

THE G.O.A.T
Season 1, Episode 9
"The Stretch Run"

Written by
Kenneth Quinnell

334 19th St. NE
Washington, D.C. 20002
quinnelk@gmail.com
850-339-4600

TITLE: THE STRETCH RUN

FADE IN.

EXT. WAR MEMORIAL STADIUM, PITTSBURGH - DAY

The Statesmen visit the Pittsburgh Piledrivers at War Memorial Stadium. It's raining, but the sun is out.

Bench coach Craig Glover holds a hand out into the rain.

GLOVER

Won't be much longer now.

Kendricks walks into the dugout and slumps onto the bench. As he walks in, all eyes are on him. Savoy Bishop sits next to him.

BISHOP

You doing okay, Cam?

He doesn't say anything for a moment, then clears his throat. Other than the rain, the dugout is quiet.

CAM

I've been feeling bad for a while.
Really bad. Nothing I can put my
finger on. Nothing I can talk
about. But it's been a struggle.

The rain clears up. Grounds crews run out and start prepping the field for play.

CAM (CONT'D)

But I'm feeling much better now.

He walks over to the bin and picks up a bat. He takes some pretty serious practice swings.

CAM (CONT'D)

I'm gonna be VERY focused on
baseball from here on out.

Everyone stares at him. Some in awe. Some in fear.

CUT TO:

Alvin Huebner walks into the dugout. With him is DOMINGO SANTANA, a Dominican man in his early 20s.

HUEBNER

Hey everybody...

Everybody in the dugout checks out the new guy. Players at the end of the bench stand or lean in to see.

HUEBNER (CONT'D)
This is Domingo Santana. Just up from Roswell. Utility infielder.

SANTANA
I play outfield, too.

HUEBNER
Correction, he plays outfield, too.

Chuckles.

HUEBNER (CONT'D)
You pitch as well?

Laughs.

HUEBNER (CONT'D)
Make him feel at home.

Santana finds a spot on the bench.

CUT TO:

SUPER: First Inning

Kendricks stands at the plate, Bishop is on second. The Pittsburgh pitcher is CHEDWICK. There are two outs and the count is 0-2.

Chedwick winds up, pitches and Kendricks blasts a shot over the right field wall. The Statesmen lead 2-0.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Third Inning

Grady Duhart stands on the mound, talking to Gray and Howell. The game is now 5-2 for Pittsburgh and a runner, FUQUA, stands on first.

DUHART
Sorry, coach, I just don't have it today.

GRAY
Don't worry, we'll get it back.

Duhart runs off the field, while Eddie Parker comes in from the bullpen.

CUT TO:

The batter MANGANIELLO has two strikes. Parker leans back and throws the third strike past Manganiello's flailing bat and the Statesmen get out of the inning.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Fourth Inning

With one out, Kendricks faces Chedwick again. The pitch. Kendricks deposits it in the right field bleachers. Again.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Fifth Inning

Winston Pulsipher faces the new Pittsburgh pitcher, FLAHERTY. Flaherty tries to get a fastball past him, but Pulsipher hits a home run to right center. The score is now 5-4 in favor of the Pittsburgh.

CUT TO:

Kendricks is in the box. Flaherty pitches and Kendricks drives the ball over the left-field wall to tie the game.

CUT TO:

Gus Bennett faces off against the new Pittsburgh pitcher, MILLER. Bennett hits a towering shot to right and the Statesmen lead 6-5.

In the dugout, bench coach Craig Glover leans towards head scout Ferd Langwieler.

GLOVER

In all your years you seen anything like this?

LANGWIELER

No. And to be honest, I'm not sure that I want to see it again.

Glover nods.

CUT TO:

Ronnie Pitts steps up to the plate. Miller throws his last pitch of the game, which Pitts drives over the center field wall. It's now 7-5.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Eighth Inning

Kendricks takes a few practice swings and then steps into the batter's box. The new pitcher, SANE, winds up and faces the same fate as the earlier pitchers. The solo shot to right field makes it 8-5 for the Statesmen.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Ninth Inning

Parker stands on the mound, one out away from the victory. The count is 2-0 to the batter, GORSHIN. Parker throws a sinker and gets Gorshin to ground the ball to Kendrick at first. Kendrick easily fields it and steps on first to seal the victory.

In the dugout, Langwieler walks over to Howell, reading from his clipboard.

LANGWIELER (CONT'D)

That's a first for me.

HOWELL

Parker?

LANGWIELER

Yeah. That was his 20th win on the season.

HOWELL

It was a matter of time.

The new guy, Domingo Santana, speaks up.

SANTANA

Lots of guys win 20 games.

HOWELL

Yeah, but none of them go 20-3, all as a reliever.

Santana IS impressed.

OPENING CREDITS.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

Sen. Bob Gibson, head of the National Cult Readiness Task Force, sits at a desk in a very serious office. The American flag stands proudly to his left.

SEN. GIBSON

I'm Sen. Bob Gibson of the great state of Missouri and I'm here today to talk to you about a very serious subject... cults.

Gibson turns and faces a second CAMERA.

SEN. GIBSON (CONT'D)

You know, when I was a kid, kids did simpler, more innocent things. Like playing marbles or hopscotch. But in today's climate, kids are much more likely to participate in an activity that is NOT a game. Cults.

Gibson pauses for effect.

SEN. GIBSON (CONT'D)

Cults take away what make children children. They deaden the soul. They steal your heart. And we have to stop them. Do your part. Have a conversation with your kids about how "Cults Are NOT Cool."

Gibson smiles into the camera.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Download our free parental guide at Cults Are NOT Cool dot gov.

SUPER: CultsAreNotCool.gov

INT. SPORTS CENTRAL STUDIO

Sports Central starts up with lots of whooshes and flags and sports images and bald eagles and such.

This leads us to the very futuristic and busy Sports Central set. Blue is the dominant color. At the desk are Inesta Morgan and Major Sumrell.

INESTA

Welcome back.

MAJOR

We thank you for watching Sports Central.

INESTA

This is our last show for a week, as we are heading out on vacation.

MAJOR

Inesta has graciously agreed to join me on a trip to Cabo.

Inesta grins.

INESTA

If Major's paying, I'm going.

MAJOR

Ch-ching!

INESTA

Joining us now in the studio is reporter Sharon Alligood who will talk about the USBL playoff picture.

Alligood sits at a third chair pulled up to the news desk.

ALLIGOOD

Thank you for having me.

MAJOR

Good to see you IN the studio for once.

ALLIGOOD

The weather is nicer in here.

Laughter.

INESTA

What should baseball fans be looking to as the season winds down?

ALLIGOOD

Thanks, Inesta. Let's start in the East, where things are pretty clear. The Statesmen are way out in front of everyone else. The Smashers have pulled ahead of Boston and will likely fill the second spot.

(MORE)

ALLIGOOD (CONT'D)

The last two spots are tight with the Colonials holding a slight lead over Philadelphia and the New York Hawks.

MAJOR

I don't think anybody expects the Statesmen to fall out of the top spot.

INESTA

Agreed.

ALLIGOOD

The Southern Conference is tight, but it's down to a four-way race for first, but it's likely all four teams, the Texas Angels, Atlanta Peaches, Nashville Blues and Miami Blades will advance. Texas is ahead now, but their lead is only two games over Atlanta and anything could happen at this point.

INESTA

As everybody knows, I'm Peaches all the way.

MAJOR

You can take the woman out of Atlanta, but you can't take Atlanta out of the woman. But Texas CAN take Atlanta out of the top spot in the South.

Laughter.

ALLIGOOD

Things are much more confusing in the Midwestern, where Chicago and Detroit are in a dead heat for first, while four other teams are in contention for the last two spots.

MAJOR

I can't see anyone but Chicago winning that conference.

INESTA

Yeah, they struggled with injuries early, but they're healthy now and I don't think Detroit can catch them.

ALLIGOOD

The Western Conference is just as confusing. While the Los Angeles Cougars are on track to win 100 games and the California Bulls look to be a lock to make it for second, the other two spots are up for grabs as San Diego, Washington, Portland and San Francisco all have a chance to finish above .500. The teams that do will likely advance.

The crawl at the bottom of the screen shows the following messages, on a loop:

"New York Fashion week to debut Charles Xavier's fall collection"

"Hurricane Gingrich does \$1.2 million in damage"

"Pro football season starts Sunday with Hall of Fame Game"

"Labor Day parades go off without incident, despite warnings"

"Fourth hurricane hits Florida this season, damage TBD"

"Initial Heat Wave Advisory Panel report due Wednesday"

"Florida State opens season with 35-3 stomping of Miami"

INT. SPORTS CENTRAL STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

After the show, Alligood walks through the studio towards the craft services table. She grabs a few grapes and pops them in her mouth as she peruses the offerings. Dwayne McDaris approaches her.

