

THE G.O.A.T
Season 1, Episode 6
"On the Road Again"

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TITLE: ON THE ROAD AGAIN

FADE IN.

INT. IVAN PASCO'S CONDO - DAY

Outfielder Ivan Pasco stands in his bedroom packing a suitcase. The busy noises of a lot of people can be heard from the next room. Pasco puts several shirts in his suitcase and closes it.

He walks into the living room, where a dozen FAMILY MEMBERS eat and cheer while watching a soccer game. They barely pay attention to Pasco.

He has to squeeze his way through to get to the front door.

ABUELA

Give me a kiss before you go.

Pasco bashfully walks over to his ABUELA, a Cuban woman in her 60s, and gives her a kiss on the cheek. The younger members of the family laugh.

ABUELA (CONT'D)

Have a good game today. Play well.

Pasco walks out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. NATIONAL AIRPORT - LATER

Pasco walks through the airport, carrying a gym bag on his shoulder and pulling a large suitcase on wheels. Other players are walking or sitting in groups throughout the airport, but Pasco is alone.

He drops his bags at the counter. He goes through the security checkpoint. He stops and gets a Hater-ade from a shop. He stares out the window at the arriving and departing planes. He boards his plane. He stows his bag. He buckles in.

CUT TO:

EXT. LA GUARDIA AIRPORT, NEW YORK - LATER

Pasco climbs onto the team's charter bus and finds an empty seat near the front, the only place rookies are allowed to sit. No one sits next to him.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLUTH GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL, NEW YORK - NIGHT

Pasco steps off the bus and onto a busy New York street. He walks towards the giant revolving front door as the rest of the team unloads.

Just before he steps into the revolving door, bench coach Craig Glover hands him a small envelope.

GLOVER

Keys and per diem are in the envelope. Room number is written on the front.

Pasco looks down and sees the number 1242. Once inside, he gets on the elevator. On the elevator is an older couple wearing Hawaiian shirts and shorts. GRANDPA looks on with bemusement as GRANDMA turns to talk to him.

GRANDMA

You're a nice large young man. What do you do?

PASCO

I'm a baseball player.

GRANDMA

Up at the college?

Pasco chuckles.

PASCO

No, I play professionally.

Grandma gets excited.

GRANDMA

Oooh, oooh... do you play for the world champions? What are they called?

GRANDPA

The Smashers.

GRANDMA
Are you a Smasher?

PASCO
No ma'am. I play for the D.C.
Statesmen.

Grandma frowns.

GRANDMA
Oh.

The rest of the elevator ride is silent.

CUT TO:

Pasco pulls his suitcase down the hallway and stops at room 1212. He pulls his room key from the envelope Glover gave him. He swipes it.

It flashes red.

He swipes it again.

Another red flash.

He swipes it more carefully and slowly. It finally works and Pasco goes inside.

The hotel room is larger and much more elegant than his home. And it's empty. He drops his gym bag and suitcase and rushes to the bed. He falls on the bed with a smile and passes out.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROXXON PARK FIELD - MORNING

The ballpark is empty this early in the day. Except for third baseman Winston Pulsipher and hitting coach Alvin Huebner.

Huebner holds up a baseball and puts it in the pitching machine. Pulsipher swings away, but fouls the ball off.

PULSIPHER
Again.

Huebner holds up another ball. Pulsipher gets off a better swing, driving the ball to right field. Would've been a single in a game.

PULSIPHER (CONT'D)
Again.

Pulsipher drives the ball to the same spot.

PULSIPHER (CONT'D)

Again.

He fouls this one down the right field line.

PULSIPHER (CONT'D)

Again.

CUT TO:

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

Closer Clint Youngblood wanders around Times Square carrying armfuls of bags from various shops and stores. He walks past a man in an Elmo costume, and Elmo tries to steal one of his bags. He's a little too aggressive. Youngblood dodges him.

A few steps further and Youngblood spots his destination, the Hollywood Planet theme restaurant. He rushes inside.

CUT TO:

Youngblood sits alone at a table, pouring over the menu. He is protected from onlookers by a wall of bags in chairs and on the other half of the table. His waitress, AMBER, returns.

AMBER

You decided?

YOUNGBLOOD

Man, I can't decide. Hmmm...

AMBER

You need some more time?

YOUNGBLOOD

Nah, let's get started.

At the next table, four FRAT BROS consume various beers and meat. The WHITE FRAT BRO looks over and notices Youngblood. He elbows the BLACK FRAT BRO who sees Youngblood and gets excited. They get the attention of the ASIAN FRAT BRO and the LATINO FRAT BRO and all are now focused on Youngblood.

Youngblood looks up at Amber and smiles.

YOUNGBLOOD (CONT'D)

You ready?

AMBER

It IS my job.

YOUNGBLOOD

Sweet. Let's start with one of those tall 22 ounce beers. And then in 10 minutes, bring me another one. How about some of those loaded nachos... mozzarella sticks and... jalapeno poppers.

Amber reaches for the menu.

YOUNGBLOOD (CONT'D)

Then, for the entrée...

Amber sighs.

YOUNGBLOOD (CONT'D)

Let me get the ribeye, with a baked potato and a chef's salad.

AMBER

Is that it?

YOUNGBLOOD

And a Diet Coke.

The second Amber walks away, the Frat Bros turn their attention to Youngblood. He can't help but notice them and looks up.

ASIAN FRAT BRO

Hey, aren't you Clint Youngblood?

Youngblood smiles.

BLACK FRAT BRO

Yeah, you play for the Statesmen.

YOUNGBLOOD

Shhh. Don't tell anyone.

The Frat Bros are excited to be in on the secret.

WHITE FRAT BRO

Aren't you playing tonight?

YOUNGBLOOD

Not if I'm lucky.

It takes the Frat Bros a second, then they join him in laughter.

LATINO FRAT BRO

Can we buy you a beer?

Youngblood laughs.

YOUNGBLOOD

Do you know how much I make?

WHITE FRAT BRO

Yes. You made \$14 million last year.

YOUNGBLOOD

Correct. And with bonuses, it'll be even higher this year.

The Frat Bros are excited.

YOUNGBLOOD (CONT'D)

Let me buy YOU guys a drink.

They cheer. Around the room, others look up at the giant TVs, thinking they missed something. Several of them start to cheer along with the Frat Bros.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUTH GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL - LATER

Bullpen coach Justin Tannehill sits at the desk in his hotel room. Before him his laptop is set up and Zoom is running.

His entire family is in on the chat: WIFE, DAUGHTER, SON, MOTHER, BROTHER, FATHER, UNCLE and three COUSINS. No one will shut up and the cacophony of blandness overwhelms.

TANNEHILL

What are you having for dinner tonight?

WIFE

Chicken and yellow rice.

TANNEHILL

My favorite. Mmmmmmm....

CUT TO:

INT. ROXXON PARK LOCKER ROOM

Pitcher Conan Jones sits on table being examined by one of the team's medical personnel, Dr. Carter. Carter flexes Jones' arm back and forth, paying close attention to the elbow.

DR. CARTER
You're still fine. For now.

Jones is skeptical.

DR. CARTER (CONT'D)
But I'm guessing if you don't take
some time off by choice, and soon,
you'll be forced to take some time
off.

JONES
I've been up and down all season.
Trying to get some consistency.

DR. CARTER
If you're determined to keep
playing, we're going to have to put
you on a pitch count. I'm tempted
to say 80.

Jones sits up.

JONES
You've got to be kidding me.

DR. CARTER
I'm not the one who kids, that's
Dr. Green.

CUT TO:

INT. ROXXON PARK FIELD - DAY

SUPER: First Inning

The NEW YORK HAWKS are the Big Apple's OTHER team and it shows. Roxxon Park is lovingly referred to by fans as "the Erector Set" for it's functional appearance. The stadium is packed, but you can see just as many D.C. Statesmen jerseys as you see Hawks gear. Cam Kendricks is, by far, the most common jersey worn by fans.

Kendricks steps up to the plate to face Hawks pitcher ALCINDOR with the bases loaded.

Alcindor throws a fastball, but Kendricks gets a piece of it and drops a blooper into short right field. Leadoff hitter Jason Doster scores from third.

