THE BLIND SIDE

by

John Lee Hancock

Based on the book
The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game

by

Michael Lewis

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Alcon Film Fund, LLC
10390 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 250
Los Angeles, CA 90025
OVER BLACK...

A distinctly SOUTHERN VOICE...

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

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD/GAME FOOTAGE - NIGHT

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

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE
One Mississippi. Joe Theismann, the Redskins quarterback, takes the snap and hands off to his running back.

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

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

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Two Mississippi. It's a trick play, a flea flicker, and the running back tosses the ball back to the quarterback.

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

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Three Mississippi. Up to now the play's been defined by what the quarterback sees. It's about to be defined by what he doesn't.

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LEIGH ANNE’S VOICE
Joe Theismann never played another down of football.

TEAM PHOTO OF THE 2005 SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

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

The camera finds MATT HASSELBECK, Seattle’s quarterback.

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

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

(CONTINUED)
LEIGH ANNE’S VOICE (CONT’D)
Because, as every housewife knows, the first check you write is for the mortgage and the second is for the insurance. The left tackle’s job is to protect the quarterback from what he can’t see coming. To protect his blind side.

SERIES OF SHOTS

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

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

EXT. WEST MEMPHIS - DAY

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

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

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

INVESTIGATOR’S VOICE (V.O.)
Mr. Oher, do you know why I’m here?
(no response)
Mr. Oher?....

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Hmmm....

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

INVESTIGATOR'S VOICE (V.O.)
Do you know, do you understand why
I'm here?

MICHAEL (V.O.)
To... investigate.

INVESTIGATOR'S VOICE (V.O.)
Yes. To investigate. I'm here to
investigate your odd...
predicament.

INT. NONDESCRIPT ROOM - DAY

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

GRANGER
Do you find it odd? Your
predicament?
(no response)
Michael?...

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

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

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

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Can I... can I leave now?

GRANGER
(with finality)
No. You can't.

INT. ANCIENT FORD TAURUS - DAY

SUPERSCRIPT: TWO YEARS BEFORE

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

Not a word is spoken as they drive through the streets of WEST MEMPHIS - poverty ridden.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Taurus exits into --

EXT. SOMEWHAT NICER AREA OF TOWN - DAY

The Taurus passes an endless supply of churches and strip joints, all of which Michael's eyes take in.

EXT. EAST MEMPHIS - INT/EXT TAURUS - DAY (LATER)

We've gone from slums to nice neighborhoods - fathers and sons play baseball, kids tend lemonade stands, sprinklers keep the grass emerald green.

Michael's face tells us he's never seen anything like this.

EXT. WINGATE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL - DAY

The Taurus enters the parking lot filled with nice cars.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Big Tony strides down the almost empty hallway, spots a door.

INT. WINGATE - COTTON'S OFFICE - DAY

BERT COTTON, football coach, cleans off his desk, ready to leave for the day. Big Tony knocks at the door.

BIG TONY
They say you the coach.

Cotton eyes Tony, offers a hand.

COTTON
Bert Cotton.

BIG TONY
Tony Hamilton, but everybody call me Big Tony.

COTTON
What can I do for you, Tony?

EXT. WINGATE - SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Steven and Michael eye the freshly painted buildings, the flowers, the new playground jungle gyms and outdoor hoops.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

STEVEN
Sure is pretty, huh, Big Mike?

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

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Not even locked!

MICHAEL
White people are crazy.

INT. WINGATE - COTTON’S OFFICE - DAY

Big Tony and Cotton are mid-discussion --

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

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

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

COTTON
What sport does he play?

BIG TONY
Anything with a ball. Good, too.

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

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

BIG TONY
I know what you’re thinking, Coach, but I got money. I’m a mechanic at Wilson’s Auto t’other side of town.

(ANOTHER TRY)
What if someone drops out or moves? Could they get in then?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

COTTON
"They?" You only mentioned one son.

BIG TONY
Steven, yessir, but I brought another boy along.

COTTON
Another boy?

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

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

BIG TONY
Yeah, sure, why not.

Cotton sighs, considers what to do.

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

BIG TONY
I was hopin’ you might just interview ‘em now.

COTTON
They’re here?

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

BIG TONY
The little ones Steven and the big one’s --

COTTON
Big Mike.

BIG TONY
Yeah. That’s right.
EXT. WINGATE - PLAYGROUND - DAY

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

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

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

Cotton’s lips are almost quivering --

COTTON
Mother of God....

INT. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE BOARD ROOM - DAY

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

COTTON
Are there spots available or not?

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

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

Sandstrom looks through papers for the name.

COTTON
Big Mike.

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

COTTON
How bad could it be?

Another board member, MRS. SMITH, pores over Michael’s file, which is a mess. She finds facts and lays them out --
MRS. SMITH
We're not sure exactly how old he is due to lack of records. He has a measured IQ of 80. That's 6th percentile. He's been enrolled in seven different institutions, including a gap of eighteen months around the age of ten when he apparently didn't attend school at all. He repeated first grade as well as second, there's no record of attendance in third, and in fourth grade --

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

MRS. SMITH
(ignoring Cotton)
His attendance records are abysmal and his grade point average begins with a zero. Zero-point-six.

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

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

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

COTTON
Forget sports! Look at the wall.

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

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

Their faces announce that he's made a point.

EXT. WINGATE - DAY

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

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

EXT. WINGATE - CAMPUS - DAY

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

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

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

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

MRS. BOSWELL
Class, this is Mike Oher and he's new here so I expect you all to make him feel welcome.
(with a warm smile)
Mike, take any empty seat.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

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

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)
This is a quiz based on the information you learned last year in your science curriculum.
(over GROANS)
Don't worry. It won't be graded. I just want to see how much of the information we need to hit again.
Just answer whatever you know.

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

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

INT. WINGLE - HALLWAY - DAY (LATER)

A bell RINGS and kids leave classrooms.

INT. WINGLE - MRS. BOSWELL’S CLASS - DAY

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

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

MRS. BOSWELL
It's okay.

MICHAEL
Can I leave now?

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

A DRAWING on the back - a boat on an ocean. On the boat is a single, stick figure person. It's sweet but looks like a third grader drew it.
INT. BIG TONY’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

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

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

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

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

Michael tries to shut his eyes.

EXT. WINGATE – PARKING LOT – DAY

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

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

Big Tony’s Taurus pulls into the lot.

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

MICHAEL
Naw, it’s a’right.

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

INT. WINGATE – GYMNASIUM FOYER – NIGHT

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

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

She arrives at the concession stand and waits impatiently.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
There's a difference between Bunny Williams and Lazee-boy.
(to vendor)
Three large popcorns and two large diets.
(into cell)
When MTV Cribs comes to his house he'll be showing off his home theatre but all I'm gonna see is a brown Barca-lounger. I'm his designer, my name's on it. Deliver what I ordered!!

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Hi, sweetie! We're on the Kidspace committee together, aren't we?!
It'll be a hoot!

INT. WINGATE - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

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

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

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

SEAN
S.J., you know that kid?

SJ
What kid?

SEAN
Black kid. Up in the corner.

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

Sean eyes Michael suspiciously.
SEAN
He look like a volleyball fan to you?

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

LEIGH ANNE
What’d I miss?

SEAN
Collins got a dig.

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
Collins! Move your feet!

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

INT. WINGATE - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT (LATER)

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

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

COLLINS
I’m going over to Cannon’s house to study.

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

LEIGH ANNE
What’s so awful about our house?

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

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

Picking up left-over bags of popcorn.

Sean considers this for a second before leaving.

INT. WINGATE - TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Teachers drink stale coffee and chew on donuts.

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

SECOND TEACHER (APRIL)
Why would Admissions do this? It's not fair to us or the boy.

THIRD TEACHER (GLENDA)
Just setting him up to fail.

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

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

Mrs. Boswell can't contain herself.

MRS. BOSWELL
He writes.

APRIL
His name. Barely.

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

MRS. BOSWELL
He threw this in the trash can.
(reads from the page)
"I look and I see white everywhere: white walls, white floors, and a lot of white people. The teachers do not know I have no idea of anything they are talking about. I do not want to listen to anyone, especially the teachers."

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)
They are giving homework and
expecting me to do the problems on
my own. I have never done homework
in my life. I go to the bathroom,
look in the mirror and say, "This
is not Michael Oher."
(a pause for effect)
He entitled it "White Walls."

The room is dead quiet.

BOB
How's the spelling?

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

INT. WINGATE - CAFETERIA - DAY

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

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

SEAN
If he makes his grades.

COTTON
But boy-hidey, just look at him.

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

SEAN
What did you eat for lunch today?

MICHAEL
Here in the cafeteria.

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

MICHAEL
A few things.

SEAN
Do you need some money? For lunch?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
I don’t need any.

Sean walks back over to Coach Cotton.

SEAN
Buy him a semester lunch pass and
put it on my bill.
(off Cotton’s look)
He’s hungry.

COTTON
You could tell that by looking at
him?

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

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

Mrs. Boswell distributes a test to the class.

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

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

MRS. BOSWELL (CONT’D)
Mike, come with me.

INT. WINGATE - SMALL ADJACENT ROOM - DAY

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

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

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

**MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)**
Mike, how about I ask the questions and you tell me the answers or as much as you know.

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

**MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)**
Protozoans are classified based on: a) how they get their food, b) how they reproduce, c) how they move, or d) both a and c.

Michael just stares. After a long moment ...

**MICHAEL**
Iono...

**MRS. BOSWELL**
Just try. Ask questions if you don't understand.

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

He lifts his eyes to her and points to --

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

**MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)**
"Classified". It means how things are grouped together.

**MICHAEL**
Like our "class"?

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

Michael nods understanding.