MCDARIS

Hey, Sharon. How are you?

Alligood looks up and frowns when she sees McDaris. She goes back to picking out food from the table.

ALLIGOOD

I guess I'm fine.

MCDARIS

Sure.

(beat)

You should put in a good word for me.

ALLIGOOD

I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about.

Alligood tries to walk away. McDaris follows her, uncomfortably close.

MCDARIS

At the Sunday Sports Chat Show. I haven't been on in a while. I think I've been shadow-banned.

Alligood raises an eyebrow.

ALLIGOOD

I'm sure that's not true. Just talk to Weisman--

McDaris waves her off.

MCDARIS

That guy? He wouldn't spare the piss to put me out if I was on fire.

Alligood frowns and walks away again. McDaris follows her as she goes outside, continuing to crowd her space.

MCDARIS (CONT'D)

But if YOU talked to him...

ALLIGOOD

And why would I do that?

MCDARIS

Because it would really help--

She stops walking and faces him.

ALLIGOOD

I don't like you. I'm not going to do this. Stop asking.

She turns and walks away, a little shaky as she goes. McDaris stares after her in disbelief.

INT. NBS NEWS STUDIO

Jeffrey Brack sits in the NBS News Studio, which is a lot less busy and more professional than the Sports Central set. Blue is still the dominant color, although it's softer here.

BRACK

Tensions continue to rule in Puerto Rico this week, as pro-independence forces continue to control the government.

A inset box shows the flag of Puerto Rico.

BRACK (CONT'D)

The new regime refuses to surrender control and says they are the legitimate ruling body of Puerto Rico. Coup leader Burgos sent a list of demands to President Winfrey, the top of which is complete and total independence for the island....

INT. RED SHEEP RANCH - NIGHT

From the outside, no one would know that anyone was at the Red Sheep Ranch. It's dark out and no lights are on inside or nearby.

But inside the Wellness and Fulfillment Center's back room, the members of the Order of the Crimson Ram prepare for another ceremony. Abraham steps up to Ishmael.

ABRAHAM

Come with me. Time for the sharing of knowledge.

Ishmael follows Abraham through a door and into a largely empty waiting room. A few benches dot the room and wall is adorned with a painting of Holmes Mudgett, the founder of the Order of the Crimson Ram.

Standing at the far end of the room is a lone FIGURE in a black robe. Their face is covered with a mask and their voice is modulated with a voice box.

FIGURE

Welcome to the sixth level of the sixth circle. Before you can leave behind the title of acolyte, you must recommit to the Order. Are you ready?

ISHMAEL

I am.

Abraham steps up behind Ishmael and ties a black blindfold over his eyes.

FIGURE

Before we begin, you may ask one question and one question only. Choose wisely.

Ishmael thinks for a second.

ISHMAEL

What is the ultimate purpose, the ultimate goal, of the Order?

FIGURE

To create chaos on Earth so we can receive our rewards in Hell.

Ishmael smiles.

ABRAHAM

Kneel before the altar.

This room has a smaller altar than the big room, like a personal-sized altar for one. On it are candles and beads and burnt offerings and dead flowers. Ishmael awkwardly kneels, not sure where he's going because of the blindfold.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Do you promise the Blood Oath to the Order of the Crimson Ram?

ISHMAEL

I do.

ABRAHAM

Will you continue the works of Holmes Mudgett and pass his teaching on to the world that sorely lacks them?

ISHMAEL

I will.

ABRAHAM

Will you engage in any activities in pursuit of Mudgett's vision for the world that your leaders require of you?

ISHMAEL

I will.

ABRAHAM

Even if that vision requires the death of a human being.

ISHMAEL

Yes.

A small, but devious, grin comes over Ishmael's face. Abraham puts his hand on Ishmael's head and says a silent prayer. Then he removes the blindfold.

ABRAHAM

You may rise.

FIGURE

That wasn't so bad, was it?

Ishmael remains stone-faced.

FIGURE (CONT'D)

Guide him through the ceremony.

Abraham nods.

CUT TO:

The cult members surround the altar in the Center's huge back room. The Figure stands at the head of the altar.

The Figure recites poems from a dead language for the ceremony. Abraham and Ishmael stand off to the side. Abraham whispers to Ishmael as the ceremony progresses.

ABRAHAM

(quietly)

Tonight's ceremony extends the life
of our previous ceremonies.

The Figure gestures towards the back of the room and Esau and Jacob bring in the dead body of Maya Marin.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

It takes less of a sacrifice.

Other Cult Members bring in a second body and place it on the altar next to Maya's body.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

For the ceremony, we only need the
heads.

Ishmael remains stone-faced. The Figure pulls out a laser scalpel and proceeds to sever the heads, off-screen.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

The blood and the bodies serve
other purposes.

The closest cult member to Abraham and Isaac is LEILA RASSI. She is a white woman in her 30s, 6' tall and nearly 200 pounds with medium-length brown hair. She looks upon the ceremony with disgust and fear.

She turns to walk away from the bodies. She bumps into Rebecca who stands beside a RANDOM FEMALE CULT MEMBER.

REBECCA

(quietly)

I didn't even know they made robes
in your size.

The two women laugh softly as Leila rushes out of the room.

INT. LEILA RASSI'S QUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

Leila walks into the room and goes to her dresser. She opens the underwear drawer and digs around for a second until she finds her phone. She loads the YouTube app.

She finds the video of her mother from Entertainment News Network and hits play. As she watches, Leila tears up.

MONICA RASSI

Please come home, Leila. I know who
those people are and I know they
don't really care about you. Not
like your momma does. Please
listen...

Leila cries as she falls asleep.

CUT TO:

Leila awakes with a start in the dark of night. She hears murmuring voices and some movement outside her room. She rips off her blanket to reveal she never got undressed for the night.

She gets up and rushes across the room to the window and opens it. The drop is over 10 feet.

Someone turns the doorknob and Leila panics. She climbs onto the window sill and jumps to the ground. She lands with a thud, but is able to get up, unhurt.

She stares back up at the window and hears the room's door smashed in. She turns and runs into the darkness. The light comes on in her room, but Leila is long gone.

INT. LEAH OWENS' OFFICE - DAY

Leah Owens sits across from Shirley Muldoon. As always, Owens sips from her whiskey. Mackey and Solly stand by the door.

SHIRLEY

This is all on background. I'm not working on a specific story at this moment, but it could develop into something more, depending not only on what happens here, but with other interviews.

OWENS

Okay. So this is technically off the record. Are you going to record it?

Shirley shakes her head.

OWENS (CONT'D)

Okay then, let's get started.

SHIRLEY

I wanted to meet with you because I've been assigned to do some color stories about the team. I wanted to get some background stuff so I have more of a finger on the pulse, you know what I mean?

Owens smiles and nods.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

So, how has the first year been so far?

Owens laughs deeply.

OWENS

Surprising.

SHIRLEY

In what ways?

OWENS

Have you been watching the games?

SHIRLEY

I can't say that I have.

Owens chuckles.

OWENS

Baseball's not your thing, is it?

Shirley laughs.

OWENS (CONT'D)

It wasn't mine, either. Until I inherited the team.

Owens intercom buzzes. She hits the button.

OWENS (CONT'D)

What is it, Ms. Richardson? I'm still meeting with the reporter.

Shirley smiles.

MS. RICHARDSON (O.S.)

Sorry to interrupt, but you said to let you know if Manda Starr ever called or showed up.

OWENS

Yes?

MS. RICHARDSON (O.S.)

She's here. In person.

OWENS

Okay, I'll be right with her.

She lets go of the intercom button.

OWENS (CONT'D)

Sorry about that. I'm going to have to cut this short. Important, but surprise, meeting.

SHIRLEY

I totally understand. Can we pick this up at a later time?

OWENS

Of course, as long as I'm not stuck in a high-importance meeting, my time is yours.

SHIRLEY

Thanks, I have your card and you have mine.

OWENS

I look forward to hearing from you.

Shirley nods and leaves.

CUT TO:

As Shirley leaves Owen's office, she bumps into Ashley Hernandez.

ASHLEY
Hey, Shirley Muldoon, right?

SHIRLEY
Yeah, how'd you know?

ASHLEY
I read the Gazette religiously. I love your work.

SHIRLEY
Thanks. I wish everybody did.

Ashley chuckles.

ASHLEY
Can I get your card? In case we have a story we'd like to promote?

SHIRLEY
Sure.

Shirley hands her a card.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
I've got to get to my next appointment.

ASHLEY
Thank you, I'll keep you in mind.

SHIRLEY
Thanks.

She walks out. Ashley stares at the card with a smile.

INT. LEAH OWENS' OFFICE - LATER

Manda Starr sits across from Owens. Neither woman is pleased. Mackey and Solly walk out and shut the door behind them.

OWENS
How is Carmesi Molto? How is... I don't know what you actually do.