CUT TO:

Kendricks steps up to face the new pitcher, RATHER. Doster is on third and Lombardi is at second.

Rather throws a fastball and drives it past the first baseman, who was playing off the bag. Two runs score as Kendricks pulls into first with a single.

In the dugout, bench coach Craig Glover elbows Huebner.

GLOVER

He should've been out twice.

HUEBNER

(grinning)

Scoreboard says otherwise.

The Statesmen lead 8-0.

CUT TO:

Jones stands on the mound. He's already sweaty and looks tired. It's the first inning.

He throws a pitch well outside and Umpire KALINA LONEY calls ball four. The bases are now loaded.

GUS BENNETT steps up to the plate. The powerful third baseman is made of muscles. He's a 30-year-old white man.

Jones takes a deep breath, but the sound doesn't drop away. He can't concentrate. He steps off the mound.

Bennett stares him down.

Jones steps back onto the mound. He takes a deep breath again, and the sound only drops to a low buzz. He still can't concentrate. He eyes Loney, who is getting itchy. He has to pitch.

He throws a curve, but it doesn't curve. Bennett slams the ball to deep right field and flips his bat. Jones throws his glove down on the mound.

In the dugout, pitching coach Vernon Howell gets up to call the bullpen.

GRAY

Get Wheeler up.

GLOVER

Jones doesn't have it today.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Third Inning

Kendricks faces Rather again. Kendricks has a 3-0 count.

Rather throws a fastball and Kendricks drives it into the right field corner. He rounds first and coasts into second with a stand-up double.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Fifth Inning

The new Hawks pitcher, IAN, has an 0-2 count on Kendricks. He winds up and pitches. Ian dives for the liner Kendricks drives up the middle. Another single. Two runs score.

CUT TO:

Kendricks steps up to the plate. The bases are loaded again. The score is now 14-5 for D.C. The Hawks have another new pitcher, BELAFONTE.

Kendricks finishes his practices swings. Belafonte pitches low and away. Kendricks is ready though, and drives a single to short right field. The score is now 16-5.

GLOVER (CONT'D)

Ferd. Was that his second two-hit
inning of the game?

Head scout Ferd Langwieler checks his stat book.

LANGWIELER

Yep.

Gray gets up and starts pacing.

CUT TO:

Bennett steps up again, this time there are only two runners on base with one out. Jones sees who the batter is.

JONES

(under his breath)
Fuck!

Jones takes a deep breath, but the sound doesn't drop away. He takes another deep breath, but still nothing. He drops his head.

He winds up and throws the pitch. Same result. Bennett deposits the pitch in the left field bleachers. The score is now 16-8.

HUEBNER

How do we have 16 runs and we've
lost momentum?

GRAY

Get your boy.

Howell runs out onto the field. Gray grabs the bullpen phone.

GRAY (CONT'D)

Send in Hector.

In the bullpen, reliever Hector Delarosa tosses the ball to backup catcher Haywood Doman, who has shaven his beard and long hair. Delarosa runs onto the field while Jones walks off dejectedly.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Seventh Inning

Kendricks is the first batter of the inning. The Hawks have a new pitcher, ADAMS. Adams throws a pitch and Kendricks drives it to left field for a single.

CUT TO:

Kendricks comes up to bat for the second time in the inning. This time the bases are loaded and there are still no outs. The score is now 22-8.

Adams is still pitching, but he looks worn out. He throws a slider, but Kendricks still gets ahold of it, driving it to left field for a single.

CUT TO:

Kendricks steps up to the plate for the third time in the inning. There are two outs and the bases are loaded. The new pitcher is ELLINGTON. The score is now 26-8.

GLOVER

You ever seen anything like this?

LANGWIELER

Not professionally.

GLOVER

Three hits in an inning has been done. A few times. But nobody's ever done four. He gets a hit here, it ties a record that'll never be broken.

HUEBNER
I'm guessing he'll do it.

Laughter.

GLOVER
We've already got 13 runs in this
inning. That's crazy.

HUEBNER
Watch.

They do. Ellington throws the best pitch he can and Kendricks jacks it to deep right field. The Statesmen's bench and the few thousand fans left in the stands go crazy.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Ninth Inning

Kendricks steps up to the plate, facing yet another pitcher, REYNOLDS. The stands are mostly empty now, but even the Hawks fans still in the stadium cheer for what Kendricks has done today.

GLOVER
One more and he ties the record.

HUEBNER
How many does he have now?

GLOVER
Eight. A homer, two doubles and
five singles.

BISHOP
Damn. And the record is nine?

Glover nods.

Reynolds tries a curve, but it doesn't curve enough and Kendricks drives a single up the middle.

Once he gets to first, he tips his cap to the remaining fans. The response is small, but boisterous.

CUT TO:

Kendricks stands on the field talking to reporter Sharon Alligood. The final score is 33-8.

ALLIGOOD

That was amazing! Nine hits in a game a thing that hasn't been done since 1932. Seven runs in a game hasn't been done since 1886. Three hits in an inning. Three runs in an inning. It just keeps going and going. How are you feeling?

Kendricks is giddy.

KENDRICKS

What can I say? I'm in awe of myself.

ALLIGOOD

How did you do it?

KENDRICKS

When you're good, you're good.

ALLIGOOD

But did you change your stance? Get a new workout routine? Stay at a Holiday Inn Express last night?

KENDRICKS

A magician never reveals his tricks.

Huebner walks by and Alligood pulls him into the discussion.

ALLIGOOD

Coach Huebner, that was one of the most impressive team hitting efforts in the history of the sport. We're still counting how many records were broken tonight, but we've already confirmed at least a dozen: 33 runs is the modern record and hasn't been done since the Chicago Colts did it in 1892. 17 runs in an inning is insane and at least seven players hit career highs in at least one stat. Can you possibly sum up what we just saw?

Huebner shrugs. Kendricks manages to slip away while Alligood speaks.

HUEBNER

We've been putting in the work. Trying new things.

(MORE)

HUEBNER (CONT'D)
 Finding out what works best.
 Tonight, I think we got it.

ALLIGOOD
 You certainly did. Everybody knows
 Kendricks came out of nowhere, but
 how'd the rest of the team start
 hitting so well?

HUEBNER
 If I'd could explain it, I'd bottle
 it. There's something in the water,
 I guess.

Gray walks behind him at that moment and he overhears
 Huebner. Gray doesn't know the term side-eye, but he sure
 knows how to deliver it.

OPENING CREDITS.

INT. STATESMEN WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Kendricks lays on a weight bench, pressing 250 pounds easily.
 He's shirtless and has almost no body fat. His muscles are
 unbelievably huge.

He easily presses the 250 pounds and slams it back on the
 rack.

KENDRICKS
 More!

He takes a sip from an aluminum can filled with ThunderBrew.
 The weight on the bar is doubled. He lifts it easily.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
 More!

He drinks more ThunderBrew and easily lifts all the weights
 AND four giant paint buckets that are hung from the weight
 bar.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
 More!

He drinks more ThunderBrew and now he's bench pressing an
 actual elephant.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
 More!

He shifts the elephant to one hand, still keeping it aloft. He picks up the can of ThunderBrew and slams the whole thing. He crunches the can and tosses it aside.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)

More!

He looks directly into the camera as he tosses the elephant aside with a large crash.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)

There's NEVER enough ThunderBrew!

He grabs another ThunderBrew and starts chugging it.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

ThunderBrew! Now available at all
Cloud 9 locations.

Kendricks looks around the room for something else to lift.

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

Before we get into today's sports
news, I'm going to go ahead and
make a leap.

Major raises an eyebrow. Inesta turns towards Major. He's taken aback, but he makes eye contact.

INESTA (CONT'D)

If you watch this show regularly,
you might have noticed that Major
and I seem to have great chemistry.
We often flirt on the air.

MAJOR

That we do.

INESTA
We also flirt OFF the air.

Major wasn't expecting that.

 INESTA (CONT'D)
So let's just cut to the chase...

Beat.

 INESTA (CONT'D)
Major, would you like to go on a
date with me?

Major is flabbergasted.

 MAJOR
Hell yeah... I mean hell yes... I
mean yes.

Inesta laughs. Crew members audibly join her.

 INESTA
I'm guessing you'll be fined for
that slip, so I'll pay.

