

PERFECT SEASON

by

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OVER BLACK a VOICE with a heavy Boston accent -

FITCH (V.O.)
Milford, Mass was known for two
things: pink granite and football.

FADE IN:

SHOTS of old, granite buildings. The entire downtown
must be made out of the same stone.

FITCH (V.O.)
Once the quarries shut down...

SHOTS of empty quarries, now filled with brackish water.

FITCH (V.O.)
... it was all football.

1 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

1

Moving through the empty locker room with the opening to
"Stairway to Heaven" playing: *"There's a lady who's sure
all that glitters is gold..."*

FITCH (V.O.)
Tradition says the '71 team played
Stairway during pre-game speeches for
the Super Bowl with Shrewsbury...

Still moving through the locker room...

FITCH (V.O.)
They then went out and demolished
them. That album has since been
passed down from team to team...

At the far end is the original album, slightly tattered,
sitting on its perch like a cross on the altar.

FITCH (V.O.)
And "The Song", as we called it, was
played before every game. The
results were always the same...

PHOTOS and ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE animates -

FITCH (V.O.)
'73 and '74, two more Super Bowls.
The 1980 team was considered one of
the greatest ever. The '84 team was
ranked in *USA Today's* national poll.
One member of the team went onto the
NFL and eventually the Hall of Fame.
(MORE)

FITCH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But he was a nobody next to Coach Corbin. Coach was a legend in Milford. Hell, he got elected Town Selectman and he didn't even run.

2

INT. TOWN HALL - EVENING

2

COACH CORBIN (60s), looking annoyed and a bit lost, leads a Town Hall meeting.

FITCH (V.O.)

Half the time you couldn't understand a thing he said. Coach had a habit of pluralizing words he shouldn't and vice versa -

COACH CORBIN

Tomorrows... we will unveil a new budgets... that will save the town of Milford... over ten thousand grand.

FITCH (V.O.)

But he was a winner.

The room erupts into applause.

FITCH (V.O.)

I tell'ya, football owned that town. Until we came along -

3

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

3

Team picture day. A photographer corrals everyone onto the bleachers. Moving through the players -

GUY NIRO jostles the kid next to him -

FITCH (V.O.)

We had Guy Niro, called that because that's what he called everyone else -

GUY NIRO

Guy, the camera can't see me, guy!

STICKMAN in huge shoulder pads and neckroll -

FITCH (V.O.)

Stickman, our punter who dressed like a linebacker -

COACH CORBIN

Jesus H. Christs, Francesconi! You got so many god damn pads on you look like the Michelin Man.

DOYLE a weasly looking kid -

FITCH (V.O.)

Doyle, our quarterback, threw nickels
around like manhole covers.

DOYLE

I paid my share for the *keggah*.

(gets a cold glare)

Wait a minute. Oh, you know what? I
think I forgot.

GANDOLFI in Black Flag T-shirt casually smokes a butt -

FITCH (V.O.)

Gandolfi, a druggie who just liked to
play football.

STEPHAN is 90 pounds soaking wet -

FITCH (V.O.)

Stephan Sanacandro, four year
benchwarmer.

COACH CORBIN

Steven, get in the front or no one
will know you were on the team.

STEPHAN

It's pronounced [Steffin], Coach.

COACH CORBIN

Steppin' Shit, get the hells down
there!

COACH MAYNES with handlebar moustache -

FITCH (V.O.)

Coach Maynes taught English and was
famous for his "word of the week"
speeches -

COACH MAYNES

Word of the week, gentlemen, is
"retribution."

STICKMAN

Retro-who?

WAXIE is a bear of a guy who chews on athletic tape -

FITCH (V.O.)

Waxie played on the '78 team. All he
did was yell at you for being soft -

WAXIE

You Sallies are more worried about
your hair than looking tough!

COACH CORBIN

Captains, squares up your pad!

Down in the front and center are the three Captains -

PYNIE is the only guy who looks like he's good -

FITCH (V.O.)

Pynie, captain of the defense and
probably our best player.

ATWOOD is the good-looking one -

FITCH (V.O.)

Atwood, our fullback, beaver hound,
and captain of the offense. And the
last and least respected of the
captains -

FITCH looks like more like an Honor Society kid than a
football player -

FITCH (V.O.)

The special teams captain, yours
truly.

The team has finally settled in, facing the camera.

FITCH

Give'em your game face!

The photographer raises his hand and FREEZE FRAME of a
sorry looking football team. A TITLE reads:

Milford High School Scarlet Hawks - 1989

Winless in three seasons

4

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

4

SHOTS of the Scarlet Hawks losing games.

FITCH (V.O.)

You can't blame us for our freshman
year since none of us played.

Sophomore year footage of games -

FITCH (V.O.)

Sophomore year we just plain sucked.

Junior year footage -

FITCH (V.O.)

Junior year was awful, capped off by the Thanksgiving game against the rich kids at St. John's Prep. They shellacked us 75-0.

SHOTS of a clearly dominant St. John's team having their way with Milford, and laughing while doing it.

FITCH (V.O.)

But the end of summer brought a new year and a chance to make amends...

CUT TO:

5 EXT. MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - MORNING 5

"Welcome to the Jungle" cranks on the radio.

El Caminos, Dodge Aries Ks, Mercury Monarchs. One shitty car after the next files in.

Freshman pour out of yellow buses.

Stoners play hacky-sack.

Geeks lug instrument cases.

6 INT. MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL - LOBBY - MORNING 6

Three BALCONIES overlook the main entrance. A huge "Welcome Back" BANNER spans it.

FITCH (V.O.)

The "balcony" was the pre-homeroom hangout of choice. It had three sections: one for sophomores -

SHOT of sophomores milling around on their balcony.

FITCH (V.O.)

Juniors -

SHOT of junior balcony.

FITCH (V.O.)

And seniors -

SHOT of the senior group.

FITCH (V.O.)

Down below -- freshman.

A senior looks down at -

The freshman. Scared, huddled together like sheep.

The senior smiles, then works up an enormous loogey and -

FITCH (V.O.)

First day of school was about one
thing and one thing only -- showing
off your new clothes.

Guy Niro struts up in his new Adidas with day-glo laces.

PYNIE

Whoa, Run DMC!

GUY NIRO

Mary-Mary, guy! Why you buggin?

ZIGMAN dons a heavy leather coat with fake patches.

FITCH

Hey Zigman, little early for the
bomber jacket, no? It's gotta be
eighty degrees outside.

ZIGMAN

It was cold when I left the house
this morning.

FITCH

Dude, it looks like you're going to
pass out.

ZIGMAN

(sweating profusely)
I'm fine.

A BIG HAIR GIRL looks at a BIGGER HAIR GIRL's do -

BIG HAIR GIRL

Oh my god, I love your hair!

BIGGER HAIR GIRL

I love yours! It's so awesome -

Then a third girl with hair that is two feet high walks
by and leaves them both speechless.

DUSTIN approaches in a nice button-down, khakis and boat
shoes with no socks.

PYNIE

Look at Dustin in the top-siders.

ATWOOD

Guy spends a summer down the Cape and comes back an aristocrat.

SANTOS wears a dingy rugby jersey.

GUY NIRO

Guy, didn't you wear that rugby shirt last year?

SANTOS

You're one to talk. The thermals and Herman Survivor look? That went out five years ago.

Stickman struts up the stairs like a peacock sporting some new sneakers. MAC-A-DOOBIE studies them.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Hey, those the new black Reeboks?

STICKMAN

Yeah, I got'em at *Maurice the Pants Man*.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Kind of gay.

STICKMAN

Little bit.

Awkward beat.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

I'll see you around.

STICKMAN

(really bummed)

Yeah.

7

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

7

Fitch talks with HERSON, a wiry Puerto Rican with a wispy moustache.

HERSON

I don't know, man.

FITCH

Come on, Herson, you got the best locker in the school. I only need to keep one, maybe two books here.

HERSON

What's the matter with your locker?

FITCH

It's in D-wing.

HERSON

Shit, man, you gotta get out of the boonies.

FITCH

That's what I'm saying. I can't be carrying all my books around. I'll end up like Joe D needing back surgery in ten years.

JOE D strides past with an ENORMOUS BACKPACK.

JOE D

What's up, fellas.

HERSON

I don't know, man. This locker, is an institution. A Gonzalez tradition, man. My oldest brother, Jaime, he had it first -

Shot of JAIME GONZALEZ (circa 1970) hanging out by the locker. He has the same wispy moustache as Herson.

HERSON (V.O.)

He passed it on to Hugo...

HUGO GONZALEZ (same moustache) by the locker...

HERSON (V.O.)

...who gave it to Elias...

ELIAS GONZALEZ (same moustache)...

HERSON (V.O.)

...who gave it to Maria...

MARIA GONZALEZ (same moustache)...

HERSON (CONT'D)

...Who gave it to me. And when little Jose gets out of juvie, I'm going to leave it to him.

FITCH

Come on -

The warning bell rings. Fitch panics.

FITCH

Is that the first bell?

HERSON

Second.

BOOM -- Fitch is off running.

8 INT. CLASSROOM/HALLWAY - MORNING

8

MRS. BOBERG -- fifties, hair knotted tightly in a bun. Her blank eyes, like a shark's, stare at the clock. Students file past her into the room.

Down the hall, Fitch runs an obstacle course to get to class on time... He side-steps a group of girls... He spins around a janitor... He leaps over a kid tying his shoe...

The final bell tones like a death sentence.

Mrs. Boberg, with the slightest flick of the wrist, pushes the door so that it starts to close VERY slowly. She has it timed exactly with the length of the bell. She's had a lot of practice.

Fitch has the door in his sights. He smiles -

FITCH

I got you -

OOF! He falls flat on his face. Looking back at what tripped him -

A giant bookbag belonging to -

JOE D

Sorry, Fitchie.

Fitch scrambles to his feet. He still has a chance. Locking eyes with Mrs. Boberg. He leans forward like a sprinter at the end of a race, head out -

SLAM! The door closes, locks. And Fitch hits it hard.

9 INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

9

Mrs. Boberg takes attendance. When she gets to -

MRS. BOBERG

Fitch, James? Fitch?

An exaggerated search around the room. Not here. She scribbles a note in her roster and finishes the roll.

10 INT. HALLWAY - MINUTE LATER 10

Fitch, resting on the ground. The door opens behind him.

MRS. BOBERG
You're late. Detention.

11 INT. DETENTION HALL - AFTERNOON 11

Fitch scans the room -- just your average druggies, freaks, wise-asses, and -

JANET, an incredibly cute girl from the "freaks" crowd. She has an edgy haircut and her clothes are sort of patched together but in a cool way. She doodles on an art pad while listening to a walkman.

Fitch slides into the seat next to her. He tries to build up the courage to speak to her but decides to write a note instead. He scribbles -- "What are you listening to?" -- on a piece of paper and slides it over to her.

Janet writes a reply -- "Fuck off."

FITCH
Well, that's not very nice.

Fitch raises his hand -

FITCH
Mr. Zachilli? Can we listen to music while in detention?

MR. ZACHILLI the detention monitor pulls himself away from the sports section of the *Herald* long enough to say -

MR. ZACHILLI
No music.

Fitch smugly looks over to Janet who angrily pulls the headphones from her ears.

FITCH
So what were you listening to?

JANET
No one you ever heard of.

FITCH
Try me.

JANET
The Smiths.

FITCH

Sure, I know their music.

JANET

Name a song.

Silence. Janet smirks and puts the headphones back on.

FITCH

What's with all the hostility?

JANET

You're on the football team, right?

Pointing to the patch on his sleeve -

FITCH

Captain.

JANET

Well, captains of football teams and me don't mix.

Out in the hall, Atwood and Pynie give Fitch the "what's up?" gesture. Fitch waves them off but they won't leave. Atwood grabs his crotch. Pynie starts humping his leg. Mr. Zachilli, eyes still on the *Herald*, walks over and closes the door on them.

FITCH

All right, I'm captain of the football team. But captain of special teams. There's a reason they call it "special" you know. It's where the retarded kids play.

JANET

You're a part of that group. A bunch of jerks who get off picking on kids just because they do theater or play music.

FITCH

Yeah, but they're band geeks. They kind of deserve it.

(sees her look)

I'm kidding!

JANET

You're all the same. You might as well be one of President Bush's thugs slaughtering innocent Sandinistas.

FITCH

Sandinistas? What the hell are you talking about?

JANET

Maybe if you read something other
than the sports page...

This one burns him.

FITCH

Just because you listen to a bunch of
guys wearing black eye-liner doesn't
necessarily make you smart. Maybe I
am a jerk and hang out with other
jerks. But I'm no bigger jerk than
anyone else.

Fitch gathers his stuff and moves to another desk. He
turns back -

FITCH

And screw the Sandinistas. Daniel
Ortega is as big a thug as any of the
Contras and you god damn know it.

Off Janet's look -

12

EXT. "THE HEIGHTS" - EVENING

12

The Portuguese Picnic is in full swing. There are food
stalls and bands and outdoor dance floors. Fitch and
Atwood chow down on traditional food.

