

THE BIG BET

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. ESPN 2022 NBA DRAFT LOTTERY STUDIO - NIGHT

A spotlight shines on the glossy, high-stakes set. The NBA Commissioner clutches oversized envelopes, each one a team's ticket to salvation or despair.

Team reps sit on stage: some stoic, others fidgeting, one nervously twirling a bedazzled rabbit's foot in team colors.

ANNOUNCER

Welcome to the 2022 NBA draft
lottery!

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC - PLAYER ANALYSIS WAR ROOM - NIGHT

A sleek, glass-walled room lit by monitors. Four analytical minds sit at a conference table: GARY WALKER (33), the dedicated VP of Player Personnel. Quietly stubborn about the players he believes in.

SCOTT SLEGL (35), seasoned, skeptical, and enjoys challenging the room.

LINDA DOYLE (28), young, razor-sharp, and all business.

Finally, LIZ GETZ (32), laid-back stats scholar who lives at the intersection of hoops and math.

Coffee, sunflower shells, and half-eaten wings cover the table. Gary habitually chews sunflower seeds and spits them into a Magic mug.

LIZ

Gary, you gonna finish those wings?

Gary slides a takeout container of wings and bones to Liz.

GARY

Well, we finished 22-60. Second worst in the league. Nowhere to go but up.

LIZ

At least we weren't Houston. Those guys went 19-63. How embarrassing.

SCOTT

Worst we can do is sixth. But we have a 14% chance at first pick.

LIZ

Your stats can suck it, Scott.
We're getting first pick. I feel it
in my plums.

LINDA

I appreciate your delusional
optimism.

GARY

Top three gets us Jabari, Chet, or
Paolo. Any of those three can
change a franchise. Miss that, and
we're drafting another role player.

INTERCUT MAGIC OFFICE AND NBA DRAFT LOTTERY STUDIO

The announcer opens an oversized envelope, pulls the card,
and flips it, revealing the Wizards logo.

ANNOUNCER

With the 10th pick in the 2022 NBA
Draft...the Washington Wizards.

GARY

Bummer for them.

ANNOUNCER

Ninth pick... goes to the San
Antonio Spurs.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Eighth pick... New Orleans
Pelicans.

The New Orleans rep pounds his fists on the table.

LIZ

Tanked all year and landed eighth.
Ouch.

ANNOUNCER

Seventh pick...the Portland Trail
Blazers.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

With the sixth pick... the Indiana
Pacers.

SCOTT

Hell yeah, we're top five.

ANNOUNCER

Fifth pick... Detroit Pistons.

GARY
Top four. Getting close to
paradise.

ANNOUNCER
Fourth pick... Sacramento Kings.

LINDA
I'm getting really sweaty.

Scott is hyperventilating into a fast food bag, rhythmically inflating and deflating it.

ANNOUNCER
Third pick... Houston Rockets.

POP! With a huge exhale, Scott blows out the back of the bag.

SCOTT
No way. No freakin' way.

LIZ
My heart's gonna explode.

ANNOUNCER
Second pick...the Oklahoma City
Thunder. Which means first pick in
the 2022 NBA Draft goes to the
Orlando Magic!

A stunned silence. Disbelief as the information processes.
Then, PANDEMONIUM.

LIZ
WE GOT IT! WE GOT NUMBER ONE BAY-
BAY!

High-fives. Screaming. Liz bear-hugs Linda then busts into the Running Man, knees pumping like the early 90's.

SCOTT
Please no.

LIZ
Oh, it's a yes. It's very yes.

Without missing a beat, Liz swivels into the Carlton, arms swinging with hips gyrating side-to-side.

LINDA
She's possessed.

Then she drops. The Worm. Full commitment. All the way across the conference room floor.

Scott scoops sunflower seeds and launches them into the air with two hands, mimicking LeBron's chalk toss. Seeds rain everywhere.

SCOTT

Let's GO!