Major is embarrassed, but a PRODUCTION ASSISTANT saves the day by bringing him a piece of paper. He immediately frowns when he reads it.

 MAJOR
Important breaking news at this
hour.

He hands the bulletin to Inesta. She frowns.

 INESTA
We're going to dispense with the
jokes for this story.

 MAJOR
The USBL announced today that an
investigation has been launched
into Cam Kendricks.

 INESTA
Reportedly, the investigation will
include testing for not only
steroids, but for human growth
hormone, and several other PEDs.

MAJOR

It would appear that the investigation comes from the league office and is not based on any complaints from other teams.

INESTA

I'm told that Alton Nix, president of the USBL Players Association is joining us live.

Alton Nix joins Major and Inesta in a three-way split-screen.

NIX

Thank you for having me.

MAJOR

What is the union's take on the allegations against Cam Kendricks?

NIX

First off, we categorically deny that Cam Kendricks has done anything illegal or against league rules. Let's make that clear.

INESTA

They haven't run any tests yet. How can you be so confident?

NIX

Because I know Cam Kendricks...

Major raises an eyebrow.

NIX (CONT'D)

...he's not the type of man who--

MAJOR

Have you even met Cam Kendricks?

Nix looks like a deer caught in headlights.

NIX

Well... no... but we've talked--

INESTA

Alton, he had...

She looks down at her notes.

INESTA (CONT'D)

...nine hits in a game the other night. Three hits in an inning.

(MORE)

INESTA (CONT'D)

Don't you think it's at least
POSSIBLE that a 30-year-old rookie
comes out of nowhere to start
setting every possible offensive
record is using PEDs?

NIX

Sure...

Inesta and Major are both shocked.

NIX (CONT'D)

...it's possible, but we don't--

INESTA

Does that mean that you are
retracting your earlier denial?

Nix doesn't respond. He can't.

MAJOR

You heard it here first, folks.
Even the players' union questions
the recent performance of superstar
Cam Kendricks.

NIX

No... I... Uh....

He gulps audibly.

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

"Ambassador Clemente leads delegation on Southeast Asian
trip"

"Palmer in three-way tie for lead at U.S. Open"

"Dolenz, U.S. lead Tour de France after 2nd stage"

"Scientists predict record hurricane season"

"Peru wins first Copa América"

"Fog Horns advance to Stanley Cup for third straight year"

"Increase in deaths due to heat wave"

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

Tonight, we're going to take a deeper look into the investigation into the so-called Wild Night riots and look into disturbing accusations that the riots might be connected to a series of grisly murders in recent months. Joining us now is Captain Alex Levin of the Police Department of the District of Columbia. Welcome Captain Levin.

Levin, in her full dress uniform, joins Brack via Zoom.

LEVIN

Thank you for having me, although I wish it were under better circumstances.

BRACK

Let's not beat around the bush. What is it that we're dealing with right now.

Levin wasn't ready.

LEVIN

Wow, I think it might be too soon to come to any conclusion about that--

BRACK

I'm getting reports that paint a picture of some pretty disturbing things happening in Washington.

LEVIN

Yes, it is true that we've seen a rash of violence lately.

BRACK

So, what's the big picture? Is this violence connected? Is it a result of Wild Night?

LEVIN

I'd prefer not to speculate at this point.

(MORE)

LEVIN (CONT'D)

I can say that I fully believe that everyone in the nation's capital is fully safe right now and that our finest officers are working to not only stop the violence, but to catch the perpetrators.

BRACK

Is there any truth to the rumor that the violence is all connected?

LEVIN

I think it would be premature to say anything about that at this time...

EXT. NATIONAL STADIUM EXTERIOR - DAY

With the team in New York, the stadium is virtually empty.

Albert Whaley opens the front door and goes inside, carrying a gym bag.

INT. NATIONAL STADIUM FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Just inside, Whaley almost bumps into team president Lekebra Benjamin. She's startled a bit.

BENJAMIN

Hey, Whaley. Albert Whaley, is it?

Whaley awkwardly nods and bows.

WHALEY

Yes, ma'am, that's me.

She furrows her brow.

BENJAMIN

You didn't make the trip with the team?

He frowns.

WHALEY

I... uh... I had a funeral.

She nods.

BENJAMIN

And it's... over?

He doesn't understand.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)
Getting in a workout?

She nods at the gym bag. He finally gets it.

WHALEY
Oh, yeah. I have some things to...
uh... work out.

Benjamin is sympathetic. She puts a hand on his shoulder.

BENJAMIN
Are you doing okay?

WHALEY
I will be.

He nods towards the stadium. She takes the hint.

BENJAMIN
Of course. Don't work too hard.

He watches her walk out the door then turns towards the locker room.

INT. STATESMEN LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Whaley peeks inside, but it's empty. He makes his way to Kendrick's locker.

He roots around for a bit, not finding what he's looking for. He picks up a jersey and smells it. He shakes his head and puts it back.

He picks up Kendrick's hat and looks inside. He tosses it back, disappointed.

Whaley looks at the bottom of the locker and sees a gym bag. He grins.

He picks up the bag and unzips it. He roots around inside and pulls out a pair of tighty-whitey underwear. He grimaces at the smell.

Whaley reaches into his own gym bag and pulls out a Ziploc freezer bag. He puts the underwear inside, squeezes out the air and seals it. He stuffs it in his bag and walks out.

As he walks down the hall, Janice, the custodian, sees him. She takes cover as Whaley looks in her direction.

He doesn't see her and he walks out. Janice peeks from around the corner, fear on her face.

INT. VERNON HOWELL'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Pitching coach Vernon Howell sits in a chair sipping from a glass of whiskey. He watches Sports Central with the sound off. He is deep in thought. A knock at the door.

Howell opens the door and finds pitcher Kit Riggins.

RIGGINS
Can we talk?

CUT TO:

Howell and Riggins sit across from each other at the room's lone table. Howell pours them each a glass of vodka.

HOWELL
How'd it happen?

RIGGINS
She had cancer.

Howell takes a sip of his drink.

HOWELL
Hell, son, I'd would've reacted the same way. It's tough losing a parent. Don't worry about it, Kendricks has been in dust-ups with several players, it's not just you.

RIGGINS
But I do worry about it. I don't want to be here. I can't get over it. And the atmosphere here, it's just--

HOWELL
You're certainly too good to designate.

RIGGINS
Thanks. I definitely don't want to go back to the minors.

Howell thinks for a moment.

HOWELL
We do have some possible trades in the works. I'll see what I can do.

RIGGINS

It's nothing personal. Not against you or Gray, at least.

HOWELL

Understood.

Howell takes another sip of vodka as his mind searches for what to do next.

INT. PDDC BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Levin stands at the front of the briefing. Even more new hires fill the overflowing room. Levin has a bounce in her step. She's excited.

LEVIN

Okay, everybody calm down. I know there's a lot going on, but we still have work to do. In fact, our main objective is before us. Rita...

Rita rolls in a new white board. Taped to the board are the pictures and names of two men: CLIFFORD BYARS and PERVIS TILL. Levin has to hold back a grin.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

Clifford Byars and Pervis Till are our men. We believe the evidence shows that these two men are the most devious serial killers this city has ever seen.

Officer Cody Paige and Detective Brice Eversmith exchange a concerned look.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

Within the hour, we will have a complete profile ready, including all known associates and hangouts of both suspects. You'll each be assigned a list of people to track down and question. Your sole purpose is to catch Byars and Till. Nothing else matters. Do whatever you can. The District is counting on us.

The briefing breaks up.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

Eversmith. Paige. A second.

They hang back as the room empties. Jeremy Spencer stays, too.

LEVIN (CONT'D)

I need you to work with Spencer here. Show him The Setup and all that nonsense. He's got a techie background.

SPENCER

Actually, I--

LEVIN

Chop chop. We've got work to do.

She walks away.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Whaley walks down a hotel hallway quietly. He carries a vinyl grocery bag over his shoulder. He stops at a door in middle of the hall, room 1237, and knocks on the door.

No one answers, so he knocks more aggressively.

TESSELL (O.S.)

Who is it.

Whaley is impatient.

WHALEY

It's me.

TESSELL

I'm sorry, who are you?