ATWOOD

That's a great *sangwich*. Not better
than Oliva's but close.

FITCH

Have you seen that new girl? Sort of
skinny with dyed black hair -

ATWOOD

Yeah, she was one of the vampires in
Lost Boys, right?

Before Fitch can answer -

ATWOOD

Just busting on you. I saw her and
thought, now that's Fitchie's type.

FITCH

(hopeful)
Yeah?

ATWOOD

Doesn't mean that you're her type -
(sees something)
Ah, shit, it's my cousin.

BURNSIE (30s) strolls over with some friends.

BURNSIE

You girls enjoying the Spic-Nic?

FITCH

What's up, Burnsie.

BURNSIE

Eh, can't complain. So how we
looking this year? You like your
chances?

FITCH

I always like our chances. You never
know, right?

BURNSIE

You never know what?

Fitch is stumped.

FITCH

I don't know.

BURNSIE

Not asking for the Super Bowl. Just
got to get a W.

More as a challenge -

ATWOOD

We'll win.

BURNSIE

I hope so. You heard about the
record, right?

FITCH

What record?

BURNSIE

I was talking to Steve Manguso down
at Dunkin' -

BURNSIE'S CRONY

It wasn't Steve Manguso.

BURNSIE

I thought it was Manguso.

THE OTHER CRONY

It was Lou Acquafresca.

BURNSIE

Fine, I was talking to Lou Freshwater and he said that in the history of Massachusetts high school football, no team has ever put up goose eggs four years in a row. Not even Nipmuc, if you can believe that. You guys are in some rare company.

FITCH

We got a whole season to go.

BURNSIE

Yeah, I guess we all gotta be known for something.

ATWOOD

What are you known for?

BURNSIE

My year we won the big one.

ATWOOD

And what about now? Aren't you down at Kentucky Fried or something?

Atwood stalks off with some parting words -

ATWOOD

Don't get your panties in a bunch, Burnsie. We'll win.

13 EXT. CENTRAL AVENUE - EVENING

13

Pynie's Ford station wagon idles loudly. Mac-A-Doobie leans out the front window as Fitch and Atwood approach.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Get in the back, Rosa.

FITCH

Dude, I studied Civil Rights last year. That's not funny.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

What?

FITCH

Do you even know who Rosa Parks is?

MAC-A-DOOBIE

No. My brother always says it to me,
and now that I'm in the front seat, I
get to say it to you: get in the
back, Rosa.

14 INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

14

Cruising on a quiet night in Milford.

PYNIE

Where is everyone?

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Let's make a packie run, go to the U-
Turn, and get hammered.

ATWOOD

The cops posted Charlie Skaff up
there with a radio.

PYNIE

Skaff's a cop?

ATWOOD

Auxiliary. They gave him a gun.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

That's a scary thought.

FITCH

You guys hear anything about this
record? Something about us being the
only winless team in state history.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Really? That's pretty cool.

ATWOOD

You want to be known as the biggest
loser of all time?

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Better than not being known at all.

ATWOOD

And people wonder why we haven't won
a game.

15 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

15

Stripped to their shorts, the guys hop a chain link fence
and quietly approach a swimming pool. Whispering -

PYNIE

Dude, what'd you get on your SATs?

FITCH

Eleven fifty.

ATWOOD

I should have sat next to you.

FITCH

Doobie, what'd you get?

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Four thirty.

FITCH

No, total.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

That is the total.

ATWOOD

You get 400 by signing your name.

FITCH

How many questions did you leave blank?

MAC-A-DOOBIE

You can leave some blank?

The guys try to control their laughter. They line up across the deep end of the pool. Cans of Budweiser are passed around.

ATWOOD

Let's go, bottoms-up.

The guys shotgun the beers then with hoots and hollers they dive into the pool and race towards the other end. They scramble out and over the opposite fence just as the owner comes out to see what the ruckus was.

16

EXT. ANOTHER BACKYARD - NIGHT

16

The guys approach another pool, above-ground this time.

FITCH

Sent my early decision application to Georgetown yesterday.

The guys all laugh.

FITCH

You don't think I can get in?

Silence.

FITCH

Assholes. I'm getting in. I'm going to be a diplomat.

Bigger laughs are cut short by the backyard suddenly being lit up by four blinding floodlights.

ATWOOD

These new sensor lights are killing pool hopping.

They guzzle the beers, then run to launch themselves up and into the pool. As they reach the side, everyone stops short except -

Mac-A-Doobie, who propels himself in to the pool. No water splash, just a heavy THUD. The guys die laughing.

PYNIE

Dumb ass.

Off-screen GROAN from inside the empty pool.

FITCH

Cogliandro's always drain their pool early.

17

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

17

Pre-practice stretches. Coach Maynes prowls between the rows of players -

COACH MAYNES

Word of the week, gentlemen -- capitulation. We will not quit, we will not surrender.

Fitch comes hustling out of the locker room and joins the front of the team group with the other Captains. Coach Corbin walks over.

FITCH

Sorry Coach, I was one second later for Mrs. Boberg's class.

COACH CORBIN

In a game, one second can be the difference between winning or losing.

WAXIE

You girls want to get that first "W", you're going to have to want it. Let me hear you want it!

The team growls rather pathetically.

18

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - EVENING

18

Fitch finishes up his punishment laps around the deserted field. The sun is just creeping down the horizon.

Someone is waiting for him -

JANET

Why are you the only one running?

FITCH

Boberg talked to the coach about me being late for her class. This is his way of conveying the message. What are you hanging around for?

JANET

Looking for a ride home. Can I catch a lift with you?

FITCH

Sure. But I don't have a car. I don't even have a license.

JANET

Then I guess we walk.

19

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING

19

Fitch and Janet on their way home.

JANET

My parents got divorced when I was like five. We've bounced around a lot. Dad's remarried, lives down in Florida.

FITCH

Your mom remarry?

JANET

No, but she's dating some guy. That's why we're in Milford. He's kind of a tool but whatever, she likes him.

FITCH

That's cool.

JANET

What about you? Any brothers or sisters?

FITCH

Two older brothers. One works for Consigli Construction, the other one hopes to work for Consigli Construction.

JANET

And the 'rents?

FITCH

Mom's... mom. My dad, I don't know... my dad, he's pretty demanding. I mean, it's like things are never good enough -- grades, sports, everything.

Janet listens intently.

FITCH

Sometimes, he has this look like... man, I don't know, like he's wicked disappointed. And when he's really mad, he, um, he -
(busts out laughing)
I'm sorry, I'm just kidding.

Janet punches him in the arm.

FITCH

What do you want me to do? Impress you with some speech about how I'm different?

JANET

Are you?

FITCH

I'm from Milford.

JANET

That says it all, right?

FITCH

But I'm not a townie. After this year, I'm gone.

JANET

Where are you going?

FITCH

Georgetown.

JANET

Georgetown?

FITCH

What, you don't think I can get in?

JANET

I didn't say that. Just thinking
it's so far away.

FITCH

Sorry, didn't mean to jump down your
throat. What about you? You're
smart, where you gonna go?

JANET

I haven't really thought about it.

FITCH

Well, you better start thinking. You
don't want to get stuck here.

They stop in front of a small house.

JANET

This is me.

FITCH

You think your mom can give me a lift
home? Kind of a far walk.

JANET

Nah, probably not.

FITCH

That's cool.

(beat)

So... you maybe want to hang out
sometime? Go to the movies or
something?

JANET

Maybe. Won't your friends make fun
of you?

FITCH

Of course they will.

She studies him.

JANET

Okay. What about tomorrow night?

FITCH

Tomorrow?! It's Friday night.

JANET

So?

FITCH
You really don't know Milford.

20 INT. GYMNASIUM LOBBY - DAY

20

Streams of pissed-off students file into the gym.

PISSED-OFF KID
This blows.

DUSTIN
Nothing like mandatory school spirit
to get the old juices flowing, huh?

21 INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

21

It's a pep rally for the first game. Huge banners hang
on the wall. Students are crammed onto the bleachers.

At the center of the gym are three band geeks -- a
flautist, an acoustic guitarist, and warbly singer --
belting out a very serious but very painful rendition of
Stairway to Heaven -

SINGER
*There's a feeling I get when I look
to the west, And my spirit is crying
for leaving;*

*In my thoughts I have seen rings of
smoke through the trees, And the
voices of those who stand looking...*

A chorus of BOOS drowns them out. PRINCIPAL PAGNINI
comes to their rescue -

PRINCIPAL PAGNINI
Thank you, thank you for a wonderful
performance. It's time to bring out
the boys. Let's hear some Scarlet
Hawk pride for our men in red!

From a side entrance, several cheerleaders come sprinting
out doing back-handsprings and waving pom-poms. Behind
them, the football team emerges wearing home jerseys.

A light smattering of applause.

Principal Pagnini motions to Atwood to step up to the
microphone. He reluctantly does.

ATWOOD
Uh, thanks everyone for coming out.
It really means a lot to us.

VOICE IN THE CROWD

You suck!

Pynie scans the bleachers, looking for the culprit.

PYNIE

Who was that, Slomba?

FITCH

Yeah, I think so.

PYNIE

Your dead, Slomba! You hear me?
You're dead!

VOICE IN THE CROWD

Bite me!

PYNIE

Oh, I'm going to fucking kill him.

Atwood continues with his speech.

ATWOOD

I hope you all come out to tonight's
game. It's going to be a good time.
We can really, uh, use your support.
And, uh, we're going to win.
(awkward beat)
Milford rules!!!

22

EXT. FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

22

The first game.

The Franklin Panthers are decked out in their blue and
white uniforms. The band kicks up the fight song.

UP IN THE PRESS BOOTH

Milford's local radio personality, ED THOMPSON, opens his
broadcast.

ED THOMPSON

We're coming to you live from Panther
Field in scummy Franklin. The grass
already looks chewed up and it's only
the first game of the season. Joe
Graz, if you're out there, god bless
you. No one grows sod like you, and
I mean, no one.

23

INT. VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

23

The guys sit on benches, waiting for the call. Stickman is in the back. He rubs his helmet against the blue-painted wall.

SANTOS

What are you doing?

Stickman shows his helmet which now has a mean blue streak running down the side.

STICKMAN

Makes it look like I'm a hitter.
It'll psych them out.

SANTOS

Dude, you're the punter.

Coach Corbin strides in front of the team.

COACH CORBIN

Let's go, gather up. First game.
Remember, keep your heads screwed up
straight and do your jobs. Drown out
the boo-birds in the stands from both
sides. We've prepared for this and
we're ready. Now let's come away
with a win.

WAXIE

Win on three. One-two-three-

TEAM

WIN!!

24

EXT. FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

24

The whistle blows and Fitch and the kickoff team start things off.

ED THOMPSON (O.S.)

And the 1989 Scarlet Hawk season is
underway...

The Franklin returner catches the ball on his own ten, waits for his blockers to form the wedge, then follows them right up the gut -

He goes untouched ninety yards for the touchdown.

UP IN THE BOOTH

Ed Thompson shakes his head.

ED THOMPSON

The Scarlet Hawks waste no time
picking up where they left off last
year. Seven-zip, Franklin.

25

EXT. FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

25

The score is 35-7. A Franklin running back toss sweeps
into the endzone. Make it 42-7.

ON THE SIDELINES

Coach Maynes prowls a despondent sideline.

COACH MAYNES

Capitulation, gentlemen. No one is
surrendering yet.

COACH CORBIN

Coach Maynes, I am capitulating.
Second team, get in there.

Stickman, Fitch, Stephan and others all grab their
helmets. This is going to be ugly.

Fitch is at the center. He takes the snap and throws a
very slow, arcing pass to Stickman who goes up to get it
and is -

Absolutely plastered by the strong safety.

Stickman lies prone on his back. Fitch helps him up.

STICKMAN

You laid me out, brother.

FITCH

Sorry, man. At least you got a real
mark on your helmet.

STICKMAN

Yeah? Cool.

TIME CUT:

The umpire's pistol thankfully ends the game.

UP IN THE BOOTH

Ed Thompson sums it all up.

ED THOMPSON

That'll end it. I won't embarrass the parents and relatives of the players by reading the score out loud. Looks like we are in for yet another LONG season.

26 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

26

Most of the guys and other kids from the school stand around a good-sized bonfire. Keg of beer. Somber.

STEPHAN

The score didn't reflect the game. It was closer than it looked.

PYNIE

Shut the fuck up.

GUY NIRO

Guy, we're having a nice kegga here. Don't go ruining it reliving the game, all right, guy?

ATWOOD

Guy's right. Let's just drink beer and not talk about the game.

Atwood takes a swig of a beer, grimaces.

ATWOOD

Who bought the Natty Lite?

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Don't look at me.

ATWOOD

Can't anyone do anything right?

27 DOWN THE ROAD

27

Fitch and Janet arrive. As they work their way through the crowd, Fitch calls out his friends.

