

H O O P S

Robert Kirschten

robert\_kirschten@sbcglobal.net  
15111 Crescent Lilly Drive  
Cypress, TX 77433  
281-758-5835

SUPER:

1957

FADE IN

INT. BOSTON GARDEN - NIGHT

HIGH, WIDE SHOT of the Boston Garden from the last-row seats.

ON scoreboard and clock: 20 seconds left. Celtics 79, New York 80. The CLOCK is TICKING down.

RADIO COVERAGE in the background:

ANNOUNCER (v.o.)  
Twenty seconds left with the Knicks  
by one. The Knicks bring in the ball . . .

SLOW CONTINUOUS SHOT AROUND THE FLOOR,

PASSING THROUGH the PLAYERS as the Celts press full-court on defense.

A CELTIC PLAYER

off the bench to the scorer's table, sweat pouring from his face.

RED COUGHLIN

the Celtics' coach, charging up the baseline, yelling at him, the team, and the world in general.

RED  
Stop the ball, goddamn it! Defense!

DOWN THE CELTICS' BENCH, PAST empty seats to

HOOPS MORAN

not a drop of sweat on him, still wearing his sweat suit.

Celtics steal the ball. WHISTLE BLOWS. TIME OUT.  
4 SECONDS.

As the Celtics circle, Hoops shuffles around the outside of the huddle.

CLOSE on his eyes. He's part of the team but not in the game. He's not going to get in. He knows it.

Celtics' ball. The offense sets a triple pick (three players posting side by side).

A Celtic player runs behind the pick, is open, and shoots. The play works like a dream.

The ball is on the rim, spinning as the BUZZER SOUNDS and SOUNDS as we

DISSOLVE TO:

1985

INT. GYM - DAY

The screen is filled with a basketball, spinning beautifully in one spot like a gyroscope . . .

on the front of a basketball rim which, itself, seems suspended magically in mid air.

As the ball slows down, losing its position and momentum, a backboard comes into view.

The ball rolls madly around the rim, almost spinning out, finally stops, hangs precariously for a moment, then falls through.

A voice like a rusted car muffler.

HOOPS (o.c.)

All right.

THREE LOUD BLOWS ON A COACH'S WHISTLE: ONE. TWO. THREE.

SWISH. SWISH. SWISH. Basketballs come pouring through the hoop from all angles, beautiful high-arching shoots, bank shots BOOMING off the board.

TWO HANDS stuff a ball through, shaking the entire backboard as if an earthquake has struck.

ONE WHISTLE. Everything stops.

GEORGE "HOOPS" MORAN, twenty-eight years later, is head coach of the St. Michael's College Dragons.

He's 67, a crusty son-of-a-gun with a short fuse, who is, however, naive regarding the political wiles of academe--under the basket, reacting to the "stuff."

HOOPS

Way to STICK IT in there.  
Let's go.

FIVE FIRST STRING PLAYERS huddle around Hoops while his son DANNY MORAN, 40, the assistant coach, stands on the sidelines . . .

Next to LES THRESHER, a desperate 46 who could use more than a shave, nonetheless dressed in a fancy three-piece suit. He's a scout for the team, a hanger-on.

HOOPS

When I say " Defense,"  
I mean, "Defense."

One white player, a distracted hippie, LIONEL, looks away. Hoops yanks his jersey.

HOOPS

You're not listening, Lionel.  
Twenty. First time ranked. Ever.  
You want to stay there?  
Then it's defense, rough, tough  
like we played thirty years  
ago with Cousy, Russell, Sharman.

Lionel's heard this before.

HOOPS

I'm talkin "D" like the Celtics,  
head to head, way Red Coughlin tells  
them. My old coach. Never give  
your man a lay-up. Knock his legs out  
before he scores. Make him earn those  
points at the foul line.

(beat)

Scott, offense on Lionel.

SCOTT turns his shirt inside out.

The first team scrimmages the second team. Scott goes around Lionel and scores.

HOOPS

(to Lionel)

In his jockstrap.

Scott scores again.

HOOPS

(to Lionel)

Jockstrap. Turn yours around --  
ain't no prick to protect.

The team does a figure-eights fast break drill.  
PACO loses the ball several times and is dragging.

HOOPS

You, Mr. Paco, no desire,  
no hustle, no in-ten-sity.  
Off the floor. Go find your balls.

PACO

I got balls.

HOOPS

OFF, or I cut 'em off.

Paco shuffles off the floor in anger.

Hoops BLOWS HIS WHISTLE. On the base line, Scott drives around Lionel and, this time, Lionel pushes him into a pile of chairs.

Scott charges Lionel; OTHER PLAYERS jump in the fight.

Hoops is about to blow the whistle for order, but decides against it.

CLOSE ON Hoops, savoring the moment. This is his kind of basketball.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GYM HALLWAY - LATER

HOOPS hustles down a hallway with LES trying to catch up.

LES

Hell of a practice, Hoops. Old days,  
like you said.

HOOPS

Didn't have to start nothin' then.  
Players started themselves. Like  
Red used to say. It's a war out  
there, and . . .

LES

That twenty ranking . . .

HOOPS

Don't interrupt me.

LES  
Sorry, Hoops.

HOOPS  
A twenty rank but nineteen on top.

LES  
Scouted that Framingham prospect.  
Worth a look.

HOOPS  
Tell Danny.

Hoops SLAMS his office DOOR.

LES  
Thanks, Hoops. I'll return the  
favor some day.

Les takes a roll of cash from his pocket.

LES  
Treat me like shit, you  
eat shit.

GYM EXIT

Still counting his cash, LES heads for a door then  
sees a janitor.

LES  
Henry. That horse...

JANITOR  
Lost me eighty-seven dollars.

LES  
How I know he didn't love mud?

JANITOR  
Quicksand.

LES  
Make it up. A tip: Kings Road  
in the third --eleven to one.

JANITOR  
Whoa and neigh.

LES  
Fifty bucks, forty-five,  
twenty-five... I'll take  
whatever you got.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Team trainer MANNY attends to LIONEL who sits on a table with a shiner. Manny puts on an eye patch.

MANNY  
You look tough.

LIONEL  
(defensive)  
I am tough.

MANNY  
You and what other six guys?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

HOOPS shoves a box of Tampax into Lionel's locker with a note: "Fill your strap with that."

INT. GYM FLOOR - DAY

Later, LIONEL, with the patch over his eye alone at one end of the dark court, shooting frantically.

It's in his way; he rips off the patch.

INT. ATHLETIC OFFICE - DAY

HOOPS finishes a can of beer.

He tries to punch a hole in the top of a beer can with a stick with a windmill on it.

DANNY opens the door.

DANNY  
Try the other end, Dad; it's softer.  
About that practice today . . .

HOOPS  
"D" builds spirit, Danny.

DANNY  
Someone could have been hurt.

HOOPS  
No pain no gain.

DANNY  
We can't afford any injuries.

HOOPS

Anger makes focus.

DANNY

Not with our bench.

HOOPS

I send the bench in to foul,  
not to play.

DANNY

That's goon basketball.

HOOPS

That was my job with the Celts.

DANNY

Hack attack. Where's the sport?

In frustration, Hoops throws the beer can across  
the room toward the wastebasket, misses: CLANK.

HOOPS

Aluminum.

He opens a desk drawer filled with empty beer cans.

HOOPS

Make 'em out of tin anymore?

DANNY

There are other ways to psyche a team.

HOOPS

Once you step on that court, it's  
heaven and hell.

DANNY

A game, not Armageddon. I mean it's 1985.

HOOPS

You and the devil in 1985.

DANNY

Dad, I'm only saying --complaints,  
legal stuff.

HOOPS

All players do today is complain.

DANNY

Tough "D" is one thing. Pushing a player  
into chairs is something else.

HOOPS

Didn't tell Lionel to push anyone into anything, but damn glad he did. Most damn desire I've seen from that space face in months. Danny, when you take over this chair next year, you run things the way you see fit. Not til then.

DANNY

You said that two years ago.

HOOPS

Two years?

DANNY

What are you doing with a drawer full of empty beer cans?

HOOPS

Trophies.

DANNY

Wait a minute. Most are unopened.

HOOPS

I'll open them later.

DANNY

Not at work?

HOOPS

Brewskies aint work.

DANNY

Come on, Dad . . .

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

BANG! An angry SCOTT slams a locker shut.

SCOTT

Crazy Lionel.

LANCE

Thought he killed you for sure.

SCOTT

That crazy hippie liked to broke my knee cap.

LANCE

What you going to do about it?

LIONEL comes in with his basketball and eye patch.

SCOTT

(grabs ball)

You push me again like today,  
this goes up your butt.

LIONEL

Right now, sucker.

They tug-o-war with the ball.

SCOTT

I want a crack at the pros this year,  
not some cracked knee that puts me out  
before I begin.

LIONEL

Ain't never gonna be no pro, but I'm  
starting--my first and last year.

SCOTT

We know he rides you, but never,  
never...

LIONEL

If you got past again, the old  
man woulda killed me --there  
goes my start.

LANCE

(breaks them apart)

This is basketball, not Friday  
Night Fights. I can't play ball  
with this.

(to Scott)

Hate him after the season.

(to Lionel)

Apologize now. I'm team captain.  
Now.

LIONEL

So I lost it.

SCOTT

Go find it.

LIONEL

I don't know.

LANCE  
 (raps)  
 Now as in pow wow.

LIONEL  
 (still angry)  
 Bow wow.

INT. GYM FLOOR -NEXT DAY

CAMERA MOVES FROM DARK GYM FLOOR to a light at the end of the floor. The light is from the open door of the

LOCKER ROOM

HOOPS holding a team meeting with PACO, LANCE, SCOTT, LIONEL, and AARON up front. Each player has a handbook.

HOOPS  
 . . . everyone in bed by ten, no drinking, no gambling, no girls on the road, suits and ties for travelling, no smoking, no fatty foods, no talking to the press less I say so, no fast driving, weight room every day, get to practice on time, watch your language in public . . .

LANCE  
 No room to breathe, Coach.

HOOPS  
 Breathe when I tell you, inhale and exhale when I tell you.

LANCE  
 Oh, man.

HOOPS  
 No outside jobs, no women in dorm rooms, no drugs, mass every day . . .

LANCE  
 Every day?

HOOPS  
 Lance, you are such a pussy. All-American pussy. Dick-less wonder pussy. You have the most talent

on this team, and all you do is whine.  
Get the hell out of this meeting.  
If you're not a team player,  
you ain't playing for me in the opener.

LANCE  
I'm a team player.

Hoops' CLOSED FIST THUMPING Lance's chest.

HOOPS  
Shape up. Get rid of that All-  
American attitude. I run  
this game. No intensity,  
no desire. Get your black ass  
out of my sight.

Lance in tears storms out.

HOOPS  
Anyone else?

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

LANCE, PACO, AND AARON do figure-eights with a  
basketball.

LANCE  
Some meeting. Dracula meets Godzilla.

AARON  
Old man's not that bad. Almost  
though.

PACO  
(holds ball to his crotch)  
Check to see if my balls are  
still here.

SERIES OF SHOTS ESTABLISH that we're in a working-  
class neighborhood

with an MTA Green Line el train rattling above.

TRAIN CAR

CLOSE ON HOOPS riding the train.

EXT. EL PLATFORM

HOOPS gets off at a sign that says "St. Patrick's  
Cemetery."

EXT. MOM & POP GROCERY - DAY

HOOPS comes out of the store in a working class neighborhood with a small carton of milk.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

CLOSE ON a tombstone with the name "Mary Frances Moran."

HOOPS tears open the carton; puts it next to the tombstone. A mangy CAT comes out of the shadows and licks the milk.

HOOPS

(to tombstone)

You always told me to feed our cat at night. Like now, darker -- late September. Got a reception tonight at the President's--rich alumni. Why do they want to talk to me, a blue-collar guy? What I got to show for my life but beer and basketballs? I mean . . . what do I mean? You always knew. Didn't have to say nothin'. Where did everything go? My first five--best I ever had.

HOOPS takes out a small windmill made from beer cans in his office and sticks it in the ground near the tombstone.

CLOSE ON cat, alone, lapping milk.

INT. OUTSIDE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -DAY

ON sign on door: Fr. James Callahan, President

INT. FR. CALLAHAN'S OFFICE - DAY

SID MCGINTY, head of alumni, rich, tough, 65, turns from looking out a window, throws up his hands in exasperation, and addresses FR. CALLAHAN, kindly, 60.

MCGINTY

Stone Age, Fr. Callahan--Neander  
-thal.

FR. CALLAHAN  
Coaching here twenty-five years.

MCGINTY  
Weak on strategy, motivation,  
p.r., and he drinks.

FR. CALLAHAN  
Could be Hoops' biggest season.

MCGINTY  
Starters are all seniors. Now  
or never.

FR. CALLAHAN  
Never had a team like this.

MCGINTY  
Who recruited those players?  
Danny Moran, the son and assistant  
coach, supposed to take over  
last year. The reason those players  
came here is Danny talks to kids.  
He's young, today. Not 1957.

FR. CALLAHAN  
Want Hoops to retire?

MCGINTY  
I want a playoff bid--Division I.