Tessell opens the door. When he sees Whaley, he immediately frowns.

TESSELL (CONT'D)

Oh. You.

WHALEY

Can I come in?

TESSELL

To my hotel room? At this hour?

Whaley shrugs.

TESSELL (CONT'D)

You know what... No. You can't come in. Whatever you need to say, say it here.

Whaley looks up and down the hallway.

WHALEY

What happened with that evidence I gave you.

TESSELL

What evidence?

Whaley starts to get angry.

WHALEY

About that asshole Kendricks.

TESSELL

Oh, you mean his file?

WHALEY

Of course that's what I mean. What'd you do with it?

Tessell shrugs.

TESSELL

Nothing yet. It's interesting. It raises questions. But it doesn't provide any answers.

Whaley reaches into his bag and pulls out the plastic bag with Kendricks' underwear.

TESSELL (CONT'D)

Is that... underwear?

WHALEY

No, it's DNA. I mean, yeah, it's underwear, but it's got his DNA on it.

Beat.

WHALEY (CONT'D)

You know... for testing?

TESSELL

For testing what?

Whaley shrugs.

WHALEY

I don't know. I'm not the reporter.

Tessell looks at the underwear skeptically.

WHALEY (CONT'D)

You don't want them?

Tessell takes a deep breath. He reaches out and takes the bag.

TESSELL

I'll see what I can do. But you have to stop showing up randomly like this. How did you even know I was in town?

Whaley shrugs. Tessell stares at him for a second, then slams the door in his face.

INT. VITO'S MAMA'S PLACE - NIGHT

Vito's Mama's Place is a VERY exclusive Italian restaurant. The room is mostly lit by candles, is very elegant, and the large room only has 10 tables that ONLY seat couples. Every table is filled, including the one closest to the kitchen, which seats shortstop Alfredo Brito and Ashley Hernandez.

A WAITER has arrived with their food. Brito has a steak/baked potato/broccoli thing going on. Ashley has something with clams.

BRITO

(to the waitress)

Could we get some more wine?

He finishes off the last sip and shakes the glass a little.

WAITER

Certainly.

He takes the glass and walks away.

ASHLEY

So you flew all the way back?

BRITO

From New York. It's only like an hour.

ASHLEY

Still, you FLEW to this date.

Brito grins then tears off a piece of bread and eats it bare.
He shrugs.

BRITO
Wouldn't miss it.

She smiles. They eat in silence for a while.

ASHLEY
Did you see the new Kendricks
commercial?

BRITO
Yeah, that was pretty tight.

She takes a sip of wine.

BRITO (CONT'D)
Hey, can you get me one of those
commercials?

She laughs.

ASHLEY
Of course I can. What are you
looking for?

He thinks for a second.

BRITO
Nothing here.

She frowns.

BRITO (CONT'D)
I want to do Spanish ads

ASHLEY
That can definitely be arranged. I
have MANY contacts.

BRITO
Really?

ASHLEY
You just keep playing as good as
you are and we'll get you all kinds
of endorsements.

BRITO
Wow. Thanks. Nobody else around
here ever seemed to care much about
me.

ASHLEY
What's your career average again?

BRITO
Ouch.

ASHLEY
I didn't mean it THAT way. What I'm saying is that's all THEY are looking at. Big gaudy numbers. Batting average, home runs, RBIs. You, on the other hand, shine elsewhere.

He frowns.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
You're a lock for a third Gold Glove. That's a big deal. Especially on this team.

Brito nods.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
But you also are leading the team in On Base Percentage.

News to Brito.

BRITO
I am?

ASHLEY
We just focus on your strengths and not worry about what other people do or think. Be yourself. Show your value.

BRITO
And you're good at finding value, are you?

She grins.

ASHLEY
I am.

They both sip from their wine, hiding smiles.

EXT. THE PINCH - NIGHT

Reporter Shirley Muldoon stands outside the Pinch, looking anxious. She checks her phone several times, growing more and more frustrated. Shirley gives up and grabs the door handle.

CHAD (O.S.)

Hey!

Shirley whirls around to see Chad, who is dressed in a t-shirt for some obscure video game and cargo shorts, and grins extensively. Shirley relaxes.

CHAD (CONT'D)

What, you thought I wasn't going to make it?

She punches him in the shoulder.

SHIRLEY

I mean, you do have a track record.

Chad scoffs.

CHAD

I don't repeat mistakes.

Shirley laughs.

SHIRLEY

Good to know.

Chad opens the door.

CHAD

M'lady.

SHIRLEY

Ugh. You just lost your bonus points.

He pouts exaggeratedly as they go inside.

INT. ALTON NIX'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Alton Nix sits in his sparsely decorated office. He's new in the role of USBL Players Association president and hasn't had time to settle in.

His phone rings.

NIX

Dammit.

He takes a deep breath and answers the phone by clicking his Blue Tooth headset.

NIX (CONT'D)
Nix.

He rolls his eyes.

NIX (CONT'D)
Yes.

Beat.

NIX (CONT'D)
I realized it right after I said
it.

Beat.

NIX (CONT'D)
I don't know.

Beat.

NIX (CONT'D)
Yes.

Beat.

NIX (CONT'D)
I'll fix it.

Beat.

NIX (CONT'D)
I know.

He turns off the Blue Tooth.

NIX (CONT'D)
Dammit.

INT. THE PINCH - NIGHT

Annie looks up from the bar, which is almost empty.

ANNIE
They're downstairs. They're waiting
for you.

SHIRLEY
Is it private down there?

Annie hands her a PBR.

ANNIE

For another hour and a half. Then we have a band that needs to load in.

SHIRLEY

Thanks.

Shirley and Chad go downstairs.

INT. THE PINCH BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Shirley walks into the basement to see Officer Cody Paige and Detective Brice Eversmith sitting at the bar. Paige drinks a soda, Eversmith water.

Everybody exchanges handshakes and they sit down.

CODY

Shirley. Chad. This is Brice Eversmith.

EVERSMITH

Nice to meet you.

They all sit.

CODY

So what's this about?

SHIRLEY

Well... I think we all share mutual interests...

CODY

We obviously can't say anything to the press and...

(to Chad)

...what is it you do again?

CHAD

(overconfidently)

I do what I can.

They ignore him.

SHIRLEY

I mean... Seriously, it's scary out there. People are dying. I almost died.

Cody raises an eyebrow.

CODY
What happened? Did you report it?

Shirley shakes her head.

SHIRLEY
I'm fine. But I don't feel safe.
Nobody feels safe.

Eversmith nods.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
And these two guys your boss is
after... Well, I'm not from
Missouri, but...

Cody and Eversmith exchange a look.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
We need to work together. Compare
notes. And catch whoever really did
these... horrible things.

EVERSMITH
I'm in.

Cody hesitates. Then she nods.

EXT. THE LIMELIGHT DANCETERIA - NIGHT

Three members of the Reliever Party Patrol wear their most expensive designer clothes as they walk up to the club.

Omar Wheeler is dressed in designer slacks, a silk shirt and a tasteful gold chain. Hector Delarosa wears a full Armani suit and tie. Eddie Parker is dressed a little more economically conservative, but still very nice.

The three walk to the front of the LONG line to get into the night club. Delarosa is the highest-paid of the three players, he walks up to the BOUNCER and slips him a hundred.

The Bouncer opens the rope and lets the three relievers into the club. The players cheer. The people waiting in line groan. The Bouncer pockets the tip.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRODY'S SECRET STASH - NIGHT

Huebner walks past the entrance of a giant Times Square comic book store, Brody's Secret Stash, looking at GPS. He comes back, looking from his phone to the store several times before deciding it's the right place and going inside.

INT. BRODY'S SECRET STASH - CONTINUOUS

Huebner walks down a row of comic book long boxes, talking on the phone as he goes.

HUEBNER

What were the two comics again?

On the phone, Huebner's wife, CARRIE, audibly sighs.

CARRIE (O.S.)

You have them in a text.

HUEBNER

I know, but I want to make sure I get them right.

CARRIE (O.S.)

Okay, but I have things to do. People to see. That kind of stuff.

HUEBNER

I know you do. So let's do this quickly.

CARRIE (O.S.)

Weather Witch #1 and--

HUEBNER

Hold on...