Gary is still seated, fists clenched. He pounds the table once and points at the TV like it just challenged him to a fight. Seeds fall from his shoulders.

GARY

OK. Let's build a champion.

INT. FLORIDA SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

A dim, beat-up dive bar. Neon signs flicker. Ceiling fans spin lazily above of locals in Magic gear. TVs show the NBA Draft Lottery.

ESPN BROADCASTER

...and the number one pick goes to
the Orlando Magic!

The place ERUPTS. Beer sloshes as pints CLINK together and emptied shot glasses are SMACKED down on tables.

A Magic hat rockets across the room and, impossibly, lands on the speared bill of a taxidermied marlin behind the bar.

The crowd ROARS like they've seen a miracle. A DRUNK FAN kicks a chair over to get the room's attention.

DRUNK FAN

God's a Magic fan tonight!

As the crowd ROARS again, MARCO BARESE (40s) sits on a creaky stool at the bar. A velour track suit hugs his hefty frame as his Italian loafers tap the floor. Marco cradles a tall, frothy Chicago Fizz.

He stirs it with a pinky ring on display. Eyes briefly close as he takes a sip.

MARCO

Ahhh. Now that's a Fizz. Reminds me
of The Flamingo in the eighties.

He sets the glass down, wipes his mouth with his sleeve.

MARCO (CONT'D)

(directly addressing the
audience)

(MORE)

MARCO (CONT'D)

I miss Vegas. But Vegas is missing something too. You see, before 2018, the only place in the U.S. to legally bet on sports was a Nevada casino.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

The sports book hums with around-the-clock tension, a chaotic symphony of shouting, drinking, and desperation.

Gamblers crowd the room, eyes glued to dozens of televisions showing every sport imaginable.

CHEERING, BOOING, and dopamine surges and recedes in restless tides.

A red-faced man hurls his basket of hot wings across the room. They EXPLODE on the wall with sauce splattering like a crime scene.

Nearby, a guy grits his teeth, yanks off his Raiders cap, and grinds his lit cigarette into the silver and black logo. He sparks a second cig and repeats the ritual.

A triumphant bettor in a garish Hawaiian shirt vaults onto a table, busting out a frenzied victory dance, arms windmilling, hips gyrating like he's spinning a Hula-Hoop.

A coaster underfoot nearly sends him crashing, but he recovers with a flamboyant bow, owning the stumble as the crowd CHEERS.

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

Back then, you had to walk into a Vegas casino to slap down a bet in person, cash in hand. No phones, no apps. The casinos ran the whole show. Every. Single. Dollar. Just like God intended.

INT. SUPREME COURT - DAY

An active room where attorneys spar, Justices deliberate, and clerks move with brisk precision, clutching stacks of briefs.

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

Everybody wanted a piece of Nevada's money.

(MORE)

MARCO (V.O.) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 So in 2018, New Jersey, and of course it was New Jersey, took the issue to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled in Jersey's favor, and just like that, the floodgates burst open. Any state hungry for sports betting could dive in.

ON SCREEN: A MAP OF THE UNITED STATES

Nevada alone glows with a pulsing, green "\$" icon. A corner calendar rips through years—2017, 2018, 2019, up through 2022. One by one, states light up with "\$" signs, exploding across the map in a fevered rush.

MARCO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 In 2017, Nevada was the only game in town. By 2022, twenty-eight states were cashing in on the boom.

ON SCREEN: A BAR GRAPH

In 2018, the bar spikes to \$3 billion—a teaser. Each following year's bar spikes higher than the last until 2022, which towers with \$92 billion, dwarfing the rest.

MARCO (V.O.)
 In 2018, Nevada's last year as the only state taking sports bets, they grabbed \$3 billion of wagers. Juicy, right? But in 2022, with twenty-eight states in the game, over \$92 billion was wagered. A 3000% explosion of sports betting by Americans! What a country!

Ads for Draft Kings, Fan Duel, Bet MGM and others dominate TVs, web banner ads, and sports stadiums.