FITCH

That's Zigman and Karen. They pretty much just fight the whole time -

Zigman and his girlfriend are in a serious argument.

FITCH

Five minutes before it's time to go home they always make up.

Passing two guys with their shirts off -

FITCH

The kid on the right is Danimal.
He's always asking guys to wrestle
after he's been drinking.

DANIMAL

Fitchie, you want a piece of this?

FITCH

I'm good, man, thanks.

Passing a scrawny kid with an electric guitar -

JANET

There's going to be a band?

FITCH

God no... he's just obsessed with
Eddie Van Halen. He doesn't know how
to actually play guitar but he has
all the moves.

The kid expertly flips the guitar over his shoulder and
it effortlessly slides back into his hands where he can
continue air strumming "Diver Down".

They finally get to the bonfire. Janet hesitates.

JANET

You sure about this?

FITCH

Come on, it'll be fun.

Fitch grabs her hand and leads the way -

FITCH

Hey everyone, this is Janet.

A few murmurs of hello but it's awkward. Janet stands
next to the Big Hair Girl. They eye each other
contemptuously -- one for the size of her hair, one for
the lack of size of her hair.

BIG HAIR GIRL

I like your hair.

JANET

Yours... too.

A Jeep creeps along with its lights off. Inside, SLOMBA and his buddy D'EFONZO are up to no good.

D'EFONZO

You think it's a good idea? They got smoked by Franklin. They're probably in a bad mood.

SLOMBA

Just wait for me to flash the lights before you say anything. Once they bolt we can swoop in and take all their beer.

The Jeep quietly approaches then -

BLAM! Slomba turns on his high beams and the roll-bar lights. They illuminate the night like a searchlight.

D'Efonzo grabs a BULLHORN and lets out a whirp-whirp like a police siren. Then he shouts into it -

D'EFONZO

Everyone stay where you are!

The bonfire crew does anything but that.

STICKMAN

It's Charlie Skaff!

Guys madly chuck beers, empty beers, hide beers. Two heroically try to run off with the keg. Streams of kids go bounding into the woods. It's every man for himself.

Fitch makes a break for it but realizes that Janet isn't with him. He looks back and sees that she hasn't moved and is standing in the glare of the headlights.

FITCH

Janet, get out of there! It's the cops.

Janet shields her eyes -

JANET

No, it isn't. It's just two kids in a Jeep.

As the chaos subsides, you can hear the howls of laughter coming from up the road. Pynie stops dead in his tracks. He hears that cackle and knows it immediately -

PYNIE

It's Slomba, that asshole.

29 IN THE JEEP

29

D'Efonzo and Slomba stop laughing when they see a small mob forming to come get them.

D'EFONZO

Shit, they know it's us. Get out of here!

Slomba throws it into reverse but in his haste he pops the clutch and stalls the engine. He madly tries to turn the engine over.

D'EFONZO

See ya!

D'Efonzo bails and runs off into the night.

SLOMBA

Come on, come on, come on -

Too late. About ten guys surround the Jeep.

SLOMBA

Guys, I was only kidding. Seriously, it was a joke. I -

30 EXT. EMPTY ROAD - NIGHT

30

Slomba, entirely naked, tries to hitch a ride with a passing motorist. Naturally, they don't stop.

CUT TO:

31 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

31

Where you sit is a signal of which group you're in and your status. Most of the football players sit at the prime table by the window.

Protecting your food is a requirement and most of the guys have their arms looped around their trays like they're in prison.

Mac-A-Doobie taps Guy Niro on the shoulder and as soon as he turns, he steals Guy's cookie.

GUY NIRO

What the fuck, guy!

Stickman joins them with his meal. The first thing he does is LICK every piece of food on his tray. Fitch and others watch him in disbelief. Licking his last fry -

STICKMAN

There. Now I can eat my lunch in peace without worrying one of you vultures is going to take some -

Mac-A-Doobie grabs one of the licked fries and eats it.

STICKMAN

That's just sick, man.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Anyone want to play "Who would you?"

ZIGMAN

Sure, where you starting?

MAC-A-DOOBIE

First table by the door, the stoners.

The stoner table is mostly guys in jean jackets, girls with REALLY big hair, and no food.

SANTOS

You ever notice how the stoners never eat. I mean, they never eat lunch.

ZIGMAN

I'd do *Lion King*.

SHOT of a girl with an enormous mane of hair.

ZIGMAN

She looks like she could suck a golf ball through a garden hose.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Yeah, I'd vote for her.

Agreement from all the other players -

SANTOS

All right, Book-of-the-Month Club.

Santos points out the table of "geeks" who are either reading a book, playing *D&D*, or both.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

It's like they're reading for fun or something. That's fucking weird.

SANTOS

Didn't Atwood fool around with that librarian chick on the right?

SHOT of a MOUSY GIRL engrossed in a Bronte novel.

ATWOOD

Students Against Drunk Driving event.
Half the place was cocked. Great
place to score.

ZIGMAN

Okay, table by the door -

Fitch turns around and sees he's pointing out the
"freaks" table where Janet sits.

GUY NIRO

I pass.

SANTOS

Seriously?

GUY NIRO

Those are black widows there, guy.
They like eat you after it's over.

Everyone laughs, except Fitch.

GUY NIRO

Look at them. It's like the Salem
Witch Trials over there -

FITCH

You know, maybe you guys shouldn't
objectify women like this. It's
pretty juvenile when you come to
think about it.

The laughter subsides. Everyone stares at Fitch, letting
his words sink in. Then, Guy Niro grabs his nose and
screams out -

GUY NIRO

Oh my god! You farted, guy!

Everyone backs away from the table, waving their hands in
front of their noses, pointing at Fitch with their other
hand. The entire cafeteria is now looking at Fitch,
including Janet.

They catch eyes. Fitch can't do anything but sit there
and look like a doofus.

Janet and Fitch watch *Uncle Buck*. Fitch seems to be
enjoying it more than anyone in the theater. Janet just
sits there with her arms crossed.

As they head back to Janet's car -

FITCH

That was awesome.

JANET

You think?

FITCH

What, you didn't like it?

JANET

It was okay. I like movies with more substance.

FITCH

Here it comes. Such as?

JANET

Born on the 4th of July.

FITCH

Tom Cruise in a wheelchair? Gees... depressing.

JANET

It's an important film.

FITCH

Now it's a "film." I'll take John Candy over another cripple movie any day.

They get to Janet's mom's car.

FITCH

Is this a Subaru? What do you call this color, it's like "pine green" or something.

JANET

It's better than the car you drive.

FITCH

Good point. It's a wonderful color, tell your mother I said so.

Janet laughs, studies him.

JANET

Can I ask you something?

FITCH

No.

JANET

Why not?

FITCH

Because anytime someone leads with,
"can I ask you something" it's always
bad news.

JANET

Why do you play football?

FITCH

I don't know.

JANET

You barely get into the games, you
guys aren't very good, and... you're
not like all those guys.

FITCH

But I am. I've just done a good job
of fooling you.

An elderly couple walk past.

FITCH

Hi, Mr. Cogliandro.

MR. COGLIANDRO

Fitch. You going to win tomorrow?

FITCH

Of course we are, sir.

The old man is about to reply but then figures it's too
hopeless. He just shakes his head in disgust and
continues on his way.

FITCH

Actually, I don't know why I play.

JANET

Then quit.

FITCH

Quit? What's with all the bad
influences. You going to start
giving me cigarettes now? All the
cool kids do it, you know.

JANET

Winning a game means that much?

FITCH

Who said anything about winning? I
play because I want to run through
the frame.

Off her confused look -

34 EXT. MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL FIELD - HOMECOMING - NIGHT 34

CLOSE ON a large panel of tinfoil spanning a wooden frame
about the size of a door. It's covered in crepe paper
and streamers.

Two lines of cheerleaders and band members funnel a path
straight into the frame. It's like a magical door at the
end of a long tunnel.

BY THE ENTRANCE TO THE FIELD

The team waits to be announced. Waxie calls out -

WAXIE

We're going with special teams first.
Line up.

Atwood pats Fitch on the helmet.

ATWOOD

Your time to shine.

FITCH

I've waited four years for this.

Fitch, all smiles, moves to the front of the pack.

PA ANNOUNCER

Special teams captain, number thirty-
eight -

Fitch breaks for the frame -

But then out of nowhere the HAWK MASCOT jumps in front of
him and sprints right through the tinfoil.

FITCH

What the fuck?!

Fitch stands there with arms out, looking totally pissed.

WAXIE

Let's go, Fitch. Get your ass out
there.

Fitch walks angrily up to the frame and swipes at the
last remaining piece of dangling tinfoil.

35 INT. PRESS BOOTH - NIGHT

35

Ed Thompson looks to the scoreboard which reads **Visitors
44 - Hawks 7.**

ED THOMPSON

... And Coach Corbin calls timeout.
Someone apparently wants to drag this
misery out.

36 DOWN ON THE FIELD

36

A despondent Fitch and Atwood wait for it all to be over.

ATWOOD

This sucks.

FITCH

I know. What was that idiot thinking
running through the frame before me?

37 EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

37

A solemn team files off the field. Fitch looks up and
sees the Mascot and FLIPS OUT -

FITCH

You son of bitch!

PYNIE

Take it easy!

It takes all of Pynie's strength to pull him off.

38 INT. PAGO PAGO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

38

Polynesian themed restaurant with tiki torches, Hawaiian
shirts, and bamboo booths.

FITCH

Two things before we start. One: no
one talks about the game. Two:
Doyle, do you have any money?

DOYLE

Yeah, I got money.

FITCH

Put it on the table.

DOYLE

You serious?

GUY NIRO

Let's see the cabbage, guy.

DOYLE

We haven't even ordered yet.

ATWOOD

We don't want any surprises when the bill comes.

DOYLE

I got money.

DUSTIN

Let's see it.

DOYLE

Screw you guys.

PYNIE

Doyle, put out the money.

Pynie's words hold weight.

DOYLE

OK.

(feels for wallet)

Oh, you know what?

GUY NIRO

Here it comes.

DOYLE

No, here's what happened. I think I left my wallet -

ATWOOD

Rice only. Maybe a chicken wing.
That's it. And you drink water.

DOYLE

You guys are jerks.

The waiter approaches.

FITCH

OK, how many we got? Six?

(to waiter)

Poo-Poo platter for twenty.

TIME CUT:

An empty Poo-Poo tray, the blue flame close to dying.

ATWOOD

My face is tingling.

GUY NIRO

Told you not to eat the pork with the red dye. Too much MSG, guy.

DUSTIN

I filled up on the fried shrimp too early.

PYNIE

Rookie mistake, brother.

DUSTIN

(really disappointed)
I knew it, too.

FITCH

All right, count up your bones. It's fifty cents per. Need help with the math, ask Dustin.

Everyone tallies the number of sparerib bones on their plates. Fitch points to Doyle -

FITCH

And someone spot money-bags over here.

Fitch looks at the bill and makes a face.

FITCH

This can't be right.
(calls to the waiter)
Excuse me, did you guys raise your prices or something?

WAITER

(inspects bill)
No, it is right.

FITCH

We've never paid this much before.

WAITER

Mr., uh, Chang said you boys must pay full price now.

ATWOOD

Since when?

WAITER

You talk to Mr. Chang. I don't know anything.

GUY NIRO

Look, guy, you tell that slanty-eyed Chang -

FITCH
Guy, don't be a jerk.

ATWOOD
Everyone just pay up and let it go.

PYNIE
This is some serious bullshit.

39 EXT. PAGO PAGO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

39

Everyone slinks to their cars. Guy Niro kicks over a large tiki lamp just for the hell of it.

FITCH
Now where are we going to eat?

ATWOOD
I don't know. But when guys like Chang know we suck, it's gotta be bad.

40 INT. JOHNNY JACK'S DINER - MORNING

40

Coach Corbin at the counter. The OWNER swings by.

OWNER
Tough loss last night.

COACH CORBIN
They're all tough.

OWNER
Going for it on fourth down... tough call there.

COACH CORBIN
You too, Mike?

OWNER
Coach, you know me. I'll support you no matter what.

COACH CORBIN
But?

OWNER
But there's... there's talk of a petition.

COACH CORBIN
For what?

OWNER

To remove you as head coach. They want Coach Maynes to take over for the rest of the year.

COACH CORBIN

He'd make a fine coach.

Perking up -

OWNER

What are you saying, you might step down?

COACH CORBIN

Coach Maynes will make a fine coach. After I retire at the end of the year.

Coach Corbin pays for his coffee.

COACH CORBIN

Mike, your's coffee is as shitty as it's always been.

41 INT. HOMEROOM - MORNING

41

The Principal finishes the Pledge of Allegiance over the intercom -

PRINCIPAL ON INTERCOM

... one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.

(beat)

Please be seated. Seniors, report to the auditorium following homeroom to receive your assignments for "Career Day". Just a reminder, this is a terrific opportunity to learn about a job from somebody actually living it. This is not an excuse to goof off or cut school. I will be checking in personally with each volunteer to make sure that everyone shows up for their assignments.