STARR

I don't have time for your banter.

OWENS

Then let's get to the point.

STARR

I simply need your answer.

OWENS

Any amount?

STARR

I can't say yes to a number until you say it out loud.

Owens thinks to herself for a moment.

OWENS

No.

Starr doesn't react.

STARR

That your final answer?

OWENS

It is.

STARR

So it is.

She gets up and walks out without saying anything to anyone.

INT. PDDC BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Only PDDC officers are in the room today, no staff, and the doors are locked. Levin leads the briefing and she is short-tempered.

LEVIN

We have once again seen a major shift in this case. And our current goal is to make sure that the public doesn't panic, that people don't freak out and we don't see major economic and social disruptions like we did with COVID.

CODY

Should our goal be to catch the suspects?

LEVIN

What I'm about to say doesn't leave
this room...

Levin clears her throat.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

But both of our suspects are
deceased.

Murmurs of shock. Eversmith and Cody exchange a concerned
look.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

If that fact leaves this room, some
of you will be in the unemployment
line. We do NOT want the media to
get ahold of this yet. We aren't
releasing it to the public.

EVERSMITH

So we're letting the public think
that our top two murder suspects
are at large?

Levin ignores her.

LEVIN

We will continue our public
manhunt, making sure that everyone
sees that we are doing our job and
hunting these scumbags down.

Officer Bill Tucker raises his hand. Levin rolls her eyes and
points to Tucker.

TUCKER

What happened. To Byars?

LEVIN

Apparently he got into a conflict
with some of the other prisoners
and was beaten to death.

Tucker chuckles. Quietly.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

PDDC is under a total media
blackout. Anyone seen or heard
talking to the press, anyone cited
by the press, any information leaks
out means automatic firing, as
previously mentioned, and then it
means prosecution. Understand?

No one dares respond. Cody frowns.

CODY
(under her breath, to
Eversmith)
This can't be good.

INT. ALEX LEVIN'S OFFICE - LATER

Levin opens the door to her office.

LEVIN
Rita, can you come in?

Rita gets up from her desk and walks into Levin's office. She stands holding the edge of the door, but doesn't shut it completely.

RITA
Yes?

Eversmith walks by and overhears Levin.

LEVIN
I need you to set me up an
appointment with Mindy and Fernando
over at America First PAC.

RITA
Yes, ma'am, right away.

Eversmith raises an eyebrow then walks away.

INT. PDDC CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Levin sits at the head of the conference room table, Brice Eversmith and Cody Paige sitting to her left and Jeremy Spencer to her right.

LEVIN
I hope you three understand, in
advance, why I called you in here?

They all shake their heads. Levin sighs.

LEVIN (CONT'D)
Typical. Anyway, this department
has become a leaky ship filled with
too many sailors whose heart isn't
in the mission.

EVERSMITH
I don't see what--

Levin shushes her.

LEVIN
There are freeloaders in any situation, naturally, but this goes well beyond that. Freeloaders incur some cost, but they usually don't actively undermine the goals which their organization is pursuing. But you two...

She gestures towards Eversmith and Cody.

LEVIN (CONT'D)
You two take the cake. We actually had the body of a suspect in a murder case in our custody. And you two ran off and left it alone. Now it's gone.

Eversmith and Cody exchange a glance of concern.

EVERSMITH
Yes, but we have conclusive--

LEVIN
Your continued interruptions border on insubordination.

EVERSMITH
I've got clear evidence that The Setup was tampered with...

Spencer raises an eyebrow.

EVERSMITH (CONT'D)
...it's fixed now. There's clear evidence that not just A cult, but THE cult--

Levin slams her hand down on the desk.

LEVIN
Your badge and gun. Now.

EVERSMITH
You can't be--

LEVIN

Indefinite suspension. You want to be fired? You want to lose that pension?

Eversmith frowns. Then she puts her badge and gun on the desk and walks out.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

As for you two, you have two choices.

Cody bites her lip to hold back the rage.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

You could quit, and save us all the drama...

No reaction.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

Of course not. Well, then. You are both on probation. Indefinitely. Even a tiny slip-up and you'll be joining Eversmith. Got it?

Both cops stare at her for a moment.

SPENCER

But I didn't do anything.

LEVIN

Exactly.

Spencer stares at her for a moment.

SPENCER

Screw that. I quit.

He puts his gun and badge on her desk and walks out.

LEVIN

That leaves you, Cody? Ready to quit?

Cody stares at her.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

And I understand that you've been missing your appointments with Carlton?

Cody nods.

LEVIN (CONT'D)
 You have to go back. Or you're
 fired.

Cody sits, stone-faced.

LEVIN (CONT'D)
 Your choice. Get out.

Levin turns towards her computer and starts typing.

EXT. PDDC PRECINCT - MOMENTS LATER

Spencer exits the PDDC precinct building and gets in his car, which is a new Ford Shelby Mustang. He pulls out of the parking lot.

EXT. RED SHEEP RANCH - LATER

Spencer parks in front of the Wellness and Fulfillment center and goes inside.

INT. RED SHEEP RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Spencer walks down a hallway and stops at a door guarded by two CULT MEMBERS. These two wear shiny black masks that cover their entire faces and show no features. The FIRST GUARD speaks to Spencer.

FIRST GUARD
 Do I know you?

SPENCER
 Do we ever know anyone?

The guard nods and extends his hand. Spencer reaches out to shake, but goes past the guard's hand to the wrist and grasps him by the elbow. The guard does the same. They squeeze twice. Then once more.

GUARD AND SPENCER
 (simultaneously)
 Beherit chemosh mastema.

The SECOND GUARD opens the door and Spencer goes inside.

The door shuts behind Spencer and he finds himself alone with the Figure. They exchange the handshake.

FIGURE AND SPENCER
 (simultaneously)
 Beherit chemosh mastema.

Spencer stands, almost at attention.

FIGURE
 What information do you have for
 me, Isaac?

SPENCER
 My mission is complete. The drones
 at the PDDC are too busy fighting
 amongst themselves to worry about
 us.

FIGURE
 Good. Tell me the details before we
 begin....

INT. JAMELLE LEWIS' OFFICE - DAY

Ashley Hernandez sits across from Jamelle Lewis. Hernandez
 looks scared, Lewis angry.

LEWIS
 I only had one ask for you on this.

ASHLEY
 I know. Things were already in
 motion--

LEWIS
 And I was clear that OTHER things
 were also in motion.

ASHLEY
 Meaning?

LEWIS
 Meaning you're fired.

Ashley is stunned.

ASHLEY
 But...

LEWIS
 It's above my pay grade. I'm just
 passing it along.

Ashley nods.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
If you want to challenge it, talk
to Owens.

Ashley leaves.

INT. NATIONAL STADIUM FIELD - DAY

Kendricks stands on the mound of an empty stadium. Bishop catches. From the dugout, Vernon Howell, Ferd Langwieler and Craig Glover watch. Kendricks pitches a fastball. A perfect strike with a dangerous wobble.

LANGWIELER
Unhittable.

He shows them the radar gun. The pitch hit 101 mph.

HOWELL
He looks better now than he ever
did before.

GLOVER
Agreed.

LANGWIELER
So we just let him start pitching
again?

Howell shrugs.

GLOVER
Sometimes you gotta do what you
gotta do.

He chuckles.

GLOVER (CONT'D)
Just don't let what you do do you.

Glover walks away.

Jones comes into the dugout from the locker room, ready to start his own workout.

JONES
How's he look?

Jones nods towards Kendricks.

LANGWIELER
The words "fit" and "fiddle" come
to mind.

Jones laughs with no humor.

HOWELL
How are YOU coming along?

JONES
Not as fast as I'd hoped.

Jones stretches his elbow. Howell frowns.

HOWELL
You gonna be back at the end of
your 15 days?

JONES
I'm not sure. Green says I may have
to sit out another two weeks.

Howell raises an eyebrow. Kendricks throws another perfect
fastball.

INT. STATESMEN LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Bishop walks through the busy locker room and up to Jones.

BISHOP
Hey. Can we talk?

JONES
Sure. In here?

Bishop shakes his head and walks out of the locker room and
into the hallway.

JONES (CONT'D)
What's up?

Bishop struggles to figure out how to say it.

BISHOP
It's Betty...

Jones frowns.

JONES
She okay? Something happen?

Bishop shakes his head.

BISHOP
She's fine. It's me.

JONES

Still?

Bishop nods.

BISHOP

I feel like I need to... repent.
I've been distracted. Doing bad at
the plate.

JONES

Bad?

BISHOP

.220 on the month.

JONES

Ouch. Did you talk to her yet?

Bishop looks at the ground bashfully.

JONES (CONT'D)

Then why are you even here?

BISHOP

I don't know.

Beat.

JONES

Then go!

He does.