Huebner moves down towards boxes marked with a W. He flips through the comics until he finds Weather Witch #1. He pulls it out.

HUEBNER (CONT'D)

Got it. What's the other one?

CARRIE (O.S.)

The Stalking Dead... Issue #39.

HUEBNER

Number 39? Why not #1 or something?

CARRIE (O.S.)
First appearance of a major
character.

HUEBNER
And that's a big deal?

CARRIE (O.S.)
It is to your son.

Huebner shrugs and grabs the comic.

HUEBNER
Got 'em both. Love you. See you
when I get back.

He hangs up and walks to the register.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROADWAY THEATER - MOMENTS LATER

Ajax Cloud stands outside the Broadway production of
Hamilton. He bounces excitedly, waiting for someone, waiting
for the show.

A tall, thin British man, BARRY, 30s, walks up and Cloud
greet him with a hug.

CLOUD
I can't believe it. You. In
America.

BARRY
Says the professional baseballer.

Laughs.

BARRY (CONT'D)
How'd you score tickets to see
Beckham as Hamilton? I thought he'd
retired after playing Harry Potter
for eight films.

CLOUD
(grinning)
Professional baseballer.

They laugh and go inside.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUTH GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL - NIGHT

Howell walks down the hotel hallway and stops outside the penthouse sweet. He knocks on the door.

HOWELL
It's me. Coach Howell.

Kendricks opens the door. He's shirtless and sweaty. He dries himself off with a towel.

HOWELL (CONT'D)
Can we chat?

Kendricks motions him inside.

INT. CAM KENDRICKS' HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Howell looks around the room, but doesn't see any workout equipment.

HOWELL
You been working out?

Kendricks grins.

KENDRICKS
Something like that.

Howell shifts on his feet uncomfortably.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
What can I do for you coach?

HOWELL
I... uh... well. I have a favor to ask you.

KENDRICKS
A favor?

HOWELL
You want to win games? Or do you want to be the best player on a shitty team?

KENDRICKS
Sports Central says we're in first.

HOWELL
We're not even at the halfway point. And we've got some cracks in the foundation.

Kendricks frowns.

KENDRICKS
What do you want?

HOWELL
Let's start with maybe no more fist fights?

KENDRICKS
I didn't start anything.

HOWELL
But you're the strongest guy on the team. And maybe the smartest.

Kendricks relaxes.

KENDRICKS
No more fighting. Even if douchebags start fights with me. Got it. That it?

Howell hesitates.

HOWELL
Well, there's one more thing, but you aren't gonna want to do it...

EXT. ROXXON PARK FIELD - DAY

SUPER: First Inning

Harrell Flowers stands on the mound. The crowd is relatively sparse after the record-breaking loss. Flowers is confident and calm despite having two men on and two outs.

He throws a fastball but his ankle buckles as he plants. He falls to the ground and the ball has no velocity. The batter, Bennett, drives the ball over Flowers and into center field, making the game 2-0 for the Hawks.

CUT TO:

Flowers rolls around, holding his ankle. Howell and Gray rush to the mound. Glover runs into the locker room and returns with Dr. Carter who runs to join EMTs on the field.

CUT TO:

Flowers is carried off the field on a stretcher. He waves to the crowd, who applauds politely.

Grady Duhart stands on the mound, warming up.

In the dugout, Huebner and Gray are face-to-face. Gray is enraged.

GRAY

I knew it was a mistake to let you handle hitting AND conditioning.

HUEBNER

You can't possibly be blaming me for THAT.

GRAY

But it's not just that. Injury after injury. We've got more injured starters than healthy ones.

Gray paces back and forth.

GRAY (CONT'D)

Get this shit fixed or I'll find someone who can.

He turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Fifth Inning

Gus Bennett steps up to the plate. Duhart is ready. He pitches.

Bennett hits a bouncer towards Chester at third base. Chester looks ahead to the throw and loses concentration. The ball goes through his legs and Bennett ends up safe at second.

In the dugout, Gray starts pacing.

GRAY (CONT'D)

Get him out.

CUT TO:

Pulsipher now plays third. Duhart gets ready to pitch to the new batter, Wainwright.

Wainwright drives Duhart's pitch towards third base. Pulsipher fields it cleanly, but the throw is wide and past the FIRST BASEMAN. Bennett scores and Wainwright is safe at second. 3-0 for the Hawks.

GRAY (CONT'D)

God dammit, get him out!

GLOVER
Coach, we don't have anybody else
who can play third.

GRAY
We don't? What about Reeves?

HUEBNER
Reeves? Really?

GRAY
He got any errors this year?

HUEBNER
He hasn't played this year.

GRAY
Then get him in there. I'd trade
half my team for a fucking third
baseman.

Duhart stands on the mound, seething with resentment, almost
anger, a feeling he rarely expresses.

DUHART
Lord help me.

The next batter, LEE, steps to the plate. Duhart says a
little prayer under his breath and throws a breaking ball.
Lee hits a hopper to Brito who easily fields it, tags
Wainwright and throws to first for the double play.

Duhart pumps a fist, points to the sky and runs into the
dugout.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Seventh Inning

Kendricks steps into the batter's box. Reserve outfielder
Mario Gay is on third with two outs. Reynolds pitches for the
Hawks.

He throws a fastball and Kendricks drives it to the right
field gap, scoring Gay. The lead is cut to 3-1.

CUT TO:

Pitts stands in the box. Reynolds throws the ball low and
outside. Umpire Kalina Loney calls ball four.

CUT TO:

Bishop stands in the box with a 2-0 count. The new pitcher is Alcindor, who has just finished his warm-up tosses.

Bishop takes the first pitch. It misses outside.

Alcindor throws again. Bishop swings and misses.

Alcindor's next pitch is low.

LONEY

Ball four.

CUT TO:

The new pitcher is Fallon. He has a 2-1 count on Pulsipher.

He brings heat. Pulsipher is ready. He smashes a line drive that bounces off the right field wall. He clears the bases and pulls into second with a double. The Statesmen now lead 4-3.

CUT TO:

SUPER: Ninth Inning

Duhart checks the runner at second, then stares down the batter Gus Bennett. The count is 0-2.

Duhart mumbles a prayer to himself. He takes a deep breath. The sound drops away.

Duhart throws a sinker and Bennett flails at it wildly. The Statesmen win.

INT. DAVE AND BUSTER'S, TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

Bishop rolls a ski ball, easily sinking it in the upper right-hand 100 slot. Lots of tickets come out as Betty Billups cheers.

BETTY

It should be illegal for you to play this...

She halfway seriously looks around for store employees to make sure they aren't in trouble.

BISHOP

So you were modeling? What for?

She rolls a ski ball and gets a 40. She cheers and claps.

BETTY
Burgers.

BISHOP
Not bad.

BETTY
In a bikini.

BISHOP
Do you like your job?

Betty hands him a ski ball.

BETTY
I do not. But it pays VERY well.

He rolls the ball and gets another 100.

BISHOP
Man, I couldn't imagine doing a job
I didn't love.

BETTY
Says the farmboy baseball player.

He smiles. She picks up another ball.

BETTY (CONT'D)
Not everyone has the options to do
what they love.

She rolls the ball and gets a 10.

BETTY (CONT'D)
Some of us have to work with what
we have.

Bishop gathers up the tickets. More than a hundred from his
row. Three from Betty's.

BETTY (CONT'D)
Let's get drinks.

BISHOP
Sweet.

CUT TO:

At the bar, Bishop and Betty down their third shots of
tequila.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
That's the most tequila I've ever
had.

Betty laughs.

BETTY
That shot?

BISHOP
Haha, no. All of them.

He burps. Betty laughs again. Prince's "1999" plays on the bar's radio. Bishop gets excited and starts singing along.

BETTY
Man, you really like Prince, huh?

MCDARIS (O.S.)
Hey, Dan, can you turn the radio
down and Smashers game up.

DAN
Sure.

He turns the house volume down and grabs a remote.

Bishop goes from joyous to angry. He turns and sees that it's Dwayne McDaris who took away his Prince.

BISHOP
This fucking guy.

Betty looks up at him.

BETTY
McDaris? From TV?

BISHOP
Yeah, I hate that guy.