Eyes locked on phone screens as people place bets from anywhere, watching the game at a bar, stuck in traffic, sitting at the family dinner table, and from a bland work cubicle. A young fan watches an NBA and places a bet on the same game from his phone.

MARCO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The shift wasn't just that more states allowed sports gambling. It was *how* they allowed it. Now, anyone with a smartphone has a bookie in their pocket.

(MORE)

MARCO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Sports gambling fused with pro sports itself. No resistance from the NFL, NBA, MLB, or NHL. No outrage. Just partnerships. Profits. Ads hit you nonstop. You can't watch a single game without seeing dozens of ads inviting you to gamble. This year, one in four Americans will bet on sports. An unfathomable amount of money surges through online sports books every day.

END MONTAGE.

INT. FLORIDA SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Marco swirls the cup and agitates the foam.

MARCO
The big scores though? They start with a whisper. The right intel, in the right hands.

Marco gulps down the last of the fizz.

MARCO (CONT'D)
That's how the house gets burned.

Marco pulls a pack of unfiltered Camels from his track jacket and sets them on the bar.

MARCO (CONT'D)
But not everyone switched to online betting. Some guys still like their friendly neighborhood bookie. A guy who doesn't need your bank account number. A guy who can provide a short-term loan at a predatory interest rate. A guy who collects and pays in real greenbacks. I still run some of that action. Matter of fact, that guy just walked in.

CHRIS WALKER (27) slides onto the barstool next to Marco. Hoodie up. Fidgeting. Guilty eyes.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Look who finally crawled out from under his rock. C'mon. Let's take a walk. I need a smoke.

CHRIS

I just got here. Can I get a beer first?

MARCO

No. We're heading out back. Move your ass.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

A packed dumpster overflows with garbage bags teetering on a landslide.

An loafer rotates back and quickly punts forward, delivering a CRUNCHING kick to the rib cage of Chris who rolls on the filthy ground. Chris GROANS, clutching his chest.

CHRIS

I don't have the cash, Marco!

MARCO

Wrong answer, Chris.

A cig dangling from his lips, Marco delivers another kick to Chris's gut. Chris absorbs the blow to the belly, GRUNTING.

He grabs the dumpster to get up, it lurches forward, sending a trash avalanche CRASHING onto Chris.

He's flattened back to the ground.

A rat scurries out from under the dumpster, running over Chris's hand.

He YELPS with disgust and shakes his hand to get the rat cooties off.

MARCO (CONT'D)

You're two months late! I'm tired of waiting, asshole.

Marco picks up a Corona bottle by the neck and SMASHES the bottom on the dumpster. Shards of glass, stale beer, and a lime slice rain down on Chris.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Time's up, jerkoff.

Marco pulls the jagged bottle back, ready to carve. Chris raises his arms, a useless defense.

CHRIS

Wait! STOP! I have a way to get the money! A real way! Wait! WAIT!

Marco's ready to shiv Chris with the busted bottle.

MARCO

Talk quick, asshole.

CHRIS

My brother Gary works for the Magic! Player analysis!

MARCO

Why the hell do I care?

CHRIS

He'll have inside info on the draft. Stuff nobody else knows. That's worth way more than I owe.

Marco hovers with the sharp glass, processing. His lip curls, skeptical.

MARCO

All I hear is you stalling.

CHRIS

I swear. He's plugged in. He'll know before anyone else.

Without breaking eye contact, Marco hurls the bottle on the dumpster. It clatters off, falling and SHATTERING near Chris, who flinches as glass sprays.

Marco kneels, getting in Chris's face.

MARCO

I was gonna gut you like a fish. Still might. Your brother better deliver that info. Fast.

Marco stands, dusts himself off.

MARCO (CONT'D)

There's plenty more Corona bottles if he doesn't.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS — DAY

The Player Analysis team huddles at a table in a conference room bathed in Magic blue, silver, and black.

Gary CLICK-CLICK-CLICKS his pen, eyes scanning the table.