EXT. BETTY BILLUPS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bishop knocks on the front door and waits a few seconds.
Betty opens up and she's not sure if she's happy or angry to
see him.

BETTY

Come in.

He does.

Prince's "Gett Off" starts to play...

INT. BETTY BILLUPS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

...and is immediately ripped away as Bishop walks into the
living room and finds STANLEY, a white man in his early 40s.
He's wearing a nice suit, Betty wears a fine evening gown.

She seems nonchalant. Bishop shifts his weight from foot to foot nervously.

BETTY
Savoy, meet Stanley.

Stanley steps over to shake Bishop's hand.

STANLEY
You the baseball player?

BISHOP
That's me.

Bishop is miserable.

BETTY
Stanley and I were about to head out. On a date.

Bishop is even MORE miserable.

STANLEY
Why don't you join us?

Beat.

BISHOP
On your date?

BETTY
Yeah, it's nothing serious. We're just playing.

BISHOP
Playing?

She smiles a smile he can't resist.

BETTY
Please come with us.

STANLEY
It'll be fun.

Bishop shrugs.

EXT. CRAZY CAPITOL CARNIVAL - DAY

The Crazy Capitol Carnival takes place in the parking lot of the old Cal Ripken Jr. Stadium. It's as big as a traveling carnival gets, with rides and games and food and the like.

Betty walks through the carnival with Stanley and Bishop in tow. She arrives at the carnival games and gets super excited.

BETTY

Let's play.

She claps her hands and giggles and runs towards the games. Bishop and Stanley exchange a look of concern.

CUT TO:

The three stand at the ring toss. Bishop tosses one and it bounces off several bottles before falling to the ground. Stanley tosses one and scores. Betty hugs him.

CUT TO:

They step up to the baseball throwing booth. Bishop chuckles.

BISHOP

I got this one.

Stanley throws a ball, but it misses the milk bottles. Bishop steps up and throws the ball, knocking down all the milk cartons. Betty hugs him.

CUT TO:

Bishop steps up to the hi-striker and brings the hammer down. He doesn't hit it square and the bell doesn't ring.

Stanley, who is more muscular than Bishop, gets ready.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

(to Betty)

I didn't get a good hit.

Betty puts a hand on his arm and does a fake pout.

Stanley smashes the hammer down, easily ringing the bell.

CUT TO:

The trio arrive at the skee ball area. Bishop gets excited and runs straight for the closest lane. Betty chuckles.

STANLEY

You into this?

BETTY

A little.

She giggles.

Bishop rolls three straight 100-point balls. Stanley shakes his head.

STANLEY

Nope.

He walks on to the next event. Betty laughs. Bishop grins. He thinks he's winning.

CUT TO:

The trio approaches the basketball toss.

BETTY

I'm getting drinks. Be back in a few.

She walks away. Stanley grabs a ball, he's grinning and excited.

STANLEY

Last chance.

Bishop laughs.

BISHOP

For what?

STANLEY

I'm letting you bow out easily. I was a two-year starter at basketball in high school.

BISHOP

Dude, I'm a professional athlete on the best team in sports.

Stanley lines up, takes a shot and drains it. The BARKER gets upset.

BARKER

Hey! You gotta pay first.

BISHOP

Allow me.

Bishop hands the Barker cash and then grabs a ball. He dribbles a few times shoots and scores.

Stanley shoots again, scores again. Bishop matches him.

STANLEY

You want to make it interesting?

BISHOP
Like a bet?

Stanley takes his shot and makes it.

STANLEY
Yep.

Bishop takes his shot and makes it.

BISHOP
Nah, I'm not much for gambling.

STANLEY
You scared?

BISHOP
Of what?

The two men stare at each other for a second.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
Take your shot.

Stanley turns and takes his shot. It misses. Bishop smiles a bit, but keeps it to himself.

He steps up to the line and easily makes the shot. Stanley doesn't say anything. Betty comes back and hands a drink to Stanley.

BETTY
What's going on?

Bishop takes another shot. Makes it.

BISHOP
Just cleaning up.

Betty hands Bishop a drink. Stanley stares off into the crowds.

INT. DWAYNE MCDARIS' HOUSE - NIGHT

McDaris sits in his home making a new video, but his setup is different. Instead of the CAMERA looking directly at his face, head-on, the room is set up for an interview, with a second chair facing the one McDaris sits in.

In the second chair is ALEX WATKINS, a red-faced, chubby man in his 30s who wishes he had more hair.

MCDARIS

Hello out there to all of McDaris' Minions and thank you for joining me today, Alex.

ALEX

Great to see you becoming more patriotic as you grow wiser.

McDaris looks directly into the camera then clears his throat.

MCDARIS

Yes, thank you. I think. Before we get into more with Alex, I wanted to update you all on the story of Meaco Ali. After I reported on Ali's disappearance, I've received a series of tips that illuminate what likely happened to the informant. More on that later in the show.

He holds up a certificate.

MCDARIS (CONT'D)

But first, I wanted to show you that I've purchased my first pure gold investment with GoldAmerica, USA. You can see that it's certified authentic and it was delivered directly to my home. Go to GoldAmericaUSA.com And order yours today.

He puts the certificate down.

MCDARIS (CONT'D)

Now, let's turn to our guest, Alex Watkins, radio host extraordinaire. Thanks for joining me, Alex.

ALEX

It's hella great to be here.

MCDARIS

Now, you said you had something you wanted to show us that would help illuminate the tale of Cam Kendricks.

ALEX

Yeah. This is gonna blow your mind, Dwayne.

McDaris frowns at the use of his first name.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Check this out.

Alex holds up a tablet, with a video of Cam Kendricks batting queued up.

ALEX (CONT'D)
This first clip, and don't worry,
it's short, is of Cam Kendricks
early in the season. He will strike
out here, watch.

The video shows Kendricks swinging and missing.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Did you see it?

MCDARIS
See what? I didn't see anything.

ALEX
Exactly. Now watch this...

Another video comes up, this time Kendricks hits a towering home run.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Did you see THAT?

McDaris stares closely at the screen, but he can't see anyone.

MCDARIS
What is it I'm looking for?

ALEX
The blue glow.

McDaris looks at Alex with skepticism, then looks closer at the computer.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Around the bat. When he gets a hit,
the bat has a blue glow around it.

MCDARIS
You can't be serious.

ALEX
I am. I've actually run some
computer analysis of the entire
season.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

What you'll find if you crunch the numbers on ALL of Kendricks' at bats this season and you'll find that when Kendricks hits a home run, the air around his bat is between 37% and 42% bluer than normal. If you look at these graphs....

McDaris looks at the graphs.

EXT. GREYS' STADIUM, NEW MEXICO - DAY

A small minor league baseball stadium is pretty packed for today's game between the Hackensack Bulls and the Roswell Greys. Alien merchandise and images dominate the Greys' stadium.

Ajax Cloud stands at home plate, facing off against the Bulls pitcher, ARMSTRONG. Armstrong pitches and Cloud flails away for strike three.

Cloud heads back into the dugout and is greeted by teammates Langly, Byers and Frohike.

LANGLY

You'll get it next time, man.

BYERS

Yeah, no sweat.

Cloud shrugs. It's quiet for a few moments.

FROHIKE

Is he huge? Like muscles-wise?

They all burst into laughter.

CLOUD

You really want to know the truth?

They all nod eagerly.

CLOUD (CONT'D)

It's ALL true. Every rumor you've heard and quite a few haven't.

They KNEW it.

LANGLY

I imagine you're dying to get back.

BYERS

Can't wait for another chance?

Cloud stares out onto the field for a few moments.

CLOUD

Not really.

FROHIKE

What?

CLOUD

It's exhausting.

Beat.

CLOUD (CONT'D)

I need a rest. I'm thinking about going home.

INT. NATIONAL STADIUM CAFETERIA - DAY

All of the coaches sit around the table except for Harold Gray: bench coach Craig Glover, pitching coach Vernon Howell, hitting coach Alvin Huebner, third base coach Terrence Kimbell, head scout Ferd Langwieler, first base coach Chris Lawthon and bullpen coach Justin Tannehill.

HUEBNER

I think you all know why I called you here today.

Grumbles.

HUEBNER (CONT'D)

Hear me out. You've all seen it. Things are hanging by a thread around here. Howell, you--

HOWELL

No, leave me out of this. I told you before, this is a conversation for the off-season.

GLOVER

What in the hell are we talking about here?

LANGWIELER

Yeah, I don't think you want me here for this meeting.

He gets up and walks out.

HUEBNER
Ferd? Ferd? Ferd?

Ferd's gone.

HUEBNER (CONT'D)
Come on, guys, I'm serious. This situation is quite precarious.

LAWTHON
What are you talking about? We've won 100 games. I've NEVER been on a team that won 100 games.

KIMBELL
We lead the world champions by 10 games in the last month of the season. Really seems like we're kinda killing it right now.