**MRS. BOSWELL (CONT'D)**
Okay, Mike, you ready to answer the question?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He looks at her.

INT. WINGATE - TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

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

MRS. BOSWELL
He knows it!

BOB
Who knows it and what does he know?

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

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

APRIL
On how big a curve?

MRS. BOSWELL
He's been listening the whole time. It's amazing what he's absorbed. And, trust me, he's listening to you, too. Okay, so his reading level is low and he has no idea how to learn in a classroom, but...
(makes her point)
I'm not saying he's going to pass but Big Mike is not stupid.

EXT. WINGATE - CAMPUS - DAY

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

MICHAEL
Hi....

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

SJ (OS)
Smile at 'em.

Michael turns to see SJ nearby, watching him.

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

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

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

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

SJ (CONT'D)
Manana’.

Michael smiles at the kid, who smiles back.

Leigh Anne notices Michael as she drives past him.

LEIGH ANNE
Who’s that SJ?

SJ
Big Mike.

LEIGH ANNE
Get your feet off my dash.

Michael watches Leigh Anne’s car disappear.

SANDSTROM (O.S.)
Big Mike?...
CONTINUED:

Michael turns to see Paul Sandstrom, the principal.

EXT. WINGATE - DAY (A FEW MINUTES LATER)

Michael and Sandstrom sit on a bench.

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

Sandstrom struggles with how to say the words.

SANDSTROM (CONT'D)
Mike, the man... was your father.

Michael takes this in without showing emotion.

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

MICHAEL
Iono.

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

Michael nods, then rises and walks away.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - DAY (LATER)

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

OMITTED
INT. LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT

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

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

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

EXT. LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT (LATER)

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINGATE - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

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

They walk away together toward the parking lot.

INT. SEAN'S BMW - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

As they exit the parking lot--

LEIGH ANNE
Turn on the heat!

SEAN
I don’t know where it is.

LEIGH ANNE
It’s fifteen degrees, you’ve had this car a month and you don’t know how to turn on the heat?!

(as she turns it on)
What would you do without me?

SEAN
Lots of things you’ll never know about.

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

    SJ
    Get a room.

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

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

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

    SJ
    Dad, he’s like Chinese.

    LEIGH ANNE
    And you’re Irish. If you weren’t
    the Chief how come you got the
    headdress?

    SJ hesitates a bit before --

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

    LEIGH ANNE
    (laughs)
    And where does the acorn fall?

    SEAN
    Don’t laugh too hard. The
    Quesadilla saved our ass.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

INT. SEAN’S CAR - NIGHT

Leigh Anne notices Michael --
LEIGH ANNE
What is he wearing? It's below freezing. What's his name again?

SEAN AND SJ
Big Mike.

LEIGH ANNE
Where's he going?

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

SEAN
Hey, Big Mike!

Michael stops in the crosswalk, looks to the car.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Where you headin'?

MICHAEL
Gym....

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

LEIGH ANNE
The gym? It's nine o'clock.

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Turn around.

Sean sighs, knowing better than to argue.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

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

Michael slowly nods.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
The school gym's closed.

Michael takes this in but doesn't respond.
CONTINUED:

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

MICHAEL
Because... it’s warm.

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

LEIGH ANNE
Do you have anywhere to stay tonight?

Michael eyes the ground, then nods.

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

INT. SEAN’S BMW – NIGHT

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

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

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

SEAN (CONT’D)
Where we going?

LEIGH ANNE
Home.

EXT. RITZY NEIGHBORHOOD – NIGHT

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

INT. SEAN’S BMW – NIGHT

Michael’s eyes are frozen at the sight. To him it looks like a mansion. Hell, it IS a mansion.
INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

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

COLLINS
How'd the dork do in the play?

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

COLLINS (CONT'D)
Um... okay....

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

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

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

MICHAEL
Mr. Tuohy sleeps on the couch?

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

The two share a look, then...

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Sleep tight, honey.

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

SJ
Psst...

SJ is in the doorway to the kitchen.

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

(CONTINUED)
Michael nods then smiles. SJ smiles back, gives a thumbs up and disappears. Michael's eyes go to a coffee table book --
NORMAN ROCKWELL. On the cover is "FREEDOM FROM WANT" - picturing a family sitting around a dinner table.

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

They lie in bed, awake.

LEIGH ANNE
Was this a bad idea?

SEAN
What?

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
How well do you know Big Mike?

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

LEIGH ANNE
Do you think he'll steal anything?

SEAN
I guess we'll know in the morning.

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

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
If you hear a scream call the insurance adjustor.
INT. TUOHY HOUSE - COLLINS' BEDROOM - DAY

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

LEIGH ANNE
Up and at 'em.

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

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SJ'S BEDROOM - DAY

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

LEIGH ANNE
Sean Junior!

She opens the shades.

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

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

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Leigh Anne stops, stares --

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

No sign of Michael.

LEIGH ANNE
Mike? Big Mike?!

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

EXT. TUOHY HOUSE - DAY

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

LEIGH ANNE
Big Mike!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He stops, turns. Leigh Anne walks over.

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

MICHAEL
Iono.

LEIGH ANNE
Are you spending Thanksgiving with your family?

Michael shakes his head.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (LATER)
Leigh Anne carves turkey onto a tray and takes it into...

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY
Leigh Anne sets the turkey on a serving table alongside the rest of the Tuohy Thanksgiving feast.

LEIGH ANNE
Come and get it!

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

SEAN
SJ, Ole Miss is about to score!

SJ
Which means they’re about to fumble.

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

SEAN
Looks great, hon.

Collins plate is pretty delicately apportioned.

COLLINS
I see a lot of starch.

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

LEIGH ANNE
As much as you want.
(walks away)
Oh, the potato salad!

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

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

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

INT. TUOHY HOUSE – DINING ROOM – DAY

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

S\J
Why are we eating in here?

Leigh Anne holds out her hands.

LEIGH ANNE
Shall we say grace?

The Tuohy family plus Michael hold hands.

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

INT. LEIGH ANNE'S CAR - DAY

Leigh Anne drives and Michael sits shotgun.

MICHAEL
I got clothes.

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

He looks out the window.

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

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

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

He still stares out the window.

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

Nothing. Leigh Anne turns off the car.

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

He eyes the floor.

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

(continued)
CONTINUED:

After a beat...

MICHAEL
I don’t like to be called Big Mike.

She wasn’t expecting this, nods her head.

LEIGH ANNE
Okay. Mike or Michael?
(off his shrug)
Tell you what, from now on, to me, you’re Michael. So,... Michael, where we headed?

EXT. HURT VILLAGE HOUSING PROJECT – DAY

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
This is where your mother lives?

He nods and she opens her door.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT’D)
Okay, let’s go.

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

MICHAEL
Don’t get out!

LEIGH ANNE
Who’s going to help you with your clothes?

MICHAEL
(pointed)
Don’t get out of the car.

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

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

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

    ALTON
    Big Mike! Where you been?!

Michael ignores, keeps walking.

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

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

    MICHAEL
    Hey, David.

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

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DIFFERENT APARTMENT - DAY

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

He reads from the eviction for several seconds.

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

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - MINUTES LATER

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

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

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

    MICHAEL
    She wasn't home.

    LEIGH ANNE
    We can come back.

Michael takes this in, looks out the window.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
She prolly moved to a nicer place.

EXT. BIG AND TALL SHOP – DAY

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

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

MICHAEL
I got your back.

LEIGH ANNE
That’s good to know. Thank you.

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

INT. BIG AND TALL SHOP – DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

An AFRICAN AMERICAN SALESMAN directs Leigh Anne and Michael.

SALESMAN
Everything I got to fit him will be right here.

LEIGH ANNE
This is it? If this is all you got why’s it say “Big and Tall” on the sign?

SALESMAN
Big and Tall. You need “Bigger and Taller”.

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

LEIGH ANNE
Anything you like?

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

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
And before you choose something
think about yourself wearing it and
ask yourself: Is this me?

She finds one shirt, holds it out.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
What about this?

He shakes his head, "no".

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
(another shirt)
This isn't atrocious.

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
This one? This is the one you
like?

He nods, completely sure.

EXT. WINGATE - DAY

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

LEIGH ANNE
Have a great day. Learn something!

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

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

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Don't get your panties in a wad.

INT. TONY RESTAURANT - DAY

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

BETH
The best part about Paris was the
food.

(MORE)
BETH (CONT'D)
They use sauce like we use gravy. I had to join a gym the day we got back.

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

ELAINE
On the freeway.

SHERRY
Where exactly are you talking about?

LEIGH ANNE
Alabama Street... Hurt Village.

BETH
Hurt Village - that sounds like a threat.

LEIGH ANNE
You’re not far off.

SHERRY
It would “hurt” me to go there.

ELAINE
It would certainly hurt your reputation to go there.

BETH
(tongue in cheek)
I’m actually from there but didn’t mind hard work and look where I am now.

LEIGH ANNE
Eating an eighteen dollar salad.

BETH
And it’s a little soggy to be honest.

SHERRY
Such a shame.

BETH
(re: her salad)
Yes it is.

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

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

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

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

SHERRY
Then they're BerMUDian-Americans.

They all cringe and laugh.

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

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

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

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

SJ and Michael sit at the island doing their homework.

SJ
It can't be that hard.

MICHAEL
Oh, yeah?...

SJ looks at the Michael's notebook.
SJ
There are different parts of a sentence and you just have to draw lines showing what they do.