GARY

Two weeks until draft day. Where we at?

He spits sunflower shells into a Magic coffee mug and then drops it to the table like a gavel.

LINDA

Jabari Smith. Auburn's freak of nature. 6'10", lethal first step, shoots like a sniper on a rooftop. Maybe the best shooter in years. Vision. Bounce. Looks like he was built in a lab.

SCOTT

Jabari's the consensus #1 pick. Also the safest pick in years. Checks every analytical box. No weaknesses.

LINDA

Exhibit A. Feast your eyes.

Linda plays a montage of Jabari's college highlights on the conference room TV—lightning-quick drives slicing defenses, gravity-defying dunks, and pinpoint threes that tickle the twine.

Liz mimes and wipes fake tears from her eyes.

LIZ

It's too beautiful. Poetry. Does anyone have a tissue?

SCOTT

That first step could beat a cheetah.

GARY

No doubt, Jabari's incredible. Liz, sell me Chet.

LIZ

Chet Holmgren, Gonzaga's glitch in the matrix. The NBA center of the 22nd century. Seven feet of pure mismatch. Can dunk without jumping, blocks everything in his area code, and will make more three-pointers in one game than Shaq did his whole career. Projected as the second pick to Oklahoma City.

Linda plays a montage of Chet Holmgren's Gonzaga highlights. Jaw-dropping blocks, silky step-back threes, and unstoppable scoring in the paint, leaving opponents helpless.

SCOTT

Chet makes the laws of physics seem like a scam.

LIZ

I sincerely feel bad for the other team.

GARY

One of those balls he swatted had to end up in orbit.

LINDA

Chet's filthy. My OKC contact says they're drooling over him. Paolo Banchemo from Duke up next.

Gary spits several shells into the mug and energetically dives into the Paolo pitch.

GARY

19 years old, 6'10", 250 pounds. Built like a tank that power lifts. Moves like a cat on speed. A hoops savant. The dude snatches souls on dunks. Feathery jumper. Plays D like the '89 Pistons. Paolo's got a killer edge. He's nasty. Naaaaaaasty.

LIZ

How many A's is that?

LINDA

Here comes the nasty.

Linda runs Banchemo's Duke highlights—ferocious dunks, picture-perfect form on jumpers, and lockdown defensive plays that leave opponents shaking their heads and coaches calling timeouts to scream at their players.

LIZ

Have we run a background on Paolo? I don't know how it's possible he's only 19.

SCOTT

Those dunks are assault.

LINDA

I'm legitimately surprised that
shoulder drop on his drives didn't
put half the ACC in the ER.

GARY

Team execs want a recommendation
soon. Who's our future?

SCOTT

Jabari. No question.

LIZ

Same here. Jabari, 10 times out of
10. He's a slam dunk.

Liz smiles big and lets her delivery hang in the air.

LIZ (CONT'D)

See what I did there?

GARY

Yes, Liz. I see what you did there.
Linda?

LINDA

Chet for me. The Glitch.

Gary spits some more shells and leans back.

GARY

Alright, indulge me. What if
Paolo's first pick?

LIZ

At number one? We could. We
absolutely, positively should not
do that because it's a really bad
idea. But we could.

GARY

Tell me why he's a bad first pick.

SCOTT

Gladly. You're fixated on Paolo's
"edge". We can't quantify
"naaaaaaasty" in a spreadsheet.
Jabari dominates every statistical
model. Offensively, he's
untouchable. Paolo's a great two-
way player, but #1 picks aren't
used for defense, they're used for
radical offensive firepower, and
that's Jabari.

Gary takes it in, nodding slowly. He doesn't fight it.

GARY

I respect the statistical models,
but they're not an oracle.

SCOTT

Last year the model got us Franz at
eight. He came in third for Rookie
of the Year. Numbers work.

Gary responds with a thoughtful stare and more CLICKS.

GARY

Or maybe Franz tells us great
players don't always get drafted
where they're supposed to. Linda,
why Chet?