HUEBNER
Yeah, but Gray has no respect for any of us OR any of the players.

TANNEHILL
You don't speak for me.

GLOVER
Man, this is bullshit. I've been here longer than all of y'all combined. And this is bullshit.

HUEBNER
Vernon, come on, we talked about this before. You're with me, right?

Howell shakes his head.

HOWELL
I told you this was a bad idea. This isn't how you do it.

HUEBNER
But somebody has to do something.

TANNEHILL
I'm good.

LAWTHON
Seems like a bad idea to even be here.

Lawthon gets up and walks away. Tannehill and Kimbell follow.

GLOVER

This is some unprofessional,
juvenile bullshit.

He walks away, too.

HOWELL

I told you.

Huebner crosses his arms and leans back with a frown. Howell leaves Huebner alone.

INT. SHIRLEY MULDOON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Shirley sits at her computer. Her computer is open to the "From the Potomac" blog. She shifts through several documents on her desk and takes a look at her notes. She makes a decision and starts typing.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)

I don't know Cam Kendricks. But I know men like him. The type of man who gets everything he wants. And if he doesn't get it... watch out.

Shirley stops and thinks for a moment. She figures it out and starts typing again.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)

Shocking new video shows that Cam Kendricks is someone we should ALL watch out for. We've been told that the star athlete is also a wonderful boyfriend. One half of a famed celebrity couple with actress Tina Warren.

Shirley takes a deep breath and keeps typing.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)

But the evidence shows that Kendricks and Warren weren't a celebrity couple. They went on a few dates, but that was it. And when Warren tried to break it off, Kendricks physically assaulted her. The video shows this clearly. In the coming weeks, we'll have more on this story as it develops.

Shirley finishes typing, sighs and hits publish.

And nothing happens.

SHIRLEY
What the hell?

She tries again. And again. And again. Nothing.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Am I not logged in? I'm sure I
logged in.

She clicks on the account link and suddenly the browser
crashes.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Fuck!

And the entire computer shuts down.

CUT TO:

Shirley has the computer running again and opens her browser.
She tries to load her website, but she gets a 404 error
message. The website won't load, no matter what she tries.

She picks up her phone and texts Chad: "911! OMW!"

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE - LATER

Shirley sits across from Chad. Chad's desk is stacked with
seemingly random and messy paper documents. Shirley flips
through a document, frustrated. Chad is online.

CHAD
The site is down. I can't even
access it.

SHIRLEY
Does that mean everything's gone?

CHAD
It shouldn't. Everything should
still be on the server, the server
just seems to be... disconnected?

SHIRLEY
So try again later?

CHAD
That or you could contact your
host.

SHIRLEY
So they can tell me to try plugging
it and unplugging it? No thanks.

Chad laughs. A notification sound goes off on his computer.

CHAD
What's this?

Shirley looks up.

SHIRLEY
What you got?

CHAD
A BUNCH of new documents and photos
just got uploaded.

He opens a document and hits print.

SHIRLEY
Like how much "a lot"?

CHAD
Hundreds. It'll take hours to dig
through all this stuff.

SHIRLEY
And probably won't find anything of
particular use.

CHAD
That's the way this shit goes.

Shirley clears her throat. Chad looks up.

SHIRLEY
You sure no one can trace that blog
back to me? I said some... things.

Chad chuckles.

CHAD
Yeah, you did. Nah, you're totally
safe. Very secure stuff.

INT. AMERICAN UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM - DAY

Abraham stands at the front of a college classroom. He's clearly the professor. A Bible sits on the lectern in front of him while the 40 students pay close attention. He preaches to them with fire and brimstone smoldering in his eyes.

ABRAHAM

But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. We ARE the accursed children!

EXT. 16TH AVENUE NW - DAY

A WMATA bus stops at the intersection near O Street. Jacob is the driver. He opens the door and several passengers board. Jacob nods to the passengers as they get on. An unrecognizable technological device sits on his lap.

A different WMATA bus drives by going in the opposite direction. Jacob makes eye contact with the DRIVER and makes an okay sign with his fingers.

The other driver flashes the same signal with a grim smile.

Jacob closes the door to the bus and drives on. He pushes a button on the device sitting in his lap. A laser light emerges from the side of the device and scans the nearby buildings. Jacob drives on, scanning everything as he passes.

In the other bus, the Driver has the same scanner sitting on his lap and he scans the city as well.

INT. VITO'S MAMA'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The lunch rush at Vito's Mama's Restaurant is busy. Esau is a waiter and he carries a massive tray of food out to a table near the front window.

ESAU

Here we go. I'll bet you're all starving.

He hands out the plates.

ESAU (CONT'D)
We have the mushroom carbonara,
extra mushrooms.

Esau grins.

ESAU (CONT'D)
The cacio e pepe with lemon garlic
butter shrimp. My favorite.

He sets the plate down.

ESAU (CONT'D)
The eggplant parmesan. Hold the
garlic.

He and the PATRON chuckle.

ESAU (CONT'D)
And I've got the lasagna Bolognese.
I'll be right back with some more
wine. Anything else?

The PATRONS shake their heads.

CUT TO:

Esau stands at the computer in the back, ringing up his customers' orders. He looks around, not seeing anyone, and pulls a flash drive from his pocket. He sticks it in the computer and the screen briefly turns black.

He swipes the customer's credit card and it goes through. As it does, a separate window pops up on top of the point-of-sale program. The pop-up simply reads "Copied."

INT. AMERICAN HISTORY MUSEUM - DAY

Ishmael, dressed in his tour guide uniform, leads a group of mostly children through a room with a giant war-torn American flag. They take a few minutes to look at the flag and then exit to the lobby, where a giant artistic metal version of the flag adorns the wall.

ISHMAEL
For all our free guests, that's the
end of the tour. Thank you for
visiting the Smithsonian today.

A bunch of tourists and kids from local schools thank him. He shakes hands and directs them towards the gift shop. After a few seconds, they're all gone.

Ishmael speaks in low conspiratorial tones.

ISHMAEL (CONT'D)

Okay, the rest of you have signed up for the Special Secret Patriot Tour. Enough of this PR stuff, let's go see the secret room where the Illuminati meet.

INT. RADIO STUDIO - DAY

Rebecca sits in the booth at radio station WOCR. The "On Air" light goes on.

REBECCA

Hey everybody, welcome back. It's your favorite DJ, Rocket Rebecca, and now that we're done paying the bills, let's get back to the music. Next up is "Fetuscake," by the Elder Sign Cuties.

Rebecca hits play and really heavy mid-tempo metal starts up.

MALE SINGER

We want to destroy your perceptions.

FEMALE SINGER

Blind, blind, blind, blind.

MALE SINGER

We're coming to change your mind.

FEMALE SINGER

Dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb.

CUT TO:

A TEENAGE BOY sits in his bedroom listening to "Fetuscake" on his headphones.

MALE SINGER

We want to change your ways.

FEMALE SINGER

New, new, new, new.

MALE SINGER

We're coming to eat your brains.

FEMALE SINGER

Brains, brains, brains, brains.

The boy opens the web browser on his phone and visits the website for the Elder Sign Cuties. A pop-up asks for his e-mail address and name. He enters DALE MURPHY and hits send.

CUT TO:

INT. RED SHEEP RANCH FULFILLMENT CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A CULT MEMBER sits at a desk with a headset on. A notification pops up on his computer screen.

He clicks it to see that Dale Murphy has signed up for the Elder Sign Cuties mailing list. He copies the e-mail address and opens the Tor dark web browser to a completely gray webpage with no text. The only thing visible is a form with a single empty field.

The Cult Member types "recruit." The screen flashes and shows a new form with fields for name and e-mail address. She types in his name and e-mail address.

Below that is a pull-down menu that says "Choose Protocol." The Cult Member clicks on the pull-down and scrolls down until she finds "Level 2 Indoctrination Protocol." She clicks it and the website flashes to a blank gray screen.

INT. ASHLEY HERNANDEZ' APARTMENT - DAY

Ashley scrolls through her phone contacts until she comes upon the name Sandra. She calls.

ASHLEY

Hey. It's me. Need your help on something.

Beat.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Code red.

Beat.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Yep. Will send you an e-mail.

She hangs up and turns towards her computer. In her e-mail drafts folder, she sees an untitled message addressed to "Sister." She clicks on it and hits send.

Ashley sits back and waits.

CUT TO:

SUPER: 30 Minutes Later

Ashley's phone rings and she picks it up.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Yeah?

SANDRA (O.S.)
Got it.

ASHLEY
That was quick.

SANDRA (O.S.)
I'm quick.

Ashley laughs, but there isn't much humor in it.

ASHLEY
Give it to me.

SANDRA (O.S.)
The video was shot and sent by a
Maya Marin. You know her?

ASHLEY
No idea.

