BABY get out. CONOR offers out the window.

CONOR
Wednesday night practice.

TIKI has already stepped clear of the car, G-BABY lingers for a second.

G-BABY
Thanks for the uniform.

CONOR waves a "you're welcome" and drives off. G-BABY runs to catch up with his brother.

EXT. CABRINI BUILDING - NIGHT

The nights have warmed up creating more tension and drug activity on the "Green". TIKI and G-BABY continue toward their building. A strange energy accompanies the warm night.

BUILDING

A group of young men conspicuously linger in front of their building. TIKI pauses for a moment before walking to the door. A GANG KID approaches him.

GANG KID

Can't go in there now.

TIKI looks around to see that the gang is obviously staking out this entrance to the building in hopes of catching someone in particular on the way out.

TIKI

How long it gonna be?

The GANG KID shrugs. "I dunno". TIKI looks around at the determined faces of the gang. He spots a younger kid milling behind two guys, it's MAURICE. TIKI steps towards him.

TIKI (cont'd)

Yo Reese whattup?

MAURICE offers a cold nod to his former teammate. TIKI gets the hint, collects G-BABY, and heads around the side of the building.

SIDE OF THE BUILDING

G-BABY senses danger and appeals to TIKI.

G-BABY

Why can't they just let us in.

TIKI

Cuz' they waitin' to cap
somebody who's in there.

G-BABY

What're we gonna do?

TIKI ponders this question and decides to head towards the back entrance. G-BABY grabs TIKI's hand and hustles with him towards the back of the building.

BACK OF THE BUILDING

TIKI and G-BABY step into the dim light of the back stoop just in time to see TWO GUYS leaving the building with guns drawn. As the TWO GUYS leave the stoop and run to the right, TIKI pulls G-BABY to the left, back around the building the way they just came.

In the darkness on the side of the building we can see that the GANG has gotten wise to the back door and they run with guns blazing. TIKI reacts quickly to the GUN SHOTS and pulls himself and G-BABY in to the small hedge along the building.

G-BABY

Oh shit-

TIKI

Quiet, they'll pass by.

We see and hear the shadows of the GANG fly by, TIKI keeps G-BABY low to the ground. After they pass, TIKI stands and pulls G-BABY to his feet and the boys run for the back door. When they get to the light, TIKI pulls G-BABY into the dim entrance way.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

TIKI sits them both on the floor out of view and safe for the moment. TIKI looks at G-BABY to see that his eyes are wide with fear.

TIKI

It's alright we're okay.

G-BABY's gaze is fixed on TIKI as his breathing gets heavy.

TIKI (cont'd)
G' we're okay.

TIKI looks down to see a tiny hole in G-BABY's chest, the size of a straw. Blood begins to flow freely now as TIKI shakes his semi-conscious brother.

TIKI (cont'd)
Okay, c'mon, get up. G'
c'mon.

G-BABY's eyes flutter for a moment before locking in to a lifeless stare. TIKI's shocked reaction leads him to pull G-BABY close to him and wait for someone to find them.

TIKI (cont'd)
Okay, we'll just wait for
someone to come, it's okay.

INT. CONOR'S APARTMENT - DAWN

The first shafts of dawn's light glow on Conor's yellow curtains. We see CONOR asleep on his stomach as the phone rings. He grabs it and sits up.

CONOR
Yeah?

CONOR pulls an old digital clock radio to his face to check the time. 6:40.

CONOR (cont'd)
What? Elizabeth? Okay,
okay.

CONOR hangs up the phone and sits motionless as the tragic news grounds him to the bone.

EXT. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ELB"ENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

CONOR shows up to find a commotion that only the death of a 9 year old boy can provoke.

Local news and hysterical parents dominate the school. CONOR wanders dreamlike through the crowd searching for ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH grabs CONOR and he looks at her swollen eyes.

ELIZABETH

Conor it's awful, the kids
are walking around dazed and
the parents are in the church
praying.

Suddenly his players CALVERT, ALONZO, RAY-RAY and LOUIS are grabbing his arms and trying to hold an to his hands.

CONOR panics and breaks free of the kids, he looks at ELIZABETH and with nothing to say he walks away from her. She watches as CONOR runs to his car and drives away.

INT. DUFFY'S BAR - NIGHT

CONOR is locked in a seat at the end of the bar. He's obviously been here all day, drinking and staring into space.

JIMMY approaches CONOR and puts an arm on his shoulder.

JIMMY

I'm sorry about the kid-

CONOR raises his hand and stops JIMMY mid-sentence. JIMMY goes silent and takes a moment before continuing.

JIMMY (cont'd)
I just wanted to make sure
that we're okay. Y'know?
Legally? I mean the kid
didn't get shot because we
didn't take him home right?

CONOR calmly drains a drink before punching JIMMY in
the mouth, knocking him to the floor.

JIMMY is more stunned than hurt as he gets up.

JIMMY (cont'd)
You're as crazy as a shit
house rat O'Neill.

CONOR gets off his stool and JIMMY makes a hasty exit.

ELIZABETH is standing near the door having just
arrived. CONOR returns to his bar stool.

ELIZABETH sits next to CONOR and orders a drink.

ELIZABETH
Jamison's neat.

The BARTENDER places a glass of straight whiskey in
front of her. ELIZABETH takes a liberal swig without
flinching. CONOR finally reacts to her.

CONOR
Who told you where I was?

ELIZABETH
The sleeves on those uniforms
proudly advertise Duffy's
tavern. I took a shot.

CONOR
Nice uniforms.

ELIZABETH
Beautiful, but that's not
what they need right now.

CONOR stands for the first time in hours and begins dropping money on the bar. He ignores her comment, pays his tab and leaves.

EXT. DUFFY'S BAR - NIGHT

CONOR lights a cigarette and begins searching his pockets for his keys, ELIZABETH appears.

ELIZABETH

Is this an Irish thing? The quiet Man routine? Drunken, Stoic, no emotion -

CONOR

My father died in November.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry.

CONOR

I didn't cry at the wake. I couldn't, it just wasn't there.

ELIZABETH steps close to him and like a subtle dance move he takes a small step away.

CONOR (cont'd)

What do you want from me?

ELIZABETH

The kids are so upset and confused -

CONOR explodes.

CONOR

So what?! You want me to come in there and tell them it's gonna be okay?! I can't do that. I won't do that.

ELIZABETH fights back.

ELIZABETH

You've become a part of their life. They're not just there for you to play Santa Claus to clean your conscience when you beat the bookie.

CONOR

This is great, I'm sure they'd love to know you came down here and dragged me out of a bar for them.

ELIZABETH

I came for me! For me. Maybe I came to see you, maybe I need to talk about it.

CONOR softens, thinking of G-BABY.

CONOR

He was nine years old.

ELIZABETH senses CONOR's vulnerability and goes to him. She lightly places her arms around him. CONOR stands still, defenseless, accepting the hug.

CONOR breaks the hug and nods as he walks into the night. ELIZABETH watches him go.

INT. ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

CONOR makes his way into the last pew of the large church. It's quiet as he sits in silence trying to collect his thoughts. CONOR pulls the kneeling bench from under the pew in front of him and kneels to pray. He is overcome with emotion.

INT. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH - DAY

The chapel of the church is packed with the families of the Cabrini community. A spiritual verse is sung by a chorus in red robes led by a BLACK MINISTER in a white robe.

CONOR joins the congregation by slipping in to a crowded pew. He wears a tie and a dark suit obviously held over from his dad's funeral.

The hymn ends and the MINISTER begins the memorial by reading a verse from the Old Testament.

CONOR scans the room to see ELIZABETH sitting with ALONZO, CALVERT, RAY-RAY and LOUIS.

The church has become silent as PEARLA EVANS has approached the podium.

PEARLA EVANS

Over the past two days we've
been able to hear testimony
from those very close to our
family and in our community.

A scattering of "Praise Jesus" trickles through the crowd.

CONOR continues to study the assembly, touched by the unity as he watches women in floral dresses use paper church calendars to fan themselves in the growing heat.

PEARLA EVANS (cont'd)

I wanted to give a few more
people an opportunity to say
something on Jarius' behalf.
I would like to ask Coach
O'Neill to speak, is he here
today?

The assembly looks around to see if someone identifies.

CONOR raises his hand, shocked by the request. He stands to say something and PEARLA EVANS speaks into the microphone...

PEARLA EVANS (cont'd)

Please Mr. O'Neill, c'mon up.

CONOR pauses before making his way to the podium.

PODIUM.

CONOR nervously loosens his tie as he looks blankly at the assembly before beginning.

CONOR

Good Morning. Everyone. Umh... Jarius was a player on the Kikuyus baseball team... that I coach. Honestly, he was too young to play, but he wanted to be a part of the team so badly that I couldn't say no. He was a really tough guy, I'm sure you all know that. Just a boy who wanted to be around his older brother. He had a great smile too, I know I'm not telling you anything you don't know.

CONOR pauses, nervous and emotional before telling his story.

CONOR

Y'know we played a really important game against a good team and with two outs in the last inning I had no choice but to let Jarius bat because we had no other players. He was fearless as he stepped to the plate. I was terrified... for him.

The assembly laughs at CONOR's honesty.

CONOR (cont'd)

And with two strikes and our hopes dwindling he hit a shot down the first base line and won the game.

CONOR gets emotional. He takes two quick breaths and continues.

CONOR (cont'd)
And watching him raise his
arms in triumph as he ran to
first base...

CONOR raises his arms during the re-tell of this part
of the story.

CONOR (cont'd)
I swear I was lifted in that
moment to a better place. I
swear he lifted the world in
that moment, y'know? He made
me a better person even if
just for that moment.

CONOR lowers his arms and returns to his body.

CONOR (cont'd)
I am forever grateful to
Jarius for that.

CONOR leaves the podium having moved the assembly to
an honest silence. ELIZABETH wipes her eyes watching
CONOR leave the podium.

EXT. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

CONOR has stolen outside to have a cigarette as the
memorial is breaking up. LENORA TIBBS approaches him.

LENORA TIBBS
There's some people who wanna
talk to you about the
baseball team.

CONOR flicks his cigarette to the ground.

CONOR
The team is done.

LENORA TIBBS
That's what they wanna talk
about, they're in Miss Wilkes
room.

LENORA TIBBS points to the school building behind them. CONOR hesitates before storming off to face the angry mob.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CLASSROOM - DAY

CONOR barges in the door prepared to do battle with the angry parents of the KIKUYUS.

The only people inside the classroom are the KIKUYUS seated in a circle wearing their best church clothes. They all look to CONOR as he stands in the doorway.

RAY-RAY

We know the league wanna
cancel the championship game-

CALVERT

My mama said it up to us 'cuz
of G-Baby.

CONOR

Yeah, it's over. We don't
have to play, you guys had a
great year. You can keep the
uniforms.

CONOR starts to head out. FREDDY pipes up.

FREDDY

Wait -

CONOR turns back.

FREDDY (cont'd)

You quittin' again?

CONOR

What d'ya mean?

ALONZO

We wanna play bitch!

The KIKUYUS start chiming in, "Yeah, we wanna play".
"For G-Baby, let's play in the ship", "We gonna play
in the ship".

CONOR
You guys wanna play?

KIKUYUS
Hell yeah, motha fucka!

CONOR smiles as he admires their spirit. He thinks, then...

CONOR
I'll see you guys tomorrow at
11.

The team reacts to the news.

EXT. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARKING LOT - DAY

ELIZABETH catches CONOR at his car.

ELIZABETH
It's been such an emotional
couple of days.

CONOR
Yeah.

ELIZABETH
I'm gonna come to the game
tomorrow.

CONOR
Okay.

ELIZABETH
Have you thought any more
about the job.

CONOR
I dunno, I'm thinking about
it.

ELIZABETH kisses CONOR, he kisses her back. They
break, ELIZABETH smiles as she walks away.

INT. DUFFY'S BAR - NIGHT

CONOR is still wearing his good suit as he unwinds at the bar. DUFFY taps CONOR on the shoulder.

DUFFY

There's a girl wants you
outside.

EXT. DUFFY'S BAR - NIGHT

CONOR exits the bar to find ELIZABETH obviously distraught.

CONOR

What?

ELIZABETH

Tiki's runnin' around Cabrini
looking for the guys who shot
Jarius.

CONOR stares back towards the bar, wanting to return to his warm seat and cold beer.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

They haven't seen him for two
hours.

CONOR hesitates before jumping in his car and racing off.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN PROJECTS - NIGHT

CONOR jumps out of the wagon and begins combing the dark asphalt lawn for TIKI.

CONOR traces the buildings' entrances by memory having made many trips there in the dark.

After scouring the front entrance of TIKI's building, he heads towards the rear. CONOR hears a rustling and stops.

CONOR

Tiki?

A small figure bursts out of the hedge and begins sprinting across the lawn. CONOR takes off after him.

We see TIKI's dark form moving quickly across the quad until he takes a turn towards the dimly lit entrance of a maintenance building.

CONOR sees him clearly in the light and is able to corner him by the door. Both CONOR and TIKI are exhausted.

CONOR

Let's go, c'mon.

TIKI

Fuck you.

TIKI shoves CONOR. CONOR shoves him back.

CONOR

You wanna fuck with me? Huh?

CONOR shoves TIKI twice, TIKI swings and misses.

CONOR (cont'd)

What's your fuckin' problem with me?

TIKI

Fuck you, you got everything.

CONOR is stunned by this accusation.

CONOR

I got everything?! Like what?

TIKI

You got money and a car and shit. You just lay up with yo friends, yo parents. My dad's dead and now my little brother's dead too.

CONOR

My dad's dead. Died around
Christmas.

TIKI hears this and looks at CONOR, listening.

CONOR

I ain't got shit. That car
ain't mine, I owe a couple a
grand to some guys. My
life's a fuckin' mess.

TIKI sees CONOR in a new light.

TIKI

How 'bout those new uniforms?

CONOR

I won money on a basketball
game.

TIKI

I'm sorry 'bout your dad.

CONOR

He wasn't that great a guy.

TIKI

Mine neither.

CONOR

G-Baby was a good kid, I'm
gonna miss him.

TIKI begins to break down at the mention of G-BABY.
CONOR trusts an instinct and puts his arm around TIKI.
TIKI responds by burying his face in CONOR's chest.

CONOR

People really care about you.
Your mother and Elizabeth and
everybody's been lookin' for
you.

TIKI

Elizabeth?

CONOR

Ms. Wilkes.

TIKI nods in understanding. TIKI has composed himself and pursues the "Ms. Wilkes" line of questioning.

TIKI

Ms. Wilkes? She your girl?

CONOR

I dunno.

TIKI

How far you been with her?

CONOR gets shy remembering the day's kiss.

CONOR

I kissed her.

TIKI laughs. CONOR is self-conscious.

CONOR

What?

TIKI

Man, I gone further 'wit a girl than you.

TIKI laughs and CONOR smiles allowing TIKI his moment. CONOR starts walking back towards the buildings, he turns to TIKI.

CONOR

You comin' to the game tomorrow?

TIKI starts backing away from CONOR.

TIKI

Nah, I'm done playin' ball.

CONOR

Alright, I understand. Let's go home.

TIKI
You go home, I got somethin'
to do.

TIKI backs further away, CONOR knows he's losing him.

CONOR
Wait, Tiki I'll stay-

TIKI takes off, CONOR helplessly watches him disappear.

EXT. CABRINI GREEN BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

CONOR stares at the team who stare back.

CONOR
I want you guys to take a
good look at yourselves...
and be proud.

We begin a pan of the players; ALONZO, RAY-RAY,
LOUIS...

CONOR
We made it here, we're here.

The pan continues; CALVERT, FREDDY, MAURICE.

CONOR (cont'd)
What I've learned from you is
that... really the most
important thing in life is
showing up. I'm blown away
by your ability to show up...
through everything that's
gone on.

CONOR reels in his emotions and re-directs his speech.

CONOR (cont'd)

The league never wanted us to play this game but you guys showed up. But we only got eight guys today so we can't play.

TIKI appears with his mom, PEARLA, standing behind him. TIKI speaks to the team.

TIKI

He was my brother, he loved to watch us play. He's still watchin' us. We gonna play today.

The players surround TIKI, physically supporting him. They pat his head, touch his shoulders and exchange hand slaps. This is a team.

RAY-RAY, ALONZO and CALVERT hand out crude black arm bands that say "G-Baby" in silver marker. The players all affix the bands to their left arms. Many of the players have also written G-BABYS number, "11", on the side of their hats.

CALVERT and ALONZO place an arm band around TIKI's left arm.

CONOR

Okay, this is for G-baby.
Take the field.

The KIKUYUS roar onto the field.

CONOR turns to see ELIZABETH standing at the entrance to the dugout. CONOR goes to her.

ELIZABETH

I just wanted to make sure you guys are gonna win, I bet with your friend Ticky.

CONOR looks to see TICKY smiling in the stands shrugging his shoulders.

CONOR

Knowing Ticky bet against us
improves our chances.

ELIZABETH

Ticky also told me that
you're gonna work at the
school. I'm thinking that's
not a bad idea.

CONOR

I'm thinking the same thing.

ELIZABETH smiles at CONOR, he smiles back.

CONOR turns to see TIKI waiting for him. TIKI places
an arm band around CONOR's left arm.

He then pulls CONOR down as if to tell him something.

TIKI hugs CONOR and they both hold on for an extra
moment. TIKI runs to center field.

CONOR smiles as he scans the unusually large crowd
that includes DUFFY and what seems to be the entire
community of CABRINI. We hear the umpire shout, "PLAY
BALL!" as we...

Pull away from the field to establish the enormity of
events in the smallest of places.

The End