FR. CALLAHAN  
Out before the season?

MCGINTY  
Which starts in two weeks.

Fr. Callahan picks up a picture of his old college  
basketball team.

CLOSE ON player Callahan, PULL BACK to reveal  
whole team. Sign in front says "St. Mike's 1945."

FR. CALLAHAN  
We both played here, Mac. You  
know how much I love old-time  
basketball: team skills, passing,  
half-court, defense. Not today's  
run and gun, clearing out,  
one on one.

MCGINTY  
Be more hands-on, Father. It's

the modern age--speed, strength,  
force. Make him change.

FR. CALLAHN

How many time have we had this  
discussion?

McGINTY

Hoops off the bench, Danny on.

FR. CALLAHAN

I'll stake my office on Hoops.  
He's my choice. At least, give him  
a chance.

McGINTY

All right. A five-game chance.  
Five to show what he can do.  
Fails after five, I personally  
buy out his contract. Interfere,  
Father, and you're gone. I'll fax Hoops  
myself. Let him read it. We'll see  
who runs this college.

EXT. NAPOLI - DAY

A cheap, restaurant near campus. LANCE, AARON, and  
PACO, dribbling the basketball, charge in.

INT. NAPOLI - DAY

They're stopped by BERNICE, an ancient, looney  
waitress, standing in the doorway, who raises a  
ketchup bottle like a club to slow them down.

Paco grabs the bottle and pours some ketchup on  
the counter.

PACO

Hey, look. I'm bleeding, Bernice.

TABLE -LATER

AARON

Some school. Ain't even got dorms.

PACO

You knew it's a commuter school when  
you came, man. Inner city. Everyone  
lives at home. Least we got this.

LANCE

My meal ticket --punched out.

AARON

No new ones til next week. Lance?

LANCE

Don't look at me.

Bernice wipes their table then wipes her forehead with the same rag.

BERNICE

See them meal tickets.

(to Lance)

Got thirty-five cents.

PACO

Cheese on rye, please.

AARON

But hold the rye.

LANCE

On mine, hold the cheese.

BERNICE

Coach don't want you boys to eat?

LES slithers into the open seat next to LANCE.

LES

I'm here for the ambience.

(to Bernice)

Right, beautiful?

BERNICE

Cockroach kisser.

Les takes out his fat money roll.

LANCE

Scoutin' for the pros?

LES

Still work for Hoops. All the pro teams gonna be scoutin you.

(to all)

You Dragons ranked?

PACO

More cheese than usual.

LES

Dinner's on me. Pot roast.

(at Bernice)

Sweet lips. Hey, sweet lips.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

Filled with people.

Dressed as he was at the cemetery, Hoops tries to use chop sticks to eat sushi but can't figure them out.

SQUISH. The sushi flies off the plate and lands at the feet of

FR. CALLAHAN and McGINTY

FR. CALLAHAN

Double dribble, Hoops. Stick to corned beef and cabbage.

HOOPS

Use both hands?

FR. CALLAHAN

Need a ruling, Mac.

McGINTY

I defer to the President of the College.

FR. CALLAHAN

That's why they voted you Head of Alumni, Mac. You raised more this year than ever, and your check for the library...

McGINTY

Tax accountant told me to dump a hundred thousand. What better than St. Michael's?

FR. CALLAHAN

Since we all grew up on corned beef, maybe we should talk of cabbages and kings, Hoops, especially this season.

HOOPS

I'm no king, Father.

McGINTY

With this team you are.

HOOPS

King of hoops or King Hoops?

McGINTY

First time the old school's nationally known. If the team wins, alumni will triple contributions.

FR. CALLAHAN

We need that library. Badly.

McGINTY

And more money for basketball.

HOOPS

My son takes over next season, for sure?

McGINTY

We're together on that, Father --for sure.

HOOPS

I'm corned beef or cabbage?

McGINTY

Past retirement. Win or else.

HOOPS

Else what, McGinty?

McGINTY

Your corned beef is cabbage.

With both hands, Hoops slams his sushi into a circular trash container

HOOPS

(to McGinty, up yours)

Slam dunk.

INT. NAPOLI - NIGHT

LES' roll of money is sitting on the table in prominent view.

LES

Horse come in. Five to one.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM - NIGHT

On CROWD gathering in a corner.

HOOPS

Fire?

FIRST MAN

Red Coughlin, from the Celtics.

SECOND MAN

How's Larry Bird? Leg ok?

RED

Said yesterday he's a hundred per cent.

THIRD MAN

Advice for this year's Dragons?

RED

You see the pre-season polls today? Dragons at number 20.

THIRD MAN

Who took that poll --Daffy Duck?

INT. NAPOLI - NIGHT

BERNICE sets four heaping plates of pot roast in front of LES and the PLAYERS.

PACO

Big bucks, Les.

LANCE

Thank that horse.

LES

Quiet. You know how Hoops is about gambling.

Bernice has put one thin slice of pot roast on Les' plate.

LES

(to Bernice)

Hey, meat. Meat.

INT. RECEPTION - NIGHT

Trying to get some cheese dip, HOOPS breaks off several crackers then a bread stick then a celery stick and comes up with nothing.

Finally, he uses a spoon to put cheese between two crumbly crackers to make a sorry sandwich when

an attractive, middle-aged woman MAGGIE walks up.  
She's had one too many.

MAGGIE  
Dance, Mr. Coach?

HOOPS  
Pardon me?

MAGGIE  
I said they're dancing. Don't  
you get it?

HOOPS  
Where I come from girls don't  
tell guys to dance. Guys ask girls.

MAGGIE  
You make Archie Bunker look good.

The woman wobbles off.

McGINTY charges up.

McGINTY  
I was going to fax this but . . .

McGinty stuffs a fax in Hoops' coat pocket, walks  
out.

HOOPS  
(reads)  
Five games? What the hell  
five games? That sonofabitch.  
Where's he at?

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE RECEPTION - NIGHT

Moments later, McGINTY'S limo.

HOOPS  
Sonofabitch five games.

McGINTY  
You heard me.

HOOPS  
Five and 0, four and one, what?

McGINTY  
Didn't know you could count.

HOOPS  
Count you out, jackass.

McGINTY  
The board will decide.

HOOPS  
Who's the board? You?

McGINTY  
Follow the money.

HOOPS  
You're still pissed because  
my wife dumped you to marry me  
in college.

McGINTY  
That choice killed her.

HOOPS  
Saved her soul.

McGINTY  
Blow your own whistle, Coach.

HOOPS  
You ain't even got a wife  
to blow your whistle.

McGINTY  
Five games.

HOOPS  
After that?

McGINTY  
You'll lose every one.

HOOPS  
Easy—with you on our side.

McGINTY  
I am your side. You're good as fired.  
May the best man win.

HOOPS  
He already did. Mary Frances  
married me.

INT. NAPOLI - NIGHT

AARON and PACO get up to leave while LES gives BERNICE a tip to try to impress the players. Bernice examines it suspiciously.

LES  
Five dollars for Chrissakes.

BERNICE  
(stuffs it in her bra)  
You never tip. Might be for something else.

Paco and Aaron leave.

LANCE  
Me, too, Big exam tomorrow.

LES  
Lance, this is your year: lot of press, lot of pro money. I'm just Hoops' high school scout but I'm your friend.

Les takes an envelop out of his pocket with money in it.

LES  
Good friend.

INT. RECEPTION - NIGHT

Fuming, HOOPS arms on his coat as RED COUGHLIN puts on his.

RED  
Hoops, haven't seen you since the Philadelphia series.

HOOPS  
What's up, Red?

RED  
Why haven't you called? Caught AP rankings. Higher than ever. Looking good.

HOOPS  
Long as we don't play Daffy Duck.

INT. NAPOLI - NIGHT

EMPTY. HOOPS alone. DOMINIC the owner brings over a menu, but his wife MARIA intervenes.

MARIA

Dominic, give me that. Coach,  
your menu.

HOOPS

Mrs. Mancini, I can find it.

MARIA

Your table. Your chair. Always  
Your wife's place. So many years.

HOOPS

Lasagna. Mary Frances' favorite.

FR. STONE, 50, a burly, blustery Professor of English, bursts in. They're old friends.

FR. STONE

Hoops. Hoops Moran. Hell  
of a problem.

HOOPS

Fast break not working, John?

FR. STONE

My lead in this fall's play  
has athlete's foot -- in his mouth.  
Should I dump him?

HOOPS

To dump or not to dump?

FR. STONE

You wash your socks in  
holy water, Moran. No. Really.  
I'm directing "Death of a Salesman"  
next week. Tickets aren't selling.  
Kids worked their butts off.  
You know media guys--advertising--  
(takes out books of tickets)  
--can you move these for me? We  
need to break even, or no spring  
theatre.

HOOPS

How much?

FR. STONE

Two-hundred fifty. Fifty tickets.

HOOPS

(takes out a check)  
I'll scalp 'em myself.

FR.STONE

May the wind always be at your back.

HOOPS

Didn't you go to the President's  
reception tonight?

FR.STONE

Naw. I break my crackers in  
the damn dip.

HOOPS

Father, we speak the same language.  
Let us have beer.

EXT. HOT DOG STAND - NIGHT

Carrying a white apron, PACO heading for work.

Three TEENS standing in front. They mock his  
apron, RIP a tie-string off it. AD LIB.

INT. HOT DOG STAND - NIGHT

PACO tying on his apron string back on while  
GEORGE, a fat 45, puts in a basket of fries.

GEORGE

You're late. You wanna work  
here or not?

PACO

Need the money; got a wife  
and baby.

CLOSE ON fries bubbling ominously.

INT. GYM FLOOR - NIGHT

DANNY and MCGINTY shoot free throws. McGinty  
misses his.

MCGINTY

You're the future.

DANNY

I've heard the rumor.

Danny makes his.

                  McGINTY  
                   That new library for St. Mike's  
                   can happen tomorrow.

Frustrated, McGinty misses his free throw.

                  DANNY  
                   With my Dad's name on it?

Danny makes his.

                  McGINTY  
                   Why not mine?

                  DANNY  
                   "Moran" is shorter.

                  McGINTY  
                   Someone has to buy books.

Angry, McGinty misses his free throw. Danny makes his.

                  DANNY  
                   Big money.

                  McGINTY  
                   I want you as head coach.

                  DANNY  
                   What about Hoops?

                  McGINTY  
                   He can always drink beer.

Irate, McGinty drop-kicks the ball into the stands: BOOM.

INT. ATHLETIC OFFICE - DAY

AL FLAHERTY, nationally known basketball commentator, carrying tv equipment.

                  AL  
                   Hoops. Ready?

Hoops hides a beer can. The bottom drawer to his desk, filled with empty beer cans, is open.

He SLAMS it shut but it BANGS BACK OPEN.

HOOPS  
Knock first, Al.

AL  
Got tough questions.

HOOPS  
Never back off.

AL  
Thanks for getting the team  
in early.

Al notes the beer can on Hoops' desk, then the  
drawer filled with empty beer cans

AL  
...especially at 9:30 AM.

INT. GYM - DAY

AL stands near the backboard, with the STARTING  
PLAYERS lined up off to the side, each with a  
basketball.

Nearby, a WORKMAN is using a POWER DRILL to put in  
some new seats.

While acknowledging the drill's noise to his  
CAMERA MAN, AL tries to talk above it.

AL  
(checks watch)  
Get this in one take. Running late.

A ball bounces toward AL who, laughing, throws it  
back to the players.

AL  
(to players)  
Come on, guys, give me a break.  
(to camera)  
Welcome, ladies and gentlemen  
to Collegetown USA, Boston,  
Massachusetts, home of the St. Michaels'  
Green Dragons, ranked for the  
first time among the top twenty teams.  
Starting at center, Scott Powers.

SCOTT, white, 6' 10", dribbles down the middle and  
stuffs it.

AL (o.c.)  
Paco Forker, the Dragons' playmaker  
and guard.

PACO, hispanic, 6', hits a bank shot.

AL (o.c.)  
Arron Gamble, the other guard.

AARON, black, 6' 2", swishes it.

AL (o.c.)  
Everybody's Mr. All-American  
Lance Moore, power forward.

6" 8" and black, LANCE reverse stuffs.

AL (o.c.)  
Last but not least, senior Lionel  
Krieger, first year as a starter.

LIONEL, white, 6' 5", dribbles frantically toward  
the basket then loses the ball.

Lionel retrieves the ball and hits a twenty-five  
footer from the corner. It spins around the hoop  
and finally falls in.

AL  
That's Lionel. You never know.  
Hoops.

WATER FOUNTAIN

HOOPS drinking.

AL  
Hoops.

Hoops hears him but keeps drinking, taking his time.

AL  
Hoops.

Still drinking. Al yanks him away.

AL  
Good thing it's not Blatz.

HOOPS  
What the . . .

AL  
George Hoops Moran, been

at the St. Mike's twenty-five years.  
Hoops, your nickname is the game  
itself. Finally the big  
time. How far can you go?

A basketball rolls, intentionally, into the shot. Al  
throws it out.

HOOPS  
Got the horses.

Another ball dribbles in. Irritated, Al throws  
this one out.