LINDA

OKC's obsessed with him. We snag
Chet first, they grab Jabari
second. We flip Chet to OKC for
Jabari and a future pick or player.
We win twice, Jabari plus an asset.

The group all nods at this idea.

GARY

Smart play. Not bad.

SCOTT

Gary, every mock draft has Jabari
first. With that much consensus,
he's the low-risk pick.

LIZ

No one will question us taking
Jabari, even if he doesn't pan out.
If we take Paolo, the consensus #3
pick at #1, he better be a hall-of-
famer, or we're all getting canned.

Gary nods, and puts his hands up in surrender.

GARY

Alright, just a thought exercise. I
love Jabari. He'd look great in our
jersey. Let's wrap. Scott, stick
around.

Linda and Liz clear out while Scott and Gary stay put.

GARY (CONT'D)

Welcome back from paternity leave.
How are Mom and the little angel?

SCOTT

Great. Thanks for the autographed
team ball. It's in the nursery.

GARY

You bet, start fanhood early.

SCOTT

Thank Sarah too. How long before
you have a little angel of your
own?

GARY

I'll propose this summer, after the
draft.

SCOTT

My money's on her saying yes.

GARY

Wish me luck when the time comes.
Listen, last year you crushed it
with the draft binders for the
execs. I'll handle it this year.

SCOTT

Really? I'm happy to help.

GARY

It's our first number one pick in
eighteen years. I want full control
on what the execs read.

SCOTT

All yours. Gary, we're taking
Jabari, right?

GARY

Still evaluating.

SCOTT

He's a franchise cornerstone.

GARY

Well, we need one.

Scott grabs his laptop, leaves the room.

Seconds later, Linda leans in, eyes bright, notepad clutched.

LINDA
Hey, boss.

GARY
What's up?

Linda drops into a chair across from Gary.

LINDA
This draft cycle's been awesome.
I've learned so much. I love it.

GARY
Glad to hear it.

LINDA
Performance reviews are post-draft,
right? I've got six pages of self-
eval notes.

GARY
That's concerning.

LINDA
This job's my life. I want to lead
a player analysis team like you.

GARY
29 other teams out there. Your time
will come.

LINDA
I'd rather it be this one.

Gary CLICK-CLICK-CLICKS his pen and squints at her.

GARY
Easy tiger, don't eye my desk just
yet.

LINDA
If this draft goes well, another
team will poach you for an exec
role.

GARY
Let's survive this draft first.

LINDA
Of course. But when you get that
call, put in a good word for me.

She flashes a winning smile and leaves for her office.

INT. LINDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Linda slips into her office, door CLICKING shut. The smile has vanished.

Her desk shows a name plate with: Linda Doyle, Player Analyst. She sinks into her chair, grabs her phone. She opens a contact: PAUL THOMAS-OKC and starts texting.

LINDA (TEXT)
Chet's a monster. How bad you want him?

Linda's phone PINGS as Paul quickly replies.

PAUL THOMAS (TEXT)
You want Chet or you want us thinking you do?

LINDA (TEXT)
Doesn't matter. We grab Chet #1, you take our guy #2. Swap, plus your #12 pick.

PAUL THOMAS (TEXT)
You'd hold Chet hostage?

LINDA (TEXT)
You're loaded with picks, pay the ransom and lock up your unicorn.

PAUL THOMAS (TEXT)
I'll run it by Presti.

LINDA (TEXT)
Cool.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Gary's still in the conference room firing off emails. He picks up his phone and sees three missed calls and two texts from the contact: Bro.

The first text says, "CALL ME!!" The second text says, "u see my last txt??? CALL ME"

Gary sighs, pockets the phone, and heads out.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Gary walks towards his truck, clicking the fob. The lights flash. Gary slides in and closes the door with a THUD.

A dark figure quietly arises into sight from the backseat. Gary starts the truck and doesn't notice the person inches behind him.

CHRIS

Baby bro!