The HOSTESS leads McDaris past Bishop's table.

MCDARIS
Hey there, hayseed!

Bishop stands up, knocking his chair over. McDaris recoils. Betty grabs Bishop's arm and pulls him back. Her touch instantly calms him.

MCDARIS (CONT'D)
Stay away from me. Jerk.

Bishop picks up his chair as McDaris QUICKLY walks away.

The room quietly stares. Some people are taking pictures. Others recording video.

EXT. THE LIMELIGHT DANCETERIA - NIGHT

A long line of people wait to get into the Limelight. All dressed in their best. Some won't make it inside tonight, but they look on expectantly.

A limo pulls up to the front door. Kendricks and Tina Warren get out of the limo and walk up to the BOUNCER, who doesn't even hesitate, he lets them in with a grin.

INT. THE LIMELIGHT DANCETERIA, DANCE FLOOR - LATER

Kendricks and Tina dance in the middle of a giant dance floor, anonymous among the crowd.

They dance close. Very close.

They are the two most attractive people in the room and they know it. They only exist to each other.

They are close enough to kiss. They do so lightly.

Hands roam. Legs intertwine. Sweat drips.

The room dances along, a pulsing mass in a single rhythm.

EXT. THE LIMELIGHT DANCETERIA, COURTYARD - LATER

Kendricks and Tina walk into the relatively empty courtyard, breathing heavily and sweaty. A few smokers crowd around in small groups, none near the table where Kendricks leads Tina.

TINA

Pretty hot in there.

KENDRICKS

Yes. You are.

She doesn't want to, but she smiles.

TINA

That was terrible. Does that kind of stuff work for you?

KENDRICKS

Never. That's why I'm single enough to be here with you right now.

He grins.

TINA
You were MUCH smoother last time.

KENDRICKS
The night is young. And I'm a
dancer, not a sweet talker.

TINA
I thought you were a baseball
player?

KENDRICKS
I'm not a baseball player.

Tina is confused.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
I'm a baseball star.

He grins. She swats him.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
You're too cool and edgy to give me
any compliments, so I have to give
them to myself.

TINA
Stop it.

KENDRICKS
You're nowhere near as shy or
boring as they say you are.

Tina frowns.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
I hate all those celebrity
channels. With all the gossip.

TINA
I never pay them any mind.

KENDRICKS
Good for you. They'd just make you
feel bad. No reason for that.
You're beautiful, no matter what
they say.

TINA
Stop it.

KENDRICKS

I'm serious.

She gets angry.

TINA

I mean it. Stop. It's not funny.

KENDRICKS

(his voice softens)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to--

TINA

Stop it, you're just like every one else. You're just messing with my head so you can take me home and get me in bed.

KENDRICKS

No, no, no. I definitely don't want that.

She's shocked.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)

I mean, yes, you're stunningly beautiful, but I'm not trying to sleep with you again. It was great, but you were clear that you felt like we rushed into it and we should slow down.

She relaxes.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)

Sure, I'd LOVE to sleep with you again, but I'm not that kind of guy. I don't do the whole casual thing.

She smiles.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)

Not my style. I tried it. I hated it. I want something more serious.

TINA

You do?

KENDRICKS

Of course. Let me take you home.

She tenses up.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
 Sorry, let me drop you off at your home. Botched the wording on that one.

TINA
 Okay.

INT. THE PINCH BASEMENT - LATER

Everyone has moved to a table at the far end of the basement. Eversmith has a tablet before her. Shirley and Cody each have their own notebooks out. Chad skims his phone.

SHIRLEY
 I'll start with what we know, that way you have some plausible deniability.

EVERSMITH
 Smart.

SHIRLEY
 If we have anything missing, you fill in the details.

Cody nods.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
 Well, the media is saying that we have a series of ritualistic murders. That much everyone knows. How many hasn't been revealed--

CODY
 It's kinda... difficult to get a handle on an exact number.

CHAD
 Wow. That's dark.

SHIRLEY
 We got onto that first murder scene, and I gather that similar things have been seen at the other scenes.

Eversmith nods.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
 So it appears to be some kind of organized, ceremonial--

EVERSMITH
Sacrificial.

They all stay silent for a moment.

EVERSMITH (CONT'D)
But you think this is... organized?

SHIRLEY
Yeah. One of them... attacked me.

Cody and Eversmith sit up and pay attention.

CODY
Did you report it.

Shirley shakes her head.

SHIRLEY
No. I kinda kicked his ass. I noticed, though, that he had a tattoo, which isn't weird. But he had the same symbol on his sweat shirt. Like it was the EXACT same picture. Like a logo.

Cody and Eversmith exchange a look.

EVERSMITH
A logo?

She opens a folder filled with photos and flips through until she finds the right photo. She tosses it on the table.

EVERSMITH (CONT'D)
This logo?

Chad averts his eyes from the photo. It shows a spray-painted version of a blood-red image of a demonic-looking ram with great big razor-sharp horns from the skate park. Shirley's eyes bulge with fear.

SHIRLEY
That's the one!

Chad looks up and sees the logo. He pulls out his phone and scans the logo.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
That's insane. What is it?

EVERSMITH
It was at the crime scenes. Like a calling card.

SHIRLEY
Do the suspects have this tattoo?

EVERSMITH
The suspects? It's definitely not
them.

Chad and Shirley are shocked.

SHIRLEY
What? How do you know?

EVERSMITH
Not important right now, but this
isn't them. This has all the
hallmarks of... well... cult
activity.

SHIRLEY
A cult? Could they be in more than
one state?

EVERSMITH
Yes. They almost certainly are.

SHIRLEY
Like Florida?

She rifles through her stack of papers.

EVERSMITH
That's pretty far away, but it's
not impossible. If--

Shirley lays the article about the Florida murders on the
table.

SHIRLEY
Not a lot of details, but what IS
there definitely fits.

CODY
How'd you find this?

SHIRLEY
Somebody sent it to me.

EVERSMITH
Who?

Shirley shrugs.

Chad holds up his phone to show an article from a website
called DarkPedia.

CHAD
The Order of the Crimson Ram.

The room goes silent. The logo on the article is the EXACT same logo as the pictures and Abraham's neck tattoo.

INT. PDDC BASEMENT - NIGHT

Jeremy Spencer walks into the PDDC basement, but doesn't turn on the lights. He sits down and the primary computer that runs The Setup and boots it up.

He pulls out a scrap of paper that contains Eversmith's user name and password. Spencer uses them to log in.

Once the program starts, Spencer pulls a USB drive from his pocket and sticks it in the computer. A window with the drive's contents pops up.

The only file is labeled corona.exe. Spencer double clicks on it. The computer idles for moment and then a pop-up comes up that says "Upload Complete." Spencer double clicks on a second file, nirvana.exe. A download bar pops up and it takes a bit longer to complete: "Download Complete."

Spencer takes the USB drive from the computer and walks out of the room.

EXT. ROW HOUSE, PETWORTH - DAY

Officers Mitchell O'Reilly and Bill Tucker move up the front steps of a dark row house. They move silently, guns drawn.

Smoke pours from the chimney.

O'REILLY
(whispers)
What's that smell?

Tucker pulls on his COVID mask. O'Reilly does the same.

Tucker tries the door knob. It's open.

He gestures for O'Reilly to cover him. O'Reilly holds his Glock and a flashlight on the door.

Tucker throws the door open. It is quiet inside other than the crackling of a fire in the fireplace.

O'Reilly goes through the door and into the living room. Tucker follows.

The fireplace comes into view.

Burning inside are four human heads.

INT. PDDC BASEMENT - LATER

Cody and Eversmith sit before the computer that runs The Setup. Spencer stands nearby. Captain Levin sits between them.

CODY

Once you see this, you'll understand. I think we've tied it all together.

LEVIN

You three did?

SPENCER

Don't look at me. This was all their work.

Spencer grins a little too much.

The computer doesn't boot up.

LEVIN

Maybe you should've turned it on BEFORE I got here. I'm busy today.

CODY

I did.

EVERSMITH

Yeah, I tried it, too. It's not working.

LEVIN

I definitely don't have time for this.