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

SEAN
(into cell)
They’re gonna get rid of those stores in Florida.... I’ll look it over now but I need the sales figures by tomorrow morning.

SJ
Dad, you remember how to diagram sentences?

SEAN

Nah.

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

SEAN (CONT'D)
Let’s see...

MICHAEL
You don’t have to help.

(off Sean’s look)
I mean if you’re busy or somethin’.

SEAN
I know.

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

SJ
They’re like wide receivers.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SEAN
Or kickers.

Michael just stares at them.

SEAN (CONT'D)
You have no idea what we’re talking about, do you?

MICHAEL
Not exactly.

They all laugh.

NEARBY

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

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
Do you want to stay here, Michael?

He keeps working.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Because if you want to... stay... for awhile... longer... I’ll try and find some time to figure out a bedroom for you.

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
I mean, look at this, you’ve practically ruined a ten thousand dollar couch.

She moves closer to him. Her face softens.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Do you want to stay here, Michael?

MICHAEL
I don’t want to go anywhere else.

She’s a bit befuddled by the response.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE
Well, ... alright then.

INT. WINGATE - BOARDROOM - DAY

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

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

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
Love that man.

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

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

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

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

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

MRS. SMITH
Doesn't look promising. Spatial relations - third percentile. Ability to learn - fifth percentile.

(see another number)
It's funny though. He tested in the 98th percentile in one category.

LEIGH ANNE
Which one?
MRS. SMITH
"Protective instincts."

Leigh Anne smiles and hands the file back.

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

Leigh Anne considers this, then...

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

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

(again off her look)
"Darned."

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

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

Leigh Anne and Michael stand in the doorway.

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

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

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

He gingerly moves to the bed; touches it.
CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
It's mine?

LEIGH ANNE
Yeah.
(off his look)
What?

MICHAEL
Never had one before.

LEIGH ANNE
(confused)
A room to yourself?

MICHAEL
A bed.

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

LEIGH ANNE
Well, you got one now.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY
She leaves the room, walks down the hall and enters --

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE'S BEDROOM - DAY
She closes the door behind her, sits on the bed and starts to tear up. She fights it unsuccessfully.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY
OUTSIDE THE DOOR
Michael stands, unsure what to do.

INT. WINGATE - ADJACENT ROOM - DAY
Mrs. Boswell gives Michael - in a RED AND BLUE RUGBY SHIRT - an oral test...

MRS. BOSWELL
Define Osmosis, Michael.

MICHAEL
I think I know that. It's when water...
INT. WINGATE - MRS. BOSWELL'S CLASS - DAY (LATER)

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

INT. WINGATE - HISTORY TEACHER'S CLASSROOM - DAY

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

GLENDA
Name the combatants in the battle of Waterloo.

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

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

Glenda marks down a C-

INT. WINGATE - SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

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

MICHAEL
What?

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

Collins walks by with friends and glances but ignores them.

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

_COLLINS
Just another one of Mom's projects.

GIRL STUDENT
That must get incredibly old.

Collins' look says, "yes it does."

OMITTED

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

Bob grades Michael's paper. He writes "D".
INT. SEAN’S BMW - NIGHT

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

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

MICHAEL
You own all of ’em?

SJ
Yeah. We’ve got hundreds.

COLLINS
(correcting)
A hundred and fifteen.

MICHAEL
Is that why Mr. Tuchy don’t have to go to work?

SEAN
Hey, hey now. I’m working even when I’m not working.

MICHAEL
And y’all eat at those places for free?

SJ
All you want. It’s awesome.

MICHAEL
What do y’all do with the leftover food? At the restaurant?

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

MICHAEL
That’s too bad.

SEAN
Yeah, I’d rather sell it.
CONTINUED:

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

Leigh Anne and Sean share a look and a smile.

SEAN
All right, I will.

MICHAEL
Why ain’t we eatin’ at one of yours tonight?

SEAN
Because tonight is a special occasion.

SJ
What?

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

LEIGH ANNE
Isn’t that great?

SJ
Oh, man, you are gonna crush some people!

Michael almost smiles, a little unsure.

EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

COLLINS
I need some new magazines.

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

INT. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

She softens, walks over, takes the book.

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

SJ
I always liked this one.

He holds up THE STORY OF FERDINAND.

LEIGH ANNE
Yeah, me too.

Leigh Anne sees Michael left out, but interested.

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

He just stares at her, the answer obvious.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
No one ever...
EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The Tuohy family exits and waits for the valet.

SEAN
Now that was a good steak.

COLLINS
Thanks, Daddy.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

SEAN
You're welcome.

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

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

Michael absently walks over.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Michael?...

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

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

They hug.

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

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

As they drive home.

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

MICHAEL
Marcus.

LEIGH ANNE
He works there?

MICHAEL
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE
And how do you know Marcus?

MICHAEL
He's my brother.

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

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

MICHAEL
I don't know where he stays.

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

MICHAEL
When I was little mebbe.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

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

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE
"Once upon a time in Spain, there
was a little bull --"

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

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

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

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

SEAN
What?

LEIGH ANNE
Huh?

SEAN
Why are you smiling?

LEIGH ANNE
I don’t know. I’m just happy. Really happy.

SEAN
Does this happiness have anything to do with Michael?

LEIGH ANNE
No. It has everything to do with Michael.

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

SEAN
Oh...

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

SEAN (CONT’D)
Happy’s good.

As their amorous activities continue...

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

SEAN
(his mind elsewhere)
Sure, okay.

LEIGH ANNE
Maybe fund a program at Wingate.

SEAN
Absolutely....

LEIGH ANNE
Are you even listening to me?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SEAN
I try to concentrate on one thing at a time.

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

She kisses him and they roll over, laughing.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

PHOTOGRAPHER
Okay, big smiles everyone!

FLASH! Leigh Anne smiles but notices --

Michael sitting on the couch by himself.

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

Sean gives her a look like she's crazy.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
We don't have a single picture with him.

(off Sean's sigh)
Oh, come on. It's not like I'm gonna put it on the Christmas card.

Michael moves in behind the family, dwarfing them.

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

FLASH TO:

THE TUOHY FAMILY CHRISTMAS CARD - INCLUDING MICHAEL

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE
Who's winning?

SJ
Tennessee.

LEIGH ANNE
Too bad. Who are they playing?

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

LEIGH ANNE
Yep. With gusto.

SJ
(to Michael)
She can't stand Tennessee.

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

COLLINS
I'm just gonna hang around here today.

LEIGH ANNE
I like that.

SEAN
Coupla messages on the machine.

She pushes PLAY on the message machine.

MESSAGE MACHINE
Hey, Leigh Anne, it's Patrick Ramsey.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. WASHINGTON REDSKINS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

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

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

(MORE)
The Blind Side - Yellow Draft - 04/15/09

CONTINUED:

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

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. TUOHEY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY
Leigh Anne chuckles as the next message begins --

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

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. COUSIN BOBBY'S HOUSE - DAY
Bobby sits in his recliner, talks on phone...

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

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. TUOHEY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY
Leigh Anne and Sean look at each other and laugh.

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

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

More laughter.

LEIGH ANNE
Look, he’s a great kid.

ELAINE
I say just make it official and
adopt him.

Big laughs at the “crazy” idea.

LEIGH ANNE
He’ll be eighteen in a few months.
(off their confusion)
So, I mean it wouldn’t make much
sense to legally adopt him, right?

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

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

ELAINE
What will your daddy say?

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

Before Elaine can attack--

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
And if this is going to be a running diatribe I can find an overpriced salad a lot closer to home.

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

ELAINE
No, we didn't, really --

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

Leigh Anne smiles to herself, realizing...

LEIGH ANNE
No. He's changing mine.

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

LEIGH ANNE
What about Collins?

ELAINE
Aren't you worried, even just a little?
(off Leigh Anne)
I mean he is a boy, a large, black boy, sleeping under the same roof.

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

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

And strides away.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - COLLINS' ROOM - NIGHT

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE
Be honest with me now, okay?

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Is Michael being here weird for you?

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

LEIGH ANNE
What kids?

COLLINS
At school. They're juvenile.

LEIGH ANNE
And what do the juvenile kids say?

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

LEIGH ANNE
What about you?

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

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

Leigh Anne kisses Collins goodnight.

EXT. WINGATE - PLAYGROUND - DAY

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

FIRST LITTLE GIRL
Hi Mike.
CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Hi. Need a push?

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

NEARBY

Collins watches.

INT. WINGATE - LIBRARY - DAY

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

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

FRIEND

Where are you going?

Collins walks away toward Michael.

FRIEND (CONT'D)

Collins?

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

AT MICHAEL'S TABLE

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

COLLINS

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

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

EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

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

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

COTTON

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

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

EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY (LATER)

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

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

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

NEXT PLAY

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

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

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

COTTON (CONT'D)
Shuck the blocker, Mike!

Michael gingerly sets the lineman on the ground.

IN THE STANDS

Leigh Anne shows up, sits next to Sean.

LEIGH ANNE
How's he doing?

SEAN
Doesn't quite have the hang of it
yet.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

** Michael tries to crawl under the blocker.
COTTON
No!

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

COTTON (CONT'D)
No!

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

COTTON (CONT'D)
No! No! No!

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

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
(almost to herself)
He's Ferdinand the Bull.

What?

LEIGH ANNE
Nothing.

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

LEIGH ANNE
I thought you said it was your Christian duty?

He gives her a smirk.

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DIFFERENT DAY

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

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

(off Michael’s look)
Well, go ahead, get loose.

Michael moves his arms around a bit then stops.

SJ (CONT’D)
You loose?
(Michael nods)
Okay, next is five one hundred yard
runs to stretch out your legs.