SANDRA (O.S.)
She appears to have been a frequent
associate of Tina Warren.

ASHLEY
Makes sense. The actress who was
dating Kendricks.

SANDRA (O.S.)
The last person she contacted was a
reporter, Shirley Muldoon.

Ashley sits up.

ASHLEY
Now HER I know.

SANDRA (O.S.)
Old friend?

ASHLEY
No, just met her at the stadium.

SANDRA (O.S.)
Anyway, Maya Marin has been radio
silent for almost a week.

(MORE)

SANDRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
A few messages back-and-forth with
Muldoon, then nothing.

ASHLEY
That strange?

SANDRA
Yeah. Best I can tell, she's
sending dozens of e-mails daily.
Then nothing. Something's up.

Ashley nods.

ASHLEY
Thanks.

CUT TO:

Ashley listens to her phone ring. Shirley picks up on the
other end.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
Hello.

ASHLEY
Is this Shirley Muldoon?

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
It is. Who is this?

ASHLEY
Ashley Hernandez. We met at
National Stadium.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
Right. You work in the press shop?

ASHLEY
Well... I did.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
Oh, something happen?

ASHLEY
Yes, but that's not why I'm
calling. This is about Cam
Kendricks.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
Oh yeah?

ASHLEY

I understand you were writing something about him for the Gazette?

SHIRLEY (O.S.)

I was.

Ashley frowns.

ASHLEY

Oh. But you aren't now?

SHIRLEY (O.S.)

It's complicated.

ASHLEY

I know that feeling. Let me forward you something....

INT. WASHINGTON GAZETTE BULLPEN - DAY

Shirley sits at her desk going through today's mail, most of which is junk that she immediately tosses into the vertical file. She's clearly bored.

She turns off her screen saver and looks at a tab for her FTP client. She stops and looks around the room. She's alone.

She clicks on the tab and brings up the client. She looks down on her note pad. There are a list of file names, each crossed off but the last. She crosses it off and then double clicks on that document in the FTP client.

A photo opens up and we stay on her face. She recoils in horror from the screen and covers her mouth.

She clicks on the next picture. The horror grows.

She clicks another picture. Then another. And another. She never removes the hand from her face.

The CAMERA swings around and shows the last shot. It is the most recent murder scene. Carefully placed at various points on a giant pentagram are the severed heads of 16 people.

She picks up her phone and calls Chad.

SHIRLEY

Hey?

CHAD (O.S.)

Yeah?

SHIRLEY

I have access to the Gazette website, but it's limited. Can you help me upload and publish some pictures?

CHAD (O.S.)

That's easy. Try something with a bit of challenge next time.

Shirley doesn't laugh.

INT. SIMON MEYERS' OFFICE - LATER

The door to Simon Meyers' office opens and he peeks out into the bullpen. He spots Shirley and anger comes over his face.

MEYERS

You.

Shirley looks up.

MEYERS (CONT'D)

In here. Now.

She walks into his office.

MEYERS (CONT'D)

Sit down and shut up.

Shirley sits down.

MEYERS (CONT'D)

What were you thinking?

SHIRLEY

I--

MEYERS

That was a rhetorical question.

She shuts up.

MEYERS (CONT'D)

We took your little pictures down.

SHIRLEY

Those were newswor--

MEYERS

You're fired. Get out of here.

Shirley is shocked.

SHIRLEY
You can't be serious.

Meyers picks up his phone and pushes a button.

MEYERS
Security...

INT. STATESMEN LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Jones walks across the locker room and stops at Derrick Speck's locker. Speck looks up and nods with respect.

JONES
Hey, I'm throwing a little private party this weekend. A few friends from out of town. You think you could introduce me to your guy?

SPECK
Yeah, get me a pen and paper.

Jones holds up a business card and a pen. Speck takes them and he writes on the back. He hands them back to Jones. Jones reads the card.

JONES
Your guy's name is Spyder Mann?

Speck laughs and claps him on the shoulder.

SPECK
You know that it is.

Jones chuckles humorlessly.

SPECK (CONT'D)
Let me call him in advance and warn him you'll be in touch.

Jones nods.

INT. CONAN JONES' LEXUS - LATER

Jones sits in his Lexus, staring at the piece of paper with Spyder Mann's name and number on it.

JONES
This is stupid.

He dials the number. Someone answers.

JONES (CONT'D)
I'm the guy you were told about.

Beat.

JONES (CONT'D)
Over near highway 50? Yeah, I know
it.

Beat.

JONES (CONT'D)
See you then.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - LATER

Jones pulls into the parking lot of a closed and abandoned fast food restaurant. He drives around back, where a idling Hummer sits, lights off, as far from the street as possible.

He parks next to it. Spyder rolls down the window and motions for Jones to do the same. Jones complies.

SPYDER
You the guy?

JONES
Guess so.

SPYDER
You police?

Jones shakes his head with a frown.

SPYDER (CONT'D)
You have to tell me if you are.
It's the law.

JONES
I'm not.

SPYDER
My partner here is going to jump in
your passenger side.

Dante gets out of the Hummer and jumps into the Lexus.

DANTE
What's up, man? You that pitcher?

Jones hands him the cash.

JONES

That's me.

Dante chuckles.

DANTE

Good luck.

Dante hands Jones a small vial of liquid and hops out of the Lexus. Jones looks down at the bottle's label, which says "Winstrol."

INT. SUNDAY SPORTS CHAT SHOW STUDIO

The lights shine down on host Michael Weisman and his guests. Behind him is a giant sign that says: The Sunday Sports Chat Show.

WEISMAN

Hello everyone and welcome to this week's Sunday Sports Chat Show. With me today is a special panel made up entirely of injured or inactive players who have been with the D.C. Statesmen this season, but for one reason or another, have missed out on the festivities.

Next to Weisman is Frank Lassiter.

WEISMAN (CONT'D)

First up is Frank Lassiter, a starting pitcher...

LASSITER

Hello.

WEISMAN

Next we have Harrell Flowers, another starting pitcher...

FLOWERS

Hey everybody.

WEISMAN

Also with us is starting pitcher Skipper Westmoreland...

WESTMORELAND

It's nice to be here.

WEISMAN

Finally, we have Albert Whaley, who plays first and third base.

WHALEY

Yo.

INT. HAROLD GRAY'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

Gray sits on his couch, sipping from a beer. He's watching the Sunday Morning Chat Show. When he sees Whaley, he does a spit-take.

GRAY

What is this horseshit?

INT. SUNDAY SPORTS CHAT SHOW STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Weisman turns and looks into the camera.

WEISMAN

Okay, first question. What led you to sitting here with me today instead of playing for the best team in the league?

LASSITER

Frank Lassiter. I am currently in rehab after undergoing ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction, what they call Tommy John surgery, in May.

FLOWERS

Harrell Flowers and I've had a severe sprain in my plant foot and have had a slow recovery.

WESTMORELAND

Skipper Westmoreland and I joined the Statesmen in the off-season. Never actually played a game for the team. Tore my ACL last year.

WHALEY

My name is Alfred Whaley. I'm actually fully healthy, but I got cut from the team because of politics.

WEISMAN

Politics?

WHALEY

It was either going to be me or Cam Kendricks playing this season. But Cam's gotta be someone's cousin or something. I've been here for years and that job was mine.

WEISMAN

Then why'd they cut you?

WHALEY

I told you man, politics.

The panel laughs at him, not with him.

INT. HAROLD GRAY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Gray almost throws his remote at the TV, but sets it down instead. He stands up and pours himself a glass of scotch.

GRAY

Fucking putz.

INT. SUNDAY SPORTS CHAT SHOW STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Weisman continues talking to Whaley.

WEISMAN

Okay, so tell me what the environment IS like over there in the clubhouse?

The men all laugh uncomfortably.

WHALEY

It's the shi... worst environment in the history of sports.

LASSITER

Get out of here.

WHALEY

Seriously, I've never even HEARD of an environment more toxic.

FLOWERS

You're the only one toxic in that locker room. I can't believe they let you on TV.

WESTMORELAND

Yeah, you aren't even a member of the team anymore.

WHALEY

I'm more a member of that team than you are, you haven't even played a single game. I've played--

LASSITER

Shut the hell up. You got fired because you're an asshole. You were such a toxic presence in that locker room, I can't believe you didn't get cut earlier.

INT. HAROLD GRAY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Gray laughs as he sips his scotch.

GRAY

I definitely fired the right guy.

INT. SUNDAY SPORTS CHAT SHOW STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

WEISMAN

Lastly, tell us... what does YOUR future look like? Frank Lassiter?

LASSITER

My contract is up at the end of the year. We'll have to take a look at things then. How I'm doing with rehab and the like.

WEISMAN

Harrell Flowers?

FLOWERS

I've got a couple more years on mine, I should be ready to go by the beginning of next season.

WEISMAN

Skipper Westmoreland.