Groans from all the Seniors.

42 INT. AUDITORIUM - MORNING

42

Everyone lines up and receives a slip of paper with their assignment for the day.

ATWOOD
Santos, where you going?

SANTOS
Music Nook.

PYNIE
I didn't know you were into music.

SANTOS
My uncle owns the store. He figures
this way he doesn't have to pay me
for a day's work.

FITCH
Stickman, where you headed?

STICKMAN
Milford's finest, baby. We're going
to do a speed trap down off Central.
I dare one of you fuckers try to get
by us.

SANTOS
Crustmaster?

DUSTIN
Merle Norman Cosmetics.

Odd looks from everyone.

MAC-A-DOOBIE
What are you, a *fagola*?

DUSTIN
Don't you worry, I got it all figured
out.

MAC-A-DOOBIE
Fitchie, what'd you sign up for?

FITCH
Federal government -- I told you, I
want to be a diplomat.

ATWOOD
Where they sending you?

FITCH
To the Post Office.

A sliding door unveils a mail truck full of sacks.

POST OFFICE SUPE
Unload this shit and then we'll teach
you how to sort.

Fitch stares dismally at all the mail.

44 INT. MERLE NORMAN COSMETICS - DAY 44

Dustin and a roomful of hot 40-year old women. He's in
all his glory as he washes MRS. BIANCA'S hair in the back
sink. Staring at her huge jugs -

DUSTIN
You have terrific hair, Mrs. Bianca.

45 INT. POLICE STATION - DAY 45

Stickman arrives all smiles.

STICKMAN
Mike Francesconi, reporting for duty.
Let me just say, I am honored at
having the opportunity to learn all
there is to know about law
enforcement.

The DESK SERGEANT gives him an icy stare.

DESK SERGEANT
You play football, right?

STICKMAN
Starting punter.

46 INT. POLICE STATION - MINUTES LATER 46

The Desk Sergeant hands Stickman a mop and bucket.

DESK SERGEANT
Swab out the drunk tank then we'll
get you on the parking meters.

STICKMAN
(under his breath)
I fucking hate cops.

47 INT. COCKE 'N KETTLE - MORNING 47

A nice restaurant with a strange name. The MAITRE'D
explains to Mac-A-Doobie how to answer the phone.

MAITRE'D

Like this.

(picks up phone)

Good morning, Cock 'N Kettle. How
can I help you?

Hands the phone to Mac-A-Doobie.

MAITRE'D

You try.

Mac-A-Doobie picks up the phone.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

Good morning, Cock 'N -

(busts out laughing)

I'm sorry. One sec. Okay, here
goes... Good morning, Cock -

He dies laughing, much to the maitre'd's annoyance.

48

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

48

Fitch and the desultory job of sorting mail.

MAILMAN

Psst.

FITCH

Yeah?

MAILMAN

Knock off for a minute. I got
something to show you.

FITCH

I'm supposed to finish this -

MAILMAN

It's the mail, we have three days
before anyone starts complaining.
Come on.

Fitch follows the Mailman towards the back room.

MAILMAN

Son, I'm about to show you the most
important development in the mail
carrying business since pepper spray.
It's called...

(whispers)

The Victoria's Secret catalogue.

FITCH

Never heard of it.

MAILMAN

That's because we haven't released it yet. It came out a few months back but we've been hoarding it. You want to see it?

FITCH

Okay. You're kind of freaking me out right now, but okay.

49

INT. BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

49

Fitch is in awe.

FITCH

This is legal?

MAILMAN

No plastic sealers either like the Playboy's now.

FITCH

Jesus... this is way better than the Spiegel catalogue.

RITCHIE LONGO, another mailman, watches nearby.

MAILMAN

I've got every issue. These are like, going to be worth something. I know one guy, he plastered his entire bedroom with pages from the catalogue.

FITCH

Oh, yeah? That's cool... I guess.

MAILMAN

No man, it's really cool. The walls, the ceilings. It's like artwork -

Ritchie steps in -

RITCHIE LONGO

Hey kid, let's break for lunch. I'll buy you a number nine at D'Angelo's.

FITCH

Sounds good.

MAILMAN

(calling after Fitch)
You want me to save you a copy?

50

INT. D'ANGELO'S SANDWICH SHOP - DAY

50

Two Number Nine's -- steak sandwiches.

FITCH

Ritchie, you were on the '78 team.

RITCHIE LONGO

Yup.

FITCH

Halfback, right?

RITCHIE LONGO

Free safety, too.

FITCH

What was it like?

RITCHIE LONGO

I got a lot of tail, man.

FITCH

I bet.

RITCHIE LONGO

If I'd only known it was going to be short-lived, I would have taken better advantage of it.

(reflecting)

But I got a good thing going here. Got a nice truck, a place up on Highland, decent job.

Fitch nods his head.

RITCHIE LONGO

I'm fucking with you, kid. I wear a polyester uniform and sort mail.

(laughs)

Where's the fun in that?

FITCH

Could be worse.

RITCHIE LONGO

Not really. Eh, what are you going to do, right?

(beat)

How you holding up?

FITCH

I'm all right. It's not easy, though. Every jerk-off in town's got some wisecrack.

(MORE)

FITCH (CONT'D)

I can't even get a grinder at Oliva's without fat Babe making fun of me. I mean, is losing that important?

RITCHIE LONGO

You want the right answer or the real answer.

FITCH

Both.

RITCHIE LONGO

The right answer is that it's no big deal. High school is just short period in a full day of classes. The worst now is a burp on the misery scale.

FITCH

You don't believe that?

RITCHIE LONGO

No one will admit it because they don't want to be that loser reliving the glory days when he went 3-4 with a triple and a stolen base. Me, I scored two TDs against Marlborough and got my first BJ in Debbie McCentyre's bathroom later that night.

(beat)

It was the greatest day of my life.

Fitch laughs.

RITCHIE LONGO

I'm the fucking loser, right?

FITCH

I didn't say that.

RITCHIE LONGO

No, I said it.

An awkward beat. Ritchie changes subjects -

RITCHIE LONGO

How's your brother?

FITCH

He's all right.

RITCHIE LONGO

Tell him hello for me, would you?

FITCH

Sure, Ritchie.

Fitch watches Ritchie eat his sandwich -- the poor guy looks really sad.

51 EXT. PARKING LOT - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

51

Fitch and Janet.

FITCH

I really gotta get out of this town.

JANET

(laughing)

The Post Office was that bad?

FITCH

It's so depressing. All these guys talking about their trucks and saving up for a plow to make some extra cash in winter. Where'd you end up going?

JANET

Calarese Photos.

FITCH

You serious? The school picture guy?

JANET

He does portraits, too. And weddings.

FITCH

I didn't know you were into that.

JANET

It's just something I do on my own. I'm not very good, but...

FITCH

Pictures, huh?

JANET

We prefer the term "photography".

FITCH

Whoa, excuse me. Suddenly you're an *artiste*.

She laughs.

FITCH

How, uh, how come you never asked to take my photo?

JANET
Not interesting enough.

FITCH
What?!

JANET
A guy and his snow plow, now that's
an image.

Before Fitch can answer, Santos comes running up -

SANTOS
Fitchie, I figured it out!

FITCH
Figured what out?

SANTOS
How we're going to win a game.

52 EXT. BACK FIELD - DAY

52

Santos leads a small pack of players.

SANTOS
He's a distant cousin, just moved
here from Brazil. Now, don't freak
out -- he's a Portuguese, not
Brazilian. He's good people.

Standing by a soccer net is TIAGO, a scrawny kid who
looks like he just came out of salsa dancing class.

STICKMAN
This is our saviour?

Tiago then flips a soccer ball into the air and
absolutely crushes it into the upper corner of the goal.

EVERYONE
Whoa.

FITCH
Can he kick a football?

SANTOS
Fifty yarder. Into the wind.

PYNIE
Why would he play football when he
could be a stud on the soccer team?

SANTOS

I told him he'd get better trim if he hung with us. He bought it.

53 EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

53

The Hawks drive stalls on the visitor's 35-yard line. Out comes Tiago and the kicking team.

Tiago takes his three step drop and booms the kick down the center of the goal posts.

ON THE SIDELINES

Pynie and Santos share a smile as the scoreboard is updated to Milford 3 - Visitors 0.

SANTOS

Kicking game and defense. That's the recipe, baby.

TIME CUT:

The scoreboard now reads Milford 3 - Visitors 53.

Montage of losing games

54 MILFORD VS. ALGONQUIN

54

Doyle's pass is picked off for an easy touchdown.

ED THOMPSON (O.S.)

That was the best pass Doyle's thrown all game. Hit him right on the numbers...

55 MILFORD VS. SHREWSBURY

55

Stickman is in the visitor locker room scratching more "war paint" onto his helmet, which now looks like a Jackson Pollack.

Huddling up for a punt, Stickman makes the call.

STICKMAN

Fake punt right.

FITCH

Dude, we're on our own five.

STICKMAN

I can make it.

He doesn't even come close and is pancaked for a two yard loss. The coaches lose it.

56 MILFORD VS. MAYNARD

56

The team readies to run onto the field. The cheerleaders hold up the tinfoil frame up, tantalizing Fitch.

Waxie strolls past.

WAXIE

No announcement bullshit today. Get to the sidelines and get ready to smash heads.

Fitch's dream of breaking through the tinfoil is thwarted again.

Montage ends

57 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LOBBY - MORNING

57

Tiago is a hit with the girls. He wears a shiny shirt, unbuttoned almost to his waste.

PYNIE

Nice going with Deney Terrio over there. Not exactly winning us any games.

SANTOS

He's scoring in other ways.

FITCH

You have to admit, the dude's a real swordsman. Atwood, you finally got some competition.

Atwood looks legitimately pissed -

ATWOOD

Is it a law in Brazil that you can't button the top four buttons on a shirt? This is bullshit.

The warning bell sounds.

FITCH

Oh, crap!

Fitch takes off running.

58 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

58

A long way to go. Mrs. Boberg stands at her door with the eyes of an executioner.

FITCH
(under his breath)
I'm going to make it, you cold-
hearted bitch.

He sprints past Janet.

FITCH
Pick me up after practice, okay?

JANET
Get your license, you loser!

The third bell sounds. It's going to be close.

Mrs. Boberg lets the door swing slowly shut, then turns and heads back to her desk. Over her shoulder, you can see Fitch reach for the door...

CLANG! It locks before he can get to it.

59 EXT. SHOPPER'S WORLD MALL - NIGHT

59

An outdoor mall. Fitch (in his letterman jacket) and Janet stroll through the crowd.

FITCH
So, are we, like, going out now?

JANET
I don't know, I guess. Why?

FITCH
I just thought if we were maybe you'd
want to wear my jacket.

JANET
I have a jacket.

FITCH
No, my football jacket.

She laughs.

JANET
You serious?

FITCH
I know it's not black but it's what
people do, right?

JANET

You know what, maybe I will. It's not exactly my style but you guys stink so bad it could be kind of cool.

FITCH

When you put it that way, forget it.

JANET

Well what did you expect?

(phony voice)

Maybe your mom and me can go get our hair done on Saturday. And I'll carve our initials into my desk. And then we'll go to the Sadie Hawkins and take pictures in my living room when you pin a corsage on my taffeta dress.

FITCH

No one's asked me to the Sadies yet...

JANET

Oh man, I'm not going to some organized dance so I can slow-dance to Poison.

FITCH

Does everything have to be an anti-establishment protest? Can't you just admit something's fun?

Fitch sees something up ahead and quickly takes off his jacket and rolls it into a ball.

JANET

What are you doing?

FITCH

Nothing. I'm, uh, I'm hot. Let's go get an Orange Julius -

ST. JOHN'S CAPTAIN (O.S.)

Hey, it's the Goose Egg!

The ST. JOHN'S CAPTAIN and several of his teammates surround Fitch and Janet. They all have that 80's preppy look -- khakis, top-siders, untucked button-down shirts.

ST. JOHN'S CAPTAIN

Mr. Soon-To-Be-State-Record-Holder, what brings you out here?

ST. JOHN'S CRONY
What record's he gonna break?

ST. JOHN'S CAPTAIN
The biggest loser record.

ST. JOHN'S CRONY
Oh, that one.

They all laugh. Fitch, too.

FITCH
Wait, I don't get the joke.

ST. JOHN'S CAPTAIN
You're the joke, dude.

FITCH
Hey, can I ask you something? If I
went to St. John's would I have to do
the boat shoes with no socks look?
Must be freezing in winter.

ST. JOHN'S CAPTAIN
You'd have to get in first, then
worry about it.

Fitch turns to Janet -

FITCH
Let's get out of here.

As they walk off -

ST. JOHN'S CAPTAIN
Now don't you go winning on us, all
right? We want to be the ones to
break that record for 'ya.

Laughter rings out.

JANET
Those guys are bigger assholes than
your friends.

FITCH
Whatever.

JANET
You still want me to wear your
jacket?

FITCH
Hilarious. You should do stand-up.