Gary springs from his seat, tapping the HORN, which echoes through the garage.

GARY

JESUS CHRIST! You scared the shit out of me. How did you get in here?

CHRIS

You're the responsible type who has a magnetized keybox under the truck. I let myself in.

GARY

You broke in.

CHRIS

No, I let myself in. Why didn't you call me back?

GARY

I was in a meeting. You know, a job.

CHRIS

Yeah, I've heard of jobs.

Gary adjusts the rearview mirror to look into Chris's eyes. He sees the left one is a hideous tie-dye of purple and blue.

GARY

What happened to you?

CHRIS

I'm in trouble. I lost bets. Chased losses and lost more. It's bad.

GARY

How bad?

CHRIS

Financially? Over six figures. Physically? It hurts to blink. Spiritually? I've been better.

GARY

Six figures! I don't have that lying around. Who do you owe?

CHRIS

My bookie. Baby bro, I don't need money, I need information.

GARY

Information about what?

CHRIS

My bookie, Marco, came to collect and proceeded to kick the shit out of me. To avoid getting stabbed and dying in an alley, I told him I can get inside info on the NBA draft.

Gary freezes. Turns slowly.

GARY

WHAT? Did you tell him who I am?

CHRIS

I said my bro works for the Magic and will know draft info early.

Gary detonates.

GARY

You gave a bookie my name? How about we drive back to that alley and I'll stab you myself!

CHRIS

That's a mean thing to say.

GARY

God damn it, Chris! This draft is the peak of my career. Now I've got to worry about your kneecaps too?

CHRIS

Marco isn't patient. I need to give him something soon.

GARY

You mean I have to give him something soon? Get out.

Chris meekly hands the magnetic keybox over the front seat to Gary who snatches it out of his hand. Chris slinks out. Gary doesn't look at him.

As Chris walks into the distance, Gary SLAMS his palm against the steering wheel. BAM! BAM! BAM! On the third slam, he again accidentally hits the HORN, which echoes through the garage.

EXT. SECOND CHANCE RESCUE — DAY

Gary's truck pulls into a near-empty parking lot. A brightly painted sign on a modest, one-story building reads: "SECOND CHANCE RESCUE."

INT. SECOND CHANCE RESCUE - BACK AREA - DAY

The area is full of clean, roomy kennels. Each one holds a furry occupant, a beagle howling a hungry song, a terrier mix with a twitchy nose, a sleepy calico cat.

SARAH GRIFFIN (31), a saint in sneakers, moves with practiced ease. Her hands are full as she portions out dog food, offering warm words and an ear scratch to each animal.

At her feet, BRUTUS, Gary and Sarah's black pug, wrestles a bug-eyed Chihuahua-pug mix. They grunt and play-growl over a knotted rope toy.

Gary enters with a weary face that softens as he sees Sarah. He walks over and places a gentle kiss on her head.

SARAH

Hey, handsome. Almost done here.

GARY

Take your time.

Brutus spots him, drops the toy, and stampedes over, full-body wiggle. Gary sits down and places Brutus in his lap.

GARY (CONT'D)

How was the week?

SARAH

So-so. We took in this little gentleman today, Nacho.

Sarah takes a seat and picks up the chug.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Seven surrenders this week. Only three adoptions. Bad numbers.

GARY

Are donations keeping up?

SARAH

Worst ever. I'm nervous.

GARY

I'm sorry to hear that.

Gary looks closer at Nacho and his furry gremlin face.

GARY (CONT'D)
What kind of dog is that?

SARAH
A chug! Chihuahua-pug mix. Look at
his face. I kinda love him already.

Gary stares at the bizarre breed.

GARY
Adorable, ungodly. Adorably
ungodly.

Sarah laughs and hugs Nacho. Brutus gives a jealous growl.

SARAH
How's the office?

GARY
Electric. Christmas Eve on
steroids.

SARAH
You guys decide who you'll take?

GARY
Jabari's the safe pick, seems to be
the consensus.