Michael grimaces.

MICHAEL
Let’s go home, play some video
games.

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

MICHAEL
Iono.

SJ
What about Dad and Mom?
(off Michael’s lock)
‘Cause you see, in our family,
everyone’s an athlete. Dad was a
basketball star, Collins plays
volleyball and runs track. Me, as
you know, I do it all and Mom,...
well, Mom was a cheerleader, which
doesn’t exactly count but don’t
tell her I said that.

(continued)
CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Okay....

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

EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS - DIFFERENT DAYS:

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

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

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

** Michael does crab crawls.

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

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

Leigh Anne goes through sample boxes and matches swatches.

MICHAEL

Mrs. Tuohy?

Michael stands nearby.

LEIGH ANNE

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

MICHAEL

Will you help get me something?

LEIGH ANNE

What?

MICHAEL

Driver's license.

LEIGH ANNE

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

MICHAEL

You have a car.
CONTINUED:

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

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Why do you want a license, Michael?

MICHAEL
Something to carry. With my name on it.

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

DMV EMPLOYEE (V.O.)
Address?....

INT: DMV OFFICE - DAY

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

DMV EMPLOYEE
Is this his address as well?

LEIGH ANNE
Yes. He lives with us.

DMV EMPLOYEE
Are y'all his foster parents?

LEIGH ANNE
No.

DMV EMPLOYEE
His legal guardians?

LEIGH ANNE
Oh... no.

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

DMV EMPLOYEE
Does he have a Social Security card?

Leigh Anne looks to Michael, who shakes his head.

DMV EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)
Birth certificate?

(CONTINUED)
LEIGH ANNE
We tried to find one for school, but...

DMV EMPLOYEE
You don’t know which city, which county, which hospital?...

LEIGH ANNE
How big a problem is this?

DMV Employee looks to Leigh Anne.

DMV EMPLOYEE
There’s nobody named Michael Oher in the system. Another last name perhaps?

Leigh Anne again turns to Michael, who shrugs.

LEIGH ANNE
Look, I’ll sign something saying he lives with us and we’ll pay for the insurance; whatever it takes.
(off her look)
What’s it gonna take?

Off the Employee’s look --

INT. TUOHY HOUSE – SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE’S MASTER BATH – NIGHT

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

SEAN
You wanna do what?!

LEIGH ANNE
Don’t pretend you didn’t hear me.

SEAN
Shouldn’t we at least talk about it?

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

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

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

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

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

SEAN
Do you really expect Big Mike --

LEIGH ANNE
Michael --

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

This puts her on her heels.

LEIGH ANNE
You're right.

SEAN
(like he's never heard these words)
Excuse me? "You're right?"
(off her grimace)
How'd those words taste coming out of your mouth?

LEIGH ANNE
Like vinegar.

She moves to him, holds him.

*
LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
At least promise me you'll think about it.

SEAN
Alright.

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

SEAN
Is there a difference?

INT. CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES OFFICE - DAY

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

LEIGH ANNE
(into cell)
Just tell Rodney to hold the chiffonier for me and I'll get by after while.

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
I'm not cutting, just asking.
(to Employee)
I've been waiting for over an hour and I look around and all I see is people shooting the bull and drinking coffee. Who runs this place anyway?

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Well I'd have it in shape in two days, I can tell you that.

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

She turns to the man waiting behind her.

LEIGH ANNE
He was first.
MAN IN LINE
No, you go ahead. I think I want to hear this.

EMPLOYEE
Me, too.

LEIGH ANNE
(to Employee)
I do not appreciate the attitude.

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

LEIGH ANNE
I'd like to become a legal guardian.

EMPLOYEE
Lord look over that child.

INT. CRAMPED OFFICE - DAY (LATER)
A haggard MANAGER, let's call him RONALD, sits across from Leigh Ann. He looks at a flimsy file.

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

LEIGH ANNE
What is in there?

RONALD
A few case notes.
(holds one sheet up)
This one describes an incident where officers forcibly removed Michael and six half-siblings from Denise Ocher's care when Michael was seven. Quite a scene evidently. They had to split up the kids. And it's far from the worst.

LEIGH ANNE
Where is she? His mother?

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

(CONTINUED)
104 CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE
How many children does she have?

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

Leigh Anne absorbs this.

LEIGH ANNE
We’d need her permission though, right?

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

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

Ronald shrugs.

105 EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DAY

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

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

106 EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DAY

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

A VOICE comes from the apartment behind her --

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
Who you lookin’ for?! 

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

LEIGH ANNE
I’m looking for Denise Ocher.

ALTON
Dee Dee don’t stay there no more.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE
Do you know where she might be?

ALTON
Chances are she ain’t gone far.
(smiles)
I seen you before. You with Big
Mike now. You wanna come in for a
wine cooler or sumthin’?

LEIGH ANNE
No, I can’t, but thank you.

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - PLAYGROUND - DAY

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

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - BUILDING E - DAY

A door opens revealing DENISE OHER in a ratty robe.

LEIGH ANNE
Hi. Mrs. Oher?

DENISE OHER
You from the state?

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

Denise takes this in.

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

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

DENISE OHER (O.S.)
How is my boy, how’s Big Mike?

LEIGH ANNE
(calls out)
He’s fine. He’s doing well.
(after a beat)
When did you move from the other
building?

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
When did you last see Michael?

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

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

DENISE OHER
How many foster kids you got living with you?

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

DENISE OHER
State don't pay you nothing?

LEIGH ANNE
No.

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

LEIGH ANNE
When I can find them in his size.

DENISE OHER
You a fine Christian lady.

LEIGH ANNE
I try to be.

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

(CONTINUED)
LEIGH ANNE
What do you mean?

DENISE OHER
He’s a “runner”. That’s what the state called him after they took him from me.

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

(an explanation)
I’ve had some ... health problems.

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

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

DENISE OHER
Proctor. That was his Daddy’s last name.

LEIGH ANNE
Where is he, the father, if you don’t mind me asking?

DENISE OHER
Ain’t seen him since he left.

LEIGH ANNE
And when was that?

DENISE OHER
Week after Mike was born.

LEIGH ANNE
Do you have Michael’s birth certificate?

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT’D)
It’s okay, Mrs. Oher. I’ll figure it out.

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

(CONTINUED)
LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
You'll always be Michael's Mama.
Would you like to see him?

DENISE OHER
No.... Not this way.

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

DENISE OHER
It's Williams.
(off Leigh Anne's look)
His last name's Williams. Couldn't
even remember who the boy's father
is.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

The entire Tuohy family sits with Michael at the table.

SEAN
Michael, we have something to ask
you.

MICHAEL
What?

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

MICHAEL
What's that mean?

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

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

MICHAEL
I kinda thought I already was.
Leigh Anne feels a wave of emotion, nods to him, then races away to go and gather herself.

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

A CAMERA FLASH (IN DMV OFFICE)

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

EXT. TUOHY HOUSE - DAY

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

A NEW TRUCK in the driveway.

SEAN
Is that the one you wanted?

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

SEAN (CONT'D)
Well, hell, take it for a spin.
(off Michael's look)
Go on.

SJ
Can I go, too?

LEIGH ANNE
Okay, but Michael?...
(off his look)
Be careful.

Michael smiles and he and SJ get inside the truck.

COLLINS
He wanted a truck?!

SEAN
Michael thinks he's a redneck.

EXT. WINGATE - PARKING LOT - DAY

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

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

MICHAEL
Tenth grade tough?

STEVEN
Naw.
(points to truck)
This really yours?

MICHAEL
Yeah.

STEVEN
They just give it to ya'?

MICHAEL
Yeah.

After a beat...

STEVEN
You're right. White people are crazy.

And they walk off together to class.

INT. WINGATE - BOB'S LITERATURE CLASS - DAY

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

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

The faces in the classroom tell us this is a tough course.
INT. TUOHY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

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

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

MICHAEL
I’m not that weak, SJ.

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

MICHAEL
A compliment for a condiment.

SJ
(chuckles)
Good one.
(back to work)
So the first play is simple. “Gap.” It just means you block whoever is in front of you, or the person on your inside shoulder if you’re not covered by a defender.
(points to condiments)
I’ll be the running back and you show me what you’re supposed to do. Ready.... Hike!

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

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

SJ (CONT’D)
Open lane to the end zone. All there is to it.

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
What is going on here?!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
Cinnamon just scored.

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

LEIGH ANNE
Well, when you’re finished, put the players back in the spice cabinet.

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

LEIGH ANNE
Honey, I’ve got a meeting in ten minutes.

MICHAEL
I’ll drive.

Off her look --

INT. MICHAEL’S TRUCK - DAY

Michael drives while SJ searches for music on the radio.

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

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

SJ (CONT’D)
That’s what I’m talkin’ ‘bout!

As the beat reaches a crescendo --

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

EXT. INTERSECTION - SAME

THE truck CRASHES into the side of a VAN.

INT. RUG SHOP - DAY

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
We'll give you nine tops.
(into phone)
Hello.....

The look on her face changes --

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

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

THE COLLISION INTERSECTION

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
Michael!

He looks up, sobbing.

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

LEIGH ANNE
Where's SJ?!

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

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE AND PARAMEDIC — MINUTES LATER

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
He’s okay, though, right?

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
Michael, it wasn’t your fault. It could have happened to anybody.

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

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT’D)
Michael, your arm... what happened?

He looks up and into her eyes...

MICHAEL
I stopped it.

EXT. WINGATE — STANDS/PRACTICE FIELD — DAY

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

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

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

* 

IN THE STANDS

Leigh Anne sits down next to SJ.