JANET

Hey, if I'm going to a stupid Sadie Hawkins dance, it better not be with some moper.

Fitch stops in his tracks.

FITCH

Are you asking me to the dance?
Because that really didn't sound like an offer...

JANET

(fake annoyance)
Will you, James Fitch, go to the Sadie Hawkins dance with me?

FITCH

I'll think about it.

She punches his arm.

JANET

Jerk off.

60

INT. FITCH'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

60

MRS. FITCH, a burning Virginia Slim in her hand, smiles warmly at Fitch and Janet in their dance get-ups. They both look incredibly uncomfortable.

MRS. FITCH

Now don't they look sharp.

MR. FITCH steps in with a Polaroid camera.

MRS. FITCH

Make sure you get the mantle in the back.

MR. FITCH

Am I taking a picture of the kids or of your god-damn Hummel collection?

FITCH

Can you just take the picture so we can get out of here?

OFF the flash -

61 INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

61

The DJ spins records at one end. Colored lights and a disco ball set the mood. *Rob Base and DJ EZ Rock* do the rest -

Fitch and crew dance really badly to "Joy and Pain."

Janet watches from off to the side.

ZIGMAN

What's up with your girl?

FITCH

She hates this kind of music.

ZIGMAN

You can't exactly dance to The Cure!

FITCH

Don't tell her that.

62 INT. BOY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

62

Santos and Stickman. Someone's vomiting in the stalls.

SANTOS

You see Joannie Tomase? That dress, man, is killing me.

STICKMAN

I'm telling you, play Slick Rick's Mona Lisa, get her jumping around and those marangas are coming out. They're held in by a thread!

SANTOS

You think they're nice?

STICKMAN

Atwood says she has unusually large nipples.

SANTOS

I like that.

63 INT. GIRL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

63

A long line of girls poof their hair up to gravity-defying heights.

BIG HAIR GIRL

I swear, he touches my hair again and I'm going rip his arms off.

Her pal pulls out a full can of Aqua-Net -

BIGGER HAIR GIRL
All you burners, hold off lighting up
until I'm done!

64

INT. GYMNASIUM - LATER

64

"Is This Love" by Whitesnake. Fitch approaches Janet.
His tie is off, his shirt soaked with sweat. He looks at
her; she reads his mind -

JANET
Get out of here, are you serious?

FITCH
What?

JANET
Whitesnake?

FITCH
One song. It won't kill you.

She acquiesces. He leads her out onto the dance floor.
Everyone slow dances in a sloppy, crumpled body sort of
way. She puts her arms around him -

JANET
You're all sweaty.

FITCH
I'm a guy. I sweat. What do you
want?

JANET
This song stinks.

FITCH
Seriously, what's up? If you're
miserable, we can just go home. I'll
have my mom come pick us up.

JANET
I don't want to go home.

FITCH
Then I don't understand.

She studies him.

JANET
Why do you care about me?

FITCH
I have to have a reason?

JANET
No. But you do care, right?

FITCH
Yeah, I do. A lot.

She studies him -

JANET
No one's ever said that to me before.
I'm not sure what it means.

FITCH
No one's ever said that to me either -
(thinks about it)
Wait a minute. You haven't said
anything! Here I am baring my soul -

She leans in and kisses him before he can finish -

65 INT. JANET'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

65

Janet and Fitch make out on the couch. Fitch moves to
get on top of her, but she holds him off.

JANET
Wait a sec.

FITCH
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get all
Mario Andretti on you.

JANET
No, stupid. I have a surprise. But
you have to cover your eyes.

An uneasy look.

JANET
Relax.

66 INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

66

Fitch's eyes are covered with a blindfold. Janet then
runs into the bathroom -

67 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

67

- and hurries out the side entrance into -

68 INT. JANET'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 68

Where she leaps onto her bed. She calls out -

JANET
Okay, you can look now!

69 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT 69

Fitch removes the blindfold and his jaw unhinges -

The entire door frame leading to Janet's room is covered in TINFOIL. From behind it -

JANET (O.S.)
(fake echo-effect)
The captain, captain, captain...
number thirty-eight, eight,
eight...James Fitch, Fitch, Fitch...

Fitch takes a few steps back, then rushes and -
Bursts through the tinfoil.

70 INT. JANET'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 70

Janet claps, gives the fake crowd roar. Fitch stands in the center of room, tears in his eyes -

FITCH
That's the greatest thing anyone has
ever done for me.

And he takes a flying leap onto the bed and gathers her into his arms. They awkwardly stare at each other, nervous. Fitch slowly unzips the back of her dress...

CUT TO:

71 EXT. MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL FIELD - DAY 71

Milford is getting crushed, again. There's sniping on the sidelines. Even the coaches are getting into it.

COACH MAYNES
Coach, we need more time out of your
line.

WAXIE
Maybe if your quarterback didn't hold
onto the ball for half the day you'd
have it.

Coach Corbin intercedes.

COACH CORBIN

Enough. There's no good arguing now.
Get some minute for the seconds team.

COACH MAYNES

Stephan, replace Gandolfi.

Stephan runs onto the field.

STEPHAN

Gandolfi, I'm in.

Gandolfi just ignores.

STEPHAN

You hear me? I'm in.

FROM THE SIDELINES

COACH MAYNES

Gandolfi, get out of there!

REFEREE

Coach, you got twelve men on the
field.

COACH CORBIN

Let's go Gandolfi!

OUT ON THE FIELD

Stephan tries to pull Gandolfi off. It quickly turns
into a shoving match. Even the Fitchburg players are
getting a kick out of it.

Atwood watches it and just shakes his head.

CUT TO:

72

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

72

The guys watch the painful game footage. Coach Corbin
doesn't even know what to say.

COACH CORBIN

Santos -- in God good graces, what
the hell are you doing way back
there?

SANTOS

Not sure, Coach.

There's a commotion outside.

MAN'S VOICE

Is this where the Hawk's play?

Everyone turns to see -

HOWIE LONG, wearing his Raiders coat, strolls into the room. No one can believe it.

HOWIE LONG

Hey guys.

COACH CORBIN

Welcome back, Howie.

HOWIE LONG

Thanks, Coach. We flew in last night for the game on Sunday down in Foxboro. Thought I'd swing by, catch up with the old team.

73 INT. LOCKER ROOM - MINUTES LATER

73

Howie strolls through his old haunts. Everyone hangs on his every word. He stops in front of Stickman's locker.

HOWIE LONG

This was my locker here.

STICKMAN

I knew it. I'm like channeling your energy, Mr. Long.

(holds up helmet)

Lot of pain and suffering dished out on the other end of this.

HOWIE LONG

Looks like it. What position you play?

STICKMAN

Punter.

HOWIE LONG

Who's got my old number?

STEPHAN

Right here, sir.

The shirt is so big on him that when he tucks it into his jeans, half of the number "75" is covered up.

HOWIE LONG

Looks like a night gown on you, kid.
Are you the waterboy?

Before he can answer -

HOWIE LONG

Ah, there it is.

The team follows Howie to the Stairway to Heaven shrine.

HOWIE LONG

I remember the day Chuck first brought this in. What a speech. This thing's been good to the Scarlet Hawks, huh? Well, before you guys came along.

Laughter, kind of.

HOWIE LONG

Need to get you guys that W.

PYNIE

We'll get it.

HOWIE LONG

Let's hope, right. You guys are getting big time now.

WAXIE

Why, what do you mean?

HOWIE LONG

They've heard of you all the way out in California.

WAXIE

Come on, what are you talking about?

HOWIE LONG

The record. Losing all these games. Guys in the locker room are giving me an earful.

FITCH

Serious?

HOWIE LONG

Maybe I should come back and take a few snaps.

DOYLE

That'd be sweet.

HOWIE LONG

Don't know if it'd help. You guys need a lot more than that.

Uncomfortable laughter. From the back -

ATWOOD

Fuck you.

Everyone looks back.

WAXIE

Take it easy... we're just goofing around here.

HOWIE LONG

I'm just busting on you guys.

ATWOOD

I don't care. Fuck you. Fuck the fuckin' Raiders. Fuck number 75.

WAXIE

Whoa!!

ATWOOD

And fuck that stupid album.

Atwood storms out.

74

INT. COACH CORBIN'S OFFICE - EVENING

74

MR. WHITTORF, head booster, is joined by other "concerned" townies.

MR. WHITTORF

Coach, you got a minute?

COACH CORBIN

Not really, but sit down anyway. To what do I owe this honors?

MR. WHITTORF

You're losing the team, Coach.

COACH CORBIN

The only thing we're losing are games.

MR. WHITTORF

That's very clear. But the conduct of the team.

COACH CORBIN

Mr. Long can suck my left nuts.

MR. WHITTORF

It goes beyond the incident today.

COACH CORBIN

What do you want Whittorf?

MR. WHITTORF

Coach, you've had an incredible run. You are legend in this town. Hell, I could get a statue for you in the town park tomorrow. I just hate to see your legacy get tarnished.

COACH CORBIN

No one can take anything away from me.

TOWNIE

You told me yourself it's not how you start, it's how you finish. Do you really want to be remembered for coaching the worst team in state history?

COACH CORBIN

I don't look at us like that.

MR. WHITTORF

It may not be up to you.

COACH CORBIN

Whittorf, you always were a soft sack. You want me out of here you're going to have to drag me out. Now, you may kindly remove yourselves from my office.

75 EXT. QUARRIES - NIGHT

75

Fitch, Pynie and Atwood hang out on one of the ledges that overlook the quarry.

PYNIE

Friday afternoon, let's meet and go over speeches. I got some good lines I stole from *Platoon*.

ATWOOD

I can't. I got something to do.

FITCH

It's game day. What do you have going on?

ATWOOD

Jack-off, I got plans.

FITCH

Who is it? Carla? You're meeting Carla, right? You lucky bastard, Carla? God damn -

ATWOOD

I got a job.

PYNIE

We all got a job... and that's get ready for Nipmuc.

Pynie and Fitch high-five.

ATWOOD

No, man. I got a real job.

FITCH

How can you have a job when we have Nipmuc?

ATWOOD

I think I'm quitting.

PYNIE

You can't quit.

ATWOOD

Why not?

FITCH

Because we're a team. We're in this together.

PYNIE

What's the job?

Atwood shifts uncomfortably.

ATWOOD

Down at, uh... KFC.

PYNIE

Knights of Columbus? I didn't know they paid.

ATWOOD

Kentucky Fried Chicken.

FITCH

You're giving up on the team to work a deep fryer?

ATWOOD

It's time to grow up, man.

Atwood walks to the edge and hurls a rock into the water below. A distant splash.

ATWOOD

Jesus, these were supposed to be the salad days. Playing ball, getting the hot chicks, sitting at the cool table at lunch. Sort of that one great time in life before you graduate and reality kicks in. Reality starts early, I guess.

FITCH

So you're just gonna quit and work with your stupid cousin?

ATWOOD

He's not as dumb as he sounds.

FITCH

Bullshit. I talked to my brother. He said the only thing Burnsie contributed to the '81 team was during the Canton game he faked an injury because Milford was out of time outs. The guy came off the bench and rolled around like a little girl to stop the clock.

PYNIE

Dave, it's Nipmuc! We'll win.

ATWOOD

No, you won't.

FITCH

That's just great, man. Go ahead and quit. Maybe if you work hard enough they'll make you shift manager.

ATWOOD

What about you, Fitchie?

FITCH

What about me?

ATWOOD

You signed up for a diplomat and they sent you to the Post Office. What does that tell you?

FITCH

Well, it doesn't mean I pussy out and quit.

Fitch stalks off -

76

INT. JANET'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

76

B-52s on the stereo. Fitch is so distracted that he doesn't notice Janet standing near him with a big envelope in her hand.

FITCH

This whole town's going crazy. If I don't get out of here soon it's going to bring me down with it.

JANET

I got my ticket out.

Janet holds up the envelope.

FITCH

What's that?

JANET

My early acceptance to Emerson's Visual Arts Program.

FITCH

What? That's awesome!

He rushes over and gives her a huge hug.

JANET

It's a really cool program, too. They only accept around fifty kids so it's wicked hard to get into.

FITCH

I didn't even know you applied.

JANET

I didn't plan it. I kind of owe it to you.

FITCH

What'd I do?

JANET

I guess I always thought I'd just be bumming around the rest of my life like my mom, but the way you kept talking about Georgetown and DC and... I don't know, I thought I'd give it a shot.

Fitch studies her. He can't mask his disappointment from not having heard from Georgetown.

JANET

You okay?

FITCH
 What? Yeah, I'm fine.
 (smiles)
 Congratulations.

He hugs her but his expression belies his true feelings.

77 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY 77

Guys getting ready for the game. Fitch glances over at Atwood's locker -- he's not there.

Fitch and Pynie share a look.

78 EXT. MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL FIELD - NIGHT 78

Fitch and Pynie lead the team out for warm-ups.

COACH CORBIN
 Santos! Get up front with the other
 Captains.
 (to team)
 Mr. Atwood has decided not to see
 this season out with all of us.