A WORKMAN begins to DRILL for new benches.

AL  
They say you have no bench.

HOOPS  
I have starters who can carry it  
just the way I played.

AL  
Game has changed.

HOOPS  
Frankly, Al, I don't buy a  
lot of modern strategy.

AL  
It's faster, fatiguing, complex.

Another ball comes into the picture. Hoops chokes  
it. DRILL GROWS LOUDER, turning the interview into  
a joke.

HOOPS  
Intensity never changes.

AL  
(almost yelling)  
Last year, you said you were going  
to retire and let your son Danny,  
take over.

HOOPS  
Dedication to intensity never  
changes, and guts, guts never  
change.

AL  
This your last year?

HOOPS

That's my business.

AL

Do you retire four or five times  
like boxers?

HOOPS

I'm my own man --always have been.

AL

Too much pressure?

HOOPS

They say I'm a loser, but I've never  
been a loser in my heart.

AL

Critics say you coach like 1955 when  
you sat on the bench for the those  
great Celtic teams.

HOOPS

I sat on the bench. Who could beat  
out Bob Cousy at his best? You?  
They could never coach Cousy, ever.  
He coached himself. He didn't have  
no fancy offense. He just dribbled  
through everybody.

AL

Easy, Hoops.

HOOPS

Cousy had heart. Heart.  
Right here. He loved the game.  
I love it, and that's what  
it's all about: guts, heart,  
intensity.

AL

Easy, Hoops.

HOOPS

Who has time for this?  
(stalks off  
then turns)  
I'll damn well retire when  
I want.

Hoops slams the ball against the stands: BAM.  
Suddenly, the POWER DRILL and ALL NOISE STOPS

AL  
I need a beer -- nine-forty  
in the morning.

INT. BAR - DAY

CHARLIE JONES, 34, and MUGSY O'BRIEN, 40s, both local  
sports reporters drink beer and eat pretzels.

The bar tv has a basketball game on it.

AL  
Loudest bam I ever heard.  
(off beer)  
I made it to eleven-thirty-AM.

CHARLIE  
Is he always like that?

MUGSY  
Only during the season, and the off-  
season. His wife died last spring. Used  
to keep him human.

AL  
I love the old fart, but remember  
the Marquette game?

CHARLIE  
Oh yeah.

AL  
Lobbed oranges like hand grenades.

CHARLIE  
Like a bazooka. Stuck three on  
the Marquette bench then knocked out  
the scoreboard.

MUGSY  
Still payin' for it.

CHARLIE  
Cops hauled him off court  
into court.

AL  
Want to hear what Hoops' desk's  
filled with?

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Meanwhile, at the grave of Hoops' wife, only the  
stick from the beer can wind mill is there.

HOOPS

How many am I supposed to make?

HOOPS takes a windmill from his pocket and puts it on the stick.

HOOPS

Kids probably takin' 'em.  
 I know I'm early, Mary Frances.  
 I had an early practice cause  
 of the press. They screw up my routine,  
 and it's my fault. Everything goes  
 too fast. Life's a fast-break  
 now --don't have the foot-speed  
 I used to. I'm in a zone defense,  
 slow but safe, returns the game  
 to our team, like the old days,  
 like when people respected coaching.  
 Like your old man, a real pain when I  
 came to call, but I respected him.  
 (beat)  
 Here, kitty.

The CAT trots up. Hoops opens his carton of milk.

HOOPS

Thought you was lost.

Leaving, Hoops inadvertently knocks over the windmill.

EXT. STREET - LATER

HOOPS takes another windmill from his pocket.

Out of the corner of his eye, he sees

PLAYGROUND

LIONEL playing basketball with grammar school kids, teaching one a jump shot and having a great time.

Hoops notes this quality that Lionel does not show at practice,

then he charges in and breaks up the game.

The site has plenty of dog poop on it; Hoops has to do some fancy footwork.

LIONEL  
They're only grammar school kids.

HOOPS  
You can turn an ankle, twist a knee.

LIONEL  
Just horsing around.

HOOPS  
If you get hurt, do it in practice.  
(shuffles to avoid poop)  
Everyone walk their dog here?

LIONEL  
Why you always scream at me?

HOOPS  
(screaming)  
I never scream at you.

LIONEL  
You're screaming now.

HOOPS  
I'm not screaming. I'm yelling.

LIONEL  
What's the difference?

HOOPS  
Screaming is personal.

LIONEL  
I'm a person.

HOOPS  
You are a mental problem with  
no mental.

LIONEL  
I'm a human being.

HOOPS  
Get your head in the game.

LIONEL  
I'm always in the game.

HOOPS  
The game in your head or the game  
on the floor?

LIONEL  
That's not what I mean.

HOOPS  
What do you mean?

LIONEL  
I'm a man.

Hoops SLAPS Lionel across the face.

HOOPS  
You're a man when I say you're  
a man.

Lionel turns in a huff and walks off. Hoops follows  
and steps right in some poop: SQUISH.

INT. MTA GREEN LINE CAR - NIGHT

Dried dog poop still on his shoe, HOOPS with DANNY  
rides the elevated with the lights of Boston in the  
background. They're all alone in the car.

HOOPS  
I had to ride these trains  
a long time to find my dream.

DANNY  
I'm forty years old.

HOOPS  
I'm sixty-seven. My last hurrah  
and my last stop.

DANNY  
All I'm saying is how long  
for me?

HOOPS  
Next year like we agreed.

DANNY  
A decade as assistant coach.

HOOPS  
Your turn will come.

DANNY  
I've got some offers.

HOOPS  
Other schools?

DANNY  
(images McGinty)

Offers.

HOOPS  
This is our year, our best team.

DANNY  
I need my own team, my own soul.

HOOPS  
Everyone has a soul.

DANNY  
I'm beginning to wonder.

HOOPS  
Pray for it.

St. Michael's stop comes up.

HOOPS  
Getting off?

Hoops gets off. Danny alone in an empty car.

EXT. EL STAIRS -NIGHT

HOOPS walks down stair and heads for St. Michaels past peeling posters on decrepit buildings.

EXT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

On a fresh poster proclaiming: "ST. MICHAEL'S THEATRE/ presents/ Arthur Miller's DEATH OF A SALESMAN / Directed by Fr. John Stone."

HOOPS peels off one ticket from the roll, untouched since the dinner with Fr. Stone.

INT. AUDITORIUM LOBBY - NIGHT

A red light is flashing to signal the beginning of the play. FR. STONE rushes up and hustles HOOPS along.

HOOPS  
Drama's not my thing.

FR. STONE  
Guy's a salesman at the end of his rope. He dreams about his rich brother in Africa then drives off and kills himself.

HOOPS  
My wife's favorite play, so I'll  
give it another try.

FR. STONE  
Culture's good for you.

HOOPS  
Yeah. Culture.

INT. AUDITORIUM SEATS

FATHER STONE  
Sell your tickets?

HOOPS  
(hiding his pocket bulging  
with tickets)  
Every one.

The curtain goes up. Several representative  
incidents from the play follow.

The actors are all college students like Hoops'  
ball players.

HOOPS  
(chuckles)  
They're so young they could start  
for me.

SERIES OF SCENES: DEATH OF A SALESMAN

A) OPENING LINES

LINDA  
Willy!

WILLY  
It's all right. I came back.

LINDA  
Why? What happened? Did something  
happen, Willy?

WILLY  
No, nothing happened.

LINDA  
You didn't smash the car, did you?

WILLY

I said nothing happened. Didn't you hear me?

LINDA

Don't you feel well?

WILLY

I'm tired to death. I couldn't make it. I just couldn't make it, Linda.

B) WILLY'S son BIFF confronts him.

BIFF

I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you! You were never anything but a hard-working salesman who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them!

WILLY

You vengeful, spiteful...  
(starts up the stairs)

BIFF

Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop! Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all.

END SCENES.

HOOPS glances up from his program, struck by a similar doubt. CLOSE ON Hoops.

BEGIN SCENES: DEATH OF A SALESMAN

C) BIFF runs downstairs.

BIFF

Pop!

A CAR IS HEARD SPEEDING OFF THEN CRASHING

D) Willy's grave where LINDA, BIFF, HAPPY, and CHARLEY stand in mourning clothes.

BIFF

He never knew who he was. The man didn't know who he was...

END SCENES.

The curtain comes slowly down. There is a vulnerable look on HOOPS' face.

The roll of extra tickets falls out of his pocket to the floor.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Halftime at the Dragons' opening game against Villanova. The place is jammed as AL does the half-time summary.

AL

(to camera)

Halftime at the St. Michael's -Villanova game, and the Dragons have given third-ranked Villanova everything they could ask for with the score 32 to 30 for St. Mike's. The man responsible...

As AL speaks, a MONTAGE OF HOOPS' CAREER BEGINS IN AN AMATUERISH, CHOPPY FASHION, ALMOST LIKE A HOME MOVIE,

BEGIN HOOPS' MONTAGE: b/w grainy footage

A) HOOPS as an active star in college

AL (v.o.)

In almost thirty-years of college coaching, George "Hoops" Moran seen it all. An All-American at Fordham in 1944,

B) Hoops sitting on the bench for the Celts.

AL (v.o.)

Hoops spent five years playing, then coaching, for Red Coughlin and the Boston Celtics.

C) Hoops in photo as young coach.

AL (v.o.)

In 1960, he came to St. Michael's and has been here ever since.

END HOOPS' MONTAGE

AL

But never in his career

has Hoops had a team with  
this potential.

As the St. Michael's PLAYERS return from the  
dressing room, LANCE passes AL. Al grabs him.

AL

One reason is this young man, All-  
American, Lance Moore, twenty points  
and eleven rebounds in the first half.  
Coach say anything to you at half  
time?

HOOPS rips Lance away.

HOOPS

Coach talked plenty of strategy and we  
got more strategy to talk.

Hoops leads Lance off.

THE STANDS

Sitting next to LES is a well-dressed but sleazy  
white man named CHEW.

As Lance makes a terrific shot from the floor  
during warm up, Les points it out and Chew nods.

INT. OUTSIDE LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

After the game, the DRAGONS, jubilant from their  
first win, YELL and WHOOP IT UP.

HOOPS brings up the rear, along with FR. CALLAHAN  
and MCGINTY.

FR. CALLAHAN

Great job, Hoops. Some opener.

MCGINTY

Four more games.

INT. GYM FLOOR - NIGHT.

Wearing work gloves, still in their uniforms, PACO  
and LANCE help clean up the stands.

LANCE

Some scholarship. We even get to  
clean up after the game.

PACO

Sweep that broom.

LANCE  
Tired broom ain't got no zoom.

PACO  
After this I got more broom.

LANCE  
Doin' that night job?

PACO  
Keep it quiet. The old man.

LANCE  
Wont hear it from me.

EXT. GYM - NIGHT

A while later, AARON, PACO, and LANCE head toward LANCE'S car, small and dilapidated. LANCE notices one of his tires is flat.

PACO  
(to Lance)  
Late already.

Paco jogs off; Aaron follows.

AARON  
(to Lance)  
He's got the bus money.  
(beat)  
Notre Dame next week.

Frustrated, Lance looks at his car once more then sees LES and CHEW, leaning against a huge Cadillac across the street.

Les waves him over. Chew folds up the switchblade he used on the tire.

INT. BAR - DAY

AL, MUGSY, and CHARLIE toast with beer, huge steins.

MUGSY  
Twelve point victory on opening night over a team ranked five.

CHARLIE  
Undefeated: one and "o."

AL  
 Long as the Dragons are unbeaten,  
 I buy drinks.

MUGSY  
 Go Hoops.

AL  
 Won't cost much.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Hoops' wife's grave.

HOOPS  
 We won. Twelve points. Still  
 sweatin.  
 (coughs)  
 Catch cold? Aw, I got the hat, the  
 scarf, vitamin "C's".

The CAT trots up, rubs against Hoops' leg as he  
 pours milk.

HOOPS  
 (to cat)  
 Drinks on me, pal.  
 (to wife)  
 Dartmouth next then Notre Dame two weeks  
 from Friday. South Bend, the pressure  
 cooker. After that, I'll know what kind  
 of team I got.  
 (beat)  
 I had the garage painted gray  
 like you told me last year.  
 The lawnmower broke, and the  
 dog next door trampled your roses.  
 Thirty-five years we were  
 together. All the leaves fell  
 off the maple tree, and  
 I still can't find the socks  
 that match my suit. I keep  
 losing things—car keys, ties,  
 gas bills. You always paid them.  
 The maple tree is so empty  
 that it looks like it never had  
 leaves. Like it never had  
 a life to bloom for.

Walking past the eerie tombstones, HOOPS heads back to  
 his car,

as a flurry of similarly eerie events crosses his  
 mind, fleeting at first then quickly, darkly.

SERIES of SCENES: RECENT EVENTS

A) INT. PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION - NIGHT

MAN  
Who took that poll? -Daffy Duck?

B) INT. GYM - DAY

AL  
Is this your last year?

C) INT. PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION - NIGHT

RED  
I hear you're ranked, Hoops.

D) ANOTHER PART of the ROOM

MAN  
Daffy Duck.