LEIGH ANNE
What's with the camera?

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

ON THE FIELD

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

COTTON
Holding - left tackle!

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

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

Leigh Anne grimaces, shakes her head.

NEXT PLAY

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

COTTON (CONT'D)
Move your feet, son! Keep 'em moving! Back to the huddle!

Cotton addresses an ASSISTANT COACH...

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

LEIGH ANNE
Gimme a minute, Bert.

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

LEIGH ANNE
You can thank me later.

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT’D)
Do you remember just after we met, and we went to that horrible part of town to buy you those dreadful clothes?
(he nods)
And I was a little scared and you told me not to worry, that you had my back? Do you remember that?

MICHAEL
Yes ma’am.

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

MICHAEL
I stopped it.

Leigh Anne points to the offense.

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

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

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

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
When you look at him, think of me.
How you have my back. How you have
his.

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

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

MICHAEL
What about Mr. Tuohy and Collins?

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

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Yelling at him won't help. He
doesn't trust men. In his
experience they pretend to care
about you 'til they disappear.

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
You're gonna wanna get this.

INTERCUT VIDEO AND LIVE ACTION:

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

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

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

Bert shakes his head, turns to Leigh Anne --

COTTON
What'd you say to him?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE
You should get to know your
players, Bert. He tested 98
percent in protective instincts.

(off Bert’s look)
I told you you could thank me
later.

(a beat for effect)
It’s later, Bert!

COTTON
(by rote)
Thank you, Leigh Anne.

EXT. WINGATE - STADIUM - NIGHT

Packed house - bands, banners, cheerleaders.

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

SEAN
So much for home field advantage.

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

SJ
Nascar, not even close.

INT. WINGATE - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Coach Cotton is addressing his team before the game.

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

(beat)
Grab a knee.

And the team huddles for their prayer...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

COTTON (CONT'D)
For we can...
(team repeats each phrase)
Do all things...
Through Jesus Christ...
Who strengthens us...
Each and every day...
And may God... Bless the Crusaders!

As they rise to leave--

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

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

EXT. WINGATE - EDGE OF STANDS - NIGHT

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

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

Another Milford player, #66, spots Michael.

MILFORD #66
Would y'all look at the size of that buck!

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

JAY COLLIS
Pay 'em back on the field.

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

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

IN THE STANDS

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

MILFORD DAD (CONT'D)
There's the Lions and here come the Christians!

SJ turns and gives a dirty look --

LEIGH ANNE
SJ, eyes forward! Sticks and stones...

ON THE FIELD

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

COTTON
Let's go O!

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

Wingate breaks huddle and #66 sees him.

MILFORD #66
Look whose fat black ass I get to kick all night long.

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

MILFORD #66 (CONT'D)
(as he walks by Michael)
All night long, fat ass. All night long.

IN THE STANDS

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE
Come on, Michael!

ON THE FIELD

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

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

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

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

NEXT PLAY - BALL SNAPS

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

REFEREE
Fourth down!

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

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

COTTON
Get back to your own bench, 66!

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

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

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

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

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

COTTON (CONT'D)
Where it goes he goes. And block 'til the whistle blows. All right?

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

COTTON (CONT'D)
Hello?...

IN THE STANDS

Leigh Anne is on the phone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sean pulls her back down to her seat.

SJ
Sticks and stones?

ON THE FIELD

The Milford offense is moving the ball --

** a draw play for ten yards.

** a screen pass for twenty.

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

ON THE SIDELINE

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Bert Cotton gathers his forces.

**COTTON**

It's all right. Settle down.

ON THE FIELD

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

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

**MILFORD #66**

Big black pile of nigger crap!

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

**COTTON**

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

The Ref throws a flag.

**COTTON (CONT'D)**

Thank you!

**REFEREE**

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

**COTTON**

What happened to the first Amendment?!

Cotton throws his hat and another ref throws a flag.

**COTTON (CONT'D)**

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

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
Don’t worry, Coach. I got your back.

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

REFEREE
Second and 38.

IN THE CRUSADERS HUDDLE
Michael looks to Tony.

MICHAEL
Try Gap.

TONY
Coach called a pass.

MICHAEL
Gap.

AT THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE
As Wingate lines up, 66 is at it again.

MILFORD #66
Your coach always do your fightin’ for you? He your Massa?

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

Bobby races through the hole and into the secondary --

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

Bobby cuts to the sideline --

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

Past Collins and the rest of the cheerleaders while --

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SJ is on his feet, filming Michael --

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

Just as Bobby races into the end zone --

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

As he passes Collins she gives him a high five.

COLLINS
Way to go big bro!

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

The Ref throws a flag.

COTTON
Now what?! Was he holding?

REFEREE
Uh, no.

COTTON
Did he hit after the whistle?

REFEREE
I don’t believe so.

COTTON
Then what’s the flag for?

REFEREE
I dunno.... Excessive blocking.

COTTON
You’re kidding me.

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

Cotton walks up to Michael.

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

COTTON
Where were you taking him, Mike?

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

Cotton smiles proudly and slaps Michael on the ass.

COTTON
Attaboy, Michael Oher. Attaboy!

IN THE STANDS

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

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

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

ON THE FIELD - A SEQUENCE:

** Tony throws a touchdown pass --

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

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

** And another touchdown --

** Scoreboard reads: VISITORS 7 HOME 35

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

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

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SJ'S ROOM - DAY

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

INT. TOM LEMMING'S RECRUITING OFFICE - DAY

A hub of activity. Move past a SECRETARY answering phones --
SECRETARY
Tom Lemming Recruiting, please hold... Tom Lemming Recruiting, please hold....

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

TOM LEMMING
Did the monthly recruiting updates get mailed?

SECRETARY
Coach Saban wants his Fed Exed.

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

An ASSISTANT hurries up.

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

TOM LEMMING
Yeah, why?

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

ASSISTANT
You might want to open one up.

EXT. SEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

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

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

COTTON
You’re kidding?

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

COTTON
And you think that could be Michael?

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

SEAN
What DVD? I didn’t send a DVD.

TOM LEMMING
You’re Sean Tuohy, right?

Sean “gets it”, trades a look with Cotton.

SEAN

SJ.

INT. WINGATE - SEAN’S OFFICE - DAY

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

TOM LEMMING
Wow. Just wow.

Lemming breaks out a measuring tape and smiles.

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

Sean and Bert stand outside and talk...

COTTON
Tom Lemming runs the biggest recruiting service in the nation. He practically created an industry. Every college coach subscribes to his newsletter. One word from him and... This is big, Sean.
130    INT. WINGATE - SEAN’S OFFICE - DAY

Lemming sits across from Michael...

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

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

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

The door opens and Lemming comes out shaking his head.

   TOM LEMMING
   I don’t want to offend but... does
   Mike have special needs?

   SEAN
   Well, he eats a lot.

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

   SEAN
   No, no, he’s just...

   COTTON
   Shy. Really shy.

   TOM LEMMING
   Because the only thing he said to
   me was “No.” Said it three times;
   every time I asked him if he’d like
   to play in the Army All Star game.
   I get lobbied by every player,
   every father, every coach to get
   into this game.
   (hands over application)
   Let me know if he changes his mind.

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

   SEAN
   Why didn’t you fill out the
   application, Michael?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
I don't wanna join the Army.

Sean and Coach Cotton crack up.

INT. SABAN'S OFFICE - DAY
SERIES OF SHOTS INTERCUT WITH SJ'S VIDEO OF "THE PLAY" ON LEMMING'S WEBSITE:
NICK SABAN watches on a computer --

INT. TUBERVILLE'S OFFICE - DAY
TOMMY TUBERVILLE and other AUBURN coaches watch --

INT. NUTT'S OFFICE - DAY
HOUSTON NUTT and ARKANSAS coaches watch --

INT. HOLTZ'S OFFICE - DAY
LOU HOLTZ and SOUTH CAROLINA COACHES watch --

INT. FULMER'S OFFICE - DAY
PHIL FULMER and other TENNESSEE coaches watch.

PHIL FULMER
I want him! I want him bad.

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

EXT. WINGATE - FIELD - DAY
Leigh Anne helps coach the cheerleaders, including Collins.

LEIGH ANNE
Kick higher, Collins. Point your toes!

Leigh Anne notices Fulmer.

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She strides toward the football practice field.

EXT. WINGATE - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COTTON
Coach Fulmer, it's a real honor.

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

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

FULMER (CONT'D)
Is that him? Is that O'Hair?

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

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

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

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

Cotton blows his whistle and the team approaches.

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

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

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

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

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

FULMER
(almost to himself)
Force equals mass times acceleration.

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

The Clemson coach strides away.

COTTON
Where are you going, Coach?

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

FULMER
Good luck with that, Brad!

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Leigh Anne watches him watch Michael.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

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

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

SEAN
Really?

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

SEAN
What’s his GPA now?

LEIGH ANNE
1.76.

SEAN
Not bad really, when you consider where he started.

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

SEAN
So he goes to Junior College.

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

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

She walks over to the answering machine, presses “Play.”
ON THE MACHINE
Hello, my name is Nick Saban and
I'm the head football coach at
Louisiana State University...
(Leigh Anne fast forwards)
Tommy Tuberville, Auburn
University...
(fast forwards again)
We're very interested in having
Michael over to Knoxville for a
visit.

SEAN
Phil Fulmer, from Tennessee?

LEIGH ANNE
There are twenty more.

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

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
And these. Fifty of 'em.

SEAN
Any from Ole Miss?

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

SEAN
So, what do we do?