79 EXT. MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL FIELD - LATER 79

Fourth quarter. The scoreboard reads: **Milford 14 - Nipmuc 13.**

UP IN THE BOOTH

Ed Thompson breaks it down -

ED THOMPSON
 One minute to go with Milford
 clinging to a one point lead. Sixty-
 odd seconds from what could be their
 first win in four years. Let's see
 if they can't screw this one up.

DOWN ON THE FIELD

A half-back toss pushes Nipmuc over midfield. The running back squeezes out of bounds to stop the clock.

ON THE SIDELINES

Fitch, coaches, players nervously eye the scoreboard.

COACH CORBIN

Keep them in the centers of the field! Don't let'em bounce it outside!

Nipmuc runs off tackle, chews up more yards.

Forty seconds left. A slant to the tight end moves them to the 28 yard line.

Hurry-up offense. A quick snap and handoff to their bruising fullback. Down to the 25.

ED THOMPSON (V.O.)

This is it. Here come's the kicking team to try and win it.

ON THE SIDELINES

COACH MAYNES

Kicking team! Kicking team!

Fitch and crew race onto the field.

OUT ON THE FIELD

Time winding down. Nipmuc lines up. The ball is snapped, kick up, and it's -

WIDE RIGHT!

Bedlam. Milford celebrates like they've just won the Super Bowl -

ED THOMPSON (V.O.)

A penalty on the field.

The referee makes the signal -

ED THOMPSON (V.O.)

Twelve men on the field. Nipmuc will move five yards forward and get another shot at the win. If there's ever a way to lose, trust me folks, this Milford team will find it.

This time, Nipmuc lines up for the kick and ices it.
Game over: **Nipmuc 16 - Milford 14.**

The Milford sideline is stunned.

Fitch hangs his head.

STICKMAN
It's not your fault, man.

FITCH
I'm supposed to count the number of
guys on the field.

Coach Corbin addresses the team.

COACH CORBIN
Tough one to swallow, boys. Put it
aside. We got one more game. Let's
have a good week of practice and
finish out strong.

But even Coach Corbin can't mask his true feelings --
this season is over.

81 INT. FITCH'S KITCHEN - DAY

81

Fitch comes in through the cellar door and immediately
heads for the stairs leading up to his room.

MRS. FITCH
There's something for you on the
table.

FITCH
Oh yeah?

MRS. FITCH
Came in the mail.

Fitch stops, looks back. He rushes over to the table and
ruffles through the mail until he comes to -

An envelope with Georgetown's logo.

Mrs. Fitch watches anxiously nearby. A beat as Fitch
stares at the letter, his fate. Then -

He tears it in half and throws it back on the pile.

MRS. FITCH
Jimmy! What are you -?

FITCH
It's a rejection, ma. Acceptance
letters don't come in thin envelopes.

It's a party with Janet's friends, mostly dressed in black. Fitch is totally out of place. And totally miserable.

GOTH GIRL

What station do you listen to?

FITCH

BCN.

GOTH GIRL'S FRIEND

(with disdain)

Classic rock.

Fitch chugs his drink, grimaces.

FITCH

Is there anything else here other than wine coolers?

GOTH GIRL

Do you like Robert Smith?

FITCH

The founder of Jamestown? Yeah, he's a pretty cool guy.

Fitch looks over to the bar where Janet talks to FRANKLIN, a kid so preppy he hangs out with the freaks.

GOTH GIRL

He's lead singer for *The Cure*.

FITCH

I know, I was kidding.

A SKINNY KID who has been listening in is dying to say something -

SKINNY KID

Tell me if this is funny -- pulling someone's sweats off before gym and rubbing Icy Hot on their testicles. Is that funny?

FITCH

I'm going to get another *Bartles & James*. Anybody need one?

Fitch beats it out of there over to the plywood bar.

JANET

Having fun?

FITCH

It's all right.

JANET

You know Franklin, right?

FITCH

Yeah, we're in Brucato's history class together.

FRANKLIN

So you guys got one more game?

FITCH

Yeah, against St. John's.

FRANKLIN

Ouch.

FITCH

Not going to be easy.

FRANKLIN

You can say that again.

FITCH

I already said it.

Franklin turns to Janet -

FRANKLIN

You know what we should do? We should all go to the game. It'd be a great commentary on this fucked up world. We could bring pom-poms and root-root for the home team.

FITCH

Yeah, that'd be hilarious.

FRANKLIN

We could give our booster club a name: The Nihilists. The Scarlet Nihilists.

FITCH

And maybe you could wear that faggy Polo. A red one, though.

JANET

Don't be a jerk.

FITCH

I'm a jerk?

FRANKLIN

I'll let you guys argue alone.

FITCH

Dude, your name's "Frank". Just because your dad came into a little money doesn't mean you can go around pretending you're from Wellesley.

Franklin walks off.

JANET

What's the matter with you?

FITCH

You think I don't know what a nihilist is? I'm in the A.P. classes, too, you know!

JANET

That's not what I'm talking about.

FITCH

Everyone's a frickin' expert.
(out loud)
Yeah, you're all going to be poets and philosophers and painters. I got news for you: learn how to flip burgers.

Everyone stares at Fitch.

JANET

What's your problem?

FITCH

Nothing. I love getting football advice from band geeks.

JANET

You're that worried about the game? So you lose. What's the big deal?

Fitch studies her, then the room.

FITCH

Maybe I'm not used to being around losers as much as you.

JANET

Asshole.

FITCH

Hey, I didn't want to come to your little seance in the first place.

JANET

Then leave if you don't like it.

FITCH

Sure thing. Getting sick on these wine coolers anyway.

Fitch stumbles out of the party.

83

EXT. KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN - NIGHT

83

Atwood takes his break in the back.

FITCH

Nice shirt. You singing in Mr. Moffet's barbershop quartet now?

(singing)

"Good night ladies, good night ladies..."

ATWOOD

Bite me.

FITCH

How's work?

ATWOOD

I'll never eat chicken tenders again.

FITCH

You coming back?

ATWOOD

Nah.

FITCH

Why not?

ATWOOD

What's the point?

FITCH

Because we got one game left and we have to play it.

ATWOOD

St. John's? They're nationally ranked, man.

FITCH

As good as anyone if we're going to win a game.

Atwood studies him -

ATWOOD

Hey man, I'm sorry about that Post Office crack. You're not one of us. You're smart, gonna get out this dump and do something with yourself -

FITCH

I got rejected by Georgetown.

(BEAT)

FITCH

I used to make fun of all the *shitons* crawling around this town talking about the old days. I'm starting to think in ten years I'm gonna be that guy.

ATWOOD

Don't be an idiot.

FITCH

Seriously, in four years we can't win one god damn game? How the hell am I going to do in the real frickin' world when you can't even beat Nipmuc.

ATWOOD

It's football, dude. It's not the real world.

(points to KFC)

This is the real world.

FITCH

Might as well face facts...

ATWOOD

What facts? Hey, you're going away next year, man. One way or another.

FITCH

We'll see.

A Mustang squeals into the parking lot, and a rowdy bunch of St. John's players pour out.

FITCH

Just what we needed. Punks have nothing better to do?

ATWOOD

I should get back to work.

FITCH

Want me to hang around, just in case?

Atwood laughs -

ATWOOD

What are you going to do, tough guy?

(beat)

Don't worry about it, I'll be fine.

Without the letterman jacket, these
guys look right through you, like
you're not even there.

Fitch watches Atwood suck it up and return to work.

84 EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - AFTERNOON 84

Cold and rainy. New England at its worst -- brown/gray
and dreary. Drills seems to be without any zest.
Coach's whistles echo over the field.

85 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY 85

Fitch looks up from his lunch at Janet who sits on the
other side of the room. They catch eyes, but she quickly
averts his gaze.

86 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY 86

Coach Corbin replays film from last year's St. John's
game. Not much to say here -

COACH CORBIN

Somehow we got to, got to find a way
to contain O'Mansky...

O'Mansky runs untouched for a touchdown.

87 EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - AFTERNOON 87

Almost dark, sun sets early this time of year. Coach
Corbin yells to the team -

COACH CORBIN

Coach Maynes, "last senior hit day."

COACH MAYNES

You heard the coach! Seniors, one
long line on me. Everyone else, two
columns spread out that way.

The team lines up in two rows, creating a narrow path.

WAXIE

Get your last licks in, Seniors!

One-by-one the seniors run between the columns taking token hits from everyone they pass. The whole thing lacks luster.

88 INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

88

Fitch and Pynie head for their table.

PYNIE

We got to make sure everyone knows to
be on time for -

(sees something)

What the fuck?

A group of guys are sitting in their seats.

FITCH

Who is that, the cross-country team?

PYNIE

Hell no.

Pynie goes over and literally pulls the chair out from under SOME KID. He then flips his tray onto the ground. The OTHER RUNNERS beat feet.

PYNIE

We may suck but I can still kick all
your asses!

Fitch just shakes his head.

89 INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

89

Fitch walks in a daze when -

The second bell rings. He snaps to and sprints through the mobs crowding the lockers. His eyes focus on the far end of the hallway -

There she is, staring back at him as usual. He's actually going to make it this time. But then -

He pulls up, starts walking. Even Mrs. Boberg is perplexed. It's self-sabotage. The third and final bells sounds. He'll never make it. The door is already close to locking -

She stops it, keeps the door slightly ajar. Mrs. Boberg walks to her desk and begins taking attendance.

Fitch, clearly late, walks in and finds his seat.

MRS. BOBERG

Fitch, James...

Here it comes.

MRS. BOBERG

... present. Mr. Fitch, if you don't try to make class on time, you take away all of my fun. Please don't do that again.

90

EXT. JANET'S HOUSE - NIGHT

90

Janet opens her front door. Fitch stands in the cold under a sharp porch light.

FITCH

Hey.

JANET

Hey.

FITCH

Can you talk?

Janet looks back.

JANET

Some people are over...

(beat)

Let me get my coat.

She dashes inside and returns a few seconds later with a big Army jacket. They sit down on the stoop.

FITCH

I, uh, just wanted to apologize. You know, say sorry I was an asshole and all. I don't know. I'm an idiot, I guess.

JANET

You're not an idiot.

FITCH

Sometimes.

Awkward beat.

FITCH

It's been weird lately. We're kind of different, you know.

JANET

No we're not.

FITCH

Come on, you like subtitled movies, I like *The Three Stooges*. You hate my friends, I hate your friends -

JANET

Even Stevens, right?

FITCH

- you're going away to Emerson and I'm... I don't know what I'm doing.

JANET

What happened to Georgetown?

FITCH

Nothing happened, that's the problem!

JANET

I'm sorry, Jimmy.

FITCH

Ah, come on, don't turn this into sympathy hour. All we need is a couple of violins playing, or something.

Janet smiles.

FITCH

Hey, I was a jerk. I got frustrated about getting stuck in this town and I took it out on you. I'm sorry.

JANET

It's okay.

FITCH

Seriously, though? It never entered my mind that I wouldn't get the hell out of Milford come summer.

JANET

You'll get out.

FITCH

Maybe.

(beat)

Anyway...

JANET

You want to come inside? Just a couple of us listening to records you hate.

FITCH
 Sounds like a blast, but I think I'll
 pass. The game starts early
 tomorrow.

JANET
 You're playing on Thanksgiving?

FITCH
 How can you not know we play on
 Thanksgiving?

JANET
 I don't know.

FITCH
 You see, that's how different we are.
 I'll see you around.

Janet watches him walk off.

JANET
 Good luck tomorrow!

FITCH
 We'll need it.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE OF THANKSGIVING MORNING

The sun creeps up over the horizon...
 Coffee percolates on the stove top...
 Someone chips away at the ice on their front steps...
 Canned cranberry sauce jiggles to rest on a dish...
 A car idles in the driveway as the engine warms...
 A turkey is stuffed with corn bread and sausage...

91 EXT. COACH CORBIN'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

91

Coach Corbin comes out of his front door and sees -
 Atwood standing in his driveway. Hands in his pockets,
 collar pulled up.

COACH CORBIN
 David. Everything okay?

ATWOOD
 I messed up, coach.

Coach Corbin motions to get in his car. But he doesn't turn over the engine. Their breath clouds the car.

ATWOOD

I never should have quit. It's really pissing me off. I don't know what to do.

A beat while Coach Corbin collects his thoughts.

COACH CORBIN

David, I'm going to tell you something. Earlier this year, after one of those bad losses -- hells they were all bad -- I wrote out a letter of resignations. I didn't submit it, but I really wanted to. Quitting is a real hard habit to break.

(beat)

David, I can't let you back on the team. It wouldn't be fair to the other guys.

ATWOOD

Okay.

COACH CORBIN

We all make mistakes. It's what you do afterwards that matters. If you want to come to the game, I'll let you stand with the team. But it's up to them if they want you there.

92 INT. LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

92

Everyone's getting ready. Atwood walks in and the place goes quiet.