E) INT. GYM - DAY

AL  
Your coaching style is 1955.

F) INT. PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION - NIGHT

MAGGIE  
Make Archie Bunker look good.

G) INT. GYM - DAY

AL  
1955.

H) INT. PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION - NIGHT

MAGGIE  
Archie Bunker.

CUT TO:

I) McGINTY  
Cabbage.

J) INT. GYM - DAY

AL  
Retire?

K) INT. HOOP'S OFFICE - DAY

DANNY  
You said that last year.

L) INT. PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION - NIGHT

McGINTY  
Retire.

END SCENES.

EXT. CEMETERY: HOOPS' WIFE'S GRAVE - DAY

The windmill on the beer can turns slowly, stops.

EXT. GARBAGE CANS BEHIND HOT DOG STAND - NIGHT

That same night, after the victory, PACO empties cans.

SEVERAL PUERTO RICAN YOUTHS sit in hopped up cars, drink bourbon, and eye Paco. We hear one of their CAR RADIOS:

ANNOUNCER (o.s.)  
... in the sports news, Lance Moore scored thirty-three to power St. Michaels' Green Dragons over Villanova, while Paco Forker had eight assists.

GEORGE (o.c.)  
(from inside)  
Six more in here.

The youths play a game with passersby. In their fists, the youths have wrapped dollar bills.

They go up to a PASSERBY and punch him in the throat, hand him a dollar, then repeat the process with a SECOND PASSER-BY, thinking it's hilarious.

Paco doesn't.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hours later, an exhausted PACO unlocks the door of an apartment in a decrepit hallway.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

He makes his way through a dark apartment and barely makes out a clock on a table: 3AM.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

PACO starts to undress, so tired that he fumbles a button or two, gives up.

Paco kisses his sleeping wife MARIA and climbs into bed. Too exhausted to take off his clothes.

INT. GYM - DAY

PACO is still tired as HOOPS BLOWS HIS WHISTLE. PLAYERS gather round.

HOOPS

Lucky win at Dartmouth. Got all the calls.

AARON

Five in a row.

HOOPS

My lucky five. Now I -we- start.

LANCE

Already started.

HOOPS

No over-confidence. Not Thanksgiving yet.

(shows a clipboard)

Surprise play I used with the Celtics, triple pick.

The players have heard this before.

PLAYERS

"Triple pick." Groan. Guffaw.

LIONEL

Last time, this play surprised even us.

HOOPS

You screwed it up, Lionel.

(diagramming play)

Scott, line up on the baseline next to Lionel...

SCOTT lines up next to LIONEL.

HOOPS (o.c.)

Now, to get Lance free for a shot, you, Aaron, set up next to Scott.

Three players bunched together.

HOOPS (o.c.)

Paco waits for Lance to leave his defensive man behind the pick then passes him the ball for the shot. The defense got three men to get around.

Lance tries to get around the triple pick and trips over Lionel, sending both sprawling to the floor in fits of LAUGHTER.

Hoops is fit to be tied.

INT. GYM - LATER

After practice, on their way off the court, Hoops has his arm around Paco's shoulder. Paco puts him on.

HOOPS

You're my playmaker, Paco.

PACO

Right, Coach.

HOOPS

We talk man to man, straight from the shoulder.

PACO

Absolutely.

HOOPS

You look tired. I know you got a baby to support. You're not workin' a night job like last year?

PACO

No, Coach.

HOOPS

Can't work, go to school, and play quality ball.

INT. NAPOLI - DAY

Another meal ticket, punched full of holes.

LIONEL and his girlfriend MAUREEN who examines the ticket in her hand.

MAUREEN

Not enough for a milkshake.  
Some scholarship you have.

LIONEL

I never do anything right.

MAUREEN

You told me the ticket was full.

LIONEL

Swiss cheese full of holes.

MAUREEN

I have three dollars and change.

BERNICE comes over, her conductor's punch punching  
away: PUNCH. PUNCH.

BERNICE

No more pot roast. Players eat it  
all the time now. Expensive.

LIONEL

Triple pick. Broke my back.

BERNICE

Guy in the suit pays, not here today.

MAUREEN

Enough for two cheeseburgers.

LIONEL

Oughta kick that dick.

Bernice glares at him.

MAUREEN

(to Bernice)

He didn't mean you.

(to Lionel)

If you really hate the coach  
that much, why not quit?

BERNICE

Let's see that meal ticket.

LIONEL

Can't talk to him. Same with  
my old man.

MAUREEN

You're not having fun.

BERNICE  
Eleven cents on this card.

MAUREEN  
Isn't sports all about fun?

Bernice PUNCHES the CARD and hands it back.

BERNICE  
Now there's no cents.

LIONEL  
It used to be fun. Now it's work.

MAUREEN  
Talk to Hoops anyway.

LIONEL  
He doesn't listen.

INT. MALL -NIGHT

PAN DOWN a row of stores in a mall then CLOSE ON

INT. CLOTHING STORE - NIGHT

Meanwhile, LANCE has come to LES' work place to return the cocaine Les gave him earlier.

LANCE  
No thanks.

LES  
You're a legitimate superstar.  
Every pro uses this stuff today.

LANCE  
No pro yet.

LES  
Neither are your threads.

Les takes a suit off the rack and holds it up against Lance.

LANCE  
Four hundred dollars?

LES  
Something from Les. Take off that jacket.

LATER

Lance is in the suit while Les is on his knees running a tape measure up and down Lance's leg. Les enjoys his work.

LES

Thighs ok?

LANCE

Tight.

LES

All that muscle. What about the crotch?

EXT. OUTSIDE GYM - DAY

FR. STONE takes down a "Salesman" poster.

FR. STONE

Had a good run. I saw empty seats but we sold all the tickets. "No shows" I guess.

HOOPS

(knows more than he says)

Probably. Maybe cause Willy Loman, the salesman, he gave up.

FR. STONE

He thought he had no options.

HOOPS

A quitter.

FR. STONE

Nothing to give his family except insurance money. Worth more dead than alive.

HOOPS

Even if you're twenty points down, you never quit.

FR. STONE

Over sixty with no future.

HOOPS

You quit, then you're dead.

FR. STONE

Worse, no past. Like his son said, "he never knew who he was."

HOOPS

Hell, I'm sixty-seven and I don't plan to drive into no -I can quote too, ah, ah- "it's dark there, but full of diamonds."

FR. STONE

Oughta be a professor.

HOOPS

I'm a salesman. I sell spirit -team spirit. I sell winning.

FR. STONE

For you or the team?

HOOPS

Winning is the attainment of heaven on earth.

FR. STONE

Tough theology.

HOOPS

Players think I'm tough. It's just that I hate losing, hate it. Life is filled with losing.

FR. STONE

What about love?

HOOPS

In basketball? Aggressiveness is key.

FR. STONE

St Paul says, "If I speak in the tongues of men and angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or clanging cymbal."

HOOPS

I am noisy, and I clang.

FR. STONE

With or without anger.

HOOPS

Whatever it takes.

FR. STONE

Anger loses focus.

HOOPS  
Anger motivates manhood.

FR. STONE  
Too much isolation, selfishness.

HOOPS  
Me or him.

FR. STONE  
Too much "me, not enough "team"  
enough "us."

HOOPS  
Knock down individuals then build  
them up again.

FR. STONE  
What if they stay down like Willy  
--from anger?

HOOPS  
Willy always was a loser.

FR. STONE  
Like Lionel?

HOOPS  
Lionel?

FR. STONE  
Willy was angry because he thought  
he lost the love of his family but he  
really lost his own faith in that  
love.

HOOPS  
Some gift he gave--insurance  
for suicide.

FR. STONE  
Despair. The death of love and the  
family--the team.

HOOPS  
Not what the Church teaches.

Fr. Stone locks the theatre door with his big key.

FR. STONE  
Absolutely. Ego --the death of the holy  
spirit.

HOOPS  
What are you saying?

INT. OUTSIDE HOOPS' OFFICE OFFICE - DAY

A few moments later, shaken by his exchange with Fr. Stone, HOOPS fumbles his key in his office door.

HOOPS

Winning is my theology. God loves a winner; can God love a loser like Willy Loman? Someone who can't win one way or the other? Loman.

(key goes in)

Low-man.

INT. HOOPS' OFFICE - DAY

A "contrite" MAGGIE appears at the door.

MAGGIE

Coach Moran, can I come in?

HOOPS

Sure. Sure.

MAGGIE

Remember me?

HOOPS

Fr. Callahan's reception.

MAGGIE

That's right.

HOOPS

Couple weeks ago.

MAGGIE

My name is Maggie Sweeney. I owe you an apology. That reception--the champagne, I...

HOOPS

Here, Maggie. Sit down.

MAGGIE

I was so insulting.

HOOPS

Coaches are like umpires and referees. We're used to it.

MAGGIE

I don't usually drink. My husband passed away last summer. Recently, I, I...

HOOPS

A great loss. Your heart must be broken.

MAGGIE

I don't think I'll ever recover.

HOOPS

Let's talk . . .

INT. DANNY'S KITCHEN - THANKSGIVING DAY

DANNY

You hardly know her.

HOOPS

She's alone. It's Thanksgiving.

DANNY

Mom's been dead only five months.

HOOPS

Five months and three weeks.

DANNY

We both lost Mom.

HOOPS

Now you know why I can't give up the team.

DANNY

For Mom?

HOOPS

And Christmas.

DANNY

Christmas?

HOOPS

Christmas is when you give someone something and don't expect anything in return.

DANNY

What if you open your present and the box is empty?

HOOPS

I'm not Santa.

DANNY

You're my father. You used to be Santa.

HOOPS

My bag is empty. I haven't gotten my own present yet --my season.

DANNY

You mean my present --my recruits, my team.

HOOPS

I get coal in my stocking?

DANNY

You used to quote St. Paul. You know, "God loves a cheerful giver."

HOOPS

St. Paul didn't have to wait twenty-five years.

Danny's wife ANDREA through the door.

ANDREA

Finish those drinks. Maggie isn't touching a drop. She says, not with Hoops around. She likes you, Hoops.

INT. LANCE'S DINING ROOM - LATER

LANCE (wearing the suit given him by Les) and his FAMILY --AUNTS, UNCLES, COUSINS--sit down for Thanksgiving dinner.

Their home is poor but clean and neat. Their little BLACK TERRIER (BLACKIE) BARKS throughout.

FATHER

Some suit you won, Son.  
You can buy my lottery tickets from now on.

LANCE

Sure, Pop.

FATHER

Momma, is the turkey ready?

At the door, Lance's MOTHER appears with a grand turkey on a platter.

DOOR BELL RINGS.

MOTHER  
(indicates door)

Lance.

EXT. FRONT DOOR.

LANCE opens the door and it's LES. BLACKIE BARKS HOSTILELY at Les who takes an immediate dislike to the dog.

LANCE  
What can I do for you?

LES  
It's what we can do for you,  
old buddy.

Parked in the driveway behind Lance's crummy, old car, is a brand new sports car.

Sitting in the right front seat is CHEW.

EXT. MAUREEN'S DRIVEWAY DAY

LIONEL and Maureen's little brother JOEY, age fourteen, are playing "h-o-r-s-e" on the basket over the garage.

Trying too hard, scatter-brained LIONEL misses a cripple and is not happy.

JOEY  
"S"! H-O-R-S, Lionel.  
One more letter, I win

LIONEL  
It's your back board.

Joey tries a ridiculous turnaround shot from behind a patio umbrella, next to some shrubbery, and makes it.

Stationery, Lionel dribbles and dribbles for what seems an eternity.

JOEY  
Shoot already.

LIONEL  
I getting ready.

Lionel dribbles seven more times.

MAUREEN appears at the back door with a plate of turkey.

MAUREEN  
Last call for turkey.

LIONEL  
Got to wipe Joey first.

JOEY  
Fifty cents?

LIONEL  
Ten dollars.

Lionel shoots, off balance, ending up on one foot.

BAM. The ball hits the back of the rim, goes over the garage roof.

He stumbles into the umbrella, knocking the turkey out of Maureen's hands. PLATTER CRASHES. Lionel falls into the shrubbery. Turkey all over him.

INT. DANNY'S DINING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON a carved turkey.

Sitting around the table are DANNY, ANDREA, MAGGIE, HOOPS, and DANNY'S TWO CHILDREN, A BOY and A GIRL.

BOY  
May I be excused?

GIRL  
Me too.

ANDREA  
Dirty plates to the kitchen.

MAGGIE  
More turkey, George?

HOOPS  
Don't mind if I do.

DANNY  
(off Maggie)  
Speaking of turkeys...

EXT. HOT DOG STAND - DAY

Awhile later, carrying her baby and a plate covered with tin foil, MARIA knocks at the back.

PACO opens the door. She hands him the plate.

MARIA  
Leg and dressing.

PACO  
No hot dogs.

EXT. GYM - NIGHT

Cars jam-packed around the St. Mike's gym as people scurry out after a game.

INT. GYM -NIGHT

INSIDE

AL TRIES to make his way through a throng of FANS and PLAYERS ecstatically pummeling LANCE MOORE seconds after he's won the Syracuse game.

SERIES of SHOTS:

A) SYRACUSE brings ball down court on offense.

AL (o.c.)  
What a ball game. Thirty seconds to go and St. Michael's down by two, the fourth-ranked Syracuse Orangemen brought the ball down only . . .

B) LANCE steals the ball.

AL  
. . . to have it stolen by Lance Moore . . .

C) Lance dribbles the floor and stuffs.

AL (o.c.)  
. . . who went the length of the court and tied it up.

END SERIES

A FAN pushes him. Al pushes back.

AL  
 Look out.  
     (to camera)  
 Syracuse brought it down again,  
 and, guess what? Mr. Lance takes  
 it right out of Syracuse's hands  
 under their own basket and scores.  
 St. Michael's by two.

ANOTHER FAN intentionally pushes Al.

AL  
     (to fan)  
 Come on. Lance, Lance Moore.

The microphone is knocked out of his hand and hits  
 the floor. CLUNK.

As Al bends to pick it up, the FANS spin him  
 around.

AL  
 Interviews rougher than games.  
     (yells at Lance)  
 Lance. Hey.  
     (to audience)  
 The Dragons are undefeated  
 but that's two double overtimes  
 in nine victories, five by less  
 than two points.

SEVERAL FANS push him simultaneously. That's enough  
 for Al. He pushes them back, and a shoving match  
 breaks out.

AL  
 This is Al McGinnis, at ringside.

EXT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

After the game.

LANCE  
     (to Hoops)  
 Coach, I was wonderin if I could  
 skip practice on Monday. Taking  
 care of business.

HOOPS  
 How come?

LANCE  
 Just this once.

HOOPS  
Don't ever ask me again.

Lance goes over to LES. The SOMEONE turns around, and it's CHEW. All three walk off toward the same car.

Suspicious, Hoops notices Chew.

HOOPS  
Who's that?

INT. BAR - NIGHT

After the shoving match, AL's rubbing a sore jaw.

AL  
Fans really love me.

MUGSY  
Wait til Valentine's Day.

CHARLIE  
(to Al)  
Think you'd be buying beer  
nine games in a row?

MUGSY  
Hoops may never lose. The Dragons  
oughta be top ten.

AL  
School's too small.

CHARLIE  
They've made it by Villanova, Notre  
Dame, now Syracuse.

AL  
Wait'll Georgetown.

INT. NAPOLI - NIGHT

The same night. The corner table where HOOPS pours MAGGIE some wine.

She's sitting in the seat which used to belong to Hoops' wife.

MARIA MANCINI, eyeing the situation, doesn't like it at all.

MARIA  
Too soon. Too soon.

DOMINIC  
Momma, you old fashioned.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

The tombstone of Hoops' wife, cold and forlorn.

There is only a stick where the beer can windmill  
is supposed to be.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Meanwhile, as his MOTHER stands by, LANCE ties the  
family terrier's leash to a tree in front of the  
local supermarket.

MOTHER  
We just lucky they're open til ten.  
You were supposed to be home three  
hours ago. You know you're  
father's working late.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

While his MOTHER reads a shopping list and leads  
the way, LANCE follows.

MOTHER  
Three boxes of Wheaties, four cans  
of tuna fish, six cans of corn...  
Your stomach gonna put me in  
the poor house, Lance Moore.

TWO YOUNG BOYS hear the name, recognize Lance, and  
follow along.

MOTHER  
Tin foil, carrots.

THREE TEENAGERS, one with a basketball, recognize  
Lance, and follow.

Lance's mother keeps moving ahead, unaware of  
what's going on behind her.

They all turn down another aisle and pick up  
SEVERAL MORE FANS. Lance is a celebrity.

While he chats with his fans, his mother is half  
an aisle ahead of him.

MOTHER

A bag of flour. No, two bags, and  
get me some shortening, Lance.  
Lance?

She turns to see why he doesn't respond.

There he is, signing the teenager's basketball,  
surrounded by a CROWD of PEOPLE.

INT. PRINCETON GYM - NIGHT

BUZZER SOUNDS. And St. Michael's has beat the  
Princeton Tigers 68-59.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Awhile later, the PLAYERS get on the team bus.

HOOPS

Long ride back to Boston, boys.

As LANCE gets on, HOOPS hands him something.

INT. TEAM BUS - NIGHT

HOOPS slides in next to LANCE who, somewhat  
befuddled, holds Hoops' gift, the Biography of Bill  
Russell.

HOOPS

Read this.

LANCE

Do I need to?

HOOPS

He's a star. You're just starting.

LANCE

Never saw him play.

HOOPS

You're black. He's black. What's  
the difference?

LANCE

Retired when I was in grammar school.

HOOPS

He's a real man.

LANCE

Too old.

HOOPS

We played on the same team.

LANCE

Old man. You're too old.

HOOPS

I am getting in touch with your feelings.

LANCE

I came here because Danny...

HOOPS

Danny what?

In the back, LIONEL and AARON are singing with headphones

LIONEL and AARON

Doo. Wop. Doo. Wop.

HOOPS

Call that singing? We're twelve and 0. Let's have a real song. "Roll Out the Barrel."

(sings)

"Roll out the barrel. We'll have a barrel of fun."

Lionel puts him on.

LIONEL

You sing it, Coach. We'll follow.

HOOPS

"Roll out the barrel..."

LIONEL

(rapping)

"We'll have a barrel of fun."

HOOPS

"Roll out the barrel..."

(points at Paco)

"We have the blues on the run."

PACO

(very Spanish)

"We have the blues on the run..."

HOOPS

"Ziss! Boom! Terrero. Now's the time to roll out the barrel, cause

the gang's all here."

Half in hysterics, the TEAM joins in.

HOOPS and TEAM

"Roll out the barrel. We'll have  
a barrel of fun..."

EXT. BUS

The bus pulls out.

HOOPS and TEAM (o.c.)

"Roll out the barrel ..."

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE BAR - NIGHT

AL MCGINNIS, CHARLIE, and MUGSY stumble out of the  
bar we last saw them in.

Al has the bar bill.

AL

You guys let me off easy.

MUGSY

Add one to that win over Princeton.

AL

Thirteen bar bills. Count 'em.  
If the Dragons keep winning,  
Gonna paper this street.

MUGSY

Hold back that column on Hoops'  
retirement. Been ready for years.

AL

Dragons win because or in  
spite of Coach?

MUGSY

His strategy should be in a museum.  
Did you see what Hoops calls the  
"triple pick"? Never seen four men  
on the same team run into each other  
at the same time.

EXT. OUTSIDE NAPOLI - CONTINUOUS

AL

Like I said. Georgetown --  
That's the test.

CHARLIE stops in front of Napoli restaurant and thinks he sees something inside.

MUGSY

The dragons are hot, hot.

CHARLIE

So are Hoops and his new lady friend.

They all peer in.

MUGSY, AL, JOHN

Oh, ho. Well, well, well.

AL

Haven't I seen her somewhere before?

INT. NAPOLI - NIGHT

HOOPS and MAGGIE at their usual table. Hoops tries to entice Maggie into a beer.

HOOPS

Just one.

MAGGIE

You know what happened last time.

HOOPS

(reads can)

"America's choicest hops and barley malts" This used to be my wife's favorite brand. I'd make wind mills for her.

MAGGIE

Wind mills?

HOOPS

Like this.

MAGGIE

I love it.

HOOPS

In fact, we met in a beer hall on the north side of Chicago when I was playing pro ball. 1947.

MAGGIE

When did she pass away?

HOOPS

Fourth of July. Almost six months now. I drove home that night from the hospital. Fireworks lit up the sky. All the noise in the world. I didn't hear a thing, nothing.

MAGGIE

You loved her very much.

HOOPS

Your husband?

MAGGIE

Heart condition --the last year was especially difficult.  
(laughing and crying)  
I'd like that beer now.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

MAGGIE

(checks watch)

Almost eleven.

HOOPS

Shhhhh.

CLICK. One spot light illumines the basket, under which MAGGIE is standing.

HOOPS picks up a basketball and takes her to the free throw line.

HOOPS

You know--a "free throw."  
Bring the ball up to your, er, chest then let it go.

MAGGIE

Never played basketball in my life.

HOOPS

Mary Frances played all the time.

They try to embrace but the basketball is between them.

INT. NAPOLI - CONTINUOUS

McGINTY and DANNY in the dark back room at a table.

McGINTY  
Are you still on board?

DANNY  
With this winning streak?

McGINTY  
It can't last.

DANNY  
You must be crazy.

McGINTY  
Are you still on board?

DANNY  
Tell me how.

McGINTY  
Fortunes change. Want to make sure you're ready.

DANNY  
Dunno how you're going to do this.

McGINTY  
Are you still on board?

DANNY  
Yes.

INT. LES' MOTEL APARTMENT - NIGHT

LES is holding a drinking party for the players.

PACO  
Got to leave, man. Got a wife, a kid.  
More tired than I thought.

KITCHEN.

Les has his arm around LANCE, completely sober and wearing a spiffy sport jacket.

Les tries to pour bourbon into Lance's glass.

CHEW stands off to the side, observing -an evil presence.

LES

(to Chew)

Mr. Clean, isn't he? All-American,  
and he's still on 7-Up. Some jacket.  
Right off the rack. Les's best.

CHEW

Time to go, Lester.

Chew heads out the back door, while Les sobers a  
bit, and sheep-like, runs after.

EXT. BACKSTAIRS NIGHT

At the bottom of the stairs, CHEW shoves his  
switchblade against LES' neck.

CHEW

Mister Clean all right. Makin'  
progress like McGinty wants?

LES

Gave him the suit, the jacket.

CHEW

If clothes don't work, you know  
what. They're undefeated. Now is  
the time. Get this kid stoned  
and keep him stoned.

LES

Tell McGinty I need more money.

CHEW

I'll chew your goddamn face.

He cuts him on the side of the face.

LES

Jesus Christ, I'm bleeding.

INT. OUTSIDE BATHROOM NIGHT

A worried LES comes out of the bathroom with a  
bandage on his face and blood on his collar.

LIVING ROOM

LES wanders in.

SCOTT

Scarface.

PACO  
Lipstick on his collar.

Everyone laughs but Les. PACO laughs so hard he begins to get dizzy.

PACO  
Where can I lie down?

LES  
(points to bedroom)  
Don't puke.

PACO  
Shoulda gone to work.

LANCE opens the front door to leave.

LES  
(to Lance)  
Leavin', babe?  
(beat)  
Lance, look, ah, you and me,  
we'll get together real soon.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

As the PLAYERS jam into SCOTT'S car.

AARON  
Where's Paco?

LIONEL  
Sleepin it off.

INT. BEDROOM DOOR - NIGHT

LES opens his bedroom door.

PACO, sprawled in a stupor on the bed. Les lecherously glances to see if anyone is round.

He pulls off his tie, goes into the bedroom, and shuts the door.

MONTAGE - THE DRAGONS WINNING:

A) INT. BOWLING GREEN GYM - NIGHT

HOOPS sends in

LANCE who makes a great shot. BUZZER SOUNDS.  
Scoreboard: Bowling Green 78, St. Michael's 80.

B) INT. ST. MICHAEL'S GYM - NIGHT

HOOPS draws a plan, breaks the huddle.

Beautiful fast break by Lance, Lionel, and Aaron.  
Paco, exhausted, lagging at far end of court.

BUZZER SOUNDS: Scoreboard: St. Michael's 73,  
Florida State 72.

C) INT. ST. MICHAEL'S GYM -NIGHT

PACO'S man gets around him; fatigued, Paco double  
dribbles the ball.

HOOPS yelling at Paco.

LIONEL takes a long shot which misses the basket  
completely. LANCE stuffs it in.

BUZZER SOUNDS: Scoreboard: St. Michael's 66,  
NYU 65.

D) INSERT. NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

which reads: "Dragons Still Undefeated!/ 14-0/  
Ranked # 2."

INT. HOOPS OFFICE - DAY

AL and his CAMERAMAN wait for Hoops who charges in.

AL

Who'd ever have thought?

PHONE RINGS.

HOOPS

Running me ragged.

(answers phone)

Yeah?

(beat)

It's like I told CBS: we're  
fifteen and "o," we're taking  
it one game at a time.

Georgetown coming up.

REPORTER #1

You gonna beat the Hoyas, Hoops?

REPORTER #2

They're ranked # 1. Are you  
# 1?

HOOPS

(into phone)

We're sold out the rest of the season.  
Not a ticket left.

Hoops hangs up; PHONE RINGS again.

REPORTER #3

What about those Hoyas?

HOOPS

Danny scouted them last night.

PHONE RINGS. Hoops picks up phone but doesn't answer.

PHOTOGRAPHER

One more, Hoops.

HOOPS

Get me next to this picture  
of Red Coughlin. We could give  
the Celts a run this year.

As PHOTOGRAPHER SNAPS the picture, DANNY walks in with a suitcase, tired and disheveled from his trip, and catches the flash in the eye.

Press people leave.

DANNY

Here's film on Georgetown.

HOOPS

Gonna give old Red a call. See  
how he's doin'.

He gestures with the phone toward the men who just left.