WESTMORELAND

I'm feeling the best I've felt in a year. I may be ready for the playoffs.

WEISMAN

That's good to hear. Albert Whaley?

WHALEY

I am currently accepting offers.
Including those overseas.

The other players laugh at him.

INT. HAROLD GRAY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Gray turns off his TV.

WHALEY

If I ever see that guy again...

He walks towards the kitchen with his empty glass.

EXT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Whaley walks through the TV studio, scrolling through messages on his phone. His texts are all positive, clapping him on the back for his TV appearance: "#truthteller" "That'll show 'em," "They messed with the bull, they got the horns" and things like that. Whaley grins.

He switches over to Twitter and scrolls through his mentions. They're pretty positive, too. And quite a few are strongly anti-Kendricks: "He's GOTTA be juicing," "No way he's clean," "I've heard he's an asshole OFF the field, too," "What'd this guy do, sell his soul to the devil" and the like.

But a lot are also pro-Kendricks: "#ThePeoplesChampion," "We're with Kendricks" and "Cam's our championship man."

Whaley frowns.

INT. ALBERT WHALEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

At home now, Whaley sits at his computer, phone still in his hand. He frowns as he nods.

WHALEY

I understand.

On the other end of the phone is an ANONYMOUS COACH.

ANONYMOUS COACH (O.S.)

I've been hearing bad shit. They're saying you're toxic. Nobody wants to touch you.

WHALEY

Who? Who's been saying that? Didn't you see me on TV?

ANONYMOUS COACH (O.S.)

Yeah, man, it was definitely a way to go. You talked to your agent?

Whaley laughs.

WHALEY

That useless fuck? I fired him.

Beat.

ANONYMOUS COACH (O.S.)

Man. That was a bad idea.

WHALEY

What? Why?

ANONYMOUS COACH (O.S.)

You gonna keep my name out of it?

WHALEY

What it?

ANONYMOUS COACH (O.S.)

Whatever IT is?

Whaley is confused.

WHALEY

Yeah, sure.

ANONYMOUS COACH (O.S.)

Nobody's even going to take your call.

WHALEY

What are you talking about? Twitter went crazy.

ANONYMOUS COACH (O.S.)

Well, when Twitter gets a baseball team, that'll help you out. Right now, you're screwed. You are persona non grata. You want to keep playing baseball?

WHALEY

I want to START playing baseball again.

ANONYMOUS COACH (O.S.)
Then your only choice is to go
overseas.

Whaley frowns.

INT. LEAH OWENS' OFFICE - DAY

Benjamin walks into Owens' office. Owens looks up.

OWENS
You aren't going to believe this.

Owens waves Benjamin around the desk so she can see the computer screen. Benjamin hurries.

On Owens' screen is an article from "Financial News World." The title is "Carmesi Molto launches hostile takeover of Statesmen." Benjamin's eyes grow huge in shock.

BENJAMIN
Did Starr call you? Stop by and I
missed it?

Owens shakes her head.

OWENS
She didn't say shit. This is the
first I'm learning of it, just like
you.

Benjamin raises an eyebrow.

BENJAMIN
Is she gonna win?

OWENS
No fucking way.

Owens takes a sip from her whiskey.

OWENS (CONT'D)
Here's Starr's card. See what you
can dig up.

Owens tosses Starr's card on the desk. Benjamin picks it up and looks at it.

INT. THE PINCH - NIGHT

Betty and Bishop sit at an isolated table in the bar, which is pretty busy. They each nurse a beer. Dan tends bar.

BETTY
So, let's talk.

BISHOP
I thought we WERE talking.

BETTY
Don't be dumb.

Bishop takes a sip of his beer.

BETTY (CONT'D)
I hate beating around the bush, so
I'm just gonna say it. I am
polyamorous.

Bishop takes another sip of beer.

BETTY (CONT'D)
What that means is I date and fall
in love with and have sex with more
than one person.

Bishop is quiet.

BETTY (CONT'D)
Does that bother you?

Bishop shrugs.

BISHOP
I mean. Yeah. Some.

BETTY
Well, it's who I am. I wouldn't
change it if I could.

Bishop takes another sip from his beer.

BISHOP
I really like you.

BETTY
I really like you, too.

BISHOP
So what do we do about it?

BETTY
That's up to you.

Beat.

BISHOP
I'd like to try.

BETTY
Then let's try.

Bishop leans in and kisses her.

EXT. THE PINCH BASEMENT - NIGHT

The Pinch basement is about half full. Half of those people are playing around with guitars or reading over lyric sheets, this is definitely an open mic night.

The host, DANNY ROVIN, holds the mic.

DANNY
All right, our next performer,
coming back for a second appearance
here at the Smokin' Open Mic is...

Danny looks down at the sign-up sheet.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Abraham. Everybody let's welcome
Abraham.

Everyone applauds, but no one does it enthusiastically. Abraham walks up to the mic with a sheet of paper in his hand. He clears his throat nervously.

ABRAHAM
Thanks.

***INSERT POEM HERE

EXT. DARK COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Jacob drives a Chevy Spark down a dark country road. He slows down as he comes to a road, but he doesn't turn down the drive, he stops at the mailbox instead.

He hops out of the car holding a package about the size of a kilo of cocaine or heroin, wrapped in brown paper AND in plastic wrap.

VOICE (O.S.)
Put it in the mailbox.

Jacob looks around. He can't see anyone. There's no one there.

VOICE (O.S) (CONT'D)
Put it in the mailbox and leave.

The sound of a shotgun being cocked.

Jacob runs to the mailbox and puts the package inside. He runs back to the Spark, hops in and drives off.

A man dressed in completely black clothes, including a black stocking over his head, walks from out of the trees nearby and opens the mailbox. He takes out the package and goes inside the house.

EXT. VITO'S MAMA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's prime time for Vito's Mama's Restaurant and the place is packed. Esau puts the last plate from his tray onto a table and walks back into the kitchen.

Esau walks to the window to the kitchen and grabs a plate of fettuccini alfredo. He puts it onto a platter. He looks around and the coast is clear. He pulls out a small vial of clear liquid.

He looks around once again. Nobody's looking. Esau drips a single drop from the vial into the center of the bowl of pasta.

Esau puts the vial away, picks up the plate of food and carries it out to a table. He sets the plate down in front of the MAN in a married couple.

ESAU
Sorry about that. No garlic, just like you asked.

WOMAN
Thank you, he's allergic.

ESAU
I can promise you that garlic is definitely not the important ingredient in this recipe.

He grins and the couple smiles awkwardly in return.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

The Man from the restaurant lays on an emergency room table, coding. DOCTORS and NURSES work frantically trying to revive him, but he's lifeless.

DOCTOR

I don't understand, there's nothing
on any of the tests, this shouldn't
be happening.

His wife looks on through the ER window, crying.

INT. ISHMAEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ishmael sits at his computer with Adobe Spark open. He's actually kind of happy. He's messing around with the design of the Order of the Ram logo, trying to fit it neatly into a circle with an exact size. He gets it right and hits print.

He walks over to the printer and picks up the first sheet that comes out. It's a heavier paper. He peels off a sticker and slaps it on his filing cabinet, happy with his work.

INT. LE CHAT NOIR - NIGHT

Rebecca sits in the DJ booth as the Crazy World of Arthur Brown's "Fire" plays. People dance, not paying any attention to the lyrics.

Rebecca expertly crossfades the Arthur Brown song into "Fire" by the Ohio Players. She grins as the crowd cheers.

INT. NBS NEWS STUDIO

Brack sits solemnly at the desk reading from a piece of paper.

BRACK

Pearl Connor, Minnie Williams,
Julia Smith, Edna Van Tassel. The
names of the latest victims in the
murder spree in the nation's
capital...

INT. LEAH OWENS' OFFICE - DAY

Huebner sits across from Owens. Owens hands him a glass of whiskey.

OWENS

What can I do for you?

HUEBNER

I thought we'd have a little chat.

OWENS

Despite what you might've been told, your presence doesn't bless me. I'm busy.

HUEBNER

I'm also busy. Busy trying to hold this ship together.

OWENS

Aren't we the best team in the history of baseball at this point in the season?

Huebner crosses his arms.

HUEBNER

Do you have any idea how easily this house of cards could be canceled?

Owens takes a sip of whiskey.

OWENS

I agree with you.

HUEBNER

Good, let's save this thing.

OWENS

We can't. It doesn't matter what anybody thinks. The contracts are signed in blood, no one's breaking any of them before this season is over.

HUEBNER

You're certain?

OWENS

I'm definitely one of those people who hates to repeat herself.

EXT. TINA WARREN'S MANSION - DAY

Shirley parks near the front door, but Tina's mansion is dark. It appears no one is home. Shirley rings the bell.

Nothing. She knocks on the door. Nothing. She peers through the windows, but everything is dark and quiet.