EXT. JAMELLE LEWIS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. Applegate, the private investigator, stands at the front door to Jamelle Lewis' house. He looks around, but sees no one. He pulls out a high-tech lockpick, sticks it in the lock and opens the door. He sneaks inside and shuts the door silently.

INT. JAMELLE LEWIS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Applegate sits in the dark, tapping away on Lewis' laptop. Sticking from the side is a small USB drive.

APPLEGATE

Holy sh--

He hits print. Across the room, paper starts coming from the printer.

He picks up his phone and dials Owens.

APPLEGATE (CONT'D)

It's me.

OWENS (O.S.)

You got something this time?

APPLEGATE

I do.

OWENS (O.S.)

Let's hear it.

APPLEGATE

No. Not on the phone. In person. This shit is getting kinda scary.

OWENS (O.S.)

I'm at the stadium. Waiting.

APPLEGATE

On my way.

He hangs up.

INT. ROXXON PARK, VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM - LATER

The members of the team get ready for the game. Lots of talking, loud music, an almost party atmosphere. Kendrick stands up, walks across the room and turns off the music. Several players complain, but most don't notice.

KENDRICKS

Hey, everybody.

He's too quiet and he gets almost no reaction. He puts his fingers to his mouth and whistles loudly.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)

Listen up!

The room quiets down and gives him their attention.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
Thanks everybody. Sorry about that.

Murmurs.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
Before we play today, I just wanted to tell everybody that... I'm sorry.

The room is perfectly silent.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
I've been so caught up in the excitement of finally getting to play, and getting to play at the level I knew I could play...

Grumbles.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
...that I lost sight of the real goal. To get that ring.

A few cheers and some applause.

KENDRICKS (CONT'D)
So, moving forward. I'm part of the team. And the only ass I'm going to kick will be wearing a different jersey.

Several players gather around to shake his hand. Jones doesn't join them.

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.

Next to Weisman is David Tessell.

WEISMAN (CONT'D)
With me today are four of our regular panelists: David Tessell from the Chicago Dispatch-Times...

TESSELL
Glad to be here.

WEISMAN
Dwayne McDaris of the New York
Union-Journal

MCDARIS
Bazooooooooooooom!

WEISMAN
Jonnie Travis of Denver Tribune...

TRAVIS
Back again, one more time!

WEISMAN
And Edith Merman of ABS.

She nods to Weisman and then to the camera.

Weisman turns and looks into the camera.

WEISMAN (CONT'D)
Okay, first question. Is Cam
Kendricks the G.O.A.T.?

The panel breaks into laughter.

TESSELL
That's insulting to a lot of
players.

MCDARIS
And deeply inaccurate.

MERMAN
Not so fast. At this point in the
season, no one has EVER been
better.

TRAVIS
But we haven't even gotten to the
All-Star break. No way he can
continue this pace over a full
season. Not unless he's on
steroids.

WEISMAN
So, is Kendricks on steroids?

The room quiets down.

TRAVIS

I mean, the tests will tell.

MCDARIS

Of course he is. Nine hits in one game? That's Nintendo baseball, not the real thing.

MERMAN

It is all somewhat perplexing and unprecedented, isn't it?

TESSELL

Innocent until proven guilty.

WEISMAN

We'll know soon. Last question: Can anyone catch the Statesmen?

MERMAN

They had their best month yet. 20-7. They're about to get win number 60. It's a lot.

TRAVIS

Well, if Kendrick's ISN'T busted for PEDs, it seems unlikely.

TESSELL

C'mon, no way they don't go into a slump. They played an outfielder at third the other day. Someone will catch them.

MCDARIS

Someone better. For all our sakes.

INT. SUNDAY SPORTS CHAT SHOW STUDIO - LATER

The chat show guests stand around talking in small groups. Nobody is talking to McDaris, who sits in his chair, scrolling on his phone.

Tessell walks over to McDaris, holding his leather satchel.

TESSELL

Hey, Dwayne, you got a sec?

McDaris looks up.

MCDARIS

For you, David, always.

Tessell reaches into his satchel and pulls out the large brown envelope that Whaley gave him.

TESSELL

Had a direct source give me some stuff about, well, Kendricks.

McDaris is interested.

TESSELL (CONT'D)

I'm not really interested in the story, but I thought you might be.

Tessell hands McDaris the envelope.

TESSELL (CONT'D)

Source is Albert Whaley.

McDaris sits up.

MCDARIS

The player?

TESSELL

That's the one. What if I also had DNA evidence?

McDaris raises an eyebrow.

TESSELL (CONT'D)

You know, to track him down or whatever?

McDaris stares at him.

TESSELL (CONT'D)

Like, I don't care either way. Are you interested or not?

McDaris looks at the envelope.

MCDARIS

Sure.

Tessell pulls out the Ziploc bag with Kendricks' underwear in it. He tosses it into McDaris' lap. Dwayne recoils and drops the envelope.

Tessell laughs and walks away.

INT. THE PINCH BASEMENT - NIGHT

It's Punk/Rap Karaoke night again and the room is pretty packed. Shirley stands at the bar, sipping from a PBR and watching a group performing "Blitzkrieg Bop" with slightly different lyrics.

SINGERS

Twenty twenty twenty twenty for
hours a day/I'm gonna be berated...

Applegate walks up to the bar, but doesn't look at Shirley.

SHIRLEY

We have to stop meeting like this.

He doesn't respond.

APPLEGATE

Don't look at me.

She shrugs and turns away.

SHIRLEY

What?

APPLEGATE

Don't look at me and don't respond.

She takes another sip.

APPLEGATE (CONT'D)

Don't look around the room. Just
keep watching the show. Who knows
who else could be in here.

Shirley struggles to keep calm.

Across the room, does she see Abraham, the man who assaulted her last time she was here? Maybe?

APPLEGATE (CONT'D)

I gave Dan a piece of paper
earlier. After I leave, get it. If
anything happens to me, you're the
only one who has that information.

SHIRLEY

What the hell is going on?

He's already gone.

She waits a few seconds, staring at everyone in the room.

No Abraham. Nobody scary. Nothing.

She turns to the bar.

Dan? SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Now? DAN

What? SHIRLEY

DAN
I don't know. That guy told me I'd
know when to give it to you. This
must be... Never mind.

He reaches into his apron and pulls out a piece of paper. He hands it to her.

Shirley opens up the paper and reads it. She raises an eyebrow. The paper reads "FTP" across the top and includes an FTP address, the username "truth69" and a random 12-digit alphanumeric password. She stuffs it in her pocket and pulls out her phone. She starts up a rideshare app called MooVers (complete with fun cow pattern) and orders a ride.

EXT. THE PINCH - LATER

Applegate walks down a side street, the Pinch still visible in the background.

Abraham walks out of the Pinch. He follows Applegate. A few other cult members, including Esau and Jacob, wearing matching black hoodies join him. They hurry to catch up with Applegate.

Applegate rounds a corner. The Cult Members catch him.

Who-- APPLEGATE

Esau punches Applegate in the face. He and Ishmael quickly knock Applegate to the ground. He struggles to escape, but the three of them are able to hold him down.

Abraham stands above them. He pulls out an ancient dagger with the hand that Shirley didn't break. The blade glows with a faint blue light. The broken hand is wrapped in dirty bandages.

APPLEGATE (CONT'D)
What do you want?

ABRAHAM
Your silence.

He leans down and slits Applegate's throat. The dagger glows a little more brightly blue.

INT. ALEX LEVIN'S OFFICE - DAY

The Setup remains dormant. Levin stands above them, arms crossed.

LEVIN
I've worked with my share of shitty cops in my day. But you two are consistently the worst cops I've ever had the privilege to know.

CODY
But the evidence is there.

LEVIN
YOU, in particular, shouldn't be talking to anyone about evidence. You don't seem to know what the word means.

EVERSMITH
I'm sure we'll get it working again and it'll show you--

SPENCER
I saw that thing. It's useless. It's a video game.

LEVIN
It's a waste of time. It's done.

CODY
But we have proof that this is the work of a cult.

Levin gets VERY serious.

LEVIN
We don't have cults in this town. Is that understood?

Cody stares the Captain down for a moment. Then she looks away.

CODY
Understood.

Officer Anne Snell comes in. She's bouncing with excitement.

SNELL
Captain. They got Till.