HOOPS

They all wanted me to retire  
at the beginning of the season.  
Hell. I'm good for another two, four  
years. I may never quit.

(on phone)

Sports Illustrated? This is Hoops Moran.

Danny is not happy.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

McGINTY and FR. CALLAHAN are in McGinty's limo.  
McGinty looks at a news head line: "St. Michael's  
Beats Georgetown!"

McGINTY

Alums all over the country  
calling in with pledges.

FR. CALLAHAN

Biggest thing to happen to  
the college.

McGINTY

Tonight, at the Alumni Dinner,  
I personally will pledge one  
million dollars to the Library Fund  
if the Dragons make it to the playoffs  
and another million if they're  
national champs.

FR. CALLAHAN

More pressure on Coach.

McGINTY

Can he go the distance?  
Don't forget our assistant coach.

FR. CALLAHN

Hoops is carrying the load.

McGINTY

It's the players, Father. Aristotle  
could coach this team and win.

FR. CALLAHAN

A philosopher-coach, but Hoops  
has become a winner.

McGINTY

Never know when you need a substitute;  
don't forget: we need a name for that  
library.

Street lights speed past as they speed along.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A STREAM of STREET LIGHTS brings us to Danny's.

INT. DANNY'S KITCHEN

ANDREA

Two years? That's what he said two years ago, and two years before that.

DANNY

I'm telling you what he said.

ANDREA

You do the scouting. You do scheduling. You recruited the entire team.

DANNY

The players came to St. Michael's only because of Hoops' reputation.

ANDREA

Those players came because they could talk to you, not him. What ever happened to the Head of the Alumni -McGinnis- who wanted you to take over this year?

DANNY

McGinty. How'd you know about that?

ANDREA

Everybody knows.

DANNY

No one messes with a winner. Hoops is solid.

ANDREA

Ten years in his shadow. The shadow gets longer every year.

INT. HOT DOG STAND - DAY

HOOPS is eating a hot dog at the stand where Paco works. PACO, in street clothes, tries to hide from his manager.

HOOPS

Try one; it's good. And it's a good thing I saw you walking down the street, like I said at practice, two games on the bench won't kill you.

PACO

We're winning.

HOOPS

Andre's beating you everyday in practice. You're not

concentrating, not giving  
a 100 per cent.

PACO  
I give 200 per cent all the time.

HOOPS  
I keep hearin' rumors about  
some night job.

Paco tries to hide behind the two customers.

HOOPS  
Stay still when I'm talking to you.

PACO  
Lies.

HOOPS  
Desire. Hustle. Intensity.

Paco bobbing up and down, like a fighter, to hide  
from view.

PACO  
Everything's a lie.

HOOPS  
Intensity.

PACO  
What?

Hoops uses both hands to GRAB Paco by his shirt  
collar. RIP.

HOOPS  
Stop moving. Never lie to me. Ever.

PACO  
I never lied to you, and I  
won't ever lie. I wouldn't  
lie if I had to.

HOOPS  
You do, and you're fired.

PACO  
I don't need to get fired.

HOOPS  
We understand each other.  
Adios.

Hoops drives off. Paco waits until he's out of  
sight, then runs to the

BACKDOOR

for work.

INT. GYM FLOOR -DAY

The LIGHTS CLICKING OFF after practice. The floor moving from light to pitch black to

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

the dark locker room where LES grabs PACO in a half-grapple, half-embrace, and waltzes him around once or twice.

Les won't let go. Paco finally breaks the hold.

PACO

Bugger off.

LES

Eh. Eh.

INT. GYM FLOOR - DAY

HOOPS

Do it without Paco. Lionel stays set. Triple's gonna work.

The PLAYERS go through the triple pick.

The inexperienced ANDRE throws the ball too soon and hits LIONEL in the head as LANCE moves past the pick.

Lionel stumbles into Lance who pushes Lionel into Scott who pushes him toward HOOPS.

An irate Lionel stops about a foot from Hoops who throws up his hands in despair then himself pushes Lionel.

EVERYONE begins to LAUGH at Lionel. Too much for Lionel. He charges Hoops.

PLAYERS intervene immediately, one group holding Lionel, the other group holding Hoops who's ready to duke it out.

INT. MCGINTY'S OFFICE DAY

Meanwhile, McGinty is on the phone. He throws darts at a board that says "St. Mike's Dragons."

He misses the first, hits the wall BOINK and falls.  
He's furious.

McGINTY

I know what you grossed last year.  
We need fourteen million for  
that library...

The second, WHAM, is on the board but far from the  
center,

McGINTY

That's better, Tom. How about  
a private wager on the Dragons?  
Ten of the alums have taken me up . . .

WHAM. He misses the third but it's closer.

McGINTY

. . . twenty five thousand if  
the team makes the playoffs,  
seventy-five if they go all  
the way. I'm asking three to one...  
I can afford it. Reckless?

WHAM. Bulls-eye.

McGINTY

(elated)

Not with a new coach.

He pulls the dart out of the board and touches the  
tip. Razor sharp. Drop of blood appears.

CLOSE on sketch for new library with the name:  
"McGinty Library."

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later that day, MARIA and PACO are in bed. Their  
love-making hasn't gone well.

MARIA

Don't worry, baby.

PACO

I'm no man anymore.

MARIA

Don't worry about money either.

PACO

Don't know what I am.  
Going to work.

EXT. HOT DOG STAND-PARKING LOT - NIGHT

As PACO works in the parking lot, the PUERTO RICAN YOUTHS play their game on ANOTHER PASSERBY (punch him then give him a dollar).

The YOUTHS LAUGH in PACO'S direction. An empty half-pint bottle of rum lands at his feet.

CRASH The anger and humiliation in his face is doubled. His apron is heavily stained with grease.

INT. LOCKERROOM - NIGHT

After practice, LANCE is dressed in another new outfit.

AARON  
Dressin' good.

Two small white envelopes (filled with cocaine) fall out of Lance's new jacket. AARON doesn't see them.

Lance carefully hides both in a text book in his locker.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Later, LANCE gets in his new sports car and drives off.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Lance's MOTHER comes out of the local supermarket with a bag of groceries as LANCE goes by in the sports car.

Peering over the bag, she thinks she recognizes the driver but, can't get a good view.

EXT. BOSTON ROTARY - NIGHT

Meanwhile a crazy driver in a dilapidated wreck weaves and whizzes around a rotary, almost hitting several cars then heads off a ramp marked "Cape Cod."

INT. CAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON rear view mirror, and it's LIONEL with a crazy look on his face, smoking a joint.

INT. NAPOLI BACKROOM - NIGHT

LES's face in pain. His head has been forced down into a plate of steaming spaghetti by CHEW.

CHEW

Pasta look fresh? McGinty's on my ass.

LES

Can't breathe.

CHEW

February's half over; I'm starvin'.  
Lance Moore is still clean.

LES

That party this weekend?  
I'll get him the best date  
he never had.

INT. CHEW'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Several days later, a sultry black girl named PAULINE dancing with LANCE at CHEW's party.

PAULINE

Basketball players got the  
quick moves.

LANCE

Fake left. Go right.

ANOTHER PART OF THE ROOM.

CHEW and LES watching LANCE and PAULINE dance. She gives Lance another drink.

LES

Something ain't she?

CHEW

Just do it.

Awhile later, a packet of cocaine in his hand, Les pressures Pauline.

LES

(off Lance)

You want this week's supply?

Pauline grabs the packet.

OUTSIDE BATHROOM.

PAULINE comes out of the bathroom and sniffs twice.

LIVING ROOM.

PAULINE  
(to Lance)  
Let's get air, baby.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

LANCE and PAULINE passionately kissing. Pauline feeds Lance a bottle of liquor like a mother would a baby.

PAULINE  
Who said you don't drink?.

LANCE  
I'm so drunk I'm turning white.

PAULINE  
Speakin' of white...  
(takes out the coke)

LANCE  
No, baby.

PAULINE  
You the superstar. Gonna be  
big bucks, pro money- they all  
do it.  
(puts some on her finger)  
Just a little, white powder.

PAULINE  
Let it happen -extra strong.  
Take it from me.

LANCE  
Now what?

PAULINE  
Give it time.

The coke suddenly hits him; his eyes light up.

LANCE  
Scheiss.

She squeezes two more packets into his hand.

INT. LANCE'S KITCHEN - DAY

The next morning.

MOTHER  
Lance. Breakfast.

INT. LANCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Groggy, LANCE turns over in bed and his hand hits his coat thrown on the floor.

He feels something in the pocket, takes out several bags of cocaine, and begins to remember where they came from.

INT. LANCE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Moments later, LANCE puts the packets on the sink, and tastes one out of curiosity. Nothing happens.

This stuff is harmless. He tries another snort, and the coke hits.

INT. ALUMNI BREAKFAST - DAY

ON HOOPS who holds a salt shaker. He sniffs it, throws some over his shoulder for good luck, then shakes some on his eggs.

He's sitting with FR. CALLAHAN at a fund-raising breakfast for St. Michael's ALUMS as McGinty addresses them.

McGINTY  
. . . undefeated. Fifteen and zero.  
Now I'm gonna say publically what  
many of you already know.  
As the Dragons go, I go. If the team  
goes all the way, I match any  
contribution made to my--the--new  
library. I am on line with the team.

TWO MALE ALUMS, well dressed, in the corner.

FIRST ALUM  
Sure is. Half a million--I hear--  
for himself at three to one.

SECOND ALUM  
I hear nine-fifty.

FIRST ALUM  
The dragons make the playoffs  
--his library donation won't  
cost him a thing.

SECOND ALUM

Mac crazy?

FIRST ALUM

Naw. It's a tax write-off. If  
if he wins, he wins; if he loses,  
he wins, but he hates loosing.

SECOND ALUM

Never cross him.

After the breakfast, HOOPS sees McGINTY talking to  
MAGGIE.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

HOOPS opening the car door for MAGGIE.

HOOPS

You know McGinty?

MAGGIE

Who?

HOOPS

McGinty. Sid McGinty, Head of  
the Alumni Association -builds high  
rises. Real ladies man.

MAGGIE

I met him at the Reception when  
I met you.

HOOPS

Played for St. Michael's a few years  
behind me. He was crap.

INT. GYM NIGHT

Several days later, halftime at the Niagara game.  
CLOSE ON scoreboard. St. Michael's is down by ten  
points.

INT. LOCKERROOM NIGHT

Seconds later, TWO PLAYERS help ANDRE in with a  
sprained ankle.

HOOPS

You ready, Paco?

PACO, exhausted, doesn't respond.

HOOPS

Paco?

LANCE goes by, a dreamy look in his eyes. HOOPS catches the look but dismisses it.

DANNY

Lionel didn't call in.  
Where is he?

EXT. ROTARY EXIT - NIGHT

ON Cape Cod road sign.

HOOPS (o.s.)

Crazy Lionel.

INT. GYM FLOOR - NIGHT

BUZZER SOUNDS. The game is over, and Niagara has beaten the Dragons by two. AL runs over with a microphone.

HOOPS

Only one. No one's perfect.

STANDS.

Sitting with FR. CALLAHAN, McGINTY frowns.

ANOTHER PART OF THE STANDS.

PAULINE sitting with CHEW and LES, the latter two with contented looks.

As LANCE leaves the floor, he bumps into people as if disoriented.

LATER

PACO and LANCE sweeping the floor.

MONTAGE: DAYS FOLLOWING: DRAGONS LOSING

A) FORDHAM GAME

BUZZER SOUNDS. Scoreboard reads: Fordham 75 - St.Michael's 70.

On the bench, HOOPS, not too bothered, claps twice as if to say "Next time."

B) BOWLING GREEN GAME

LANCE missing a shot. PACO losing the ball. HOOPS' head in his hands in frustration.

BUZZER SOUNDS, and scoreboard reads: Bowling Green 66-St. Michael's 58.

MAGGIE, not concerned. PAULINE, looking evil, in the stands.

C) HOLY CROSS GAME

LANCE tries the triple pick and almost kills himself, the ball rolling harmlessly to the opposition. McGinty doing a slow burn.

BUZZER. Scoreboard reads: Holy Cross 80-St. Michael's 70.

D) Headline: "St. Michael's loses three in a row."

E) Another Headline: "Six in a row."

F) RUTGER'S GAME

Another triple pick. PACO throws the ball into the stands.

As the PLAYERS return down court, a glassy-eyed LANCE stays at the end of the court.

BUZZER SOUNDS. Scoreboard reads: Rutgers 71-St. Michael's 57.

HOOPS throws down a towel in disgust.

CHEW nods knowingly to LES, and hands PAULINE an envelop.

McGINTY walking out with FR. CALLAHAN.

At the scorer's table, AL nods negatively "What a mess" to CHARLIE.

H) BUZZER SOUNDS.

Headline reads: "St. Michaels -Loses Eighth Straight. / Playoff in Jeopardy."

I) CAPE COD - Dusk.

A desolate cottage with Lionel's car parked next to it. CLOSE ON dark, relentless surf.

END MONTAGE.

INT. GYM - DAY

HOOPS is besieged by a horde of REPORTERS, yelling more or less simultaneously. HOOPS BLOWS HIS WHISTLE. They all stop.

HOOPS

One at a time.

MUGSY

Eight losses in a row, Hoops, and Paco Forker has averaged that many turnovers a game.

HOOPS

It's concentration, mental. His mind is somewhere. Eight? We'll turn it around.

CHARLIE

It's been a month since we've seen Lionel.

HOOPS

It's mental. It's a mental problem. We're working with him now.

REPORTER #1

Lance Moore has a mental problem?

HOOPS

Lance is a bona fide All-American. Just a slump.

REPORTER #2

Alumni are up in arms?

AL

What about the triple-pick?

HOOPS

Worked thirty-five years ago; gonna work today. Red Coughlin and I ...

REPORTERS

(almost a jeer)

Hoops. Hoops. Oooops.

INT. TV STUDIO - LATER

SERIES of SCENES:

- A) ON scoreboard: St. Mike's 66- Delaware 80.  
HOOPS'S head buried in his hands.

AL (v.o.)

The Dragons lost number  
nine-in-a-row tonight  
to the University of Delaware  
-Delaware!

- B) ON St. MIKE'S PLAYERS heads down leaving the  
floor.

AL (v.o.)

They're now fifteen and nine,  
after almost leading the country  
at one point.

- C) SHOT of 5 COMMISSIONERS

AL (v.o.)

The NCAA Playoff Committee make  
their selections next week,

- D) SHOT of FANS BOOING HOOPS.

AL (v.o.)

and what are the Dragons' chances?  
One fan suggested that the coach's  
name be changed from Hoops to  
"O-O-O-O-P-S" Moran.

END SCENES.

LATER:

PACO and LANCE sweeping the floor.

PACO

I'm not playing my game?  
What about you?

LANCE

I don't need this job.

PACO

Why you doin' it?

LANCE

Coach says.

PACO  
Work on your shot. You used to.

LANCE  
Like you handlin' the ball.

PACO  
You're why we're losing.

LANCE  
You need a handle.

PACO  
What are we losing for?

LANCE  
I'm not losing.

PACO  
Then what do you call it?

EXT. FANCY APARTMENT - NIGHT

That night, as his limousine pulls up, MCGINTY is talking to SOMEONE standing in the shadows.

MCGINTY  
Have to act in the next  
forty-eight hours.

The limo head light flashes on the other man.  
It's DANNY.

DANNY  
I'm ready.

MCGINTY  
Hoops can stay on as assistant  
coach but has to stay off the  
bench during games. Too divisive.  
Too many crazy plays. Too boring.

DANNY  
What if he won't quit?

MCGINTY  
I gave Callahan the ultimatum.

DANNY  
Do I get one too?

MCGINTY

You get the team, but I call  
the plays.

DANNY

What?

MCGINTY

I sit behind the bench and ok strategy.

DANNY

What do you need me for?

MCGINTY

You're the coach. You're the  
coach. I just want to make sure  
the Morans don't screw things up.

DANNY

This is all to knock down Hoops.

MCGINTY

I want my name on that library and  
on this team.

DANNY

He's my father for Chrissakes.  
I love him, owe him . . .

(beat)

Alright. One last thing.

MCGINTY

What's that?

DANNY

You're double-parked.

As Danny walks off, the limo door is opened by an  
elegant WOMAN'S HAND which MCGINTY kisses.

MCGINTY

I am double-parked.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

MCGINTY gets in; the hand belongs to MAGGIE. She  
puts her hand on his thigh.

INT. CHEW'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

PAULINE using cocaine to toy with LANCE. Both are  
stoned.

PAULINE

Sit up. Wag your tail.  
Bark.

LANCE

Bark.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

While, Lance's mother's TERRIER, unattended, tied to the tree in front of the food store, also BARKS.

EXT. PARKING LOT: HOT DOG STAND - NIGHT

From their cars, the PUERTO RICAN YOUTHS bark at PACO, taking out the garbage, who is livid.

YOUTHS

Arff. Arff. Ha. Ha. Ha.

The youths slam their car doors shut in defiance and as a mocking gesture to Paco:

SLAM. SLAM. SLAM. SLAM as we

DISSOLVE INTO

the letter "o" on the word "dog" on the hot dog sign, then out to

INT. DOOR: FR. CALLAHAN'S OFFICE - DAY

McGINTY storms out of the President's office.

MCGINTY

I don't care what you say.  
He's out.

He SLAMS the door shut.

INT. DANNY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Andrea quietly closes the kitchen door so no one hears her conversation.

ANDREA

Sid McGinty wants you take over  
with three weeks left in the season?

DANNY

He thinks it's the team's  
only chance.

ANDREA

Is it?

INT. MCGINTY'S OFFICE - DAY

MCGINTY  
Wasn't sure you'd come.

HOOPS  
To visit an old teammate?

McGinty mockingly throws a package of \$100 bills on the desk. They fall off; HOOPS picks them up.

HOOPS  
Got the same, sweet touch.

MCGINTY  
Ten . . .

HOOPS  
Still don't follow your shot.

MCGINTY  
. . . thousand.

HOOPS  
Bribe, McGinty?

MCGINTY  
I want you gone.

HOOPS  
What for?

MCGINTY  
Losing.

HOOPS  
For losing you half a million  
at three to one.

MCGINTY  
I never loose. I want St. Michael's  
a winner.

HOOPS  
You never wanted anyone to win  
except yourself.

MCGINTY  
I want Danny to take over  
tomorrow.

HOOPS

You hogged the ball when we played.

                  MCGINTY  
I talked to him.

                  HOOPS  
Wha'd he say?

                  MCGINTY  
He wants a winner. You're not.

                  HOOPS  
I'll talk to Danny.

                  MCGINTY  
Take the ten.

HOOPS picks up the money and throws it in McGinty face. The office door bursts open.

                  MAGGIE'S VOICE (o.c.)  
You home, baby?

MAGGIE sashays in. Hoops sizes things up.

                  HOOPS  
You're a rich man, McGinty.

INT. DOORWAY: ATHLETIC OFFICE - DAY

HOOPS and DANNY finish talking in DANNY'S office. His head down, HOOPS quietly walks out, leaving the door wide open.

EXT. RECTORY - DAY

Needing to talk to someone, HOOPS walks into the St. Michael's Rectory.

INT. RECTORY LOBBY

                  RECEPTIONIST  
Fr. Stone is gone for the week,  
Coach . They're doing "Death of A  
Salesman."

INT. CEMETERY - LATER

HOOPS trudges toward his wife's grave.

The beer can wind-mill is long gone. Only its peeled and weather-beaten stick remains.

HOOPS holds the milk carton and looks for the cat.

HOOPS  
Looks like hell...  
(looks around)  
Everything around here looks like hell. You hear me, Mary Francis? I let everything slide. Didn't you always tell me that? You never weed; never wash storm windows, never get the snow off the sidewalk. Christ Jesus. Danny's got the team.

QUICK FLASHBACK from "Death of A Salesman"

BIFF  
I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you!

BACK TO SCENE

HOOPS  
(to wife)  
Fr. Stone says too much anger; anger breaks spirit. I say anger makes spirit. Intensity. Intensity.

QUICK FLASHBACK

BIFF  
The man didn't know who he was.

BACK TO SCENE

HOOPS  
I'm talking to a goddamn tombstone.  
(beat)  
Where's that damn cat?

INT. CAR. - NIGHT

HOOPS STARTS THE CAR.

QUICK FLASHBACK

BIFF  
You were never anything but a hard-working coach who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them.

BACK TO SCENE

HOOPS

Hell.

CAR TEARS OFF WITH A SOUND HEARD EARLIER IN THE ST.  
MIKE'S PRODUCTION OF "DEATH OF A SALESMAN."

INT. CAR - NIGHT

HOOPS at the wheel.

QUICK FLASHBACK

LINDA

You didn't smash the car?

BEN

It's the cowardly thing  
to do.

BACK TO SCENE

HOOPS

I'm Hoops Moran, damn it

QUICK FLASHBACK

FR. STONE

The man was worth more dead  
than alive.

BACK TO SCENE

HOOPS

What do you mean?

The viaduct is closer. HOOPS grabs the steering  
wheel for dear life. But won't turn it.

The viaduct is almost on him.

HOOPS

Not Hoops Moran.

EXT. VIADUCT - NIGHT

The CAR SCREECHES TO A STOP, barely in time.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

HOOPS is shaken but not beaten.

HOOPS  
Satan, get ye gone.

INT. LES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The evil face of CHEW. He's waving a spoon of cocaine in the face of LANCE.

CHEW  
Want a shave? Shave for us.  
Next game five points lower.

EXT. HOT DOG STAND: PARKING LOT - NIGHT

TWO PUERTO RICAN YOUTHS stand next to their car as PACO sweeps up. They BARK at him then take out dollar bills.

YOUTH throws a dollar at him, then another. That's it. PACO goes for him. THREE MORE YOUTHS get out of the back seat.

ON the light on the car door signaling it's open.

EXT. GYM - NIGHT

HOOPS drives by the gym and sees a light burning, it's late. He parks to investigate

INT. GYM FLOOR - NIGHT

AARON and SCOTT practicing baskets almost in the dark. They see HOOPS and are intimidated.

HOOPS  
(gentle)  
Don't forget to blow out the candle.

A DARK FIGURE in the corner. It's LANCE, strung out

HOOPS  
Oh, Lord.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

HOOPS helps LANCE into the locker room. There's MARIA cleaning a beaten-up PACO.

HOOPS  
Call 911.

INT. GYM LOBBY. - NIGHT

Awhile later, ambulance lights are flashing.

A SIREN SOUNDS OUTSIDE. HOOPS helps MARIA. TWO MEDICS wheel PACO and LANCE past on stretchers.

AARON and SCOTT stand by.

HOOPS  
 (to medic)  
 I'll bring her over.

DANNY comes tearing in with FR. CALLAHAN.

DANNY  
 The police called...  
 (sees Paco and Lance,  
 to Hoops, accusing)  
 What the hell is this, Dad?  
 What did you do?

Before HOOPS can explain, Danny takes Maria from him.

DANNY  
 Aaron, Scott, go with the  
 ambulance. We'll take her.

ANOTHER SIREN IS HEARD.

FR. CALLAHAN  
 (to Hoops)  
 I've talked with Sid McGinty...

HOOPS  
 I know, Father.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

On his way back to his office, HOOPS hears OMINOUS FOOTSTEPS following him

He turns, and there's LIONEL, an emotional wreck.

They stand and look at each other, neither moving. Himself in pain, HOOPS extends a hand.

LIONEL takes it, tentatively at first, then like steel.

EXT. CAMPUS: STATUE DAY

ON Statue of St. Michael, sword in hand, leading the army of God.

INT. OUTSIDE HOOPS' OFFICE - DAY

CHARLIE

They're downstairs. A team meeting.

AL

I heard he almost killed them.

MUGSY

I heard he's out.

AL

Do the players know?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Total silence. ALL the PLAYERS are there: LANCE a bit shaky, PACO, bruised with a bandage, LIONEL holding his own.

DANNY stands off to the side with Fr. CALLAHAN. HOOPS marches in, still feisty.

HOOPS

(to Lance)

You ok?

(to Paco)

Paco, you give 250%

There's affection in this room, muted but growing.

HOOPS

The walking wounded. We've been down before. Doctors say Paco's bruised, couple teeth missing. Looks tougher, an intimidator. Lance is ok. We all know what happened, and we're gonna work on it. Lionel is back. Tough "D." Together. A team. We're still a team. Damn it. Family. Us against them. When you're in trouble, we care -St. Michael's, and don't you forget it.

LIONEL

Yeah.

HOOPS

This is the best team I ever coached. Of all of the -my-- boys, you work the hardest, have the most talent, and...

put up with me the best. I love you all. I'm from the old school of coaching, probably a little too old. I come from a different time, different era. I confused anger with intensity—my anger. I got mad and couldn't see players injured, only losing. Time for change, time to start again, time to see that you boys be winners. Danny's taking over as head coach.

The PLAYERS are stunned.

HOOPS

I'll be second in command. He makes the decisions. I'm sure you'll work as hard for him as you did for me. I'm retiring after this season. Right now, I want the best for you and from you. I want you to remember this team with pride and respect. We can make those playoffs.

Hoops extends one hand for a team cheer but the players are still too moved—in his favor—to respond.

Thinking he's made a fool of himself, he goes.

INT. HALLWAY: GYM - NIGHT

Hallways are empty. FANS CHEERING INSIDE.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

The Dragons are down by four with thirty seconds to go.

STANDS

HOOPS way back in the crowd.

BENCH

DANNY'S running the team; calls a time out.

DANNY

I want Paco to press all the way down then double-team Paco's man for the steal when he crosses half-court.

DANNY

Go.

PACO presses his man all the way down court. LIONEL comes up on Paco's man who is distracted.

Lionel steals the ball, dribbles the length of the floor, and scores. B.C. by two.

Twenty seconds.

Rattled, the GUARD makes a bad pass out of bounds. Under the basket, Paco nabs it and scores. Tied.

Ten seconds.