INT. WINGATE - TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY
Leigh Anne speaks to the assembled teachers.

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

There is laughter in the room.

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
Okay, fine, a B plus. And if
anyone knows of a good tutor I'd
love to hear about 'em.

MRS. BOSWELL
I think I know someone.
INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
I appreciate your honesty, Miss Sue.

MISS SUE
What’s the situation with Michael?

LEIGH ANNE
He needs to do better in school.

MISS SUE
Obviously. But why the big push?

LEIGH ANNE
He’s in line for a football scholarship if he gets his grades up.

MISS SUE
Is he considering Ole Miss?

LEIGH ANNE
He’d better be.

MISS SUE
I’d love to work with him.

LEIGH ANNE
When do you want to start?

MISS SUE
Mrs. Tuohy there’s something you should know about me. I don’t tell many people, but it’s something I feel you should be aware of before you hire me.
LEIGH ANNE
What's that?

MISS SUE
I'm a Democrat.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (LATER)

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

AT THE TABLE

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

MICHAEL
I don't understand it.

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

MICHAEL
Big.

MISS SUE
And what's in there?

MICHAEL
A brain.

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

MICHAEL
Sacagawea?

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

MICHAEL
Yes, Miss Sue.

(CONTINUED)
MISS SUE
Try it again.

He goes back to the book.

SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE
Sean shakes his head.
CONTINUED:

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

144-145 OMITTED

146 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

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

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

NICK SABAN
And you must be Leigh Anne.

LEIGH ANNE
Yes, Coach Saban, that’s me. Leigh
Anne. Touhy.

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

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

NICK SABAN
Let’s just say I appreciate
quality.

Michael and SJ walk in.

NICK SABAN (CONT’D)
(eyeing Michael)
And I know it when I see it.
(often a hand)
Michael, I’m Nick Saban. And you
must be SJ. I hear you have quite
a jump shot, young man.

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

MICHAEL
Can SJ come?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SABAN
Absolutely. I’ll recruit the both of you.

As they walk away, Collins approaches...

LEIGH ANNE
I find him extremely handsome.

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

Michael and SJ sit across from Saban.

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

Michael turns to SJ, who raises his hand.

SJ
Can I ask a question?

SABAN
Sure.

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

SABAN
Go on.

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

Saban smiles at the kid’s moxie.

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

SJ
Sounds good.
CONTINUED:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

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

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

MISS SUE
You know this stuff. Just be logical.

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

NUTT
Hi, I'm Houston Nutt from Arkansas.

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

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

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

FULMER
This is a beautiful home, Ma'am.

He is startled to see --

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

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

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

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE - DAY
A HEADLINE: CRUSADERS TO PLAY FOR PRIVATE SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIP
INT. WINGATE - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Michael and Coach Cotton hold up a championship trophy --

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

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

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

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SJ asks them each his question --

SJ
What level of access can I expect?

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Coaches, one after another, up the ante --

TOMMY TUBERVILLE
Your own locker right next to Michael's.

HOUSTON NUTT
Access to the Letterman's Lounge.

LOU HOLTZ
(with a wink)
A Gamecock headdress. Real feathers.

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

SJ
Sounds real good.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

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

(Continued)
MISS SUE
Have you decided yet, Michael?

MICHAEL
No, Miss Sue.

MISS SUE
But you like Tennessee?
(off his nod)
It's a good school. Not at the academic level of Ole Miss but they do have an outstanding science department. You know one of the things they're famous for?
(he shakes his head)
They work with the FBI to study the effects of the soil on decomposing body parts.

Michael is a bit lost.

MISS SUE (CONT'D)
When they find a body the police want to know how long they've been dead. The forensic department at Tennessee helps them. They have lots of body parts - arms, legs, hands - from hospitals and medical schools. Do you know where they store them?
(Michael shakes his head)
Right underneath the football field.

Michael's eyes widen a bit.

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

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

MISS SUE (CONT'D)
But it's your decision where you play football. Don't let me influence you.
INT. TUOHY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

LEIGH ANNE
Congrats on gettin' hired, Coach.

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

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

ED ORGERON
Yes'm.

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

ED ORGERON
Yes'm. What about Tennessee?

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

ED ORGERON
I hear the kid can really pepper the gumbo.

LEIGH ANNE
He's his daddy's boy.
INT. TUOHY HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – DAY (LATER)

Orgeron sits with Michael and SJ.

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

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

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

SJ
("that’s it?")
Seen it a thousand times.

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

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

ED ORGERON
I’ll throw in a sideline pass.

SJ considers this, smiles and nods.

INT. WINGATE – LIBRARY – DAY

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

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

INT. PHIL FULMER’S OFFICE – DAY

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

(CONTINUED)
FULMER
This stinks to high heaven.

INT. WINGATE - BOB'S LITERATURE CLASS - DAY

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

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

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

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

LEIGH ANNE
That's it. We're sunk.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Miss Sue works with Michael at the table.

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

Michael shrugs. Sean is nearby, watching NBA basketball.

MISS SUE (CONT'D)
Fine, let's go through the reading list. But you have to pick one, Michael.

(reading from list) "Pygmalion"... "A Tale of Two Cities"... "The Charge of the Light Brigade"...

SEAN
(almost to himself) "Half a league, half a league, half a league onward." I love that one.
MISS SUE
Fine, you do this and I’ll watch basketball.

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

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

MICHAEL
You’re kidding?

SEAN
No. It’s a great story.

MISS SUE
It’s a poem.

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

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

SEAN (CONT’D)
"Forward the Light Brigade! Was there a man dismay’d? Not tho’ the soldier knew someone had blundered.”

MICHAEL
Someone made a mistake?

SEAN
Yeah, their leader, their coach.

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

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

MICHAEL
They all gonna die, aren’t they?

SEAN
Yeah.

MICHAEL
That’s really, really sad.

SEAN
I think you just found something to write about.

Michael opens his notebook, picks up a pen.

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

SERIES OF REPEATED SHOTS:

EXT. HURT VILLAGE – REPEATED SHOT – DAY

Michael moves through the tough crowd.

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

EXT. WINGATE – REPEATED SHOT – DAY

Michael walks under the arch for the first time.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
That’s why courage is tricky. Should you always do what others tell you to do? Sometimes you might not even know why you’re doing something. I mean, any fool can have courage.
170 INT. LAUNDROMAT - REPEATED SHOT - NIGHT

Michael leans against the wall and tries to sleep.

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

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

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

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

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

172 INT. WINGATE - AUDITORIUM - FOYER - DAY

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

SEAN
What?

LEIGH ANNE
2.52.
(off Sean’s look)
Michael’s final GPA. Got it off
Paul’s computer. He did it, Sean.
He did it!

Sean grins, then...

SEAN
Wait a minute. You broke into the
principal's computer?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She ignores him and opens her program, letting Sean know that is precisely what she did.

INT. WINGATE - AUDITORIUM - DAY (LATER)

Graduation ceremonies. Paul Sandstrom reads the names and the graduates move across the stage to get their diplomas. As each student walks across the stage a BABY PICTURE of them is PROJECTED.

SANDSTROM

Michael Jerome Oher.

Even though no one is supposed to clap, a spontaneous round of APPLAUSE gives Michael pause as he accepts his diploma.

Projected behind him is a picture of the cutest African-American infant the world has ever seen.

ON SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE

SEAN

Where’d you find a baby picture of Michael?

LEIGH ANNE

Scanned it off an Internet ad for a toddler boutique.

(off his look)

Tell a soul and I’ll rip your tongue out.

IN THE CROWD: The Tuohys, Big Tony, Miss Sue, Bob and the other teachers all clap.

EXT. WINGATE - OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM - DAY

Michael, diploma in hand, shakes Sean’s hand. Sean moves close, looks him in the eye.

SEAN

I want you to know something.

You’n me, okay?

(beat)

I never believed you could do this. But you did. And I’m as proud of you as I am ashamed of myself. I should know better. I’ll never doubt you again, Michael.

Michael smiles, nods, gives Leigh Anne a little hug then raps knuckles with SJ and high fives Collins.

(CONTINUED)
LEIGH ANNE
Excuse me young man, but I think I need a proper hug.

He smiles and moves to her. Off their embrace --

175-176 OMITTED
177-182 OMITTED
183 INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Leigh Anne and Sean go over Ole Miss pamphlets with Michael.

LEIGH ANNE
You'll be living in Deaton Hall here. You'll have a meal plan and you'll go to Johnson commons to eat.

SEAN
Johnson Commons has all you can eat self-serve ice cream.

MICHAEL
As much as you want?

SEAN
Yep, that's how Mama put on her freshman ten.

Leigh Anne rolls up a pamphlet and whacks him hard on her way to answer a RINGING PHONE.

LEIGH ANNE
Hello.... This is Mrs. Tuohy....

As she listens she gives Sean a look - "This isn't good".

184 INT. BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Leigh Anne walks with Michael.

LEIGH ANNE
They just want to ask you a few questions. You've got nothing to hide, Michael.

They arrive at a door, open it.
INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Sits Investigator Granger in the room we’ve seen before. She rises, professional, but not smiling.

GRANGER
Mrs. Tuohy? Mr. Oher? My name is Jocelyn Granger and I’m the Assistant Director of Enforcement for the NCAA.

LEIGH ANNE
Please call me Leigh Anne.

Leigh Anne shakes her hand and she and Michael move to the chairs.

GRANGER
Mrs. Tuohy, I’d prefer to speak with Michael alone.

LEIGH ANNE
How long will this take?

GRANGER
Awhile.

Michael starts rubbing his knees, nervous as hell.

LEIGH ANNE
Michael, I’ll be outside.

Leigh Anne pecks his cheek and exits, giving Michael one last look before she leaves.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

Leigh Anne sits on a bench, talking on the phone.

LEIGH ANNE
I’ve got a bad feeling about this, Sean. This broad is tough. Oh, Susie’s on the other line.
(clicks over)
Hey… what does the client want?… But that’s tacky… You know what, fine, if she wants her living room to look like a bordello make it happen.

She hangs up, checks her watch and looks toward the building.
The interrogation is ongoing...

GRANGER
Your parents are friends with Coach Bert Cotton, correct?

MICHAEL
Coach is a good guy.

GRANGER
Were you aware that Coach Cotton is accepting a job at Ole Miss?
(Michael shakes his head)
And that this job offer came after you signed with them?
(no response from Michael)
Sean Tuohy, your legal guardian went to Ole Miss.

MICHAEL
He played basketball.

GRANGER
And Mrs. Tuohy attended Ole Miss as well.

MICHAEL
She was a cheerleader.

GRANGER
Is it safe to say that Ole Miss is their favorite school?
(Michael nods)
Do they like any other Universities?
(Michael shrugs)
What about, say Tennessee?

MICHAEL
They can’t stand Tennessee.

GRANGER
So they wouldn’t be happy if you chose to play football there?

MICHAEL
No.

GRANGER
And your tutor...

(Continued)
MICHAEL
Miss Sue.

GRANGER
Miss Sue is an Ole Miss grad, too.
(Michael nods)
Did Miss Sue try to persuade you to
attend Ole Miss?
(Michael nods)
Did you know that the Tuohys make
generous donations to Ole Miss?
That even Miss Sue makes donations?
That the Tuohy's have a condo in
Oxford so they can attend as many
athletic events as possible? That,
in fact, Sean and Leigh Anne Tuohy
are by our definition "boosters."

MICHAEL
What's that mean?

GRANGER
A booster is someone with an
abnormal interest in a school's
sports. Someone who contributes
financially to the University's
athletic program.

Michael doesn't answer, just keeps rubbing his knees. Then
comes the part we've heard before...

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

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Hmmmm....

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

MICHAEL (V.O.)
To... investigate.

GRANGER
Yes. To investigate. I'm here to
investigate your odd...
predicament. Do you find it odd?
Your predicament?
(MORE)
Continued:

Granger (Cont'd)

(no response)
Michael?...

Michael
Iono....

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

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

Michael (Cont'd)
Can I... can I leave now?

Granger
(with finality)
No. You can't.

Michael's building up anxiety by the second.

Michael
What do you want, ma'am?

Granger
What I want, what my job is, is to discern whether something untoward occurred in your recruitment to Ole Miss.

Michael
Unto...

Granger
I want the facts. I need the truth.

Michael
I didn't lie...

Granger
And I want to know what you think about all this.

Michael
THINK ABOUT WHAT?!

It's the first time we've ever heard Michael raise his voice. It echoes in the room. Granger lets it die before she leans forward and continues...
The NCAA fears that with your recruitment a door might be opened—that boosters from lots of schools in the south will become legal guardians for young athletes without means and funnel them to their Alma Maters.

Michael still doesn’t get it, shakes his head.

GRANGER (CONT’D)
I’m not saying I believe it and I’m not saying I don’t, but there are many people involved with this case who would argue that the Tuchys took you in, fed you, clothed you, paid for your private education——

MICHAEL
(almost to himself)
No...no...no...

GRANGER
--- bought you a car and paid for a tutor all as part of a plan to insure that you played football for the University of Mississippi.

Now Michael understands. He stares at the floor for a long time then quickly stands and makes for the door.

GRANGER (CONT’D)
Michael, we’re not finished.

But he’s gone.

EXT. GOVERNMENT BUILDING — DAY

Leigh Anne sees Michael exit the building. Once he’s outside he moves in circles, gesticulating and talking to himself.

Leigh Anne races over——

LEIGH ANNE
Michael, what’s wrong?

He looks at her, glares really; upset.

MICHAEL
Why’d you do it?

(CONTINUED)
LEIGH ANNE
What?

MICHAEL
All along you wanted me to go to Ole Miss.

LEIGH ANNE
Well, of course, but...

MICHAEL
Why did you do this for me?!

LEIGH ANNE
What?

MICHAEL
Everything! Was it for you or was it for me? Was it so I would go to school where you wanted?! Was it so I would do what you wanted?!

LEIGH ANNE
No, Michael....

MICHAEL
(points to building)
That’s what she thinks! Is she right?!
(her own words)
Don’t you dare lie to me!

Leigh Anne digests this, takes a breath...

LEIGH ANNE
Michael, look... I can see where, where some people might....

Her inability, for the first time, to articulate, hits Michael in the face.

MICHAEL
I’m not stupid!

He turns and walks away.

LEIGH ANNE
Michael?!

But she doesn’t move, just watches him go.
INT. TUOHY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sean and Leigh Anne sit at the kitchen table while Collins and SJ pace in the living room.

LEIGH ANNE
(on her cell)
Well if he comes by there let me know. Thanks.

COLLINS
(on phone)
Michael, please call me and let me know you’re okay.

LEIGH ANNE
Text him SJ.

SEAN
Keep it light. Tell him you’re gonna take his truck for a spin if he doesn’t get in touch.

SJ starts texting. Leigh Anne and Sean stare at each other.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - SEAN AND LEIGH ANNE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Sean sits in bed and Leigh Anne paces.

LEIGH ANNE
I should have followed him.

SEAN
You had no way of knowing he’d disappear.

LEIGH ANNE
Was he right?
(off Sean’s lock)
What he said about us?

SEAN
Leigh Anne, be sensible. We gave clothes to a boy who had one pair of shorts. We gave him a bed. To hell with the NCAA, I’d do it again tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)
LEIGH ANNE
What about the rest of it – all the stuff we did to make sure he got a scholarship? A scholarship to Ole Miss.

SEAN
He could go wherever he wanted, he knew that.

LEIGH ANNE
Did he? Did you ask him? ‘Cause I know for sure I never did.

Sean considers this, then beckons.

SEAN
Come here, honey.

She moves to him. He puts his arm around her, kisses her forehead.

LEIGH ANNE
Am I a good person?
(off his look)
Not a joke. Not rhetorical.

SEAN
You’re the best person I know. Everything you do, you do for others.

LEIGH ANNE
Why is that?

SEAN
(with a smile)
I have not a clue. You obviously get some sick satisfaction from it.

She looks at him. There’s truth in his words.

LEIGH ANNE
Sean... what if he never comes back?

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - NIGHT

Michael makes his way toward Building “C”, passing some of the same faces we’ve seen before.
CONTINUED:

Alton opens his door to make a transaction with an addict and spots Michael.

   ALTON
   That you Big Mike? Get your ass in here.

   MICHAEL
   I’m looking for Moms.

   ALTON
   Your Mama? Oh, I seen Dee Dee around. She usually stop by for a taste around this time. Tell you what, I’ll get you a forty and we’ll chop it up ‘til she get here.

Michael hesitates. Alton smiles, beckons.

OMITTED

INT. HURT VILLAGE – ALTON’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Shitty but with good electronics. There are maybe eight people in the apartment – partying, drinking, getting high.

Michael steps inside. Alton points to a chair. A stoned out couple smokes on the adjacent couch.

Next to them an INFANT cries in a broken down crib. In the other corner of the room sits David, the young man we met before. Michael nods and David nods back. Alton hands Michael a beer.

   ALTON
   It’s good to see you, Big Mike.
   You lookin’ fit. I heard you playin’ some ball.

   MICHAEL
   Yeah.

   ALTON
   But you know that rich kid football ain’t like the public school league. People packing knives in their socks. Back in the day I was a quarterback. You knew that, right? At MLK.
MICHAEL
Yeah, I heard.
(to David)
You still playing ball over at the
JC?

DAVID
Naw.

ALTON
He with me now! I’ll open a spot
for you, too.

DAVID
Got tired of going to class. Always
somebody tellin’ me what to do.

ALTON
Turn it up, bitch!

David jumps up and cranks the volume on a RAP SONG until the
beat is bouncing off the walls. Michael sips the beer; rubs
his knees.

ALTON (CONT'D)
You stayin’ to the other side of
town, that’s what Dee Dee said.
Said you got a new Mama. She fine,
too. I seen her when she come to
see Dee Dee.

MICHAEL
She came here?

ALTON
She got any other kids? She got a
daughter?
(Michael nods)
You tap that?

Michael sets down the beer, rises to leave.

ALTON (CONT'D)
Where you going? Sit down. I
wanna hear about your fine white
sister. ‘Cause I like me some
mommy/daughter.

MICHAEL
Shut up.

Alton steps in front of Michael, raises his hands --
CONTINUED:

ALTON
Shut up? You tellin' me to shut up? I'll cap your fat ass. Cap your ass, drive east and pay a visit to your Cracker Mama and her sweet little --

Michael shoves him hard. Alton unprepared for the force, flies back against the wall. On the ground he reaches in his belt for his gun, but just as he gets it out --

Michael slaps it away. He picks up Alton and throws him across the room. The party comes unhinged as Michael grabs Alton, holds him against the wall with one hand while pounding him with the other. Blood flies from Alton's face --

eighteen years of subdued rage coming out in seconds.

TWO OTHER GUYS grab Michael from behind and one --

STICKS A GUN IN MICHAEL'S TEMPLE

Michael screams like a banshee, spins, grabs them and tackles them over the couch. An errant round FIRES into the ceiling. A table flies and the crib smashes.

Michael looks to David, frozen in the corner, then over to the SCREAMING child on the floor.

He grabs his head and heaves, trying to make it all stop -- the music, the screams, the crying. The shots PULSE to the music and are INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. HURT VILLAGE -- DAY

PULSING FLASHBACK IMAGES

MICHAEL, AGE SEVEN, and several half brothers and sisters in front of Hurt Village as Child Protective Services herds them away from Denise Ober. She's screaming, the kids are crying.

Michael breaks away and runs to Denise.

SEVEN YEAR OLD MICHAEL
MAMA!!!!!!

He grabs her waist and is pulled away by an Officer.

FLASHBACK ENDS. BACK TO SCENE AT...
INT. ALTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Michael looks at the blood on his hands and shirt and stumbles out of the room, terrified.

INT. TUOHY HOUSE - HALLWAY/MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leigh Anne stands at the doorway to Michael’s empty, very neat room. She stares, missing everything about him.

INT. LEIGH ANNE'S CAR - DAY

Leigh Anne drives around, looking for Michael at Wingate.

EXT. WEST SIDE OF MEMPHIS STREET - DAY

The streets of west side of Memphis. And finally --

EXT. HURT VILLAGE - DAY

Leigh Anne approaches the complex. Alton, his face bandaged, sits on the stoop with his crowd. A mother holds the unharmed baby.

ALTON

He gone.

Leigh Anne stops, looks to Alton.

ALTON (CONT'D)

But you tell him I’ll be seeing him around. You tell him he’ll get his.

LEIGH ANNE

Michael was here?

ALTON

Last night. Sneaked me then took off like a little bitch. So you tell him, sleep with one eye open. You hear me, bitch?

Leigh Anne steps closer to Alton, stares him down.

LEIGH ANNE

No, you hear me, bitch. You threaten my son you threaten me. You so much as cross downtown you’ll be sorry. I’m in a prayer group with the D.A., I’m a member of the NRA and I am always packing.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She taps her tiny purse. Alton laughs.

ALTON
What you got in there, a .22? You got yourself a Saturday Night Special?

LEIGH ANNE
And it shoots just fine all the other days, too.

She turns on her heels and strides to her car.

INT. LEIGH ANNE’S CAR – DAY

When she gets in she’s so nervous she hyperventilates. Her phone RINGS and she opens the tiny purse revealing nothing more than a wallet and the phone. She recognizes the number and answers...

LEIGH ANNE
Michael?!!!

MICHAEL’S VOICE
Mama?...

EXT. LAUNDROMAT – DAY

The one where Michael spent the night. He sits inside. Leigh Anne pulls up, stops and they lock eyes.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
You think the police gonna come and get me?

EXT. CURB – DAY

Leigh Anne sits on the curb with Michael.

LEIGH ANNE
I’d imagine the last thing anybody at Hurt Village wants is cops snooping around. (after a beat) I swore I’d never ask but... how’d you make it out of there, Michael?

MICHAEL
When I was little and something awful was happening, my Mama would tell me to close my eyes. (MORE)
MICHAEL (CONT'D)
She was tryin' to keep me from seeing her do drugs or other bad things. And she'd say, "keep 'em closed till I say so." And then when she was finished or the bad things were over she'd say, "now when I count to three, you open your eyes and the past is gone, the world is a good place, and it's all gonna be okay."

LEIGH ANNE
You closed your eyes.

He nods. She shakes her head, amazed at the kid. They stare out at the street, then...

LEIGH ANNE (CONT'D)
You know, when I was driving all over Kingdom Come looking for you I just kept thinking about one thing. (beat) Ferdinand the bull. Everyone assumed because he was big that he wanted to fight in the ring. But he just wanted to sit under a tree and smell the flowers. (right at him) I know I should have asked this a long time ago but do you even wanna play football? I mean, do you even like it?

Michael considers this.

MICHAEL
I'm pretty good at it.

LEIGH ANNE
Yeah, you are. (a beat) Sean and I have been talking and Michael, if you're gonna accept a football scholarship we think it should be from Tennessee. (off his look) And I promise you I will be at every game cheering for you.

MICHAEL
Every game?
LEIGH ANNE
But I will not wear that gaudy orange of theirs because it's not in my color wheel.

MICHAEL
You want me to go to Tennessee?

LEIGH ANNE
I want you to go wherever you want. It's your decision, Michael. It's your life.

MICHAEL
What if I wanted to flip burgers?

She takes this in, swallows hard and --

LEIGH ANNE
Your decision; your life.

Michael smiles.

MICHAEL
Okay.

LEIGH ANNE
Okay, what?

INT. NONDESCRIPT GOVERNMENT-LOOKING ROOM - DAY

Michael is at another session with Jocelyn Granger.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry I left the other day.

GRANGER
You were pretty upset.

MICHAEL
You ask a lot of questions.

GRANGER
I'm trying to get to the bottom of this.

MICHAEL
But all the questions you asked were about why everybody else wanted me to go to Ole Miss.

(CONTINUED)
GRANGER
Okay...

MICHAEL
You asked about everybody but me. You never asked why I wanted to go there.

GRANGER
Alright, fine, Michael... why do you want to go to Ole Miss?

MICHAEL
It's where my family goes to school. It's where they've always gone to school.

Granger considers this, stares at Michael, then almost, just almost, smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OLE MISS DORM - DAY

Cars are unloaded as parents and siblings move their kids into the dorm. Tearful good-byes and lots of picture taking.

Leigh Anne and Sean walk from the dorm toward the car, giving last words of advice. SJ and Collins are there, too.

LEIGH ANNE
College is going to be a different experience for you. There are lots of distractions.

SEAN
Just have fun.

LEIGH ANNE
There'll always be some nimrod in the dorm who wants to play video games all night, or goof off on the internet.

SEAN
You're gonna have a great time. I know I did.

Leigh Anne gives Sean a look - "You're not helping."
LEIGH ANNE
You'll spend lots of time at practice which means you have to be very dedicated to your studies.

MISS SUE (O.S.)
Relax, Mama.

Miss Sue walks up carrying papers.

MISS SUE (CONT'D)
Just got back from the library where I reserved a private cubicle for the semester.
(hands sheets to Michael)
Here's your class schedule and our study hall hours.

She reaches in her purse for her keys.

MISS SUE (CONT'D)
Now, if y'all don't mind I'm gonna go move into my new apartment.

She walks away.

LEIGH ANNE
Thank you, Miss Sue.

MISS SUE
Yeah, yeah, yeah....

Sean and Michael and SJ eye a GROUP OF ATTRACTIVE COEDS sashaying past. SJ does a little dance move and laughs.

SEAN
Have a lot of fun.

Leigh Anne notices their looks.

LEIGH ANNE
Michael Oher, you listen to me. I want you to enjoy yourself but you need to know that if you get a girl pregnant out of wedlock I will climb in the car, drive here to Oxford and cut off your penis.

SJ
(sotto: to Michael)
She means it.

((CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
Yes ma’am.

Leigh Anne gives Sean a look that says, “let’s get on the road.” Sean offers a hand; Michael shakes it. Collins high fives him. SJ offers a fist; Michael knocks it.

Leigh Anne, tearing up, nods and gives Michael a quick hug.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
Thank you, Mama.

Overwhelmed, she turns for the car with a little wave.

LEIGH ANNE
The 78’ll be a parking lot. We should go.

She gets inside and closes the door for privacy.

Sean, SJ, Collins and Michael stand there, watching her cry.

MICHAEL
Why does she always do that?

SEAN
She’s an onion, Michael. You have to peel her one layer at a time.

Michael walks over to the car, knocks on the window. She rolls it down, dabbing tears from her eyes.

LEIGH ANNE
What?

MICHAEL
I need a proper hug.

She gets out of the car and holds him for a long time.

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF STILL PHOTOS:

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

“LOCAL YOUTH SHOT AND KILLED”

LEIGH ANNE’S VOICE
I read a story the other day about a boy from the projects. No daddy, in and out of foster care. (MORE)
CONTINUED:

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
He'd been killed in a gang fight at
Hurt Village.

NEWSPAPER PHOTO

A newspaper photo of a dead boy from the projects. Then
another headline, another young, black face. Another and
another, until the last headline shows a photo of David,
Alton's minion - his face full of shining promise.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE
In the last paragraph they talked
about his superb athletic skills
and how different his life might
have been if he hadn't fallen
behind and dropped out of school.
He was twenty-one years old the day
he died. It was his birthday.

STILL PHOTO OF HURT VILLAGE

Lonely, falling apart.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE
That could have been anyone. It
could have been my son, Michael.

STILL PHOTO OF OLE MISS CAMPUS

Beautiful on a fall day. And then THE STILL COMES TO LIFE
and Michael, books in hand, ENTERS FRAME walking. It's like
the other Michael/crowd shots with one difference - this time
he moves at the same speed as everyone else.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE
But it wasn't. And I suppose I
have God to thank for that. God
and Lawrence Taylor.

INT. SEAN'S CAR - DAY

As the family drives home from Ole Miss, we notice that Leigh
Anne is very still. And very content. She closes her eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

LEIGH ANNE'S VOICE
One Mississippi....
Michael Oher was a freshman All-American in his first season and, with help from Miss Sue, made the Dean's List.

Collins followed in her Mom's footsteps and became a cheerleader at Ole Miss.

Sean and Leigh Anne still live in Memphis.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. THE GROVE - DAY

Game day and Coach O and SJ walk together, leading the team to the stadium.

SUPERSCRIPT: SJ RECEIVED EVERYTHING HE WAS PROMISED.

FADE TO BLACK.