LEVIN
Byars?

Snell shakes her head.

LEVIN (CONT'D)
It's a start.

Levin waves Eversmith and Cody out of her office.

INT. ROXXON STADIUM PRESS ROOM - DAY

Kendricks and Ashley Hernandez sit at the front of the room, ready to field questions. Hernandez is calm and professional, Kendricks is damned-near giddy.

ASHLEY
I'd like to thank you all for joining us today. We will answer questions shortly, but first I will read this short statement. Then Cam will get a chance to tell you his story and we can go from there?

Murmurs of assent.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
The results of tests for all known forms of steroids and related hormones, in terms of performance enhancement, for Cam Kendricks, are negative.

The assembled reporters are skeptical.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
The results for tests for various stimulants, when it relates to Cam Kendricks, all negative.

Kendricks grins while cameras snap photos.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

The results for tests for various masking agents and diuretics, when it relates to Cam Kendricks, negative.

McDaris crosses his arms in disbelief.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Hell, they even tested for the oxygen-transfer enhancer erythropoietin, also known as EPO, and the results were negative. Cam Kendricks is not a cheater and this whole witch hunt has been a waste of time and money. Any questions?

The room explodes with reporters trying to get in the first question. Ashley reaches over and puts a hand on Kendricks' forearm and gives him a smile.

INT. DWAYNE MCDARIS' HOUSE - NIGHT

McDaris sits at his desk going over his notes. The TV is on in the background, tuned to Jeffrey Brack's news show.

BRACK

Again, our top story: Cam Kendricks has passed all tests for PEDs and has been cleared by the USBL.

MCDARIS

Bullshit! That's total bullshit!

He picks up the remote and turns to the Entertainment News Network, where anchor RACHEL BROSH delivers the latest entertainment news.

McDaris looks closer at the paperwork from the envelope Tessell gave him.

MCDARIS (CONT'D)

What is this?

He flips through the pages.

MCDARIS (CONT'D)

Hmmmm... maybe...

BROSH

(on TV)

Looks like the Tina Warren story has a happy ending, after all.

(MORE)

BROSH (CONT'D)
The tragic star is dating USBL's
latest superstar, Cam Kendricks.

McDaris looks up at the TV.

MCDARIS
You've got to be kidding me.

BROSH
This is the first time we've seen
Warren on a date since her divorce
from actor Johnny Franco after
allegations of abuse. It has been
almost three years since the
divorce was finalized and she looks
happy for the first time since.

McDaris stares at the TV, dumbfounded. His phone rings.

MCDARIS
Yeah?

MEACO ALI (O.S.)
Dwayne McDaris?

He silences the TV.

MCDARIS
Yeah?

MEACO (O.S.)
My name is Meaco Ali.

MCDARIS
How'd you get this number?

MEACO (O.S.)
We need to talk. In person.

MCDARIS
Who are you?

MEACO (O.S.)
I used to work with Cam Kendricks.
We worked at a boxing gym in Akron
back in the day.

McDaris sits up.

MCDARIS
Of course. Let's meet. Tell me when
or where.

He starts writing on the back the Kendricks' documents.

INT. ROXXON PARK, VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Carter walks into the room, holding an air cast in his hands. He has a grim look on his face.

DR. CARTER
You were warned.

JONES
How long?

DR. CARTER
3-6 weeks. At least.

Dr. Carter carefully puts the cast on Jones' elbow.

JONES
But I take it off when I pitch?

DR. CARTER
Correct. When you stick with your
VERY limited pitch count, take off
the cast before you warm up.

Jones nods.

EXT. THE LIMELIGHT DANCETERIA - NIGHT

Wheeler, Delarosa and Parker stand outside the club, waiting. They are dressed essentially the same as the previous time, just with different colors.

PARKER
Let's go in. This place is awesome!

WHEELER
Nothing even remotely like it in
D.C.

DELAROSA
Hold up. We're waiting on... BOOM!

He does a big arms gesture towards Krishna Malay, Shawn Derby and Tommy Shotwell, who are walking up in almost identical clothes.

PARKER
Bout time you guys joined the real
party.

DERBY
That's what Hector was saying.

WHEELER

Where were you guys last night?

MALAY

We went to some house party.

SHOTWELL

Some LAME house party.

MALAY

I didn't think it was THAT bad.

SHOTWELL

And yet here you are. Still looking
for love in all the wrong places.

Laughter as the players walk up to the Bouncer. Delarosa hands him a \$100. The Bouncer looks at the additional players standing behind him.

Delarosa frowns. Then he reaches in his pocket and pulls out another \$100. The Bouncer happily lets them in.

A group of people in line sees this and starts pooling their cash.

EXT. BLUTH GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL - LATER

Cloud and Pasco get off the elevator and walk towards their rooms.

CLOUD

You not going out and partying
tonight? Gonna miss out on the Big
Apple?

PASCO

Nah, not my scene.

CLOUD

It is a little much at times, isn't
it?

PASCO

Besides, my room is kinda nicer
than any room I've ever been in.

Beat.

PASCO (CONT'D)

And it's quiet. Finally get some
alone time.

CLOUD

Honestly? Same. I'm about to take an actual bubble bath.

PASCO

Man, I could have sex with that bed.

Cloud is taken aback.

PASCO (CONT'D)

Not literally. It's just a saying. Never mind.

Cloud shrugs. They awkwardly separate and go into their rooms. Once inside each grins happily before rushing into luxury.

EXT. ROXXON PARK FIELD - LATER

The lights are still on, but the stadium is empty. Well, almost empty.

Winston Pulsipher is in the batting cage, practicing again. Behind the pitching machine is some random STAFFER from the stadium. He drops a ball into the pitching machine. Pulsipher drives it to right field, reaching the wall on one hop.

STAFFER

That \$400 going to be in cash?

He drops another ball into the machine. The mechanical arm throws it. Pulsipher drives it to the exact same spot.

PULSIPHER

Yep. Got it in my locker.

STAFFER

It's just that it's late. We usually close before now.

PULSIPHER

Again.

The Staffer's shoulders slump, but he drops another ball into the machine. Pulsipher drives it to the exact same spot.

INT. THE HELLFIRE STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

This strip club is dark, posh and clean. The STRIPPERS are all attractive. The CLIENTELE are almost all in suits. All are professionals.

Clint Youngblood was sitting center stage front getting a lap dance. The DANCER stands up and leads him towards a champagne room.

As he goes by, a table of BROS spots him.

BLONDE BRO
Hey, man! That's Clint Youngblood!

BLACK BRO
Dude got a save tonight.

CHINESE-AMERICAN BRO
Let us buy you a drink, man!

Youngblood nods to them.

YOUNGBLOOD
Maybe on the way out fellas!

The Bros high five and cheer.

INT. BLUTH GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL - LATER

Tannehill sits at the desk in his hotel room, Zooming with his family. This time, though, it's just his Wife, Son and Daughter.

TANNEHILL
It won't be much longer. And hey,
this is the longest road trip of
the season--

WIFE
Until the playoffs.

TANNEHILL
I've never been to the playoffs,
you know.

WIFE
I know.

SON
But you're going to make it this
time, aren't you?

TANNEHILL
Sure am, buddy. Sure am.

INT. BLUTH GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL - LATER

Huebner lays on his back on top of the still-made up bed. He wears headphones, listening to a audiobook. The book is read by Samuel L. Jackson.

SAMUEL L. JACKSON (V.O.)

Trust me. You can do anything you want. All you have to do is put in the work and become the man. Seriously, do you know how much motherfu... can I say motherfucker on the audiobook? I can. Cool. Anyways, if I can get paid to say motherfucker on an audiobook, you can get a date to the big dance or apply to that college or whatever you're self-motivating yourself with.

Huebner snores and rolls over on his side.

INT. JEREMY SPENCER'S APARTMENT - LATER

Jeremy Spencer grabs a water from a fridge that only has a pack of bottled water and a takeout box inside.

He crosses what should be the dining room and into the living room. Both rooms are nearly empty. The only notable furniture is a desk and the chair that Spencer sits down on.

He launches the Tor browser and brings up the gray website. A blank e-mail message comes up.

Jeremy types "It's done. You can proceed."

He hits send and closes the browser.

FADE OUT.