ATWOOD

I, uh, brought something for you guys. I stole it from *Strawberries*.

He pulls out a CD -- Led Zeppelin IV.

ATWOOD

That shitty record's lost its magic.

Fitch goes over to the shrine and smashes the album on the ground. Everyone laughs.

The soft chords of "Stairway to Heaven" fills the room...

93 INT. BUS - MORNING 93

"Stairway to Heaven" plays over the entire sequence.

The team rolls through a deserted downtown.

They pass by the local Dunkin' Donuts where an early riser takes a break from his dozen Munchkins to -

Chuck them the bird.

94 EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING 94

As the bus pulls off the exit, the team sees a giant banner spanning the road -

Home of St. John's Redmen

95 EXT. ST. JOHN'S PREP - MORNING 95

The bus pulls onto the campus. Scores of kids stand on the embankments. They hold signs, shout out curses, pelt the bus with snowballs.

These people are fired up.

96 EXT. ST. JOHN'S FIELD - MORNING 96

It's more like a stadium. Full, concrete risers replace the standard aluminum bleachers.

Everything about this place is twice as big as Milford -- the players, size of the band and cheerleaders, even the concession looks like something out of Fenway Park.

The team warms up on the snowy field. They can't help but feel a little awestruck. And nervous.

97 INT. LOCKER ROOM UNDERNEATH BLEACHERS - MORNING 97

The team mills about, ready for the go-ahead. The referee sticks his head in.

REFEREE

Five minutes, coach.

Coach Corbin nods.

COACH CORBIN

Everyone, gather up. I've been, uh, thinking all week what to say, but, um...

He studies their faces. Lots of pimples, but not a lot of confidence. Deflated -

COACH CORBIN

I got no more cliché. One hundred and ten percents, play within your head, don't let your season end this way... it's all bullshits.

(beat)

We're not very good. That team across the way is better than us through and throughs, all the way up to the head coach. Most of you are thinking we're going to lose today. It's a good chance we get blown out. Luckily, most of your parents had the good sense to stay home. Gandolfi, I saw your ma out there. She must not have anything else to do.

GANDOLFI

It's an excuse to drink beer before noon.

COACH CORBIN

So why play? It's freezing cold and we should be home stuffing ourselves on turkey and mincemeat pie.

(pauses)

But there is a reason and it's not some crap about a love of the game. You play because you want to win. Because it's probably your one chance in life to look someone in the face and say, "I beat you." I beat you, you son of a bitch, I beat you.

The team hangs on his every word.

COACH CORBIN

Four years you seniors showed up for practice, hump days, double sessions. And we never won. Today, it won't matter what it says on the scoreboard at the end of the game. Don't go home ashamed. We've shit the bed for a long time, but that's what makes this game great -- down fifty points you can still get your licks in. They may win the game but god damnit don't let them beat you. Now go out there and knock someone's fucking head off!

A rush of emotion as the team jumps out of their seats, fired up, shouting, ready to lay someone out.

Snow, snow, snow.

ED THOMPSON (V.O.)

A frigid day at Memorial Field as the undefeated St. John's Redmen take on the winless Scarlet Hawks of Milford. This place has more amenities than Sullivan Stadium. A lot of empty seats on the visitor's side for those of you on your way to the game.

The Referee meets the captains for the coin toss.

REFEREE

Milford, call it in the air.

PYNIE

Heads.

The Referee catches it -

REFEREE

Heads it is. Your choice.

PYNIE

We want to -

FITCH

Defer.

Pynie looks at him like he's crazy.

PYNIE

What are you doing?

FITCH

I want first licks.

ST. JOHN'S CAPTAIN

We'll receive.

Everyone shakes hands and the kick team sprints onto the field. Fitch calls out to them -

FITCH

Huddle up, on me. Tiago, make sure they can return it.

He looks everyone in the eye. The home band is so loud he has to shout.

FITCH

Right here! Right fucking now. Make sure they know who you are.

The kicking team breaks and lines up.

UP IN THE BOOTH

Ed Thompson downs a gulp of whiskey.

ED THOMPSON

And... we're underway!

DOWN ON THE FIELD

Tiago boots a deep ball to the one-yard line. Fitch and crew sprint down the field like madmen.

A linebacker has an angle on Fitch and squares him up. The hit is ferocious. Both players let out howls. Fitch's helmet flies off.

But he keeps going -

Fitch tumbles in the snow but quickly gets back on his feet in time to see the return man coming at him.

With no helmet, he launches himself and drives the player into the snow.

ON THE HAWK SIDELINE

The entire team reacts to the hit.

BACK ON THE FIELD

Fitch, blood streaming from his nose, makes his way to the sideline. Everyone is fired up. Someone hands him his helmet -

Pynie.

FITCH

Your turn.

Pynie smiles and heads out to the huddle.

ON THE SIDELINE

Atwood yells out his support.

ATWOOD

Watch your contain!

OUT ON THE FIELD

The quarterback runs a naked bootleg and angles for the first down marker. He just barely makes it before -

Mac-A-Doobie pops him and he goes flying out of bounds.
The kid springs to his feet and jaws at the umpire -

QUARTERBACK

Come on, ref!

REFEREE

Clean hit, 12. It was a clean hit.

MAC-A-DOOBIE

You don't want to get popped, run out
of bounds faster.

IN THE MILFORD HUDDLE

Pynie addresses the defense.

PYNIE

These rich pansies don't want to get
hit. They don't like it. Zone blitz
marine.

(to Santos)

Knock him on his ass.

St. John's comes to the line in a split out set. Santos
creeps up towards the weak-side end like he's coming in
for coverage. On the snap -

He veers into the backfield, hard. The quarterback never
sees him coming.

Santos lays a vicious hit and the ball comes loose.
Milford jumps on it. Their first break in the game.

MILFORD ON OFFENSE

Doyle's driving the team with a series of off-tackle
power runs and underneath routes.

ED THOMPSON (O.S.)

And Milford is showing some success
against this vaunted St. John's
defense. The running game is finding
holes -

A Guy Niro run pushes them to the five yard line.

They line up in a tight formation, play action, quick
pass to Mac-A-Doobie in a seam -

ED THOMPSON (O.S.)

Touchdown, Hawks! They jump out to
an early lead... how about that!
Someone's come to play...

KICK-OFF

Even in the snow, Tiago sends this one out the back of the end zone for a touchback.

ON THE MILFORD SIDELINES

Coach Corbin upbraids Waxie -

COACH CORBIN

Coach, why aren't we doing on-side kicks? They're a better team, Coach. Start taking chances.

OVER BY THE BENCH

Fitch addresses his kick team.

FITCH

Next score we're gonna try a pooch, so don't give it away -

His eye catches something -

UP IN THE CROWD

Janet sits all by herself. Wrapped in an oversized Army surplus coat, she looks totally out of place. She waves meekly at him.

Fitch shoots her a "what are you doing here" gesture. She just smiles and shrugs. Doesn't matter. She's here.

99

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

99

The St. John's offense is getting first downs, but they don't come easy. On one play, a pulling guard leads the running back on a toss sweep.

Gandolfi comes up to face the guard, but doesn't take him head on (you wouldn't blame him when you look at the size difference). But by ducking under the block -

The running back is allowed to scamper outside for an easy eleven yard gain.

Coach Corbin is irate -

COACH CORBIN

Get him out! Stephan, get Gandolfi out of there.

Stephan runs onto the field.

STEPHAN

Gandolfi, I'm in.

Gandolfi doesn't move.

STEPHAN

Dude, seriously.

Stephan throws his arms up in frustration.

COACH CORBIN

Time out!

Coach Corbin stalks onto the field. He grabs Gandolfi by the facemask.

COACH CORBIN

You run around a block again and you won't play another down. Now get off the field.

IN THE STANDS

GANDOLFI'S MOM lowers her Bud tall boy (in a paper bag) to watch her son sit on the bench.

IN THE DEFENSIVE HUDDLE

Stephan doesn't know where to stand.

PYNIE

Seagull, max pressure. Ready...

TEAM

Break.

STEPHAN

Pynie, what do I do?

PYNIE

See number twelve?

STEPHAN

Yeah.

PYNIE

Hit him.

STEPHAN

Where should I line up?

PYNIE

Wherever you want to.

Stephan stands awkwardly somewhere between the linebackers and line. On the snap, his head just swivels around at all the action.

But he does see an opening in the line and runs into it.
He chases the quarterback out of the pocket.

Stephan dives for the big hit, but instead is dragged
around like a gnat for a painfully long time until Pynie
is able to get there and help bring the quarterback down -

UP IN THE BOOTH

Ed Thompson scans his notes -

ED THOMPSON
Who the heck is number 37?
(pronounces name
incorrectly)
Stephan Sannacandro. His first sack
of the year. First anything of the
year.

ON THE SIDELINES

Coach Corbin yells out to the team -

COACH CORBIN
Listen to me, everyone plays. All I
ask is that you hit someone. On
every play, from whistle to whistle.
Now, who wants in?

A scrawny kid is the first to step forward.

COACH CORBIN
Get your ass out there, son.

He shouts out to Coach Maynes -

COACH CORBIN
Coach Maynes, everyone plays.

COACH MAYNES
I'm on it, Coach.
(to team)
All right, you want in, you stick by
my side. Come on, line up.

A group of kids follow around Coach Maynes waiting for
their call.

The snow is really coming down...

A real slugfest on the line...

Long passes are knocked down or come up short...

The field is white except for the muddy line down the center...

Waxie yelling out support...

WAXIE

Get your money's worth out there!
Hit somebody, anybody!

Power runs and short yardage...

A Milford sideline rotating guys in...

101

MONTAGE ENDS

101

Another St. John's toss sweep, the same one Gandolfi got in trouble for. This time it's Stephan -

Who steps in, shoulder forward, and takes on the guard who has to outweigh him by 100 lbs.

The poor kid's toothpick legs crumble on the hit. He is absolutely crushed but -

By taking on the block, he successfully turns the running back inside where he is quickly corralled by Santos.

Stephan doesn't get up. The big Guard bends down to see if he is okay. He even offers a hand up -

But Guy Niro shoves the Guard out of the way -

GUY NIRO

Get out of here, guy.

REFEREE

Easy 28.

GUY NIRO

We don't need no charity.

Guy Niro implores Stephan -

GUY NIRO

Come on, get up, guy.

STEPHAN

(delirious)

Dude...

REFEREE

Are you hurt, 37?

GUY NIRO

He's not hurt. Get up, Stephan.

He actually pronounces his name correctly.

STEPHAN
Dude, that fricking killed.

GUY NIRO
I know. Don't let them see you hurt.
You can do it.

Stephan struggles to his feet with Guy Niro's help.

GUY NIRO
Come on, you got it.

STEPHAN
Wow, dude...

GUY NIRO
He's got it, he's got it. We're
fine, ref. Ain't nobody hurt here,
guy. Nobody got hurt!

Guy Niro is manic about it. He is literally holding Stephan up as they make it to the sidelines. He waves his free arm to rally his teammates.

A few come forward, help out. Soon, Stephan is in the air, sitting on their shoulder pads like Caesar returning from a victorious campaign.

The big Guard just watches with a confused (worried?) look on his face.

The Milford sidelines cheer him on. Stephan pumps his fist, weakly.

Coach Maynes grabs a replacement for Stephan -

COACH MAYNES
Get in there -

But Gandolfi shoves him aside and runs onto the field.

102 ON THE FIELD

102

St. John's runs a counter play. There is a brief hole but Gandolfi fills it and absolutely sticks the guy.

No celebration. Gandolfi simply turns, walks back to his position, and gets ready for the next play.

He looks like he wants to kill someone. It doesn't go unnoticed.

103 EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

103

The scoreboard reads: **St. John's 10 - Milford 7**

Doyle drives the offense down inside the ten.

UP IN THE BOOTH

ED THOMPSON

Tough call here on fourth down with
time running out in the half.

ON THE SIDELINES

The coaches confer.

WAXIE

You said earlier, Coach, we got to
take chances.

COACH CORBIN

You're right. Let's go for it.
(pulls Sanders in)
I-right, z-slant.

Sanders runs the play in.

ED THOMPSON (V.O.)

Gutsy call by Coach Corbin. He's
decided to go for it.

OUT ON THE FIELD

Doyle breaks the huddle. The crowd and band noise are
deafening.

DOYLE

Down, set! Hut! Hut -

The ball is snapped. He looks left but Mac-a-Doobie is
blanketed by the linebacker.

Doyle improvises and rolls out back to right like a naked
bootleg. Lot of white snow and no defenders.

ON THE MILFORD SIDELINE

Everyone sees it developing and starts shouting.

ATWOOD

Go, go, go!!

ON THE GOAL LINE

Doyle angles for the cone. A St. John's safety angles
for him. It's going to be close.

Doyle dives for the corner, meets the safety in mid-air,
and -

Comes up one foot short.

Time runs out in the half. St. John's celebrates and
runs off the field. Milford is stunned.

ON THE MILFORD SIDELINE

The offense comes slinking back.