Full court press by St. Michael's. Suddenly the ball is loose. Paco makes a desperate dive for the it and

saves it to Lance who shoots from the corner and scores the winning basket

BUZZER SOUNDS. The ST. MICHAEL'S PLAYERS jump up and run over to Lance.

STANDS

CHEW is unhappy with LES.

TV TABLE.

AL

(to audience)

The Dragons' losing streak is over.  
New head honcho, Danny Moran has won  
his coaching debut.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

SCOTT

(to Paco)

Looks like the old Paco tonight  
-for a little while.

High five by SCOTT. PACO avoids contact.

SCOTT

Not showering?

PACO

Work. Gotta go.

SCOTT

You never shower.

INT. HOOPS' OFFICE - NIGHT

HOOPS is alone in his office, cleaning the beer cans out of his desk.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Carrying her baby, it's MARIA, very upset.

MARIA

I didn't want to see you last time.

HOOPS

Why didn't you come sooner?

MARIA

People say you don't listen.

HOOPS

Why not talk to Danny?

MARIA

You're the coach.

HOOPS

I'm listening.

MARIA

I'm worried about Paco . . .

MONTAGE: THE DAYS FOLLOWING: ST. MICHAEL'S WINNING

A) PRINCETON GYM - NIGHT

McGINTY behind the bench arguing with DANNY, shaking his head "no," on the bench during play.

LANCE hitting a shot. LIONEL hitting a shot. After the game, the DRAGONS congratulating each other.

B) DE PAUL GAME ST. MICHAEL'S GYM - NIGHT

PACO losing the ball, picked up by LIONEL, clumsy but effective, fast-breaking with SCOTT and AARON.

Lionel dishes off to SCOTT who stuffs it, making the score 69-53 for St. Michael's. McGINTY and DANNY arguing. Danny gives in.

END MONTAGE

LOUISVILLE GAME ST. MICHAEL'S GYM - NIGHT

McGINTY, behind the bench, shoves a play on paper at DANNY. Danny shoves it back. McGinty explodes. Danny accepts the play.

TIME OUT

PLAYERS don't understand the play. SCOREBOARD: THIRTY SECONDS

McGinty's play is chaos. St. Mikes by five then three then one.

BUZZER SOUNDS. St. Michael's 75--Louisville 74. Danny less than excited.

DANNY

Hung on by one. No more interference.

McGINTY

Players didn't follow the play.

DANNY

Stay out of my huddle. I want Hoops back on the bench, or . . .

McGINTY

Or what?

DANNY

I walk--in front of a nation-wide audience.

McGINTY

He's back. Playoff game only.

STANDS - CONTINUOUS

HOOPS sees LES in heated discussion with an angry CHEW; Hoops growls.

INT. GYM: EXIT - NIGHT

LES leaving with CHEW and TWO THUGS. HOOPS steps in front of Les.

HOOPS

Les, I want to see you.

LES

What for? You don't run it no more.

HOOPS  
I run you, Les. Everyone runs  
you.

A thug moves in.

HOOPS  
(to Chew)  
Between me and Lester.

SEVERAL PEOPLE stop and stare. Not wanting  
attention, Chew and thugs leave.

INT. DANNY'S OFFICE - DAY

AL  
You're in the playoffs, Danny.  
First time.

DANNY  
Owe most of it to Hoops.

MUGSY  
Any role for him in the future?

DANNY  
He's with me for Penn -on the bench.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND LANCE'S HOUSE - DAY

LANCE heads down the alley to a garage where he  
hides his sports car. BLACKIE follows.

LANCE  
Home, Blackie. Go home.

The dog retreats then secretly follows.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

Looking both ways, LANCE unlocks the dilapidated  
garage and goes in. BLACKIE sniffs at the door.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

As LANCE puts the key in his car door, ONE of the  
the TWO THUGS grabs his hand and BREAKS THE KEY OFF  
IN THE LOCK: CRACK.

BOTH Thugs grab him, and CHEW steps out of the  
shadows.

CHEW

We lost a hundred thousand  
on the Louisville game.

LANCE

I'm off it, man. Clean.

CHEW

Wouldn't the District Attorney  
like to know about you?

LANCE

You go with me, scum.

CHEW

Les has pictures—you and coke.  
We put 'em online, send 'em to  
your church, send 'em to your  
mother. Goodbye pro career.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

BLACKIE, sensing trouble, YAPPING and pawing at the  
door.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

CHEW

What's that?

LANCE

Our dog, Blackie.

CHEW

Tough as you.

FIRST THUG twists LANCE'S arm.

FIRST THUG

Break it?

CHEW

We need him; he needs a message.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

BLACKIE YAPPING EYEN LOUDER.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Lance's MOTHER sees nothing but a leash where  
Blackie is usually tied.

MOTHER  
Blackie? Blackie?

INT. HOOPS' OFFICE - DAY

The next day, a furious HOOPS twists the leash in his hand.

LANCE  
My mother cried all night.

HOOPS  
Did you tell Danny?

LANCE  
About this, and Les and Paco? No.

HOOPS  
What about Paco?

CUT TO:

HOOPS  
The press would find out in a minute.  
Do this my way. Now we play real Hoops.

INT. NAPOLI - NIGHT

HOOPS  
I don't run things anymore but  
I can get to someone better than  
Lance - Paco, the ball handler.  
You know what happened with Les?

CHEW  
Les mentioned something.

HOOPS  
If that ever got out... Besides, Paco  
needs your money. Got a wife and kid.

CHEW  
What's in it for you?

HOOPS  
They took my team away. Now I  
take theirs.

CHEW  
Price?

HOOPS  
What I said on the phone.

CHEW  
Twenty thousand.

HOOPS

Sold.

CHEW

How can I be sure for the first  
playoff game?

HOOPS

You can be sure. Right, Les?

The scam is over. LANCE and SCOTT bring a  
whimpering LES out of the bathroom, his arms behind  
his back.

The TWO THUGS move to intervene, and suddenly the  
WHOLE DRAGON TEAM appears out of side doors and back  
booths.

PACO takes the guns from the THUGS.

PACO (off gun)

Ain't even a firecracker  
in my neighborhood.

HOOPS

Les, you got something to tell Paco  
--what you told me a couple days ago.  
The truth.

LES

What?

LANCE

What about that party in the bedroom?

LES

I went in. He was on the bed. I took  
my shoes off. He puked on my feet.

Paco is unburdened.

LES

Stumbled out, took the bus home.  
Nothing happened. Nothing.

HOOPS

You were always pathetic, Les.

(to Chew)

And you, Piece of Crap Number One,  
in three days, we have our playoff.  
If hear anything about you before  
then, this team gonna fast break your  
face. I'll keep this money for St.

Michael's library. By the way, you two are too dumb to figure all this out yourselves. Who you working for? Who-are-you-working for? Don't tell me. I already know.

(to Chew)

One last thing.

(off Lance)

This is for his mother's dog.

BAM. Hoops SMASHES Chew in the face.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Minutes before the start of the second half of the St. Mike's-Penn playoff game, it's 38 all.

A few feet from the huddle, AL catches HOOPS for a few words.

AL

Hoops. How's it look?

HOOPS

(putting him on)

It looks tied, Al.

AL

What about ...

HOOPS

Being assistant coach?

AL

Well, yes.

HOOPS

I talked to my old friend Red Coughlin yesterday. He's not on the floor -not coaching- the Celtics anymore, but he's in their hearts, every game. I think it was time for a change at St. Michael's. My son Danny is winning. These are still my boys. We're gonna beat Penn tonight.

AL

Hoops Moran. "Resigned" late in the season for the good of his boys, back tonight with his team in his first-ever NCAA playoff.

ST. MICHAEL'S PLAYERS have been waiting for Hoops join the huddle.

He puts his hand in with the others, and they break with terrific spirit.

PLAYERS

All right. Yeah.

With two minutes left, St. Michael's leads 66-63.

McGINTY sits behind the bench.

While AL does the commentary -AT TIMES, ACTION FOLLOWS AL'S COMMENTARY-

A PENN PLAYER takes a shot and there is savage rebounding.

AL

What a battle on the boards.  
St. Mike's by three and it's been like this all night

Somehow the ball bounces into the Penn basket.

AL

Penn scores. 66-65 St. Mike's.  
Two minutes left.

CUT TO:

Seconds later.

AL (o.c.)

This is the first round of the NCAA playoffs -the first ever for the St. Mike's Dragons- and neither team has lead by more than three.

PACO brings the ball down court and passes to LANCE.

AL (o.c.)

Paco Forker into superstar Lance Moore who fakes his man out of his shoes, and an incredible shot from the baseline. Dragons by three.

A PENN GUARD takes the ball out. Paco dogs him on defense him all the way down the court.

AL (o.c.)  
 Paco is on Pike like a glove,  
 one on one. Paco looks  
 like the defenseman of old  
 tonight with six steals.

Paco steals the ball and goes the length of the  
 court.

AL  
 (o.c.)  
 And there's seven. St. Michael's  
 by five, 70-65, and Penn calls  
 a time out with half a minute  
 on the clock.

St. Mike's huddle. McGinty in back of it arguing.

McGINTY  
 Now's the time for this play.

DANNY  
 Penn's in the wrong formation,  
 too much open space.

HOOPS  
 Sit down McGinty.

McGINTY  
 Off the court.

DANNY  
 You off the court.

McGINTY  
 You punk.

Danny signals SECURITY GUARD.

DANNY  
 (to guard)  
 Get this man off my bench.

Security Guard escorts McGinty out.

McGINTY  
 I'll get you, both of you.

DANNY  
 What do you think, Dad?

HOOPS  
 (to Paco)  
 Keep Pike outside his range.  
 No baseline. Play 'em tight

the rest of the way. No fouls.  
Keep your man off those boards.

BUZZER SOUNDS.

HOOPS

Go.

As the PLAYERS break, PIKE brings the ball down and sets up. Pike goes around Paco on the baseline.

AL (o.c.)

Pike around Paco Forker  
like he was standing still.  
St. Mike's by only three.  
Fifteen seconds, and Penn  
is pressing.

Suddenly Pike steals the ball again and scores.

AL (o.c.)

Oh no. Paco Forker went to sleep  
again and Penn scores. Dragons  
down by one with five seconds.

On the bench. Hoops signals for a time out.

HOOPS

Time out.

The Dragons huddle.

HOOPS

What do you want, Danny?

DANNY

You know what. Call it.

HOOPS

What?

DANNY

The triple.

HOOPS

(to players)

The triple pick.

The Dragons are stunned.

HOOPS

Paco's on the sidelines;  
Scott, Aaron, and Lionel set up  
the pick for Lance.

SCOTT

Coach, not this.

HOOPS

Three on the side by the baseline.  
Lance's been hot all night. They'll  
never suspect.

BUZZER SOUNDS. In all but despair, the players  
don't move.

HOOPS

You've come this far with  
me.

LIONEL

This old play?

HOOPS

So old it's new. My retirement  
present.

PLAYERS

Ok, Coach. Sure.

HOOPS

It works only if we all work.  
Team!

Play resumes. Paco again has the ball on the  
sidelines.

AL (o.c.)

Ready. 71-70. This is it. What  
last-second play has Hoops designed  
for the finale? St. Mike's never  
been in a playoff game.

As the OFFICIAL counts to five, the St. DANNY'S  
PLAYERS go through the triple pick.

AL (o.c.)

Paco on the side. Five seconds  
to get the ball in. Four. Three.  
Oh no. Hoops' triple pick.  
The most ridiculous play in  
basketball.

Paco tries to throw the ball in, and the pick, as  
usual, is a mess.

But also for Penn, as three of their players collide, knocking themselves out of the play.

Suddenly, out of the chaos, LIONEL emerges, comes around the pick which works perfectly, and he's open.

AL (o.c.)  
Like I said. Wait.

One second. Paco throws the ball to LIONEL, and with one of his patented, crazy shots, Lionel throws it.

The ball is in the air.

0 Seconds. BUZZER SOUNDS.

The ball hits the rim and hangs there, SILENTLY spinning just like the opening shot of this script, then slowly, slowly falls in.

HOOPS  
Way to STICK IT.

St. Mike's wins, and the place is bedlam.

AL (o.c.)  
Dragons win. Dragons win.  
St. Michael's advances in  
the playoffs.

Hoops is carried off in jubilation by Lance, Aaron, Paco, and Lionel.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMPUS: ST. MICHAEL'S STATUE -DAY

His sword raised in victory. CLOSE ON the gym.

INT. HOOPS' OFFICE -DAY

HOOPS and FATHER STONE are having a beer. DANNY walks in. Hoops puts down the phone.

DANNY  
Another job offer?

HOOPS  
Makes six in two days, and these  
letters from all over the country:  
SEC, Big Ten, Pacific Coast . . .

DANNY

Me too. Dartmouth called today,  
Northwestern yesterday.

HOOPS

Should I cancel that emergency meeting  
with McGinty.

DANNY

Unless he wants us to leave  
this afternoon.

HOOPS

I'll have Fr. Callahan cancel  
for us.

DANNY

Practice starts in ten minutes.

HOOPS

(off beer can)

Fr. Stone, can you keep this cold  
for two hours without sloshing any?

FR. STONE

Moran, I always said you wash your  
socks in holy water.

**The End**