She pulls out her phone and dials Chad.

CHAD (O.S.)
What's up?

SHIRLEY
Nothing. It's completely dark and empty. She's gone.

She hangs up with a frown.

INT. LEKEBRA BENJAMIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Benjamin sits at her desk, reading the hostile takeover article that Owens showed her. She finishes the article and picks up Manda Starr's card from the desk.

The voice of Professor Joy, Benjamin's Howard professor, admonishes her from the past:

PROFESSOR JOY (O.S.)
Bide your time, go with the flow
and wait for your opportunity.

She sits and thinks for a moment, then Benjamin dials Manda Starr's number.

INT. MICHAEL WEISMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Weisman sits in his bed, with his back against the headboard. He has a tablet in his hands with a YouTube video playing. It's the end of the Dwayne McDaris interview with Alex Watkins.

ALEX WATKINS
...the air around his bat is
between 37% and 42% bluer than
normal...

Weisman puts the tablet down, takes out his phone and dials McDaris.

MCDARIS (O.S.)
Hello?

WEISMAN
Dwayne?

MCDARIS (O.S.)

It's me.

Weisman rubs his hand through his hair.

WEISMAN

I've been... uh... watching some of your online videos.

MCDARIS (O.S.)

(excited)

Yeah?

WEISMAN

And... uh... we're not going to have you back on the show any more. Like ever.

MCDARIS (O.S.)

You've barely had me on the show at all recently. And now you're dumping me?

WEISMAN

You've been with us a long time. I'm torn up about this. But I just can't have my brand associated with... conspiracy theories.

MCDARIS (O.S.)

What? Those are FACTS, not consp--

WEISMAN

I' gonna stop you there, Dwayne. Whatever they are, I... I can't.

MCDARIS (O.S.)

What the f--

Weisman hangs up.

INT. ASHLEY HERNANDEZ' APARTMENT - EVENING

Hernandez sits on her couch. Her laptop is on the coffee table before her, her notepad sits on her lap and she holds her phone. From a directory on the web, she reads the name Maya Marin and dials the number.

No answer. She hangs up with a frown.

She pulls out Shirley's phone number. It rings for a few seconds then goes to e-mail.

ASHLEY
 Hey, Ms. Muldoon, this is Ashley
 Hernandez, following up on my e-
 mail. I think we need to talk.

INT. STATESMEN LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Kendricks sits at his locker, getting ready. Howell walks
 over and gets his attention.

HOWELL
 Get ready. You're starting today.

Kendricks smiles.

KENDRICKS
 Thanks.

He walks towards the locker room door, but turns and looks
 back at Howell before he leaves.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
 Watch this.

He winks.

EXT. NATIONAL STADIUM FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

SUPER: First Inning

The Statesmen host the New Jersey Titans. Kendricks stands on
 the mound, warming up. In the dugout, Howell and Gray sit at
 the end of the bench closest to home plate.

HOWELL
 He's ready. He's got this.

GRAY
 I'm not so sure. But let's go with
 it.

On the mound, Kendricks is ready. The first batter, all-star
 shortstop AMIRI BARAKA, stands at the plate. Kendricks winds
 up and Baraka fouls off the first pitch.

Kendricks pitches again, a fastball that blows past Baraka's
 swing.

In the dugout, Ferd Langwieler holds up his radar gun.

LANGWIELER

HUEBNER

Insane.

Howell grins.

On the mound, Kendrick throws another fastball. Baraka strikes out. He stares at Kendrick as if he is quite impressed.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Seventh Inning

Kendrick has an 0-2 count and two outs as the batter, SMITH, stands in the box, almost shaking with intimidation. Kendrick smiles directly at him.

Kendrick throws a fast ball and Smith doesn't even swing. The inning's over.

In the dugout, Howell leans towards Huebner and whispers.

HOWELL

No hits through seven.

Gray spits.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Ninth Inning

There are two outs. Two strikes to the batter, SPRINGSTEEN. Kendrick stands tall.

HUEBNER

I guess he's got his form back.

HOWELL

I'll say.

Kendrick throws the pitch, Springsteen flails away and the game is over. Kendrick has his first no-hitter.

INT. THE PINCH BASEMENT - NIGHT

It's Punk/Rap Karaoke night in the Pinch basement. Cody is cutting loose, singing karaoke. Currently, she is on stage finishing up "WAP," by Cardi B & Meghan thee Stallion. She ends the song to thunderous applause and makes her way to the bar.

Leila Rassi stands at the bar applauding her when she arrives.

LEILA
That was amazing!

CODY
Thank you. Thank you.

LEILA
No, seriously, I've been... cooped
up for a while and I've never seen
anything like that.

Cody eyes her up and down.

CODY
Let me buy you a drink?

Leila is surprised.

CODY (CONT'D)
You look like you could use a
drink.

LEILA
Oh my god, yeah, I could.

Cody signals Dan.

CODY
Whatever she wants.

Leila shrugs?

LEILA
Tequila. Beer chaser.

Cody laughs. Dan hands Leila the drinks. She takes the shot
and a sip of the beer.

LEILA (CONT'D)
I needed that. Thank you!

CODY
Rough day?

Leila laughs.

LEILA
You have no idea.

CODY
Try me.

Leila takes a sip from her beer. She makes a decision. She
chugs her beer.

LEILA

You ever heard of something called
the Order of the Crimson Ram?

Cody chuckles. She pulls out her badge and tosses it on the bar.

CODY

A little bit.

LEILA

Buy me another drink and lets talk.

Cody signals Dan for another round.

INT. CONAN JONES' MANSION - NIGHT

Conan Jones sits on his couch, playing with his laptop. The room is quiet other than his fingers typing on the keyboard. He gets an e-mail notification from Luis Narvaez. He opens it.

NARVAEZ (V.O.)

Hey. I love you man. I can't speak
for everybody else, but I love you.
I don't want you to fuck up. You
were using Vaseline. It got on my
hands. I was shocked when I
realized you were doctoring the
ball. It broke my heart. And, well,
you can be better than this. I
hope.

Jones leans back in his chair and rereads the e-mail. Then he deletes it. Then he empties the trash.

He stands up walks into the kitchen. He takes the bottle of Winstrol, looks at it one last time and pours the liquid down the drain.

CUT TO:

Jones walks into his home gym and sits down at the curl machine. He starts working out his injured elbow.

INT. SEEDY MOTEL - NIGHT

SUPER: Parts Unknown

Whaley sits on a dirty motel bed with his back against the wall. His shirt is completely unbuttoned and he wears boxers.

In his left hand is a half-drunken bottle of Jack Daniels. His right hand rests on the panty-clad ass of a SEX WORKER.

He takes a swig directly from the bottle and falls asleep on the bed.

INT. A DIFFERENT SEEDY MOTEL - NIGHT

SUPER: Outside Akron

McDaris sits in a dirty chair at a dirty table in his motel room. His laptop is open and a half-drunken bottle of Ketel One sits next to it.

He takes a big swig from the bottle of vodka, walks over and flops onto the bed, instantly falling asleep.

EXT. CHAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Shirley knocks on the door. Chad opens it almost immediately.

SHIRLEY

What's u--

Chad grabs her arm, pulls her inside and slams the door.

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Chad rushes to his desk and sits down. He swivels around to face her.

CHAD

This one is the kicker.

He hands her a police report. She flips through the pages, her eyes growing wide with shock.

SHIRLEY

This what I think it is?

CHAD

Sure looks like it.

SHIRLEY

One of the lead suspects in our case is dead. BEFORE the last incidents happened?

CHAD

There's more, but that's the topline.

Shirley flips through the pages of the police report some more.

SHIRLEY

Let's talk to our cop friends.

CHAD

Let's.

INT. RED SHEEP RANCH - NIGHT

The Figure walks through the corridors of the Center, arriving at a door with a keypad lock. The Figure types in a 13-digit code and the door opens. Once inside, the door shuts behind the Figure.

The Figure walks through what appears to be a private apartment. It is filled with the finest furniture. Priceless art hangs on the walls. Everything is spotlessly clean.

The Figure walks into a bedroom and sits at a vanity with a mirror.

She pulls down her hood, which leaves the mask on, revealing white hair tied in a tight bun.

She takes off the mask and stares into the mirror wearily.

The Figure is Manda Starr.

INT. SHIRLEY MULDOON'S APARTMENT - LATER

Shirley sits on her couch, laptop open. She checks her e-mails and sees a message from Ashley Hernandez titled "re: Cam Kendricks."

She opens the message and sees a video is attached.

She clicks on the video, it's the video of Cam Kendricks assaulting Tina Warren.

The CAMERA pulls away from the video and stays on Shirley's face. Her hand shoots to cover her mouth when the violence escalates.

Shirley sits and stares at her computer long after the video finishes, hand still covering her mouth.

FADE OUT.