No one makes a move to go into the locker room. They
watch the St. John's players giddily run off the field.

Guy Niro can't hold it in -

GUY NIRO

Fuck those guys! We're winning this
fucking game.

Total dejection -

FITCH

Shut up, guy.

GUY NIRO

Guy, I'm serious. We're winning, you
hear me?

Fitch grabs some snow and launches it at Guy Niro.

FITCH

Yeah, I heard you. Just shut up, all
right?

Guy Niro throws a snowball back.

GUY NIRO

You shut up, guy.

FITCH

Guy, huh? Enough.

GUY NIRO

You enough -

BLAM, he's cracked with another snowball from -

ATWOOD

(smiling)
Got a problem, guy?

GUY NIRO

Guy, that's some serious bullshit
there. I mean -

And he launches a snowball back. Moments, then it's a total melee. Snowballs are flying everywhere.

WAXIE

Hey, stop grab-assing and let's bring it inside!

Coach Corbin stops him from intervening.

COACH CORBIN

Let'em go.

WAXIE

Coach, we need to run some things up on the board.

COACH CORBIN

We're fine. Just keep doing what we're doing. We'll be fine.

Waxie studies him -- he's either totally lost it or in complete control. Hard to tell.

WAXIE

Okay, coach.

Coach Corbin stares happily up at the snowflakes fluttering to earth. Peaceful.

104 EXT. HOME LOCKER ROOM - LATER

104

The St. John's team emerges from the warmed room. Their breath clouds the air. Lot of confidence.

But then the Big Tackle stops, stares at the field where -

The Hawks kick-return team waits for them. Judging by the snow accumulated on their helmets and pads, they've been there a while.

QUARTERBACK

Idiots couldn't find the locker room? They're gonna be frozen through.

BIG TACKLE

Maybe.

105 MONTAGE OF THE SECOND HALF

105

It's a back-and-forth game. Not a ton of scoring but plenty of hitting.

ON MILFORD'S SIDE

Waxie prowls along the bench, exhorting his players.

WAXIE

I need rushers! I need rushers! I
need rushers!!

Coach Corbin watches the play develop -

COACH CORBIN

Screen!! Screen!! Screen!!!

ON THE ST. JOHN'S SIDE

The team realizes they're in a fight and Milford isn't
going to go away easily.

ST. JOHN'S COACH

Guys, play your game. Don't get
caught up in the shenanigans. We
just have to execute.

OUT ON THE FIELD

St. John's hits a long pass for a touchdown. Now they're
up by 20-17. Time is down to five minutes remaining.

106 EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

106

Coach Maynes yells at his linemen.

COACH MAYNES

This is it, gentlemen. There are no
more games. There are no practices.
This is the last time you'll put a
helmet on. Leave nothing, you hear
me? Leave nothing! You only got a
few minutes left. Make the most of
them.

OUT ON THE FIELD

Doyle inches the team within field goal range.

UP IN THE BOOTH

ED THOMPSON

The Scarlet Hawks are playing their
hearts out today. They came to play
with nothing to lose and they're
playing like a contender.

DOWN ON THE FIELD

The Hawks line up for a field goal.

ED THOMPSON (V.O.)
They're bringing out Tiago to try to
tie this game.

It's a low snap, bobbled.

STICKMAN
Fire! Fire!!

Stickman checks down to a pass now that the kick is
impossible. He lamely tries to lateral it to Tiago who
has dashed towards the sideline -

The "pass" is picked off by a St. John's defender who
takes it the other way for a sure touchdown.

ED THOMPSON (V.O.)
No! No! No!!

Except Fitch isn't giving up.

FITCH
Hell no.

Fitch gives pursuit. Passing the referee -

FITCH
Get on your horse, ref, I'm catching
this asshole.

Fitch has the angle. He and the player with the ball are
set to converge somewhere around the goal line. It's
going to be close -

Fitch finally reaches the St. John's player around the
three yard line, leans forward, and -

Punches the ball out of the player's arms. The ball
rolls out through the back of the end zone for a -

REFEREE
Touch -
(catches breath)
- back!

Huge gasps of cold air, like razor blades in the lungs.

FITCH
Now, let's get that -

Fitch vomits all over the place. Wipes his mouth.

FITCH
- get that field goal back!

ON THE MILFORD SIDELINE

They love it. Fitch's play has energized them.

DOYLE

Let's go offense!

UP IN THE BOOTH

Ed Thompson is beside himself.

ED THOMPSON

For all you "fans" sitting at home
stuffing your face, shame on you.
Because you're missing a heck of a
game. And don't any of you dare tell
me that you were here. Because I'm
looking around, and I'm writing down
names! Joe Pilla -- nope. Mike
Cinadella -- not here. Skipper
DeCapua, Tony Farese, Jimmy Freeley --
shame on you. Shame on all of you.

OUT ON THE FIELD

Doyle in command of the huddle.

DOYLE

Two minutes. We've practiced this
all year. Try and get out of bounds.
We only got one time-out.

Milford breaks for line. A short pass to Mac-A-Doobie
gets them nine. The offense hurries up to the line for a
quick snap -

Handoff to Sanders who rumbles for five more.

Another quick snap, slant to Mac-A-Doobie. He's a
machine out there. They cross mid-field.

One minute, thirty seconds...

A bobbled snap, broken play. Doyle is going down and at
the last second he under-hands it to Gandolfi, who has a
lot of running room in front of him.

A DB angles for a hit but Gandolfi runs out of bounds on
the St. John's side before he can get to him.

The DB decides to hit someone anyway and clocks Stephan
who was merely trailing the play. The poor kid goes
flying.

It's a cheap shot that deserves and receives a shot back -

Gandolfi comes back and pops the culprit right in front of the St. John's bench. Pushing and shoving, Gandolfi against the entire visiting team now.

ON THE MILFORD SIDE

The team rushes onto the field to defend their teammate. It takes all the coaches have to hold them back. Waxie tackles two players. Coach Corbin holds out his arms to corral several others.

COACH CORBIN

No, no, no, no, no!!!

ACROSS THE WAY

Gandolfi is in a full-on melee. His helmet is off and he swings madly at the mob enveloping him. He knocks over the Gatorade table, steps up onto the bench and kicks at whoever comes near. But they soon overcome him.

MILFORD SIDELINE

Can only watch helplessly as Gandolfi gets worked over. And it's a good while before coaches and referees can break it up.

ON THE FIELD

The Referee escorts Gandolfi back to his sideline. Coach Corbin meets them half-way.

REFEREE

Coach, he's gone. He's out of here.

Coach Corbin walks with Gandolfi.

COACH CORBIN

Come on, son.

REFEREE

Get control of your team, coach.

He whips around and gets in his face -

COACH CORBIN

You god damns get control! We're the ones playing a clean game.

Gandolfi pulls off his shoulder pads and walks towards the Milford sideline. His mouth is bleeding, his left eye already swelling shut.

Silence. He passes through the entire team, looks straight ahead. He hops the chain link fence behind the cheerleaders where -

His Mother waits. She tries to throw a blanket around him, but he won't take it. Instead, he snags her paper bag and pulls out a Bud Tall-Boy.

Gandolfi jumps up onto the bleachers with the other spectators and cracks his beer.

GANDOLFI

Let's fucking go, huh!

BACK ON THE FIELD

Milford resumes its final drive. Offsetting personal foul penalties keeps them on the St. John's twenty.

Twenty seconds remaining...

Doyle takes the snap and drops back. Stickman is open over the middle on a crossing route. He hits him in stride. A few juke moves and he's dragged down at the five.

Eleven seconds...

Doyle calls timeout. Their last.

ON THE MILFORD SIDELINE

It's decision time. Doyle and his offense and Fitch and his kicking team look to Coach Corbin -- a choice between going for the tie or taking a shot at the win.

Coach Corbin looks at his players -- beat up, tired, waiting for word what to do.

He then catches eyes with Atwood. Coach Corbin averts his gaze, unable to look him in the eye -

COACH CORBIN

(softly)

Kicking team.

Disappointment, from everyone.

COACH CORBIN

Fake kick, flood left.

Atwood smiles, pulls Fitch aside.

ATWOOD

Get this one, asshole.

UP IN THE BOOTH

Ed Thompson is visibly disappointed.

ED THOMPSON

Oh, no... Coach Corbin has elected to send out the kicking team to go for the tie. Say it ain't so, coach. Games like this one can't end in ties.

OUT ON THE FIELD

Fitch and team break the huddle. The line digs into the slush and mud. St. John's lines up, helmets mere inches apart. Tiago takes his three step drop, eyes up the goal posts. This is it.

The ball is snapped. The holder fakes like it goes over his head when in fact it has been snapped directly to Tiago, who dashes to his left.

The left side of the line collapses, two St. John's defenders barrelling down on Tiago.

Behind them, Mac-A-Doobie slips through the linebackers and cuts his route towards the sideline.

Tiago tries to square up for a pass but there's not a lot of time and barely any footing. He chucks the ball off his back foot as he's driven into the ground.

The pass is behind Mac-A-Doobie who has a linebacker blanketing him in coverage. He reaches back -

But it glances off his shoulder pads and fritters away towards the back of the end zone -

Where Fitch on the trailing route literally picks it off his shoelaces and goes tumbling into the snow.

He pops to his feet, ball in hand, face covered in snow, his mouth agape in utter shock and joy.

The referee signals -

ED THOMPSON (V.O.)

Touchdown!!!!

And the Milford sideline goes nuts.

Bedlam.

Fitch, ball in hand, never stops running. He sprints to the center of the field, his arms out like he's a glider coasting along the sky.

The kicking team sprints after him.

The players on the sideline sprint after him.

Gandolfi leaps from the bleachers and sprints after him.

Atwood catches him on the other thirty yard line, gets a handful of jersey and spins him around to the ground.

And thus begins the massive pileup as player after player after player leaps onto the growing mound of red jerseys.

107 EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

107

The Milford team hugs what few relatives have shown up for the game. Fitch picks Janet up in his arms.

JANET

That was awesome!

Letting her go -

FITCH

I got mud on you.

JANET

It's okay.

FITCH

Why'd you come? Isn't your mom having Thanksgiving?

JANET

Stove Top and powdered mashed potatoes. Food's better at the concession stand.

(beat)

I wanted to see you win.

FITCH

It's just a stupid game.

She smiles, knowing he doesn't mean it. Coach Corbin shouts out to the team -

COACH CORBIN

Let's go, load up!

JANET

I'm so happy for you, Jimmy.

FITCH

I really needed this.

JANET

I know.

They hug again.

FITCH

So you want to hang out tonight? You can come eat at my house if you want.

JANET

Yeah. Yeah, I'll do that.

The team boards the bus. Fitch hangs out the window and waves to Janet. He's beaming. As the bus pulls out of the parking lot, Fitch cranes his neck to get that last glimpse of her...

FITCH (V.O.)

Janet and I stayed together through the summer and part of the fall. Then she met some wannabe painter at Emerson and dumped me.

108 INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

108

No shouting out the windows, no chanting, no raucous displays; everyone's simply too tired. Fitch surveys the bus, at all the smiling but worn out faces -

FITCH (V.O.)

Some of us went onto college and some didn't. Almost everyone came back to Milford, eventually.

ON Pynie -

FITCH (V.O.)

Pynie played a little D-1 ball at Villanova and returned to coach Milford to a string of five straight Super Bowls.

ON Guy Niro -

FITCH (V.O.)

Guy Niro opened a strip club called "Guy's" but it closed down when the cops found out he was dealing coke out the back.

ON Stickman -

FITCH (V.O.)

Stickman worked the lines for the telephone company, got hurt on the job, and now spends all his disability money on scratch tickets and crullers at Dunkin' Donuts.

ON Gandolfi -

FITCH (V.O.)

Gandolfi became a three-time VFW candlestick bowling champ down at Pinz, but never made it on Channel 5 because of the show's no-drinking-during-the-game policy.

ON Atwood -

FITCH (V.O.)

Atwood parlayed the KFC job into an events manager position for the Fougiano Social Club, the site of our 20th reunion. He's been threatening to open his own restaurant for ten years now.

Finally, on Fitch who stares out the window as the sun sits on the horizon through the bare trees.

FITCH (V.O.)

Me, I left for a second-tier school in D.C. and never returned. After failing the first round of the Foreign Service Exam, I set out on a semi-rewarding career in risk management, got married, and started a family.

109 INT. DINING ROOM - THANKSGIVING - PRESENT DAY

109

ADULT FITCH sits at the head of the table. Two of his children are punching each other in the arm. A third covers her face with the napkin.

Fitch's WIFE hurries in with the turkey. Fitch starts carving it up but then he abruptly stops. He sort of stares blankly at the bird.

FITCH (V.O.)

If my wife finds out, I'll deny this to the end. We've had a lot of good times together like our honeymoon, the births of our kids. But that Thanksgiving game against St. John's, that was the greatest day of my life.

A faint smile and he resumes carving.

FITCH (V.O.)

I guess I'm the loser now.

FADE TO BLACK: