

Elite

By

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FADE IN:

INT. ST. BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-GYMNASIUM-DAY

A lone basketball lies static in the center of a dim lit basketball court.

Suddenly, the lights sequentially turn on. A group of high school boys of various ethnicities enter sporting T-shirts and gym shorts.

They take seats on lavish new benches. The gymnasium is state-of-the-art and dressed in the school's white and blue colors.

A large banner reads: CRUSADERS!!

ASSISTANT COACH TOM (30), skinny and sporting blue surfer shades, enters with a clipboard. He stares at it never taking his eyes off. The gym is silent as he flips pages. All the time in the world.

ASST. COACH TOM
Squads one, four. Go!

Ten kids jump up and run onto the court, forming two teams. The assistant coach picks up a basketball and throws it to one team. He blows his whistle. The game starts.

They play hard, each showing promise. Some better than others.

ALEX SIMMONS (17) sits at the end of the bench. A thin black kid with an apathetic look plastered to his face. He fiddles with his hands watching the game intensely. Studying it.

TREYVON MARCUS (17), a smaller kid, sits beside Alex. He yells, taunts, and reacts jokingly to everything in the game.

One of the players crosses-up his opponent then drives to the hoop for a layup.

SMACK!!

A tall kid blocks the layup. The ball flies off the court.

The kids on the bench yell in excitement. Treyvon reacts with unnecessary histrionics.

TREYVON
Oh shit!! You saw that shit my
nigga!?

(CONTINUED)

Alex nods. The assistant coach blows the whistle.

ASST. COACH TOM
Squads two, three. You're up!

TREYVON
Yeah, get these bum-ass niggas of
the court.
(to Alex)
What squad you on?

Alex puts up two fingers.

TREYVON
Oh shit, I'm three son. You about
to get wrecked.

Alex raises his brows indifferent. They stand up, take the floor, and face each other.

TREYVON
(points to Alex)
Yo, I got this nigga.

Everyone else calls their guy on defense. The assistant coach throws the ball to a player on squad two. The whistle blows.

They bring the ball up the court. Alex runs to the corner three-point line. Treyvon guards him loosely.

TREYVON
I wanna see what you can do.

The ball handler shot fakes then drives to the rim. Two defenders collapse on him forcing him to lose control of the ball.

Alex immediately runs to the other side of the court. Squad three runs a fast break down the court with Treyvon leading.

A team member passes it to him as he continues to the hoop.

Alex stands as the only man on defense. His eyes on Treyvon.

Treyvon crosses the ball behind his back trying to get around Alex. Alex reads the move and stays in front.

Treyvon then does a step-back mid-range shot. Not the prettiest shot but it goes in. Alex not expecting it.

Treyvon runs back on defense with a celebratory arm raise.

(CONTINUED)

Alex in-bounds the ball to his teammate. His teammate immediately passes it back, forcing him to play point guard.

He walks the ball up to the top of the key. Treyvon in an over-exaggerated defensive stance. Still guarding loosely.

TREYVON

C'mon. Let me see what you got! I wanna see somthin'!

Alex scans the court. His eyes on his teammate, TERRENCE (TREE) AKONI JR. (18). A tower of a kid wearing goggles. He fights for position under the basket.

Tree's eyes meet with Alex. He nods his head then runs up beside Treyvon, setting a screen.

Alex utilizes it and runs around closer to the basket. Tree Also runs to the basket.

A defender from the corner closes in on Alex who fakes a pass to Tree then tosses the ball over his shoulder to his teammate who stands open in the corner.

The teammate, with all the time in the world, performs a beautiful shot stroke. The ball floats through the air but hits the rim and bounces out.

Tree then out jumps everyone and grabs the rebound. With his back to the basket, he spins and performs a hook shot.

SWISH.

Squad three squabble amongst themselves.

TREYVON

Damn man! Y'all niggas gotta call that screen for me!

Alex runs back on defense. He trades nods with Tree and gives a thumb up to the teammate who missed the shot. He then glances over to THREE MEN in suits who stand at the doorway.

One of them being GEORGE THOMPSON (48), a big guy with a fierce face. His eyes meet with Alex briefly as he talks with his company.

Alex tries to put focus back on the game but is still distracted by them. The men walk away.

TEAMMATE(O.S.)

Hey!

Alex snaps back into the game. Too late. Treyvon dribbles past him and makes an easy layup.

Alex's teammates fuss at him. The whistle blows.

INT. LOCKER ROOMS-EVENING

Players finish packing their stuff and head out.

Alex puts his sweatshirt on and checks his phone. He cracks a smile.

TREE(O.S.)

Hey bro, good game out there. I like the way you play.

Alex looks up. Tree towers over him wearing thick frame glasses. A Nigerian accent.

TREE

I'm Terrence by the way. My teammates call me Tree.

ALEX

Alex.

They shake hands.

TREE

It's rare to find players like you.

ALEX

Thanks man. Same to you.

Tree's phone rings.

TREE

Damn, I got to go. Good luck to you man. Hopefully I'll see you on the court. Happy Thanksgiving.

ALEX

You too. Happy thanksgiving.

Tree walks out. Alex walks up to a large calendar. It shows the November tryout schedule. Groups A, B, C, are crossed out. Groups D, and E are left.

INT. BUS-SOUTH SIDE-NIGHT

Alex sleeps on a near-empty bus.

BUS DRIVER

Hey, kid.

The bus stops. Alex wakes up and looks outside then to the BUS DRIVER (60s). Time still putting lines on his face.

ALEX

You don't have to-

BUS DRIVER

Yeah, yeah, I know. I don't have to do this. Let's just say I'm not too eager to get back to old ball-and-chain.

Alex smiles and exits.

EXT. FRED'S HOUSE-SOUTH SIDE-NIGHT

The bus roars away from him. Alex walks up to a row-home. He knocks on the door.

Nothing.

He checks his phone then tries for the door. It opens.

INT. FRED'S HOUSE

Alex walks past the living room in which FRED'S LITTLE BROTHER (9) sleeps. The TV plays cartoons with the room being a complete dump. Alex grimaces from the smell and heads up the stairs.

UPSTAIRS

A HEAVY BASS resonates from a door down the hall. A large keep out sign nailed to it.

Alex opens the door and is greeted with heavy metal on max volume.

Black walls with video game posters positioned every which way.

FREDRICK DUGGINS (17) sits at his computer. A scrawny kid with glasses and a backward snapback. He turns the music down.

(CONTINUED)

FRED
(obnoxious nerd voice)
I don't appreciate tardiness mister
Simmons.

Alex smiles and jumps on the bed.

FRED
(obnoxious nerd voice)
This report is due in T-minus
twelve hours and we haven't even
picked a fucking topic.

Alex bellows a sigh.

ALEX
Can you put on something else?

Fred stares at Alex, unamused. He changes the song to a
cheesy pop hit. Alex shakes his head unamused.

Now a country song. Alex shrugs indifferently. Fred turns
the music down.

FRED
So how did tryouts go? You make the
team?

ALEX
Ehh. I don't think so. There were
so many kids and not that many open
spots. And that was just one group.

FRED
Well, you didn't make it freshman
year and you didn't even try the
last two years. Did you get better?

Alex thinks on it. Shakes his head.

FRED
Even if you did make it, where
would you go with it? There are so
many kids that want to go NBA.

ALEX
I never said I wanted to go NBA. A
scholarship would be nice.

FRED
C'mon man. You know once you play
for a D-1 school, that's your life.
There's no time to commit to school
or anything else.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Why are we even talking about this?
I most likely didn't make the team.
Let's just grind this shit out.

Fred throws a notebook to Alex. Alex puzzled.

FRED

Fibinachi's number is our topic. Do
some research.

ALEX

How long's the report have to be?

FRED

You don't wanna know.

INT. ST. BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-CLASSROOM-DAY

Alex and Fred stand in front of the classroom giving a power-point presentation, both dressed in school uniform. From the projector is a picture of Michael Jordan accompanied with numerous stats.

ALEX

And that's pretty much how Michael
Jordan created an age of selfish
play.

The students in class all sit apathetic. Some on their phones and others chat.

The teacher, MR. BELMONT (40s), fat and balding, stands up.

MR. BELMONT

Well done guys. Any questions? If
not then the bell should ring any
second.

STUDENT

Didn't he win six championships?

ALEX

Well... yeah...

The bell RINGS.

All the students rush out of class. Fred grabs his bag.

FRED

Yo, you commin' over later?

Alex grabs his bag.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

No. I got stuff I gotta do at home.

FRED

Alright then, see ya.

Fred exits. Alex about to head out.

MR.BELMONT

Hey, Alex.

Alex stops at the door.

MR.BELMONT

You start applying to any schools?

ALEX

Uh, yeah. I'm really looking at Northwestern. I like their math program.

MR.BELMONT

That's a tough school to get into. I know you have the grades but your SAT. How was that?

ALEX

Ehh. eighteen-hundred. I'll get a two thousand next time.

MR.BELMONT

Please be diligent. You can do it. If you need help with anything, just let me know.

ALEX

Okay, I will. Thank you.

Alex walks out.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-HALLWAY-DAY

Alex heads down the hall to the exit. He stops just before the exit and looks left down a perpendicular hall.

At the end of it is a bulletin board titled: ATHLETICS

Alex stares at it then continues out.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE-NIGHT

Alex washes dishes in a tiny kitchen. His LITTLE SISTER(8) eats while watching TV.

LITTLE SISTER
Can we play basketball tomorrow?

ALEX
Can't. I'm busy.

LITTLE SISTER
But it's gonna be Friday.

ALEX
I've got a lot of work, alright.
Next time.

LITTLE SISTER
But we don't play anymore.

Alex holds back frustration.

ALEX
Alright then. We'll play tomorrow
after school. Alright?

LITTLE SISTER
You promise?

ALEX
Promise.

LITTLE SISTER
I still don't trust you.

A stern face strikes Alex.

LITTLE SISTER
When's mom coming home?

Alex slightly struck by the question.

ALEX
She should be home Sunday.

LITTLE SISTER
Is she okay?

ALEX
She's fine. Just finish your food
and go to bed.

Alex finishes cleaning the last dish.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
And clean your plate and turn off
the TV when you're done.

Alex walks out.

LITTLE SISTER (O.S.)
Don't forget!

INT. ALEX'S ROOM

Alex places his phone on his desk and jumps face first on his bed. Within seconds he's passed out.

His phone buzzes on the desk.

INT. ALEX'S ROOM-MORNING

Sun rays illuminate the room. Alex jumps up, eyes peel open.

He grabs his bag and picks up his phone. His face puzzled. Can't believe what he's reading.

ALEX
Shit.

INT. ST. BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-HALLWAY-DAY

Alex and Fred walk down the hallway. Students fill the hall.

FRED
You nervous?

ALEX
Never.

FRED
Prepared?

ALEX
Of course not.

FRED
Nice.

They reach the gymnasium doors.

FRED
I'd love to watch you fail but I
got a shit-ton of homework. Peace.

Alex nods him off and enters the gymnasium.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-GYMNASIUM

Seventeen boys sit on the bench talking amongst each other-- all still in uniform. Tree sits at the end and sees Alex. He nods him over.

Alex sits beside Tree.

TREE

Glad to see you made it.

ALEX

I'm actually surprised I'm here right now.

TREE

Why?

ALEX

Means there's three point-guards on the team.

Alex looks to his left. All the way on the other end of the bench is Treyvon. Louder than the others.

TREE

Coach may have a plan. His son wasn't playing that much last year. I heard some school was going to drop him because of his limited minutes.

Alex looks at him surprised.

ALEX

You know what school?

TREE

No.

TREYVON

Are we ready to fuck shit up this year!!

Everyone laughs.

George Thompson walks in. The gym now silent. His footsteps echo throughout. All attention on him.

He stands in front of the team. Eyes each of them.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

Line up against the wall.

An eerie calmness to his voice. The team immediately lines up against the wall-- everyone still in the school's uniform.

GEORGE

Suicides. Go.

All seventeen boys sprint with ferocity down the court with thunderous footsteps.

GEORGE

If you can't run for thirty-five minutes, then how can I expect you to do it for an actual game.

Everyone runs hard. His voice louder than it should be.

GEORGE

Five years ago, this school was the number one ranked high school basketball team in the nation. Actually, if you look up you can see every year we won a championship.

He nonchalantly points up towards one of the banners.

GEORGE

I know some of you come from broken homes. Parents getting a divorce. Family member dying and other stuff. And I know that some of you come from wealthy well-to-do homes. Daddy probably just bought you a car. The location of this school warrants that. What I'm trying to say is that each of you has some sort of motivation to be here. Motivation that has successfully gotten you to this particular moment in time.

Everyone beginning to sweat. The overall pace much slower.

GEORGE

I know everyone is proud to be on this team and I'm proud for you. But I'm going to show you what real motivation is.

(a beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE (cont'd)

There are seventeen kids in this gym. I want a twelve-man roster.

Heads turn toward George.

GEORGE

I want the men on this team and *only* the men on this team to report back here tomorrow at seven a.m. sharp. I'll leave it up to you to figure out who those twelve will be. I'm sure you guys can do it. I'll see you tomorrow.

The boys run drenched in sweat. A few of them lagging behind.

George walks out. They all continue to run knowing what will happen.

TEAMMATE

I hope you all know how this is gonna be decided!

No one dares stop running. Alex keeping pace next to Tree who doesn't seem to break a sweat.

ALEX

He do this every year?

TREE

Kinda. Last year was a race to the port in snow. That was bad.

ALEX

Shit. I don't think I can last much longer.

TREE

Just hold out a little longer.

Tree points to three kids lagging behind. One gives up.

INT. ST. BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-GYMNASIUM-LATER

The clock reads 3:28

The echoing footsteps still boom through the gymnasium. The overall pace is much slower but the hustle still intense.

Five kids are noticeably behind. Two kids give up. Another collapses.

(CONTINUED)

Alex losing steam fast. Clothes soaked in sweat. He and Treyvon at the same pace.

Their faces scream agony as they push through.

Alex at his limit pushes through but suddenly takes a misstep and falls to the ground.

Everyone else in the gym immediately stops and collapses on the floor. Relief across the room.

Alex lays face first on the ground. Breathing hard.

Tree walks beside Alex. Unsure what to say.

TREYVON

Like my momma always said, if you believe you deserve something then get it. Much respect.

Alex looks at Treyvon then to everyone in the gym. They slowly recover themselves and leave. Tree among them.

ALEX

I guess so, huh?

Alex lays on his back. Finding it funny.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

Alex sits at the end of a wooden bench.

JUDGE (O.S.)

At this time, would the prosecution like to call a witness to the stand?

ATTORNEY (O.S.)

Yes your honor. We would like to call Alex Simmons.

Alex slowly makes his way up to the BAILIFF. Alex raises a hand and swears the truth.

The JUDGE (60) sits atop her throne. She looks and plays the part.

The prosecuting ATTORNEY stands up next to George who stares hard at Alex. Alex sits on the stand deadpan.

ATTORNEY

You initially didn't make the team. Is that correct?

ALEX

Yes that's correct.

ATTORNEY

Were the parents of the other players upset that their sons were cut from the team?

ALEX

I don't know.

ATTORNEY

How did the school handle it? Seeing that it is an unorthodox way to handle a high school basketball team.

ALEX

My teammate said the coach did something like this every year. There was no uproar from the parents-- or at least that I heard of. I guess it was understood that that's just what happens.

JUDGE

And by teammate, you are referring to Mr. Terrence Akoni Junior?

ALEX

Uh, yes. And no it's not unorthodox.

ATTORNEY

Excuse me?

ALEX

It's not out of the ordinary for a high school basketball team to be handled like this, or any other sports team at a school like this.

The Attorney pauses, caught off guard by the remark. George's team of lawyers whisper amongst themselves.

The same goes for the defendant party: A LAWYER who sits beside DESHAWN MARCUS (28), a rough looking kid whose piercing look is directed at Alex.

ATTORNEY

Mr. Simmons, before we get to the main suit and we'll get to that, can you please elaborate on how life at home was for you?

INT. BUS-SOUTH SIDE-NIGHT

Alex sleeps on a bus. His eyes slowly open as The bus comes to a stop. Outside is the CITY HOSPITAL.

INT. HOSPITAL-CORRIDOR

Alex walks past nurses and doctors towards a room at the end of the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL-PATIENT ROOM

Alex enters to see his mother, DEBORAH SIMMONS (46), laying in a hospital bed watching a tiny wall mounted TV. Thin and frail.

DEBORAH
Hey baby. How was school?

ALEX
It was good.

DEBORAH
Do me a favor and open the curtains.

Alex walks over to the windows and opens the curtains. A beautiful view of the city. Alex stares out.

DEBORAH
The nurses here never open them in the morning. They treat me like I'm a vampire or somthin'.

ALEX
How was it? You feel alright?

DEBORAH
Yeah. Just a little weak. How the college applications going?

ALEX
They're going.

DEBORAH
What's that supposed to mean boy? You get in any?

ALEX
Yeah. Harvard business.

(CONTINUED)

DEBORAH
Boy, stop playing. I wish.

A silence. DOCTOR NITZE walks in with papers. Tall German with thick glasses.

DR. NITZE
Oh, hello. You must be Alex. I'm
Dr. Nitze.

They shake hands.

DR. NITZE
As you know, the chemo is working
better than expected. And I'm
pleased to say that we are now in
remission.

Alex stares. Not knowing how to respond.

ALEX
That's... that's great.

DR. NITZE
That's more than great. Your mother
is already scheduled to return home
by tomorrow.

DEBORAH
Oh, thank the lord. Give me a hug
baby.

Alex gives his mom a hug. Tears roll down her face.

DR. NITZE
There's just one thing. The
insurance plan you're under. It
took care of everything except the
medication that we need you to
continue taking.

Deborah confused.

DR. NITZE
I bring this up because this
medication is rather expensive and
you will have to take this on a
weekly--

DEBORAH
What do you mean? I'm not covered?

DR. NITZE

Yes, for the medication. I have the papers here if you want to read them.

DEBORAH

No, no. I should be covered. This isn't right.

DR. NITZE

It could be a mistake. I suggest giving them a call.

DEBORAH

I will.

DR. NITZE

Look, don't worry about that, today is a good day. Not many people get to this stage. If your insurance won't work with you then the hospital can. We have a plan that can fit a variety of needs.

DEBORAH

Ok, thank you, doctor. God bless you.

DR. NITZE

No problem. If there's anything else, you have my number. It was nice meeting you Mr. Simmons. Have a good night.

ALEX

You too. Have a good night.

The doctor leaves.

DEBORAH

Can you believe that? Damn insurance companies are crooks. All that money I pay a month.

ALEX

Don't worry about that. Today's a good day.

DEBORAH

You're right about that baby.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

How are you getting home tomorrow?
You don't look well enough--

DEBORAH

Don't worry about me. Just focus on
getting into a good school. I'm
sure they have a van to take me
home and help me settle in.

ALEX

Alright then. I'll see you
tomorrow.

DEBORAH

Alright then. Have a good night
baby. I love you.

ALEX

Love you too.

They share a long hug. Alex leaves.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-CLASSROOM

Alex sits with his head on the desk in the back of the room.
The classroom is filled with kids talking amongst
themselves. The teacher sits at his desk on the phone.

A GIRL in front chats with her friends. Alex scans the room
until his stoic eyes meet hers. He apathetically stares as
she quickly looks away. She says something to her FRIENDS
and they all look at Alex and giggle.

PA (V.O.)

Alex Simmons, please report to the
main office after the bell. Alex
Simmons, please report to the main
office after the bell.

Alex stays motionless on his desk. The girls continue to
giggle.

The bell rings.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-OFFICE

Alex sits in front of a modest desk. Assistant coach Tom
sits on the other side.

ASST. COACH TOM

We called you in here to see if
you're still interested in joining
the team for this upcoming season.

(CONTINUED)

Alex confused.

ALEX

Why me?

ASST. COACH TOM

We felt we needed an extra point guard for this upcoming season and we decided that you were the best option.

Alex completely bewildered.

ASST. COACH TOM

So do you accept?

ALEX

Sure, yeah sure. I accept.

ASST. COACH TOM

Great. I'm just going to need you to get these signed by you and your parents. I'm also gonna need a copy of your physical before we can dress you up.

Assistant coach Tom hands him a folder of papers.

ASST. COACH TOM

Get that to me as soon as possible and we'll go from there.

ALEX

Okay. Um... why me though?

Tom confused.

ALEX

It's just that there are now three point-guards on the team. Um..

Tom sighs.

ASST. COACH TOM

Look, the coach wanted a third backup and to tell you the truth, I don't think you'll see the floor much. Just show up to practice, dress up for games, and maybe you can close. That's my honest opinion.

Alex's face shows a realization.

(CONTINUED)

ASST. COACH TOM
The coach personally wanted you if
that makes you feel any better.
Don't worry just get me those
papers and we'll go from there,
alright?

ALEX
Okay.

ASST. COACH TOM
Alright then. See you in practice.

Alex exits.

INT. FRED'S HOUSE

ALEX sits against the bed on the floor reading a large
textbook.

FRED
And that's all he said?

ALEX
Pretty much.

FRED
What a fucking bitch.

ALEX
(shrugs)
Eh.

Alex flips through the pages.

FRED
It's still pretty dope that you
made the team. When's the first
game?

ALEX
Umm... December first.

FRED
That's this Friday. And who are you
playing?

ALEX
Millbrook high school.

Fred types on his keyboard. Reads off his computer monitor.

(CONTINUED)

FRED

They're not even ranked.

ALEX

Yeah, I know. I'll make sure the bench is nice and warm.

FRED

Don't you see? This is your chance. Once you guys are up by forty, the coach would probably put you in to see what you can do.

ALEX

Well, I would agree with you if it wasn't for fact that there are *three* designated point-guards on this team. Though I hate to say it, Treyvon is good enough to close games.

FRED

Whatever happened to thinking positive?

Alex checks his phone.

ALEX

(more to himself)
Ah shit.

FRED

Oh yeah. How's your mom?

ALEX

(points to phone)
Fine apparently. I gotta go.

Alex grabs his bag.

FRED

Don't forget that central limit theorems on the test.

ALEX

I won't.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE-LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Alex enters the door. His little sister sits on the couch watching tv. He passes her into...

KITCHEN

Nobody.

He walks back into...

LIVING ROOM

ALEX

Where's mom?

His little sister doesn't even look at him. Alex realizes.

ALEX

Look, I'm sorry about today. We'll play tomorrow.

She continues to ignore him.

ALEX

Look, I'll even... buy you that doll or whatever.

Her attention now captured.

LITTLE SISTER

You promise?

ALEX

Yes, now tell me where she is.

LITTLE SISTER

You're a liar.

Alex annoyed.

ALEX

Alright then, forget it.

LITTLE SISTER

Wait! Wait! She went to aunt Sherry's house.

Alex thinks on it.

LITTLE SISTER

So tomorrow?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Sure. But for being annoying, you have to vacuum.

LITTLE SISTER

No fair! You promised!

Alex begins to stroll upstairs.

ALEX

You really don't want that doll do you.

LITTLE SISTER

Ugh! Okay fine. You better keep your promise this time.

Alex already upstairs.

INT. ALEX'S ROOM

Alex sits at his desk. His computer screen illuminates the room. He places a statistics textbook on the desk and opens it. He begins reading, sighs, then types on his computer.

On monitor: High school basketball Rankings. He clicks on the number one ranked team **ALPINE HILLS ACADEMY**.

A quick highlight video of the school pops up. Their black and red colors menacing.

Alex then searches Millbrook High school. He clicks on a video. His eyes now glued to it, studying every player.

He pulls out a pen and begins scribing. He pauses the video on a certain player. A small point guard name TEVAN XAVIER. He pulls up Tevan's respective stat sheet and copies info from it.

INT. MILLBROOK HIGH SCHOOL-LOCKERROOM-NIGHT

Alex sits amongst the rest of the basketball team. All in white and blue jerseys. The room is small and worn. George Thompson stands at center. The cheers from the gymnasium resonate through the walls.

GEORGE

You all know what this is. Nothing new here. We play at our pace and we run hard! I don't want the ball still for one second. There's a reason why you have four other teammates. Utilize each other and win.

(CONTINUED)

He scans each and every one of them then sticks his hand out. Everyone immediately rushes in. Alex on the edge trying to reach over the massive players.

GEORGE
Vic! Tor! Ry!

EVERYONE
CRUSADERS!!

They all rush out.

INT. MILLBROOK HIGH SCHOOL-GYMNASIUM

Wooden bleachers on both sides filled with people. A classic aesthetic to the gym.

Both team's starters take the court. JUSTIN THOMPSON (18), Tree, Chad, RYAN (18), and MIKE (18) all ready themselves.

Alex sits on the bench with the rest of the team. He eyes Tevan Xavier who sits on the opposing team's bench. A stoic look similar to his own.

The REFEREE whistles and throws the ball up. Tree remains planted, letting the opposing center win the tip.

Justin immediately steps in front of the receiving player and intercepts the ball. They all sprint down the court with Tree leading the fast break.

Justin throws the ball toward the rim. Tree jumps, catches it, and dunks the ball in over the defending center.

A WHISTLE blows. The Referee calls a shooting foul against the opposing team. The OPPOSING COACH furious.

Tree steps toward the line. The ref signals one shot. Tree takes two dribbles and shoots. A beautiful shot stroke coupled with a sounding swish.

The scoreboard reads; Away 3 Home 0 with 7:56 on the clock

The opposing team's point guard brings the ball up. He passes to their center who Tree guards. The center tries to muscle his way into the paint. He spins and tries for a layup but Tree smacks the ball out of his hands.

Mike picks up the loose ball and dribbles it down court. Justin already at the other end, waves for the ball.

Mike launches it across court-- Justin catches it and tries for a layup. Two defenders stand between him and the basket. He fakes and dribbles around and under the basket.

(CONTINUED)

He passes it to Mike who stands open at the three point line. Mike then immediately passes to Chad who performs a jump shot from the corner three-point line.

It rattles in.

A WHISTLE. The opposing coach calls a timeout. The crowd now quieter than before.

The bench praises the team. Justin Thompson sits beside Alex.

JUSTIN

Can you pass me that water?

ALEX

Yeah, sure.

Justin chugs half the water then heads over to the huddle. Alex sits distant. Stares at the huddle. They break.

The game continues. They dominate.

LATER

The scoreboard reads: Away 77 Home 28 with 1:56 on the clock.

All the starters now benched. Talking amongst themselves, not paying attention to the game.

Alex watches Treyvon who plays point-guard. He brings the ball up and showcases his ball-handling prowess. George not liking it one bit.

Treyvon fakes left then crosses over right. His defender reads the move and stays in front, glued to him. Treyvon does a step back fade away shot. It air-balls. The other team rebounds. They run a fast break and score.

The buzzer sounds signaling the end of the game. The teams line up and give fives. Alex's eyes on Tevan Xavier as he exits.

INT. TEAM BUS-NIGHT

The team enters the rather upscale bus. They all happily converse and joke with each other. George enters last. His face stern, something off.

GEORGE

I'm glad you guys enjoyed that game. No really, I am. Especially you Treyvon.

(CONTINUED)

The bus a little quieter.

TREYVON
C'mon coach. We destroyed 'em.

GEORGE
Well with sixteen turnovers, you contributing six of them, I'd be surprised you didn't win by less.

George takes a seat in the front. Assistant coach Tom enters and takes a seat up front.

JUSTIN
(to Treyvon)
Don't worry about it. He gets like that. Let's just keep winning.

Justin's voice more audible than he thinks. George stands up, pissed.

GEORGE
You want to say that again boy?

JUSTIN
It was nothing.

George walks up to Justin. Standing over his seat. The whole bus silent.

GEORGE
No, I don't think that was nothing. You definitely said something.

A beat.

JUSTIN
Look, we won alright. Just let us enjoy it.

GEORGE
So you think you a man now? In front of all these boys? C'mon, show me then.

JUSTIN
What the fuck you want me to say? Damn.

George snaps. Grabs Justin by his sweatshirt and violently lifts him to his face. His fist clenched.

Assistant coach Tom stands up but hesitates. Everyone stares. A long moment.

George releases him then heads back to his seat. Silent.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

Alex still sits behind the stand. The defense Lawyer paces in front of him.

LAWYER
So domestic abuse?

ALEX
Well, I don't know.

LAWYER
And did Mr. Thompson use this kind of aggression on anyone else on the team. Say, for instance, Treyvon Marcus?

Attorney whispers something in George's Ear. Alex notices.

ALEX
Nothing that any other coach wouldn't do.

LAWYER
And what is that supposed to mean?

ALEX
He made him run. He made us all run. And that's when I first noticed.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD-EARLY MORNING

The entire team jogs around the misty track. Treyvon runs up and down the bleachers, drenched in sweat.

Alex jogs around the track next to Tree. Alex keeps pace with Tree but with considerably more effort.

TREE
And that's when I moved here. I started playing in eighth grade.

ALEX
Eight grade? really? That's like four years ago. What schools are looking at you?

TREE
A couple D2. Nothing big. What I want is a full scholarship-- to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TREE (cont'd)
John Hopkins preferably. Become a surgeon.

Alex suprised.

ALEX
You don't want to play basketball?

TREE
I mean, I wouldn't mind being a millionaire baller. Then maybe I'll get into the rap game. Drop a mixtape.

They laugh. Alex more at the cheesiness.

TREE
But I'm a realist. Two-point-three percent chance of going pro. That's it. And there's a million other players out there just like me. Figure the world needs more surgeons than ball players anyway.

Alex thinks on it. Assistant Coach Tom blows a loud whistle. They stop jogging.

ALEX
Fucking finally.

TREE
You really that outta shape?

ALEX
Stamina has never been my strong suit.

Tree laughs. Alex looks over to Justin who sits on the bench out of breath.

TREE
And you want to play on this team?

ALEX
Starting to regret it.

TREE
Well, school here we come.

ALEX
Don't remind me.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-CLASSROOM-DAY

Mr. Belmont lectures in front of class. Fred sits next to a passed out Alex. He snores lightly. Mr. Belmont notices.

MR.BELMONT

And can anyone tell me what we would use in this situation?

Not one hand goes up. Mr. Belmont paces. Fred slowly raises his hand.

MR.BELMONT

Anyone? Mr. Simmons. What would we use here?

Alex startled. Looks to Fred who whispers him an answer.

ALEX

Um... The definition of a derivative.

MR.BELMONT

I didn't know we used the definition of the derivative to solve for logarithmic functions Mr. Simmons.

Some students giggle. Alex looks at Fred who returns a shrug.

MR.BELMONT

And I thought you would know better Mr. Duggins. Since you like to offer false information.

The BELL RINGS. Students begin to exit.

MR.BELMONT

We would use the fourth rule on your log sheets. Don't forget midterms are just around the corner. So Study.

Alex gets up to walk out.

MR.BELMONT

Hey, Alex. I see you're on the basketball team. I was at Friday's game.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Yeah, I somehow made the team. I doubt I'll play though.

MR.BELMONT

Well, who knows. Maybe you can switch career paths toward the NBA.

Alex laughs.

MR.BELMONT

So how did the early application to Northwestern go?

ALEX

They put me on a waiting list. I'm starting to realize that even if I was able to get in, I couldn't afford to go. I'm now looking at more realistic schools like William Penn College. I figure I get more money.

MR.BELMONT

Alex, don't let the money decide your choice. There's always financial aid so worry about that later. The education for good job opportunity is important.

ALEX

Yeah, I guess financial aid would help. But then I'd still have to pay those loans back. Right?

MR.BELMONT

That's why going to a good school to pursue a good career is important. And did you hear what I just said? Don't worry about the money. Focus on getting that SAT score up and more importantly, on the midterm coming up.

ALEX

Okay. I will.

MR.BELMONT

Oh, and I highly recommend taking the ACT.

Alex nods and heads to the door.

(CONTINUED)

MR.BELMONT

Do you like basketball? Like, are you good at it?

Alex thrown off by the question.

ALEX

Uh, yeah, I'd like to think so.

MR.BELMONT

Is that a yeah to liking it or being good at it?

ALEX

Um... both. I think.

Mr. Belmont stares at Alex.

MR.BELMONT

Go to lunch Alex. I'll see you tomorrow.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-GYMNASIUM-EVENING

Thunderous footsteps echo throughout as the team runs suicides. Everyone drenched in sweat. George blows a whistle. Everyone comes to a screeching halt.

GEORGE

Did I tell you to stop Mr. Marcus? C'mon, ten laps around the court.

TREYVON

You gotta be kidding me man.

GEORGE

You wanna complain! Then make that thirty laps. And you can join the rest of the team with another set of suicides.

The whole team frustrated toward Treyvon.

TREYVON

Damn dog! That's not fair!

CHAD

Dude, shut the fuck UP!!

GEORGE

No, no. He wants to give me talk then I'll give him laps. And the team will meet tomorrow morning for another early run. Six AM. Sharp.

(CONTINUED)

Everyone furious at Treyvon who begins his laps.

GEORGE

Alright then, settle down.

(a beat)

What's the purpose of this game we play? The end goal?

George looks for an answer. Everyone confused.

TREE

To win coach.

GEORGE

Correct. It is to win. And how do we achieve such a thing?

CHAD

By getting the basketball in the basketball hoop.

Some chuckles.

GEORGE

Precisely. We have to get the basketball in the basketball hoop using the rules and regulations of the NCAA-- the high school standard.

George begins to pace.

GEORGE

So, we've reached our conclusion, right?

Some nods.

JUSTIN

No. Defense.

George eyes Justin.

JUSTIN

Defense is an integral piece that must be instilled into the minds and performance of every player in order to maintain flow, pace, and integrity of a game.

Players awkwardly look to Justin who stands robotic. George's pacing stops.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

Hmmm... Quite so, quite so. A good defense can allow a team to dominate even if they scored forty. A great defense can twist the plans of even the greatest coaches. A perfect defense can instill *fear* into the mind of your opponent.

A beat.

GEORGE

A defense allows an opponent to be molded and you are the sculptor.

Everyone silent.

GEORGE

I'll see you here tomorrow six am sharp.

George walks away. The tension breaks.

EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE-NIGHT

Alex carries two heavy trash bags and places them in the can.

Down the street is a group of rough looking men who talk amongst each other. Their eyes meet with Alex's.

MAN #1

Fuck you looking at nigga!?

Alex grabs mail out the mailbox then walks in the house unaffected by the threat.

MAN #1

That's what I thought bitch!

MAN #2

(laughs)

You always startin' shit nigga.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE

Alex's mom sits at the kitchen table drinking tea.

DEBORAH

I want you to clean the bathroom then wash the dishes before you go to bed.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

I gotta go finish a project at
Fred's house.

DEBORAH

That's why I said before you go to
bed. You can come back and do it.

ALEX

Can't my sister do it?

DEBORAH

Dammit boy, I don't want to hear
anything else outta you. Just do
it.

A frustrating sigh from Alex. He places the mail on the
kitchen table.

ALEX

What's going on with the insurance?
Can we pay for the pills?

DEBORAH

Don't worry about that Alex. I'll
handle it.

ALEX

But what did the insurance company
say-

DEBORAH

Don't worry about it!

She sips her tea and calms herself.

DEBORAH

Don't worry about it, alright. I
got enough on my mind so just don't
worry about it.

ALEX

Alright.

Alex grabs his bag and walks out.

INT. FRED'S HOUSE

On computer monitor: Alpine Hills Academy players perform a
spectacular alley-oop.

Fred sits at his desk and marvels at the team's video.

(CONTINUED)

FRED

Holy shit. This is the number one ranked team? They could all go pro.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

(through monitor)

This team is just unbelievable. The Ximo brothers paving the way for another perfect season. These boys are the pinnacle of high school basketball elite.

Alex lays on the bed flipping through a large textbook.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

(through monitor)

Here we have the eldest of the three, Darcy Ximo. How have you been able to perform at such a high level with unparalleled consistency?

DARCY XIMO (V.O.)

(through monitor)

Well, It's always been my dream-- well, me and my brothers dream to go to the NBA. All these years of hard work are paying off.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

(through monitor)

What school do you think you'll choose?

DARCY XIMO (V.O.)

(through monitor)

I already have an idea on where I want to go so I'll be announcing it next month. Don't want to give it all away.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

(through monitor)

Can you give us a hint?

Darcy Ximo gives a zipping gesture over his mouth.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

(through monitor)

Well there you have it. The Ximo bros on their way to lead the number one ranked Alpine Hill Matadors to their fourth state title.

(CONTINUED)

The video ends.

FRED

Damn. It's like he knows he's gonna be a multi-millionaire.

ALEX

Cause he is. Wouldn't be surprised if NBA teams are calling him up now. Probably since middle school. Let's get back to work.

Fred looks at Darcy Ximo's stat sheet.

FRED

He's fucking six-nine two hundred forty pounds. Jesus fuck! Ever heard of football?

ALEX

Wait till you see his brother. Actually, can you look at our schedule and see who we play next?

A couple clicks.

FRED

Saint Charles Beromeo. They are also undefeated.

ALEX

Rank?

FRED

Eleventh in the nation.

ALEX

That's a big school.

FRED

So you think the bench'll be warm enough for this one?

Alex smiles.

ALEX

Fuck this shit.

(tosses book aside)

Let's get the stats for this team. I created this excel sheet that gives me the probabilities of how players will perform and the choices they're likely to make.

(CONTINUED)

Alex walks up behind Fred.

FRED
What? Really?

ALEX
Check your drop box.

Fred opens the stat sheet.

FRED
You did this shit yourself?

ALEX
Had a lot of help from the cyber
webs. That's just for one player
too.

Fred's face completely amazed.

FRED
That's fucking scary.

ALEX
What?

FRED
Did you not check how this kid
actually performed?

ALEX
No. Didn't really have time.

FRED
Your sheet says he would shoot
twenty-three percent from
mid-range. He shot twenty-two.

ALEX
Okay, so that's one stat.

FRED
Twenty percent from three and he
shot nineteen. Seven assists and he
got five.

ALEX
That is scary.

FRED
All the stats that the sheet
predicted were over. Shit. This
could be something.

ALEX

Okay so we need every stat for each player next game.

They both snap to work.

INT. ST. BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-CAFETERIA-DAY

Alex, Fred and Tree all sit at a table with lunches in front. Tree chows down on a large sandwich while looking at a laptop. Three more sandwiches on his tray.

Alex and Fred eagerly await his response.

ALEX

So what do you think?

TREE

Hmmm... send me this.

FRED

As you see, if your guy takes three dribbles, he shoots. If he takes two, then he drives to the rim.

ALEX

And that's just one player. We have the rhythms to every starter including the sixth guy.

TREE

I'll run it by the others but they're not gonna bother reading all this let alone use it.

ALEX

What about Justin?

TREE

JT's the one kid that might. This really isn't anything new though. They run shit like this at higher levels. It's just the smart players that implement it. I mean thanks though. I'll definitely use it.

Tree looks over to the door where Chad, Mike and Justin wave for him.

TREE

I got a meeting with the team.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
Oh crap, I didn't know.

Alex quickly stands.

TREE
It's just for the starters.

Alex stands awkward.

ALEX
Oh, Okay.

He sits.

TREE
I'll see you at next practice.
Don't forget to send me that.

Tree walks away. Alex grabs the laptop and shuts it.

FRED
Starters only, huh.

INT. ST. CHARLES BEROMEIO-GYMNASIUM-NIGHT

The gym is massive with a green trim and a polished oak wood finish. Students fill the stadium with banners that read LIONS.

Alex sits on the bench frozen. The crowd roars like a collegiate game. It feels like one.

George stands in the coaches box directing the team. Assistant coach Tom draws a play on the clipboard.

The scoreboard reads; Away 17 Home 24 with 1:19 on the clock

Justin brings the ball up court. Tree runs up to set a screen. Justin utilizes it and breaks away from his defender. He drives toward the basket and tries for a layup.

A massive center blocks his shot hard from the side. Justin falls down but no whistle.

GEORGE
Are you fucking kidding me!!

The opposing team runs a fast break.

GEORGE
Get back on defense!!

Justin springs up and sprints down the court but too late. The opposing team scores. The referee whistles. Timeout by George.

Everyone gathers in.

GEORGE
What the fuck is going on!? Mike, you need to come hard off that screen and cut to the corner. Chad, what the hell are you doing standing in the corner-- you're shot's cold so move you're goddamn feet. Tree I need a lot more out of you on defense-- they're killing us in the paint. And Justin I don't want to see the ball in your hands for more than two seconds.

Justin nods his head but looks extremely winded. He coughs.

GEORGE
You alright?

Justin nods but coughs even harder. George and Tom trade looks. Tom immediately grabs a bag and digs for something.

GEORGE
This game is far from over boys.
Everyone in.

They all put their hands together.

EVERYONE
One, two, three, Crusaders!!

The referee blows the whistle. The four take to the court except Justin. Tom hands Justin an inhaler which he uses secretly but continues to cough. George looks over to Tom who nods his head. No good.

The referee signals for their fifth player. George looks at Treyvon.

GEORGE
Treyvon, get out there!

Treyvon gets up but has one of his shoes off. He struggles to put it on. The referee gets impatient--about to blow the whistle for delay of game.

(CONTINUED)

George looks around to Alex who sits at the end of the bench.

GEORGE

Alex! I need you in the game, now!!

Alex shocked, jumps up from the bench and enters the court.

The crowd surrounds him and endlessly cheers. Alex seemingly lost in it all.

The referee passes the ball to Mike who sits ready to inbound the ball. The referee then blows the whistle. Game on.

Alex stands frozen.

GEORGE

Alex, get open!!

Alex snaps out of his trance and gets himself into an open position mid-court. Mike in-bounds it to him.

GEORGE

Movement guys, movement!

Alex dribbles the ball to the top of the key where his defender waits for him. Alex's movement is stiff. Something off. The crowd cheers defense even louder. Alex distracted by it. Nervous.

His defender notices his stiff dribbling and applies pressure. Alex stops his dribble and is trapped.

GEORGE

What the hell are you doing!?

Alex looks for an open man. He passes it to Mike but the ball is stolen. The opposing team runs another fast break and scores.

MIKE

Dude, what the fuck are you doing!?
Shit!

TREE

You alright man?

ALEX

Yeah, I'm just...uh... you know--

TREE

Get your head in the game man.
Now's not the time.

Tree in-bounds the ball to Alex who immediately passes to Mike. Mike immediately passes it back to Alex.

MIKE

Dude!! What the fuck are you
doing!!? You're at point!!

Alex runs the ball up court. He looks at the massive roaring crowd. Suddenly, he takes a clumsy misstep and trips, falling hard to the ground. The ball rolls right to his defender who dribbles to the basket and scores unopposed.

The gym fills with laughter. A whistle-- George calls timeout. Alex takes it all in. Complete and utter embarrassment.

INT. TEAM BUS-NIGHT

Alex sits in the back staring out the window. A bandage over his nose. The whole bus silent. Some teammates look at Alex and shake their heads.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

The Attorney continues to pace. Alex still on the stand.

ATTORNEY

Was this the first time you had
seen the inhaler?

ALEX

Yes.

ATTORNEY

Seeing what you saw in practice,
did you assume that Justin had
asthma?

ALEX

Not really. I didn't give it much
thought.

ATTORNEY

Interesting.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

ATTORNEY

That must of been a rough game for you. A rough game for mister Treyvon Marcus too. I heard he didn't finish the game very strong either. Is that true?

ALEX

Yes.

ATTORNEY

What was the score to the game?

ALEX

Sixty-four to... I think, eighty-seven.

ATTORNEY

And seeing that you and Treyvon failed George in the wake of his son's absence, what did he do to you?

Alex glances at George's cold eyes.

EXT. PARK-BASKETBALL COURT-NIGHT

Alex shoots by himself under the bright lights of the park. A heavy fog shrouds the park. A dark figure walks up to him. It's Fred.

Alex does a flashy crossover move and shoots a three-pointer. It misses. Fred catches the rebound and passes it back to Alex who remains stoic. A large bandage over his nose.

Alex shoots and it goes in. Fred, again, gets the rebound and passes the ball to Alex.

FRED

Not much of a point-guard.

Alex shoots and it goes in. A beautiful shot stroke.

FRED

But I see you can still shoot.

ALEX

Yeah, well, what does it matter now?

Fred walks up to him with the ball.

(CONTINUED)

FRED

Let me see what you got.

Fred passes him the ball and gets into a defensive stance. Alex reluctantly accepts the challenge. He brings the ball low and does a hesitation. Fred doesn't bite.

FRED

I don't suggest you go left.

Alex then dribbles with his left hand and slowly moves left-- his back facing Fred.

Fred moves along with him. Alex then guns it toward the rim but Fred keeps pace. Alex then crosses the ball under his legs and eyes the rim for a shot. Fred anticipates the shot and jumps for a block but Alex never stops the dribble and drives to the hoop.

Fred shakes his head.

FRED

Tsk, tsk. Same old tricks.

ALEX

Uhhh, I scored.

FRED

It's not that you scored but how.

Alex confused.

FRED

Your back is to the rim. You've always done that. What's the point of a strong triple threat stance if you never commit to it?

Fred demonstrates with the ball.

ALEX

It's a lot easier with teammates.

FRED

Exactly. But how do you utilize them when you can't see half the court? Don't get me wrong, one-on-one moves like that work but in a game against a strong defense, you have to be able to see everything.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Yeah well, I'm not the strongest dribbler.

FRED

You used to be better. What the hell happened?

ALEX

I don't know... the crowd--

FRED

The crowd? Were you nervous?

ALEX

I mean a little, I just-

FRED

Fuck man, I hate to tell you but this is a spectator sport brah. And if you can't perform for the spectators then what the fuck are you doing?

Alex can't respond.

FRED

Why would you do this?

ALEX

I don't know. You're right. Fucking-shit. It's not like I'm on the team anymore. Who was I kidding?

FRED

You're a smart player. I honestly didn't see that move coming. And you're a really good shooter. Maybe shooting guard is a better fit.

ALEX

(sarcastic)

Oh yeah, shooting guard. Of course. Let me just grow seven inches.

Alex's phone rings.

ALEX

I have to go to the store. I'll see you tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

FRED
Prepare for the shame that awaits
you at school.

ALEX
Thanks for the reminder.

Alex walks away. Fred notices the ball on the ground.

FRED
Your ball!

ALEX
Keep it.

EXT. QUICK MART-NIGHT

Alex walks inside the bright lights of the store. A gang of thug looking young men stand at the corner of the store smoking and conversing.

INT. QUICK MART

Alex makes his way to the fridge section in the back corner of the store. He stares at the vast milk selection. A poster of an NBA point guard is plastered on one of the glass doors.

The CLERK (40s) suspiciously eyes Alex from behind his newspaper. Alex makes his way to the front. His phone buzzes.

Alex places the milk on the counter and pulls out his wallet.

CLERK
five-eighty.

Alex hands him a five-dollar bill. The clerk not impressed.

CLERK
five-eighty.

ALEX
Oh. It was five dollars last week.
I think I have some change.

Alex digs for change. The clerk impatient. Alex scrapes some change, mostly nickels.

ALEX
I think that's eighty.

(CONTINUED)

The clerk nods his head and rings it up. Alex nods back and grabs the milk.

Suddenly the three young men burst in with bandannas masking their faces. They all hold guns. Thug #1 who sports a skull T-shirt, shoves Alex aside and points a gun in the clerks face. Thug #2 points a gun in Alex's face.

THUG #1
Give me the fucking money!!

The clerk slowly grabs cash out of the register. Thug# 3 trashes the place.

THUG #1
(to clerk)
So you like to talk shit to my
little brother, huh!?

THUG #2
(to Alex)
Yo nigga, back up this way.

Thug #2 directs Alex away from the counter.

THUG #2
Let me see your wallet.

Alex grabs his wallet. The thug snatches it. He opens it. Empty.

A slight smirk on Alex's face. The thug catches it.

THUG #2
You think that shit's funny nigga!?

He slams Alex in his bandaged nose with the butt of his gun.

THUG #2
Fuckin' broke ass niggas.

Alex grimaces in pain as blood seeps from under the bandage.

THUG #1
Yo, we out!!

THUG #2
You lucky I don't shoot yo bitch
ass. Next time though.

They all run out. The Clerk looks to Alex and immediately dials 911.

LATER

(CONTINUED)

Police officers stand inside the store. TWO OFFICERS question the clerk as he explains mostly with hand motions.

A PARAMEDIC places a large gauze over Alex's nose.

PARAMEDIC

Are you sure you don't want to head to the hospital? We can-

ALEX

I'm fine, I'm fine.

PARAMEDIC

Okay then, sign here.

Alex signs papers. Two police officers head over.

POLICE OFFICER

I'm just gonna need a statement from you. Can you give me your full name?

ALEX

Alex Simmons.

POLICE OFFICER

And can you tell me what happened?

ALEX

Three guys came in, robbed the store. One guy pulled me aside and hit me in the face. The third guy trashed the store.

POLICE OFFICER

Were they black, Spanish, white?

ALEX

Black.

POLICE OFFICER

And did you recognize anyone of them?

ALEX

No.

The officer slightly frustrated.

POLICE OFFICER

Did one of them happen to wear a skull T-shirt?

ALEX

I-I don't know I couldn't see.

The second officer kneels down and pulls out a photograph.

POLICE OFFICER #2

Look I understand how things go down in this area but if we can get a positive identification on this kid right here right now, his probation will be violated and he will potentially be going away for a long time along with his gang. Do you recognize this guy?

The officer shows a mugshot of Deshawn Marcus. Alex stares at it for a moment.

POLICE OFFICER #2

C'mon kid, I just need you to identify him so we can get this guy and his friends off the streets.

Alex begins to shake his head.

ALEX

Sorry, I don't recognize him.

Both officers sigh.

POLICE OFFICER

Alright then, I'm gonna need your street address number and some identification.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE-NIGHT

Alex enters with groceries. The house silent. He places the milk in the refrigerator and looks on the table. Two envelopes-- one big and one small.

He picks up the small envelope first. It's from Northwestern University. He then picks up the big envelope which is from WilliamPenn College.

He sighs and slowly heads upstairs.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-CAFETERIA-DAY

Alex sits alone near a window. Chatter fills the room. Some kids giggle and glance at Alex. Fred approaches and sits.

FRED
So how we feeling?

ALEX
Like a hundred eyes are pointed at
my back. At least that's what I
feel right now.

Fred turns around and spots a specific table whose occupants giggle. He sticks both middle fingers up. They return the same.

FRED
So what are you gonna do now?

ALEX
I don't know.

A beat.

FRED
I got into the University of
Chicago.

ALEX
Shit, really? Nice.

FRED
Yeah, I got into the business
program. Gonna see if I can
transfer into the engineering one.
You heard from Northwestern?

ALEX
No. I've been actually considering
other options. Less expensive ones.
I don't know.

FRED
Like what?

The bell rings. They both get up.

ALEX
Like some smaller tech school, I
just don't know yet.

(CONTINUED)

FRED

Well, you better figure that shit out man. Deadlines.

ALEX

Trying.

INT. ST. BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-MR. BELMONT'S OFFICE

Mr. Belmont sits behind his desk. Alex in front.

MR. BELMONT

So you have good news for me?

ALEX

I didn't get into Northwestern.

Mr. Belmont sighs. A beat.

MR. BELMONT

Really? Hmm...

He grabs a piece of paper and writes on it. Alex looks at the wall. A plaque that holds a Master's Degree from Northwestern University.

Mr. Belmont hands Alex a piece of paper.

MR. BELMONT

These are schools that I'm sure you'll get into, if you consider them.

Alex looks over the list.

ALEX

The University of Chicago? Isn't that even harder to get into than Northwestern?

MR. BELMONT

Not necessarily. I heard from a friend in admissions that they are looking for more black students in the stem fields. Should increase your chances.

Alex thinks on it.

MR. BELMONT

I heard about what happened at the game. You alright? I see you hurt your nose real bad.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
Yeah, I'm good. Stuff happens.

Mr. Belmont laughs.

MR. BELMONT
Don't worry about it Alex. You're
an intelligent kid, you'll be fine.

INT. ST. BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-CORRIDOR

Alex walks up to the gymnasium doors and peers through the glass.

A scrimmage runs with Treyvon playing point guard. George blows the whistle frustrated and stops the game. He looks to Justin who shakes his head winded.

George yells at the team and blows the whistle starting another scrimmage.

Alex walks away to the exit.

ASST. COACH TOM
Hey Alex!

Asst coach Tom walks to the gymnasium doors holding papers.

ASST. COACH TOM
You going to practice?

ALEX
I can't, I have a uh-- doctors
appointment I have to go to.

ASST. COACH TOM
Look Alex, I understand it's hard
to recover from what happened but
if you want to stay on this team
then show that you want it.

ALEX
Thanks but I'm good. I got a lot of
stuff I gotta do.

Alex walks off. Assistant coach Tom shakes his head and walks in the gymnasium.

EXT. BUS STOP

Alex stands waiting amongst others. A bus approaches and stops. It then drives off leaving Alex alone at the stop.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-GYMNASIUM

Alex walks in and immediately heads to the bench. The team awkwardly stares at him as they run drills. George gives Alex a look then puts his attention back on the drills.

Alex puts on his gym gear and joins the layup drill line.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

The Attorney continues to pace.

ATTORNEY

Continuing our discussion on the team dynamic, did George make it known that his son had a pre-existing respiratory condition?

ALEX

No.

ATTORNEY

So he didn't make it known to the team or anyone else in the matter that his son had asthma.

ALEX

Yes.

ATTORNEY

Yes that he made it known or yes that he didn't make it known?

LAWYER

Objection your honor this is ridiculous.

JUDGE

Sustained.

The prosecuting attorney and the defense lawyer trade looks.

ATTORNEY

That Thursday night on January seventh, you had an incident at the quick-mart on Sutherland street. Can you tell us what happened?

Alex looks to the judge whose expression gives nothing.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Um, I went in to buy milk and the store was robbed.

ATTORNEY

The police report stated that it was robbed by three African-American males in their twenties. It also stated that you could not identify any of them.

LAWYER

Objection! Your honor, the question is leading. He is trying to associate my client--

ATTORNEY

He is simply telling us what happened that night--

LAWYER

The question brings up irrelevant suits.

JUDGE

Sustained.

ATTORNEY

I rest my case.

The Attorney smirks and confidently sits down.

JUDGE

Does the defense want to proceed with a cross-examination?

Deshawn's lawyers talk amongst each other.

LAWYER

We would like to move forward with a cross-examination of the witness your honor.

EXT. DEPAUL HIGH SCHOOL-NIGHT

St. Benedict's bus arrives in the parking lot. The team exits the bus and looks at the school. It's a modest size with a gothic look.

INT. DEPAUL HIGH SCHOOL-GYMNASIUM

Banners inside the gym read EAGLES. The court a shiny tan wood finish. Very few people in the stands. The team takes the bench including Justin.

Chad, Mike, Tree, Ryan, and Treyvon walk on the court. The opposing team also take the court. The referee throws the ball up with Tree winning the tip.

Treyvon brings the ball up to the top of the key. He displays fancy moves in front of his defender.

GEORGE

C'mon! Screen!

Tree runs up to set a screen but before he can complete it, Treyvon drives hard to the rim. He goes for a layup which is heavily contested by the opposing team's center. It goes in.

George palms his head, not sure what to say.

TREE

What are you doing man?

TREYVON

Yo, chill nigga I made that shit.

TREE

Wait for my screen.

They all run back on defense.

Alex sits at the end of the bench. He eyes Justin who sits on the opposite side of the bench in uniform.

ALEX

(to teammate)

Hey, do you know why coach didn't start Justin?

TEAMMATE

I think he's reserving him for the second half.

ALEX

Why?

TEAMMATE

Honestly, I think it's because of his asthma.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Asthma?

TEAMMATE

Yeah. Don't tell anyone I said this
but I think it's getting worse.

Alex thinks on it. The opposing team hits a three-pointer.
The few people in the stands cheer.

GEORGE

Dammit! Switch on defense guys!!

Treyvon brings the ball up. He does a quick crossover move
then passes it to Mike who powers to the rim for a shot. A
whistle; he gets fouled. The referee signals two shots.

Mike makes the first shot. The opposing coach calls a
substitution. JOHN JACOBS (18), the popular kid, comes in as
point-guard.

TEAMMATE

Fuck. See that kid that just got
subbed in?

ALEX

Yeah.

TEAMMATE

That's John Jacobs. He's from
DeSalle Academy. He just
transferred to finish his senior
year here.

ALEX

Shit, you right.

TEAMMATE

You know him?

ALEX

Yeah. That school was top ten last
year with him.

Mike makes his second free throw. The team runs back to
defense. John Jacobs handles the ball to the top of the key.

ALEX

Watch what he does. If the ball is
in his left hand he shoots. If it's
in his right hand he crosses left
and drives.

(CONTINUED)

The teammate gives Alex a weird look. Treyvon gets in a low guarding stance.

GEORGE

Step up to him!

John Jacobs switches the ball to his right hand. He hesitates right then crosses to his left. Treyvon completely caught by it, gets blown past.

John Jacobs then stops and shoots a mid-range jumper. It goes in.

TEAMMATE

No way. He didn't drive all the way though.

ALEX

Well with Tree there, of course he isn't gonna go to the rim.

Treyvon brings the ball up showing his ball handling. He tries for a quick crossover move but gets the ball stolen by John Jacobs who, in return, runs a fast break and scores.

George heated, calls timeout.

The scoreboard reads; Away 12 Home 29 with 1:56 on the clock

INT. DEPAUL HIGH SCHOOL-LOCKER ROOM-GYMNASIUM

The team all stand around George. The starters drenched in sweat.

GEORGE

What the fuck is going on? You guys are pathetic! This is honestly the worst team I have coached in my entire fucking life!!

CHAD

Coach, it's Treyvon. He keeps-

GEORGE

I don't give a fuck!! It's a team sport so if one of you sucks-- you all suck!!

A beat. George walks just outside the hall and discusses something with Assistant coach Tom.

Chad gives Treyvon a harsh look. Treyvon not liking it.

(CONTINUED)

TREYVON

Nigga what the fuck you looking at?
(mocking)
Ooo, Treyvon doesn't do this. Well
guess who has the most points,
bitch.

CHAD

That's because you chuck up
eighty fucking shots a game!

TREE

Guys enough!

MIKE

No, he's right. You gotta cut that
shit out Treyvon.

TREYVON

Oh, like you hitting shots.

Mike furious begins to approach Treyvon but Tree and Justin
defuse it.

MIKE

Say that shit to my face--

JUSTIN

Games not over so calm yourselves!
Still got two more quarters to go.

RYAN

We're down thirty dude.

JUSTIN

So? Anything's possible.

George walks back in.

GEORGE

Alright then. Treyvon, Chad you're
out. I want Justin at two and Alex,
you're at one.

Everyone shocked.

GEORGE

Alright, everyone in.

Everybody huddles in.

(CONTINUED)

EVERYONE
Vic! Tor! Ry! CRUSADERS!!

INT. DEPAUL HIGH SCHOOL-GYMNASIUM

The scoreboard reads; Away 35 Home 66 with 8:00 static on the clock

Alex takes the court and readies himself on defense. He looks around the gymnasium. Even fewer people than before.

The whistle blows; game start.

John Jacobs brings the ball up. Alex guards him watching his every move. John Jacobs switches the ball to his left hand.

The teammate sitting on the bench turns to teammate #2.

TEAMMATE
(to teammate #2)
Yo, check this out.

John Jacobs tries to misdirect Alex with his eyes then goes for a jump shot. Alex sees it the whole way through and blocks it.

He gets the ball and runs a solo fast-break. John Jacobs doesn't even try to chase after Alex and complains to the referee. Alex scores.

The whole team shocked. John Jacobs brings the ball up again this time keeping the dribble with his right hand. He immediately crosses left and drives. Alex stays in front which causes John Jacobs to force a pass.

It is immediately stolen by Mike who passes it to Justin. Justin then passes to Alex.

JUSTIN
You're at point man you got it.

Tree sets a screen for Alex who drives left to the basket. The corner defender collapses on Alex leaving Justin wide open in the corner. Alex passes to Justin who shoots and misses.

Tree grabs the rebound and passes to an open Mike in the other corner. He shoots and hits the three.

GEORGE
Alright guys, let's keep it going,
let's keep it going.

(CONTINUED)

John Jacobs brings the ball up but passes immediately to a teammate who takes a shot and misses. Ryan grabs the rebound and passes it to Alex. Alex stops his fast-break at the three-point line and shoots. It goes in.

A montage of Alex getting steals and scoring more three-point shots.

The scoreboard reads; Away 72 Home 74 with 0:14 on the clock

John Jacobs calls for the ball from his teammates which infuriates his coach. Alex squares up on him. Both their eyes intense on each other. John Jacobs dribbles left. Alex follows but gets caught on a hard screen.

GEORGE

C'mon ref, that's a foul!! Dammit!!

Alex now forced to guard the screener and Justin guarding John Jacobs. John Jacobs calls an isolation. Justin gives him space and eyes the ball.

John switches his dribble from his left hand to his right.

GEORGE

Step up on him!!

Alex sees the situation and shakes his head. John Jacobs crosses left then drives hard to the rim. Alex runs over to help but Justin swats the ball out of John Jacobs hand. Tree recovers it and brings it up the court.

4 seconds on the clock.

Tree passes to Alex who runs a fast break. Three defenders stand between him and the rim. Alex then stops his fast-break at the three-point line and shoots.

The clock ticks 0 and the ball swishes in. They win.

The whole team runs on the court and celebrates. Alex getting much of the praise.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-CLASSROOM-DAY

Alex sits with Fred at a table who has his laptop open. Fred stuff his mouth with food.

FRED

Dude, you were like Steph Curry out there!

ALEX

I wasn't that good.

FRED

You shot one-hundred percent from the field dude!! Look!

(point: laptop)

Twelve of twelve from the field, nine of nine from three and seventeen assists. And you had ten rebounds-- that's a triple double! Dude you got a fucking triple double!

Alex reads the box score.

ALEX

Holy shit, I was good. Damn. Will probably never do that again ever in my life.

FRED

The coach might start you.

ALEX

C'mon, that's ridiculous-

FRED

He has to start you.

ALEX

It was Justin's steal that really won us the game.

FRED

Oh come on, nobody's gonna remember that. What people remember is Jordan's mid range buzzer beater, Kobe's contested three's, Ray Allen handing LeBron the championship. Basketball is an offensive spectacle. Don't get me wrong, defense is just as important but ask yourself why they call foul on almost every play? It's because offense sells tickets.

Alex takes it all in.

FRED

If you can do that most games then a path to the NBA is very real for you.

(CONTINUED)

Alex's face betrays a feeling of belief.

FRED

And when you get that first call
don't forget about me.

TREE (O.S.)

Alex!! Yoo!!

Tree, Chad, and Chad's girlfriend, STACEY(18), youthful
sexiness, walk over.

TREE

Mister one hundred percent from the
field a.k.a. mister tippie dubs!

CHAD

(laughs)

Dubs is a win Tree.

TREE

Whatever, we gonna win thrice and
then gonna win, win, win some more.

CHAD

There's a little get-together at my
place tonight and you need to be
there.

STACEY

It's at my place idiot.

CHAD

Whatever, I'm always there, right.

She laughs and they kiss.

CHAD

Anyway, you're coming right? You
can bring your friend too.

ALEX

Uh, yeah, sure.

CHAD

Alrighty then, I'll text you the
address. We got class Tree. Let's
bounce.

TREE

Alright Alex, I'll see you tonight.

Alex nods them off.

(CONTINUED)

FRED

The one party I get invited to and
My sister has a stupid recital
tonight. Fuck. Pour one out for me
will ya?

ALEX

That's a big stretch on invited
don't you think?

FRED

Fuck you.

They both laugh.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE-NIGHT

Alex wears a polo and khakis. He rushes downstairs to the
living room. His sister watches tv and sees him.

LITTLE SISTER

Hey, where are you going?

ALEX

None of your business.

LITTLE SISTER

You didn't buy me my doll like you
promised.

ALEX

Sucks.

LITTLE SISTER

I hate you.

ALEX

Let that be a life lesson.

LITTLE SISTER

I'm telling mom you're leaving.

ALEX

I'm actually getting the doll on my
way back so if you really want it,
I would suggest not doing that.

Her face shows conflict.

LITTLE SISTER

Fine.

Alex fixes his collar and checks his phone. He then heads
out.

EXT. MANSION-NIGHT

A cab pulls up outside of a lavish estate with a front yard that goes on for days. Colorful lights strobe from the windows. Alex steps out and walks up to the door.

He knocks. No answer.

He then makes his way around the side of the house toward...

EXT. MANSION-BACK YARD

... the back. There, a large lit pool with droves of kids swimming. A lavish, ultra extravagant, patio has Tree with Justin, Chad, and Ryan sitting. Tree sees Alex.

TREE

Ayo, Alex!!

Alex heads over and sits.

TREE

Fashionably late, I like it.

CHAD

Hey Stacey can you bring a beer!?

(to Alex)

I hope you like corona cause that's all we got.

(to Stacey)

Make that two!!

ALEX

This is a nice place.

CHAD

Yeah. Her rich-ass parents are on vacation so you know what happens. No need to stuff you with details.

RYAN

I'm telling you man, marry her. You won't have to work a day in your life.

CHAD

Why do you think I'm still with her?

TREE

(laughs)

That's cold.

(CONTINUED)

CHAD
That's life.

RYAN
Oh yeah dude, I forgot, congrats on
the acceptance.

CHAD
Oh yeah, thanks.

TREE
Wait don't tell me... no way!
Northwestern!

CHAD
Yup got in. Full athletic
scholarship. Already committed.

Alex shocked. Hits him hard.

RYAN
Only like, one kid every three
years gets in from our school.

CHAD
I know. I'm super lucky.

Chad and Ryan toast. Stacey approaches with two beers. She
hands one to Alex then sits next to Chad.

TREE
So you ready for the next game?

ALEX
Thomas Jefferson High School right?

RYAN
Yup. The Knights.

CHAD
They're a public school but they're
one of the best so we can't sleep
on em guys.

TREE
If you have a game anywhere as
close to yesterday then we win the
title easy.

RYAN
Whoa, slow your role Tree, don't
put too much pressure on him.
Remember the game before?

(CONTINUED)

They all grimace.

RYAN

I honestly felt bad for you.

CHAD

Yeah were you having a seizure out there?

ALEX

I was a little nervous starting. Haven't played in a while. Years actually.

TREE

Look, that's all behind us. We're moving forward. Forward onto... onto what team?

RYAN

Thomas Jefferson h-

TREE

Thomas Jefferson high school!!

Tree pumps a fist in the air. He gives Ryan and Chad a look. They all stand and surround Alex.

STACEY

(giggles)

Oh no.

Alex confused. The all grab him and lift him up and head to the pool.

ALEX

Guys wait! I like these clothes!
Wait! Wait! No!

They reach the edge of the pool.

ALEX

At least take my phone.

CHAD

Stacey! Grab his phone.

She grabs the phone then watches as they toss him in. Everyone at the party laughs. Tree then grabs Chad and jumps in. Ryan laughs at them but is pushed in by Stacey.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

Deshawn Marcus' lawyer stands and takes the floor.

LAWYER

Mr. Simmons, about a third of the way through the season you performed very well. Now the prosecution has stated that this continued. Is that true?

ALEX

Yes.

LAWYER

And up to this point, you have not met Mr. Deshawn Marcus yet. Correct?

ALEX

Yes, I have not met him yet.

LAWYER

That means you didn't see him in any games and he hasn't been apart of anything to do with the team. Is that correct?

ALEX

Correct.

LAWYER

Then can you describe your relationship with his brother, Treyvon Marcus?

ALEX

Um, it wasn't anything really. I just... I don't know, he was just another player.

LAWYER

Another player yes, but you stated Mr. Simmons that you yourself found it weird that he was on a team with two other point guards. Why--

ALEX

No, I though it was weird that there were three point-guards on the team all together.

(CONTINUED)

LAWYER

Well that brings me to my point.
Why do you think that was?

ALEX

I think the coach had his own
reasons.

LAWYER

Do you think it had something to do
with Justin's asthma?

ALEX

Well yeah, it was no secret around
the team that he had asthma. But he
played okay in the beginning of the
season.

LAWYER

Then why did George Thompson stop
playing Treyvon Marcus and keep you
in instead for the rest of the
season?

ALEX

He was a better ball handler than
me but the coach knew I was the
smar-- making better decisions out
there.

LAWYER

Was there any evidence on why
George pulled his son for the rest
of the season? Did you hear or
notice anything?

ALEX

Um...
(shakes head)
No.

LAWYER

Nothing? Not one thing?

ATTORNEY

Objection your honor, asked and
answered.

JUDGE

Sustained.

The lawyer stares at Alex.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-GYMNASIUM-DAY

The entire team does a high intensity passing exercise.

ASST. COACH TOM
C'mon guys, Push!! Push!!

Every kid sweating and hustling hard.

ASST. COACH TOM
Alright guys, one last suicide!!

The team snaps to it and struggles.

ASST. COACH TOM
Alright, good job boys!! Scrimmages
on Thursday to prepare for
Saturday's game.

Some kids go to the bench while others hit the locker room.
Alex grabs water on the bench. Drenched in sweat.

ASST. COACH TOM
Hey Alex. Coach wants to see you at
his office at five o' clock.

Alex nods and checks the time. It's 4:40

INT. ATHLETIC CORRIDOR

Alex approaches George Thompson office door. Yelling can be heard from inside. Alex gets near the door and eavesdrops.

GEORGE (O.S.)
They need to see him play!... I
don't care what the doctor said, I
don't wanna lose this school!...
alright then I'll talk to you
later.

Alex steps back, waits a moment then knocks.

GEORGE (O.S.)
Come in.

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE-CONTINUOUS

George stands by his window.

GEORGE
How are you doing today Alex?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

I'm fine.

A silence.

GEORGE

I wanted to commend you not on the amazing game you had, but the bravery you mustered to come back to this team. It means you haven't given up on yourself. That's very important.

ALEX

Uh, thank you.

GEORGE

I also wanted to let you know that you'll be starting for the rest of the season.

ALEX

What about Justin?

GEORGE

After that game you just had, I think you have more to prove.

(a beat)

Do you have a father, Alex?

ALEX

Um, no.

GEORGE

So you live with...

ALEX

My mom and my sister.

George nods his head and looks out the window. A beat.

GEORGE

Whatever you do Alex, just don't let them down. Whatever you do.

ALEX

Okay.

GEORGE

That's it.

Alex nods and exits.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

The lawyer begins pacing again.

LAWYER

Can you tell us what happened with the team?

ALEX

Well I started and Treyvon got a lot of minutes too. The team chemistry went up and we just started winning.

LAWYER

Who do you think was the best player on the team?

ALEX

Chad was considered our best player because he averaged the most points but I always thought it was Tree.

LAWYER

And why is that?

ALEX

It was all the little things-- on defense and offense. Plus he was a rebounding machine.

LAWYER

Can you tell me what Treyvon brought to the team?

ALEX

He was by far the quickest ball handler on the team so that was a plus.

LAWYER

Record shows you spent a lot of time with Treyvon. Can you elaborate?

ALEX

I was helping him focus his game. Mostly his driving. It became our main weapon in closing tight games.

INT. VARIOUS GYMNASIUMS

[BEGIN MONTAGE]

Treyvon drives and scores. Alex hits a three. Chad does crossovers, drives, and dunks. Tree get put-backs and dunks.

St Benedict's Academy wins all their games against multiple high schools.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

St. Benedict's Academy is quickly taken the nation by storm as they defeat high caliber teams with elite level players. Lead by coach George Thompson whose son, the starting point guard, is out due to injury, the back up point guard Alex Simmons has more than picked up the slack.

COMMENTATOR #2 (V.O.)

Yes Alex Simmons, with his first year starting varsity, is leading the nation in shooting percentage at sixty-five percent and has topped the list among non ranked players. Their second point guard, Treyvon Marcus, is also a force with his speed and ball handling ability and has flourished under Thompson's offense. But the two main stars of the team, Chad Libitz and Terrence Akoni Jr, have dominated with a combined average forty-three points per game.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Only one team stands in their way for an appearance at the state title. That team is the number five ranked, Silver Creek Valley High School Jaguars.

[END MONTAGE]

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-GYMNASIUM-DAY

Alex and Treyvon finish a one-on-one game.

ALEX

See, you're quick. One of the quickest off the drive I've seen honestly.

(CONTINUED)

TREYVON

Yeah you know, been workin' on it
my whole life.

ALEX

So let me see you do it again,
c'mon.

Treyvon gets into a low triple threat stance. Alex guards.
Treyvon fakes left then drive hard right-- beating Alex to
the rim.

ALEX

See, that shit works in game right?
No flashiness just straight
forward.

TREYVON

Yeah nigga that shit's crazy good.
I actually got a call from a couple
D2 schools bro. They scouting me.
Want me to come in.

ALEX

Damn, really? That's sick.

TREYVON

What about you?

ALEX

Na, nothing yet.

TREYVON

Really? Damn. They commin' bro,
they commin'. Ah shit, my bro's
here, I gotta go. Check you later
dog.

ALEX

See ya.

Treyvon grabs his stuff and runs to the exit. There his
brother, Deshawn Marcus, stands. He looks at Alex then walks
away.

INT. ST BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-LIBRARY-DAY

Alex and Fred sit on along wooden table by a large window.
They both do homework.

FRED

So what you get on that test?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
Sixty-four.

Fred shocked.

FRED
What!? How? Didn't you study?

ALEX
Eh. Not really. Practice has been draining me.

FRED
Dude. Now's not the time for your grade to be dropping. Colleges notice kids who finish strong and kids who finish weak.

Alex hands Fred an open envelope. Fred grabs it and takes out the papers inside.

FRED
Dude, no way!
(reading)
... hope that you accept our offer for a full athletic scholarship to be apart of our division two men's basketball team. That's sick!

ALEX
Yeah.

FRED
I've never heard of this school though.

ALEX
Yeah me neither. But it's a start.

FRED
This means other schools are probably looking at you.

ALEX
And if a school with a good math program offers then I don't have to pay for college.

FRED
But you still have to play once you're there. That'll eat up your schedule.

Alex waves a dismissive hand.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

C'mon. A D2 school? I'll have plenty of time to focus on school.

FRED

Well, I mean, yeah, this is crazy. I'm jealous.

INT. SUPERMARKET-NIGHT

Alex walks down the fridge isle and grabs milk. His phone rings as he continues down another isle.

ALEX

Yeah, I'm in the store right now... I don't see it.

Alex heads to a shelf full of pills. He looks under aspirin.

ALEX

Aleve or Advil?

Alex grabs a pill bottle and inspects it.

ALEX

You sure the doctor said-- okay, okay jeez... alright then.

He puts his phone to sleep.

EXT. SUPERMARKET-NIGHT

Alex exits and walks through the parking lot. Deshawn Marcus stand amongst a group of thug looking men. He sees Alex and heads toward him.

DESHAWN

Ayo, let me holla at you real quick.

Alex ignores and keeps walking. Deshawn agitated but covered in an eerie calm.

DESHAWN

Ayo, dog.

Deshawn grabs Alex's arm which Alex quickly pulls away.

DESHAWN

Fuck nigga, I'm just tryin' to talk.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

What? What do you want?

DESHAWN

You Alex, right? On my little brother's basketball team?

ALEX

Treyvon?

DESHAWN

Yeah, that little nigga. He told me you've been helpin' him out. His game has stepped up for real and now he's got a couple colleges looking at him. I just wanted to say I appreciate what you did.

Alex face shows distrust. Dumbstruck almost.

ALEX

Yeah, no problem.

DESHAWN

I also wanted to let you know that you made a smart decision that night.

Alex puzzled.

DESHAWN

C'mon nigga don't play stupid. The store on Sutherland. My boys was worried you was gonna talk. If it wasn't for me, my boy would've did much worse then that.

Deshawn nods to his bandaged nose. Alex looks over to Deshawn's boys who stand a distance away looking right back.

DESHAWN

I've got a problem though.

ALEX

What's that?

DESHAWN

The starting point guard, what's his name...

ALEX

Justin.

(CONTINUED)

DESHAWN

Yeah, Justin. He's been slowly eatin' at my boys playtime. Have you noticed?

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

ALEX

It is true. I also found it weird that Justin was cutting into Treyvon's playtime.

LAWYER

Was there a reason why this was? Did Treyvon not play well?

[CLIPS OF TREYVON PLAYING WELL]

ALEX

No, he actually was playing pretty decent. I mean, we didn't lose a single game with him starting or closing.

LAWYER

So I'm trying to understand this but George slowly gave his son playtime despite the fact, and this is on record, that the doctor prohibited him from playing. And George didn't tell anyone about this?

ATTORNEY

Objection your honor, witness has previously answered the question!

LAWYER

Your honor, this redundancy is confirmation for my main point.

The judge thinks on it, interested.

JUDGE

Overruled. But do get to the point.

LAWYER

Thank you your honor.

The lawyer pulls out a BLUE INHALER.

EXT. SUPERMARKET-NIGHT

ALEX

Yeah I noticed. I think it's fucked up. Treyvon's been playing fine.

DESHAWN

Exactly what I'm sayin. Why you think he's doing that shit?

ALEX

I think Justin might have a D1 scholarship lined up and the school wants to see him play.

DESHAWN

Well that little shit seems to be the coaches favorite. He's hurting my bros chances at getting other scholarships. Don't you think my bro can go D1?

ALEX

Yeah, sure.

DESHAWN

It was a matter of time but the coach is playin' fuckin' favorites.

ALEX

Well he is his son.

Deshawn completely taken over by it. Now furious.

DESHAWN

What!? Seriously!? That motherfucker-- shit makes so much sense! How can they be doin' that shit!? This is fucked up dog! This is the same shit that happened to my nigga who played football. His coach always started his son over him even though he was much better. The coach's son eventually went to the NFL while my friend played D3. He played four years but never made it past that. Not even a call.

Deshawn stares in deep thought.

DESHAWN

Na, not again nigga. Not this time. I need you to get me Justin's inhaler.

(CONTINUED)

Alex confused.

DESHAWN

I seen him walk to the locker room using one. Nigga probably got asthma or somthin'.

ALEX

I don't think I can get away with that.

DESHAWN

You gonna have to do this for me dog, I ain't fuckin' playin' around. I'ma teach this coach a lesson he won't forget.

ALEX

What are you gonna do?

DESHAWN

There's this powder shit that's untraceable. Put a little in the inhaler and he'll be out.

ALEX

You're gonna kill him?

DESHAWN

Na, it wont kill him. It'll just make the inhaler not work as good. This should be enough to take him out of the last game. Give my bro the shine he deserves.

ALEX

What if it kills him?

DESHAWN

Nigga, I said it wont.

ALEX

No, I mean the asthma. If he has an attack and the inhaler doesn't work, he could die.

DESHAWN

Then I guess that's just too fuckin' bad. Just get me that fucking inhaler an you wont have no problems from me. And if anybody bothers you, tell me. Got it?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
(nodding)
Yeah. Got it.

Deshawn turns and heads back to his boys. A GUN tucked in the back of his pants. Alex stares for a moment then turns and walks away.

INT. ST. BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-GYMNASIUM-DAY

The team sits on the bench sweaty after practice. Asst coach Tom and George stand in front facing them.

GEORGE
Good practice boys. Tomorrow is Silver Creek Valley. Remember that from here on we slow down our offense. We're gonna force them to play at our pace.

George nods to assistant coach Tom.

ASST. COACH TOM
Tomorrow's starters are Chad, Ryan, Tree, Mike, and Justin.

TREYVON
Why has Justin been starting!? He's not even here!

George turns to look at Treyvon; The audacity.

GEORGE
You just question me boy?

TREYVON
No disrespect coach but I've been--

George kicks over a chair and stands over Treyvon.

GEORGE
SHUT THE FUCK UP!! Don't you ever question me, not you. Now leave.

Treyvon face filled with anger.

TREYVON
What!?

GEORGE
Get the fuck OUT OF HERE!!

A beat. Treyvon slowly stands.

(CONTINUED)

TREYVON

I see how it is. Fuck this shit.

He takes the long walk to the gymnasium doors and exits.
Complete silence.

GEORGE

Any more questions?

No one dare raise their hands.

ALEX

Just for my understanding, why are we slowing the pace down? We are undefeated with your previous style.

Everyone shocked at the question and waiting for George to explode.

GEORGE

(calm)

It's because Silver Creek averages one-hundred three points a game. Is that all?

ALEX

Well, we average... forget about it.

GEORGE

No, no, spit it out. You were gonna say we average one hundred five points, right?

Alex, ever so slightly, nods his head

GEORGE

Well considering we've lost to them the last five years with an arguably better team, do you think those numbers are promising?

Alex shakes his head.

GEORGE

Speak up son, I can't hear you.

ALEX

No.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

Alright then, if there's no more questions, I'll see you all here tomorrow.

Everyone gets up. Tree and Chad look at Alex funny.

ASST. COACH TOM

We meet here at six-thirty sharp. Buses leave with or without you.

Chad and Tree run over to Alex.

CHAD

Dude. Don't. Ever. Do that.

TREE

Yeah, what was that? You insane?

ALEX

Silver Creek shoots thirty-eight percent from the field. They chuck up a lot of threes. We shoot sixty-two.

CHAD

At least you were smart enough not to say that.

TREE

So that means we're better at a faster pace?

ALEX

Yeah, and it also means that he's full of shit. He also just got rid of Treyvon so he needs me.

EXT. SILVER CREEK VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL-NIGHT

A large school with modern style architecture. The buses pull up in the parking lot.

INT. SILVER CREEK VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Silver Creek furiously runs a fast break down the court. The foot steps thunderous. The court stands out with it's shiny grey fill with black and red trim.

GEORGE

Get back on d!!

Their point guard tries for a layup but Justin comes behind to contest it. It misses.

(CONTINUED)

Silver Creek's center grabs the rebound and they pass it to a guard in the corner. He shoots it and it swishes in. A whistle. George calls timeout.

The scoreboard reads; Away 89 Home 95 with 2:00 on the clock

The team huddles in.

GEORGE

We got this guys. Their shots aren't falling like the first half. We run wings this time. Tree, stay in the low post-- I want the floor as open as possible. Chad, you make your guy chase you. Justin, you're still at point. Mike, I need you to stay in the corner-- you're three for three so you're a threat to them. And Alex, I want you in for Ryan.

Alex stands up surprised.

GEORGE

Everyone in!

EVERYONE

Vic! Tory! Ry! CRUSADERS!!

Alex takes the court with the rest of the team. He stands on the wing. The whistle blows. Mike in-bounds the ball to Justin.

Alex sets a pick for Justin who uses it to shoot an open three. It misses bad. Alex immediately runs to the other side of the court.

Silver creek runs a fast break. Their guard drives straight for the basket but runs right into Alex. They both fall to the ground. The whistle blows. A foul.

GEORGE

What the fuck was that ref!? That's a charge!!

Silver Creek's guard takes his first foul shot. It misses. They make substitutions. THREE BIGGER GUYS come onto the floor. Alex notices. Now worried.

The guard misses the second free throw. Tree rebounds the ball and passes it to Justin.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Tree, we're not scoring down low
with those guys.

TREE

Yeah, I see that too.

Justin dribbles to the top of the key where his defender is. He then drives hard left to the rim and is met by two big men. He passes it to Tree who tries for a layup but gets blocked.

Mike recovers the ball and passes it to Chad who dribbles to a mid range jump shot. It goes in.

The scoreboard reads; Away 91 Home 98 with 1:10 on the clock

Silver creek's point guard dribbles the ball up in front of Justin. Justin's pressure extremely effective which forces the point-guard to pass.

Alex sees right through it and steals the ball. He runs a solo fast-break. He looks at the clock and stops at the three point line and shoots. It goes in.

GEORGE

C'mon, let's keep going, let's keep
going!

Silver Creek brings the ball up. Their coach YELLS with frustration. They pass the ball around eating away at the clock. The shot clock gets down to 5 seconds.

They get the ball down low to the center who tries to muscle his way past Tree. Alex runs over to help and traps the player. The center throws an elbow which hits Alex in the face.

The referee stands unaware. The center then passes it out to a guard. The buzzer goes off-- a shot clock violation.

Tree walks up to Alex who holds his jaw.

TREE

You alright?

ALEX

I'm good. Let's go.

Justin brings the ball up and passes it to Chad. Chad fakes a shot then drives. He passes it to Mike who passes it to Alex at the three-point line. Alex shoots. It misses and bounces high off the iron.

(CONTINUED)

Alex immediately runs toward the basket and hustles for the rebound. He grabs the ball and runs to the corner three. A defender comes sprinting over towards him. He quickly shoots it and it swishes in.

The whistle blows. The other team calls timeout.

The scoreboard reads; Away 96 Home 98 with 0:28 on the clock

The team heads to the bench.

ALEX

Does anybody have an extra water?

TREE

Yeah, I do. Look in my bag.

Alex walks to the end of the bench and shuffles through a pile of bags. He pauses on a distinct blue bag. He looks over to Justin.

Alex opens the bag and spots the blue inhaler. He pauses then looks over to Justin.

Alex approaches the huddle drinking water.

GEORGE

We have to get one more stop guys.
We can do this! Same game plan as
before! I want this game won by
yesterday!

The referee whistles. The players take the floor. Mike in-bounds it to Tree. His back to the basket. Tree's defender guards him well forcing him to pass out to Chad.

Chad shot fakes then drives to the rim. He gets heavily contested by two defenders but gets the shot off. It misses and the Silver Creek rebounds the ball. George furious.

GEORGE

What the fuck was that!!?

Alex spots a player from Silver Creek, sprinting down the court wide open. The player launches the ball to him and he dribbles to the basket. He goes up for a layup but out of nowhere, Alex comes flying in and blocks the shot from behind.

Justin grabs the rebound and sprints down the court the other way. Silver Creek's coach yells goal-tend.

Justin drives hard in the lane and tries for a layup. Two defenders contest him and block the shot. The referee blows the whistle. A foul.

(CONTINUED)

The scoreboard reads; Away 96 Home 98 with 0:04 on the clock

Justin hits his first shot. He then makes the second. Silver Creek calls timeout.

Everyone huddles in drenched in sweat.

GEORGE

Alright everyone we got this. I want to see the hardest press out there. We're getting a steal. Ryan I want you in for Alex. Justin, you're still at point.

This hits Alex hard. He holds back words.

CHAD

Wait coach I think we need Alex for this play.

GEORGE

No, I need Ryan's length out there-- Tree I want you to do whatever you need to keep your guy out. Mike-- stay in front of your guy. Justin your man's probably gonna go long so make sure you watch him. Just don't let your defenders get in front of you, we're in overdrive mode now. Got it?

Everyone nods their heads.

GEORGE

Okay, one, two, three,

EVERYONE

CRUSADERS!!

Alex takes the bench as the five take the floor.

TEAMMATE

Why the fuck did he bench you? You have like, the most steals this season.

ALEX

Why don't you fucking ask him that?

Alex throws his towel down. He looks over to SUITED MEN on a bench. They stoically watch the game.

(CONTINUED)

The referee blows the whistle. Silver Creek's team scrambles around the court trying to get open. No one can. Ryan stands in front of the in-bounder arms wide.

The in-bounder then launches the ball across court. Tree gets a finger on it, disrupting the pass. The ball bounces on the court. Justin picks it up.

He dribbles fast up the court and does a lightning fast crossover, getting by one defender. Another defender challenges. He does a spin move and gets around him. He then stops at the three point line and launches a three.

The buzzer goes off. The ball in the air for ages.

It swishes in.

The team celebrates and huddles around Justin. Silver Creek's coach pissed-- slams his clip board on the ground.

Alex remains seated.

INT. TEAM BUS-NIGHT

Alex enters the bus downtrodden and lethargic. The team chat and celebrate. He takes a seat in the back and looks out the window to see:

George and Justin converse with the suited men. George gives them handshakes and so does Justin.

Alex's face stoic.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE-NIGHT

Alex places various food items in the fridge. He periodically checks his phone anxiously. His mother enters and takes a seat at the small kitchen table and checks a large stack of mail. The TV from the living room is audible.

DEBORAH

Did you get the salt and the parsley?

ALEX

Uh-huh.

A beat.

DEBORAH

What about the garlic?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
(annoyed)
Yeah ma, I got everything.

DEBORAH
Hey! You betta' watch your mouth
boy.

A silence between them. She grabs an envelope.

DEBORAH
I see a lot of college letters.
Hopefully they have scholarships.

Alex's little sister walks in and grabs a drink out the
fridge.

DEBORAH
What did I tell you about drinking
before dinner?

She frustratingly puts the drink back. Alex picks his phone
up.

ALEX
Hey, I gotta go to Fred's to finish
a project.

DEBORAH
Tonight?

ALEX
It's due tomorrow.

DEBORAH
Alright then.

LITTLE SISTER
No way, That's not fair!

DEBORAH
Hush up. It's school work. Now do
your homework.

She storms out.

INT. FRED'S HOUSE

Fred rummages through his closet.

FRED
Ah, here it is.

(CONTINUED)

He comes out with a blue inhaler and tosses it to Alex who sits on the bed. Alex inspects it.

FRED

This is sketchy as fuck man. Why are you even doing this?

ALEX

He had a fucking gun man, I wasn't just gonna be like-- no fuck off.

FRED

Exactly why I don't want any part of this. What if shit goes south and he finds out you duped him? What'll happen to me?

ALEX

He's not gonna find out. I thought about it and at most, he'll blame the people who gave him the powder. He'll just think it didn't work and boom, problem solved. Nobody gets hurt.

FRED

Except for the powder guys.

ALEX

Yeah well then don't be selling untraceable stuff to guys like that.

Fred turns on his computer.

FRED

So, I heard you made it to the state championship huh? Good for you.

ALEX

Yeah. It was a close game. I only played five minutes in the last quarter though.

FRED

What? That's bullshit. I'm telling you, you should complain to the school. I would've a while ago. The coach can't do that.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Well you know, he can. It's not like Justin plays bad. I mean fuck, he won the game.

FRED

Yeah but all those you games you won. You guys were fucking undefeated for christ sake.

ALEX

Yeah but it's not like I won them by myself. Basketball is a team sport. Tree and Chad really dominated a lot of games.

FRED

Yeah but when you play with them you guys do well. You seem to fit them better.

ALEX

Silver Creek was a tough school though.

FRED

Oh shit! You see this? Duuuude!

On monitor: One of the Ximo brothers dunks over two defenders.

FRED

I don't care how good you are, there's no way you're beating this team.

ALEX

There's three of them right?

FRED

Yup. Vince, Bryce, and Darcy.

ALEX

What are they, triplets or something?

FRED

Ha, no. But they might as well be. Six-six--two thirty, six-seven--two forty, and six-ten--two eighty--jeez. How tall is the tallest kid on your team?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Tree? About six-nine.

FRED

So he'll get dominated by Darcy.
What about your next best players?

ALEX

Chad is six-four and Justin is
six-three.

FRED

So they'll get wrecked by Vince.

ALEX

Not if we plan well.

FRED

No dude. It's a mismatch across the
board. All they have to do is iso
all day and back you down to the
rim. Especially you. What do they
list you at?

ALEX

I'm listed at six but I'm five-ten
and three-quarters.

FRED

Three-quarters?

ALEX

Yeah, that part's really important.

EXT. STREET-NIGHT

The pavement glisten after the rain. Alex looks around and
waits. Deshawn approaches by himself.

DESHAWN

You got that shit?

Alex hands him the inhaler. Deshawn inspects.

DESHAWN

That's what I'm talkin' about my
nigga.

Deshawn pulls out a small tube filled with white powder.

DESHAWN

My boy showed me exactly how to do
this shit.

(CONTINUED)

He opens the tube and places a little bit of the powder inside the inhaler. Alex watches.

ALEX

Do you know what that stuff is?

DESHAWN

No. But it's untraceable.

Deshawn finishes and hands the inhaler back to Alex.

DESHAWN

And my brother will be at the championship game. Alright, I'm out.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

LAWYER

Final investigation and autopsy reports show that the inhaler is said to have contained and distributed a foreign substance directly into the lungs which resulted in the death of Justin Thompson. Asphyxiation was the cause due to the induced asthma attack. Now, the plaintiff's case tries to place the blame on my client but doctoral records show that Justin Thompson was strictly prohibited from playing. If the doctor said you were not allowed to play would you still play Mr. Simmons?

ALEX

No.

LAWYER

Then why would George go beyond the doctors specific instructions and play him anyway? Did Justin look fine while he was playing Mr. Simmons?

ALEX

Yes, he did. I didn't see any problems in his play.

LAWYER

Do you think George's slower paced offense assisted in the matter? Help suppress the problem per-say?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Uh, I think it helped a little. But the end of the games were intense. He was sprinting up and down the court just as hard as anyone else.

The lawyer quickly moves to his next point.

LAWYER

I challenge everyone to think about this. Why would my client do such a thing? The plaintiff believes that it was revenge against the coach for taking his brother, Treyvon, out of the basketball games but my client's brother had received multiple scholarships from various schools. There's just no motivation to back up such a heinous act plus no hard evidence that the inhaler was the true cause. Now I turn to the father of the victim. He was not supposed to play his son and he did. In fact, he played him so hard that what the doctor feared would happen, happened.

George's attorneys whisper to each other.

LAWYER

Now all that's left is the foreign substance.

(a beat)

Autopsy states that it consisted mostly of fiber glass. Think about that. Fiberglass. One of the most common substances found in insulation among households. There are over two thousand reported deaths a year related to fiberglass inhalation. It was Justin's inhaler so who knows what he did with it. That inhaler could have been anywhere at anytime. Especially with all of the traveling, dingy bus, old locker rooms-- the list goes on. Hopefully reason will lead to justice. Thank-you your honor. I rest my case.

The lawyer takes a seat back next to Deshawn.

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE

This court now gives the
prosecution its closing argument.

The attorneys whisper to each other and nod their heads. He stands and takes the floor.

INT. ST. BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-CLASSROOM-DAY

Alex takes a test in a near empty classroom. He taps his pencil on his head and thinks hard. Mr. Belmont sits at his desk.

MR. BELMONT

Okay guys, I'm afraid I can't give
you more time so finish writing
down your last answers.

Alex shakes his head and walks up to hand in his test. The bell rings.

MR. BELMONT

You got time Alex? I wanna talk
with you.

ALEX

I've got practice now.

MR. BELMONT

Right at three?

ALEX

I like to get there early and go
over some stuff.

MR. BELMONT

Well, it's your grade I'm concerned
about. What happened? You're damn
near failing the last assignments.
If it wasn't for you doing well
early on, there would be no way you
could pass.

ALEX

Basketball's been pretty intense...

MR. BELMONT

And I've seen you've had a more
active roll on the team to
understate things. Even the girls
are talking about you.

They both laugh.

(CONTINUED)

MR. BELMONT

Is it that important to you?

ALEX

Well, I mean, it's a new reality.

MR. BELMONT

A what?

Alex takes his bags and pulls out a bunch of envelopes. He places them on Mr. Belmont's desk. Belmont reads through them.

ALEX

They're all D2 and D3 schools but it's something.

MR. BELMONT

So you're really considering making a career in basketball.

ALEX

No, not a career. These are all full or partial scholarships. I figure not paying for college would be good.

Belmont continues through the envelopes.

MR. BELMONT

Yeah, but you would still have to play, right?

ALEX

Yeah.

MR. BELMONT

So that would put you in the same position you're in right now.

ALEX

Yeah, but it's not like it's a D1 school.

MR. BELMONT

So you're saying it would be easier than it is now? College level courses on a college level team?

ALEX

Yeah, but it's not the same--

(CONTINUED)

MR.BELMONT

What's not the same Alex? If you can't handle it here what makes you think you can handle it there?

This hits Alex hard.

MR.BELMONT

I've had friends who failed out because they underestimated this. I don't want to see this happen to you.

(a beat)

I still think you should get the grades up, do better on the SAT, and try to get into a good school-- I know you can do it. Have you heard back from any of the other schools I suggested?

ALEX

I got in to the University of Chicago.

MR.BELMONT

Alex... that's great news. Any money?

ALEX

No.

MR.BELMONT

Hmm... well don't worry about that. This is a very prestigious school and if you graduate from there, you'll be fine. Did you reply to confirm?

ALEX

No, not yet.

MR.BELMONT

Then what are you waiting for. Go do it.

Belmont excited. Alex gives a weaker smile, grabs the envelopes, and heads to the door.

ALEX

I have one question?

(CONTINUED)

MR.BELMONT

What is it?

ALEX

How long did it take you to finish paying off your college loans?

MR.BELMONT

Well, I'll be finally done by the end of this year. Can't say so for some of my friends. They should've done better in school. Would've came out with better jobs. Don't worry about that, this is an amazing opportunity.

ALEX

I just wanted to know. I'll see you later.

Alex exits. Belmont's face betrays a realization. He stares at the empty doorway.

INT. ST.BENEDICT'S ACADEMY-GYMNASIUM-DAY

Alex, Chad, and Ryan shoot around.

CHAD

Think I can hit three in a row?

RYAN

Dude, you can't even hit one.

Chad shoots. It goes in. Gives Ryan a look.

He shoots a second. It goes in. He gives Ryan another goofy look.

CHAD

I dedicate this last shot to Northwestern.

He shoots. It misses. Ryan laughs.

RYAN

Well, two in a row, how lucky. Wish you could show off some of that luck during games.

Ryan passes the ball to Alex who stands at the foul line.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN
Go to the three.

Alex walks to three.

RYAN
Let's see your shooting, mister
sixty percent from the field.

CHAD
Na-ah, NBA line.

ALEX
I don't know where exactly that is.

CHAD
Just take a giant step back. Then
another cause there's defenders.

ALEX
This is really far.

RYAN
Dude, this is high school.

CHAD
C'mon, Kobe entered the league when
he was seventeen. I'm already
fucking eighteen. They should be
training us like this. We're not
prepared.

Alex shoots. An air ball.

CHAD
See.

RYAN
You guys ready for the Ximo
brothers?

CHAD
If there was one game I know for a
fact we would lose, it would be
this one.

RYAN
Have you no faith?

CHAD
Dude, have you seen them? One's
like seven feet tall. And built.

RYAN

But that doesn't mean we don't have a chance.

CHAD

Yeah it does.

RYAN

No it doesn't.

The rest of the team enters. George follows.

GEORGE

Alright boys, the usually. Let's get to work!

Alex eyes Justin who sits on the bench.

INT. FRED'S HOUSE-NIGHT

Fred sits at his desk facing Alex who sits on the bed with a notebook in hand.

FRED

Are you're sure it's over?

ALEX

Yeah, I'm telling you, he won't fucking know. Worst case, he blames his boy.

FRED

Alright then. But if anything, you stole it from my room.

ALEX

Sure.

Fred looks at the envelopes.

FRED

How many of these you got?

ALEX

Like, fifteen.

FRED

You commit to one yet?

ALEX

Yeah, Brownfield State University. It's the one with the brown letterhead-- yeah that one.

(CONTINUED)

Fred reads through it.

ALEX

They have the best math program out of all of them so you know.

FRED

Full ride too. Makes me regret Chicago but I bet the girls are hotter where I'm at.

ALEX

Like that's gonna make a difference.

FRED

Whatever. Did you see this? All three Ximo brothers just committed to UCLA. You should consider yourself lucky you're not going D1. You'd have to deal with them.

ALEX

Well, I'll be facing them next week.

FRED

Oh shit, yeah, the states. You're playing at the college arena. You nervous?

ALEX

A little.

FRED

You're literally playing future NBA all-stars and potential MVP's.

ALEX

I wouldn't go that far.

FRED

Have you read this?

Fred points to an article on his monitor.

FRED

This is apparently gonna be the largest high school basketball event in history. They're saying that UCLA's staff is gonna be there and want all students to support their future athletes.

(CONTINUED)

Alex on his phone disinterested.

FRED

Wait, where'd you say you were playing?

ALEX

That old college arena in town.

Something on Alex's phone captures his attention. His phone buzzes repeatedly.

FRED

No dude, they changed the venue for all the top teams. You're now playing at the Staples Center.

Alex eyes wide in shock-- slowly looks at Fred.

ALEX

Oh shit.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE-NIGHT

Alex enters, soaked from the rain. The living room empty. His mother's voice audible from the kitchen.

DEBORAH (O.S.)

I don't know what I'm gonna do. I can't afford it. I'm gonna have to move again... I'm hoping he takes one of the scholarships.

He walks to the kitchen. Deborah sees him.

DEBORAH

I'm gonna have to talk to you later, Alex is back.

She hangs up.

DEBORAH

Hey baby, how are you doing?

ALEX

I'm fine. You?

DEBORAH

I've been gettin' through.

ALEX

Are the pills working?

She shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

DEBORAH

Well enough. I wanted to tell you some men came by and wanted to talk to you. I said you don't come home till late so they left this for you. They didn't tell me exactly what it was so I don't know how it's any different from the others.

She hands Alex a very large envelope.

INT. ALEX'S ROOM

Alex throws the envelope on his desk. He opens it to reveal a letter.

It reads: Oregon State University is looking at you...

INT. AIRPORT-DAY

St Benedict's team all enter the hanger of the flight to Los Angeles. They all wear white track suits.

INT. AIRPLANE

Alex places his bags in a cubby and takes a window seat. Tree takes a seat right beside him.

TREE

So you ready for this?

ALEX

Yeah. I guess.

Justin takes a seat on the opposite end. Immediately puts headphones in.

TREE

I still can't believe Treyvon's here.

ALEX

Me either. It's not like the coach officially kicked him off.

TREE

And it's not like coach is gonna play him either.

INTERCOM (O.S.)

We'll begin taxiing once the runway clears.

Alex stares out the window.

(CONTINUED)

TREE

You ever been on a plane before?

ALEX

No.

TREE

Don't worry, we're not gonna crash.

Tree smiles.

ALEX

(deadpan)

I would hope not, Tree.

INT. LOS ANGELES-HOTEL-DAY

Alex unpacks his bags in a extremely lavish hotel room. Ryan also unpacks his bag on his bed.

RYAN

Dude, this hotel is ridiculous. I now see where my tuition is going.

ALEX

This is a nice hotel.

Alex walks to the window and stares out. A beautiful LA city under blue skies.

RYAN

Some of us are gonna go out-- hit the city. You wanna come?

ALEX

Yeah, sure.

Alex phone buzzes on the night stand.

RYAN

I wanna see the boulevard so bad. Heard they're some hot ass girls that walk with their asses out. I mean the weather is perfect out here. I shoulda' packed my summer shit.

ALEX

Uh-huh.

Alex looks at his buzzing phone. A private number. He answers.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Yes it is..... Um, yeah, of course..... I'm sure I can find it..... Okay then I'll see you then.

Alex hangs up.

RYAN

Who was that?

ALEX

It was a friend of mine I gotta meet. I don't think I can go out with you guys so I'll catch you later.

Alex quickly heads out. Ryan confused on the matter.

EXT. BISTRO-DAY

Alex exits a cab and looks across the street. The bistro is fancy with lavish outdoor seating. Two recruiters sit at a round table wearing blazers and khakis. They drink coffee and eat danish.

DAVE NUBIN (32) and MARC WILDE (35).

Alex approaches. Dave points at Alex, confirming.

DAVE

Alex Simmons-- go ahead ahead and take a seat.

Alex sits. Dave signals the waiter for another coffee.

DAVE

So the stars have aligned. We just so happen to be in the city and saw that your school's playing the state title at the Staples Center.

DAVE

Oh, I'm Dave by the way. Dave Nubin. This is Marc Wilde. I'm the primary recruiter for Oregon and this is the team manager.

They shake.

MARC

So, how you liking the city?

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

Much better than out there in the east.

ALEX

Yeah-- I mean, I just flew in but yeah, the weather's really nice. Hoping to see more of the city later.

DAVE

Awesome, awesome-- well let's get down to business. Did you read our letter?

ALEX

Yeah. I would like to commit right now.

Dave and Marc look at each other.

DAVE

That's great. So there's just one thing.

MARC

There's another kid that the head coach has his eye on. He just recently came up-- from some small town in Indiana-- anyway, this kid is essentially another point-guard with vaguely similar skill sets to you.

DAVE

We've been pulling for you but the coach has been hell bent on giving this other kid a chance. So we came to a compromise.

MARC

Since you're both playing in your respective state titles, we're gonna weigh the options after and come to a decision on who we think would best fit our organization.

Alex takes it in.

DAVE

So how we feeling? You understand?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Yeah I do. No problem. Just play well.

DAVE

Exactly. Just keep doing what you've done.

MARC

Don't take it too hard. Trust me, the other kid doesn't have much on you.

DAVE

And, again, we're pulling hard for you so odds are heavily in your favor. Coach is on the fence, you just need to tip him over.

Alex nods.

MARC

We'll be at the game tonight.

DAVE

Everybody's gonna be at the game tonight. You guys gotta go up against those Ximo brothers.

MARC

It'll be a good opportunity to check out the future competition. See how they play on a big stage.

DAVE

If we could get those three though. UCLA always gets the best. What is it? The weather, the city, the girls?

MARC

They only get em' for one year. Those kids are always one-and-done.

DAVE

Guess you're right.

Dave looks at Alex who sits quietly listening.

DAVE

Oh jeez, look how rude we are. It was nice meeting you Alex.

Alex stands and shakes their hands.

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

We'll keep you informed.

ALEX

I just had one question.

DAVE

Go ahead.

ALEX

Any reason on where this other kid came from. I mean the offer letter...

DAVE

I know, I know-- we apologize. But don't worry. This other kid he's...

Dave looks to Marc for approval.

MARC

You didn't hear it from me but he's the coaches nephew. That's the only up he's got on you which means nothing.

DAVE

So don't worry. Alright?

ALEX

Alright then, thank you.

They nod him off. Alex heads down the street.

INT. DINER-SUNSET

St. Benedict's basketball team sit rather packed in a classic diner, all still in warm-up outfits. George stands in the middle next to assistant coach Tom. He holds a wine glass.

GEORGE

So I wanted to commend you all on a beautiful season. And wanted to let you know that it's been a wonderful four years. Tree, Ryan, Justin, Mike, Alex, Northwestern Chad.

They all CHEER for Chad. George smiles.

GEORGE

I wanted you all to know that life will hit you with many things. I'm

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE (cont'd)
sure it's hit you guys a couple times and that's okay. It certainly hit me many, many times. But guess what? I'm still standing here today smiling with you. Take control of anything you do and be the best at everything you do. Putting in one-hundred percent at everything you do ensures that you'll go through life with no regrets. And if that's one thing you take away from me, is to live life with no regrets.

A long silence.

GEORGE
Everybody in.

EVERYONE
Vic! To! Ry!

EXT/INT. STAPLES CENTER-NIGHT

EVERYONE (V.O.)
CRUSADERS!!

The exterior of the arena shines with multiple neon lights. The team enter through the loading bay. Alex sees multiple people on line waiting to get in through the front.

He trails the team and continues...

LOADING BAY

... past workers and few photographers. They continue walking into...

CORRIDOR

... an entrance hall and at the end of it, an opening to the center court which showcases a sliver of intensity of an ongoing game. The CROWD CHEERS.

The team takes a left down a corridor into...

LOCKER-ROOM

The room is spotless with polished wooden cubbies and pristine carpeting.

Members of the team put their bags down and dress in their white and blue trimmed uniforms.

(CONTINUED)

Alex takes it all in and then stares at his jersey. His eyes on the name: SIMMONS

TEAMMATE

Fuck, I gotta throw-up.

The teammate sprints out.

GEORGE

If anybody else has to do the same,
I suggest you do it now.

Two more kids sprint out.

GEORGE

That's right, get it all out.

Tree sits beside Alex.

TREE

This is insane. You nervous?

ALEX

What do you want me to say?

INTERCOM (O.S.)

Non-public group four-- please make
your way to the court. Non-public
group four-- please make your way
to the court.

TREE

Aw shit, here we go. We about to be
on TV.

ALEX

This shit's televised?

GEORGE

Alright everyone, this is it. Now's
not the time to be camera shy--
let's go.

Everyone gets up and heads out.

INT. STAPLES CENTER-COURT

The team walk through the gate onto the court.

The arena is almost full as spectators take their seats. The court emits a golden glow under the intense spotlights. Banners of Lakers championships hang.

(CONTINUED)

Paparazzi take pictures of VIP guests. Alex surrounded by the perpetual commotion the arena emits. The lights almost blinding.

The team take it all in, overwhelmed, and continue down the sideline onto their bench.

Alex takes a seat and fiddles his fingers-- staring at the vast arena.

ALPINE HILLS ACADEMY enter on the other side. Their black jerseys menacing. The crowd cheers for them as they take to their bench.

The buzzer BUZZES. It's loud and professional.

George walks in front of Alex.

GEORGE

C'mon, get up. You're starting.

Alex's eyes wide.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

ATTORNEY

Why do you think he started you over his own son?

ALEX

I-I don't know.

ATTORNEY (O.S.)

You said the coach was a selfish person who gave his son special treatment.

ALEX

It was apart of his plan.

ATTORNEY

Excuse me? Can you elaborate?

ALEX

He knew I would be nervous in front of a crowd like this. Probably thought I would freeze up just like before.

ATTORNEY

But didn't you get over that? I mean you played against multiple large schools and performed well.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

He saw it in my eyes.

INT. STAPLES CENTER-COURT

Alex takes the court along with Tree, Mike, Ryan, and Chad.

Tree stands ready for the jump ball. Darcy also stands ready. More of a physical presence.

Tree nods at Alex. Alex slightly shifts his position. He looks at the crowd and hears their roars. He then shakes his head and snaps himself out of it.

The referee tosses the ball up. Tree remains grounded. Darcy jumps and tips the ball toward Vince.

Alex immediately steps in front of him and steals the ball.

Vince tries to pressure Alex for a steal but his coach waves him off and directs the team to a defensive formation.

Alex brings the ball to the top of the key where Vince stands. The crowd's cheers echo through the stadium.

Vince approaches to pressure but Alex passes to Mike who does a shot fake and drives to the rim. Darcy comes over to block the shot but Mike passes to Tree.

Tree tries for the layup but gets blocked from behind by Vince.

Vince sprints up the court with the ball like a locomotive. He attacks the rim with Tree and Chad there to defend. He takes contact and scores. The crowd roars.

The ball is in-bounded to Alex. Alex takes it up to the top of the key. The crowds roars seem even louder this time.

Alex, somewhat stiff, passes the ball to Chad. They set up an isolation play for him. Bryce stands tall in front of him readily accepting the challenge. Chad enters a triple-threat stance then drives hard baseline to the rim.

Darcy turns his attention to him and runs up to block. Chad notices and in a panic, passes the ball to Alex who stands at the three-point line.

Vince runs up to try to block the shot but Alex gets it off in time.

It swishes in.

Away 12 Home 20 Q:1 4:23 on the clock

(CONTINUED)

VINCE

So you wanna shoot? Alright then, I got you.

Alex stands at the top of the key in a defensive position. He looks behind him-- an isolation.

Vince dribbles slowly then explodes to the rim. He easily powers by Alex, knocking him down and dunks-- the easiest looking basket.

GEORGE

Foul ref, foul!!

Ryan in-bounds the ball.

ALEX

(to Tree)

I need help on those.

Alex dribbles the ball up.

TREE

I got my hands full with Darcy.

Alex dribbles up to where Vince awaits.

Alex dribbles slowly. Suddenly, Vince reaches in and disrupts Alex's dribble. The ball comes loose but Alex dives on the floor and recovers it. He passes it to Ryan.

GEORGE

Movement guys, movement!!

Ryan does a crossover move but can't get by his defender. He then passes back to Alex.

Vince steps up to him. A smirk on his face. Alex then dribbles and drives hard left.

Vince stays on him. Alex then does a behind the back crossover. Vince reads it the whole way through and steals the ball.

He takes the ball all the way to the other end and dunks. The crowd roars. Alex stares into the vast arena. A whistle blows. Timeout by George.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

ATTORNEY

You were the one who performed bad. My client gave you the opportunity and you under-performed.

ALEX

I was starting to play better and he knew so he took me out.

ATTORNEY

Mr. Simmons, it seems that my client made a reasonable decision that any other coach would have made.

A silence.

ATTORNEY

So where was Treyvon during all this?

ALEX

He was there, sitting at the end of the bench.

ATTORNEY

And did Treyvon ever leave the court-- to go to the bathroom or for other reasons?

ALEX

I don't know, I wasn't keeping my eye on him.

ATTORNEY

And by this point, have you seen his brother, Deshawn?

ALEX

No.

ATTORNEY

Did Treyvon seem upset?

ALEX

No.

ATTORNEY

Did you notice any difference in his behavior, demeanor?...

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Well, he was quieter than usual.

INT. STAPLES CENTER-COURT

Alex stares at Treyvon. He sits still, face showing an intense focus. The crowd cheers every shot Alpine Hills Academy makes.

Justin Drives hard to the rim and passes to Chad who shot fakes at the three-point line then drives and performs a mid-range shot.

It goes in.

Darcy launches the ball down court to a wide open Bryce. Bryce has an uncontested path to the rim but shoots a three instead. It rattles in.

George yells out for Justin to make a play. Justin dribbles to the top of the key and puts three fingers up.

Tree runs and sets a screen for Chad who runs around the three-point line.

Justin does a crossover move and passes it to Chad who immediately shoots the ball. Bryce jumps to block and grazes the ball. It falls short, right into Darcy's hands.

[BEGIN QUICK MONTAGE]

Alpine Hills continue to dominate. Flashes of the scoreboards point disparity. Dunk after score after dunk after steal.

[END MONTAGE]

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

ATTORNEY

How upset were you at George?

ALEX

I was very upset.

ATTORNEY

Can you state exactly why you were upset?

The room dead silent. Alex looks at Deshawn who stares intensely back-- then to George whose stare is even sharper. Alex sighs.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

I was upset because because I felt like I was being treated unfairly.

ATTORNEY

Upset enough to carry that hate on toward Justin?

LAWYER

Objection your honor!! Prosecution is leading to an unreasonable conclusion--

ATTORNEY

Your honor, I would like to remind you that this is a professional witness, I assure you everyone wants to hear this.

LAWYER

No, this is leading to a ridiculous conclusion--

BANG, BANG, BANG.

The judge bangs the hammer.

JUDGE

I will have order!

The commotion settles down. The judge looks to the prosecuting lawyer.

JUDGE

The objection is overruled. Please continue.

The attorney sets himself. The lawyer sits upset.

ATTORNEY

Mr. Simmons. Did you have any malice toward Justin during this game?

ALEX

Yes.

ATTORNEY

And you are on record to have been absent from the game during this time. Where did you go?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

I went to the bathroom.

ATTORNEY

The bathroom was located down the hall from the locker-room. Is that correct.?

ALEX

Yes. Correct.

ATTORNEY

And in the locker-room, was the team's luggage-- including Justin's bag. Is that correct?

Alex begins to catch on. His understands where this is headed.

ALEX

Yes.

ATTORNEY

And inside that bag was his blue inhaler.

INT. STAPLES CENTER-CORRIDOR

Alex is alone and places his head against the wall frustrated. His eyes closed, fist clenched, thinking hard. Two spectators walk by, conversing.

SPECTATOR

This isn't even a game. The Ximo bros are too good.

SPECTATOR #2

I know right? They gonna kill it at UCLA.

SPECTATOR

What NBA team you think they go to.

SPECTATOR #2

Shit, if they all end up on the Lakers they could be a championship contender.

SPECTATOR

Lakers? Yeah fuckin' right. My money's on the Knicks.

(CONTINUED)

The conversation hits Alex hard. He looks at the two who look back at him. One whispers to the other and they both giggle.

He then looks left down the end of the hallway to see Deshawn Marcus walking. Deshawn turns the corner and disappears.

Alex stares perplexed.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

ALEX

He was walking away from me. He didn't see me, at least I don't think.

ATTORNEY

Did you see him walk into or out of the locker-room?

ALEX

I only saw him walking away from me.

ATTORNEY

Walking away, huh? And where was the locker room door in relation to you?

ALEX

It was in the middle of the hall a couple doors down from the bathroom.

ATTORNEY

And was the locker-room on the other-side or was it between you and Deshawn?

A beat. Alex looks at Deshawn.

ALEX

It was between me and Deshawn.

Some commotion arises.

ATTORNEY

And if you were to make a decision on where Deshawn was coming from, would you think it was from the locker-room?

A long moment.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Yes.

Even more commotion.

ATTORNEY

No further questions your honor.

INT. STAPLES CENTER-COURT

Alex enters the court and takes a seat on the bench.

Away 24 Home 59 Q:2 :56 on the clock

GEORGE

Goddammit, set the fucking screen!!

Vince runs a fast break down the middle. Justin is the only one who stands between him and the rim. Vince drives his shoulders down and tries to power through Justin.

Justin takes heavy contact and contests the layup. Vince powers his way up and scores the layup. A whistle.

George furious. The opposing coach claps.

Vince makes his first foul shot. The buzzer sounds. The opposing coach substitutes Bryce and a teammate.

RYAN

What the fuck are we doing?

CHAD

Dude, I don't know.

They both look at Justin who stands hunched and drenched in sweat. He breathes heavy.

BENCH

Alex sits at the end. George stands frustrated. He gives Alex a hard look then focuses back on his clipboard.

ALEX

Coach, I think I can help out there.

George turns to Alex and gives a puzzled look.

ALEX

You just gotta give me a chance.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

And why the hell would I do that?

ALEX

Because we need more offense. If--

GEORGE

You didn't do anything out there.
On both ends.

ALEX

Your son isn't doing much better.
Look if we--

GEORGE

You shut up! Don't you tell me how
to run this team! If my son played
the whole season, we would be in
the same exact situation-- right
here, right now.

(a beat)

Get comfortable because you're not
coming back in this game.

The whole bench stares at George and Alex. Alex sits unable
to respond.

The crowd cheers.

COURT

Vince makes the second foul shot.

Justin brings the ball up. Vince now guards Chad. Justin
does quick crossover moves and gets by his defender--
driving to the rim.

Darcy turns his attention to Justin. Justin jumps hard for a
layup. Darcy comes behind and blocks the shot hard. Justin
falls to the ground. No whistle.

George furious. Alpine Hills recovers the ball and runs a
fast break.

Just immediately snaps up and sprints as hard as he can down
court. He comes behind the ball handler and blocks the shot.
It goes out of bounds.

GEORGE

(to referee)

That's fucking bullshit!! He
fucking did that on purpose!

(CONTINUED)

ASST. COACH TOM
George, calm down.

GEORGE
No, it's fucking bullshit. Fuck
this ref!!

The referee looks at George and blows the whistle. He thrusts his fist. An ejection.

George slams his clipboard hard.

GEORGE
WHAT!! BULLSHIT!! NO-- FUCK YOU!!

Assistant coach Tom holds him back along with two teammates.

The two teammates walk George away. The referee continues the game. The crowd roars.

Tree in-bounds it to Justin.

Justin forces a fast-break and drives up court. About mid court, Justin suddenly falls hard to the ground.

He grabs his chest-- an asthma attack. The referee blows the whistle pausing the game.

George notices before he exits and runs to Justin along with assistant coach Tom.

ASST. COACH TOM
Shit, his inhaler is in the
locker-room. Let me get it.

George puts a hand on him stopping Tom.

GEORGE
No, no, no.

He looks over to men in suits in the stands.

GEORGE
(to players)
Grab him.

ASST. COACH TOM
Are you crazy. Just--

George, along with two players, lift him up.

GEORGE

(to Tom)

You stay here and take over. My boy
will be fine.

They quickly get Justin off the court.

INT. LOCKER ROOMS

They set Justin down. George quickly gets the inhaler and makes Justin inhale it. Justin's breathing under control.

GEORGE

You good boy?

Justin nods his head and coughs. George sighs and sits back in relief.

INT. STAPLES CENTER-COURT

Assistant coach Tom looks at Alex.

ASST. COACH TOM

Hey Alex. You're in.

Alex slowly stands and walks on the court. All three Ximo bros still sit on the bench.

CHAD

Shit, I hope Justin's alright.

ALEX

Me too.

TREE

Yeah, damn.

RYAN

Dude, he's tough. I seen worse.
He's gonna be fine, stay positive.

MIKE

Yeah, Ryan's right. Let's focus on
the game. I'll play point.

ALEX

No, I got it.

RYAN

You sure.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Yeah.

RYAN

Alright, we got thirty points to make up.

The whistle blows. Alex brings the ball to the top of the key. Tree sets a screen and Alex drives to the rim. He passes it out to Chad who hits a wide open three.

Alex steals the ball and dribbles it up court. Alex passes it to Mike who cuts to the rim and scores.

Tree posts up and scores.

Chad does a fancy crossover move and dunks it.

Away 44 Home 67 Q:3 9:12 on the clock

Mike dribbles it to the rim and passes it out to Ryan who hits an open three.

Chad drives and does a spin move floater.

Alex gets a steal and throws it across court to Ryan who dunks it.

Tree does a two handed slam.

Chad hits a three-pointer.

Away 57 Home 70 Q:3 1:03 on the clock

The opposing coach calls timeout.

The team huddle.

MIKE

Why isn't the coach putting them in?

TREE

It's because he's that confident.

ASST. COACH TOM

Tree's right. We're barely staying in this game when their best players are off. He'll probably put them in in the fourth.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

They're getting a nice rest too.

Alex stares at them a moment. Vince looks back at him.

ASST. COACH TOM

How are we? We good?

They all nod.

ASST. COACH TOM

Good. Conditioning shouldn't be a problem for us.

CHAD

This is fun and all but what are we gonna do when they come back in?

ASST. COACH TOM

Same thing we've done all season. Play at our pace.

CHAD

Like that worked so well in the first half.

ALEX

We're just gonna have to outscore them.

RYAN

(sarcastic)

Yeah, just like every fucking basketball game ever.

TREE

No, I see where you're coming from. We don't have a choice.

The referee blows the whistle.

ASST. COACH TOM

Just continue what you're doing.

The team takes the floor.

Away 66 Home 69 Q:4 12:00 on the clock

The buzzer sounds. Vince, Bryce and Darcy take the floor. The ball is in-bounded to Vince.

Alex steps up to defend. Vince drives hard to the rim for an easy layup.

(CONTINUED)

Alex brings the ball up. Vince tries to steal the ball but Alex keeps it away. He passes to Mike who drives to the rim from a screen set by Ryan.

Darcy blocks the shot. Bryce recovers it and dribbles all the way to the other side and scores. The crowd cheers.

Assistant coach Tom calls timeout. The team huddles in.

ASST. COACH TOM

Alright guys we need more movement.
And better defense.

CHAD

It's tough to get around Bryce man.

ALEX

And I'm not really contributing at
point but I've got an idea. Put
Treyvon in.

They all look at Alex puzzled.

Away 71 Home 83 Q:4 3:56 on the clock

Bryce does a flashy crossover spin move and shoots a floater. It misses.

Tree gets the rebound and runs the fast-break. He passes it out to Chad who shoots the three. He misses. Vince grabs the rebound.

Alex guards Vince who gets into a triple threat stance. Vince drives left then crosses right going to the rim. Tree slides over to help-- forcing Vince to pass it to Darcy, but Treyvon steals the ball.

Treyvon sprints impeccably fast up the court with the ball and scores.

Vince passes the ball to Bryce who shoots a three in Chad's face. It goes in.

Away 73 Home 86 Q:4 2:59 on the clock

Treyvon dribbles up court and does a lightning fast crossover completely blowing by his defender. He passes it to Ryan who passes it to Alex.

Alex shoots the three and it goes in.

Darcy in-bounds the ball by launching it across court. Ryan intercepts the ball and passes it to Tree who gets a quick layup.

(CONTINUED)

The opposing coach calls timeout.

Away 75 Home 86 Q:4 2:24 on the clock

The team huddles in.

ASST. COACH TOM

Alright guys, nice effort, nice effort. We're playing much better now-- just keep getting stops, we're still in this. We win this on the defensive end so watch the screens and don't let any mismatches occur. Got it?

They all nod. The whistle blows. They all take the floor.

ALEX

We're not getting anywhere. We're in the same spot we were at the start of the quarter.

TREE

I know. It's just like you said we're gonna have to outscore 'em right here, right now.

Vince brings the ball up. He passes it to Treyvon's defender who shoots the three and scores. The crowd cheers.

Away 75 Home 89 Q:4 2:02 on the clock

Alex stands at the corner three. He looks at the clock and shakes his head.

Alex runs around the three-point line. Treyvon passes the ball to him. He shoots and scores.

Vince brings the ball up and drives to the rim. He forces a layup but it misses. Tree gets the rebound and passes it to Treyvon.

Treyvon dribbles around the court making his defender chase him.

Bryce tries to trap Treyvon but he breaks free and passes it to Chad who shoots a three. It misses.

Alex gets the rebound and runs to the three and takes a shot. It goes in.

Away 81 Home 89 Q:4 1:20 on the clock

(CONTINUED)

Alex gets a steal, runs a fast break, and shoots a three-- it goes in.

Bryce misses a shot. Treyvon passes to Alex who passes to Ryan for the three. It swishes in.

Alpine hills eats the clock and forces a missed shot.

Away 87 Home 89 Q:4 0:20 on the clock

Alex slowly dribbles up court. The crowd roars. Every player fights for position.

Vince stands determined at the three. Alex notices the space between them. Alpine Hills coach screams for Vince to step up.

He stares at the rim for a long moment. Then passes to Ryan who shoots a deep three.

The ball in the air forever until...

... SWISH.

The arena erupts. The entire team celebrates in the middle of the court. Alex celebrates then looks up at the stands and sees:

George is high up in the stands overlooking the celebration with a stoic face. Him and Alex's eyes meet.

A long stare amongst the commotion. *The sound around fades.*

A person then hastily approaches George and tells him something. Something urgent. George's facial expression changes to worry as he runs off.

Alex continues to stare at the now gone George.

INT. COURT ROOM-DAY

JUDGE

Has the jury come to a verdict?

A JUROR stands.

JUROR

Yes your honor. For the death of Justin Francis Thompson. This jury has found mister Deshawn Joshua Marcus, guilty of first degree murder.

Deshawn's face still. Indifferent almost.

George has his head down, sighs, then looks to Alex. Alex looks back.

INT. STAPLES CENTER-COURT

Alex continues to stare and stare. A teammate approaches to congratulate him and celebrate.

As he pulls him away, Alex continues to stare. His face now blank-- dead almost.

FADE OUT:

END