SARAH
Can't argue with safe.

Gary half-smiles.

GARY
So I'm told. I heard from Chris
today.

Sarah pets Nacho, reading Gary's tone.

SARAH
Uh-oh. That's the face you make
when it's bad.

GARY
He's in trouble. Gambling again.
Owes a lot to the wrong people.

Sarah's voice softens.

SARAH
God, poor Chris. What's he want
from you?

Gary exhales, rubs his temple.

GARY
He's desperate. That's never good.

Sarah studies him, sensing more to the words.

SARAH
We'll figure it out. I have an
animal rescue, you have a brother
rescue.

Gary gives the briefest laugh, eyes drifting away.

GARY
I don't want a brother rescue. How
about some dinner?

SARAH
Sounds great. Lead the way.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB (ORLANDO, FL) - DAY

KENNY FISHER (61), is trim and tan. His teeth, hair, and golf pants all sparkle white. He owns a house along the fourteenth hole, but he lives on the fairways.

He lines up a shot just off the green, three other players watching. Two golf carts sit nearby, nearly bumper-to-bumper.

KENNY
Hey, Morty. I'm feelin' good about
this shot. Wanna bet? 2-to-1 money
for you.

A slight Southern drawl matches that of the company he keeps on Florida golf courses.

MORTY (72) squints into the sun, takes a long drag off his vaporizer, and releases a cloud so large it could carry rain.

MORTY
Nope. You'll make it.

KENNY
No bet? Then why the hell we even
golfing? And lose the vape. You
look childish.

MORTY

I ain't here to golf. I'm here to
vape and drink without my wife
nagging.

MORTY'S DOC (67) sips a can of diet Coke with a straw and
blows smoke rings from his cigar.

DOC

Morty, as your doctor, I advise
cutting back on the drinking and
vaping.

MORTY

Vaping isn't bad for you.

DOC

You're seventy-two. Everything is
bad for you.

MORTY

I'll bet you can't hit the ball
under both carts and sink it in one
shot. Carts stay put.

KENNY

Now we're talking! How much?

MORTY

A grand.

KENNY

That's chicken feed. Doc, you in?

MORTY'S DOC

I have one wife and two exes. I can
barely afford this cheap cigar.

KENNY

Bill, wanna win some money?

BILL (50s) has lost many bets to Kenny.

BILL

That shot's unmakeable, but I'm not
betting against you.

KENNY

Your loss. Or not. We'll see.

Kenny struts, using the club as a cane. He surveys the line:
ball, under both carts, to the hole.

He pauses by Morty, then snatches his vape. Kenny takes a long pull, drops it into his pocket, and steps up to the ball.

A smooth hip-swivel and TAP. The ball zips under the first cart and pops out from the second. Eight eyes track it.

The ball slows...holds its line...until it...trickles in. PLUNK.

MORTY

I hate golf.

Kenny spins his club as he strolls to the hole, plucks his ball out, and casually lobs the vape back to Morty, who fails to catch it.

KENNY

No, you hate golfing with me.

INT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The group swaps out golf gear for civilian duds. Kenny, at the mirror, slicks back his game-show-host hair and bares his pearly whites, checking for debris.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - DAY

Kenny exits the clubhouse. On a bench just outside sits Marco, his velour tracksuit a stark contrast to the preppy attire of the club's members. He rises as Kenny approaches.

KENNY

I just won a grand off Morty. That deadbeat pay up last night?

Marco shakes his head. He walks alongside Kenny toward the parking lot.

MARCO

Nah. He wants to pay with info. Kid says his brother works for the Magic. Can feed us draft intel.

Kenny stops and looks out towards the second hole. A slow smile spreads.

KENNY

Info's good, but controlling that pick is the real play. Have him meet me at 9:00 AM tomorrow. Wetlands Park, north lot.

MARCO

Done.

Marco heads to his truck, and Kenny continues to his Escalade.

INT. CHRIS' APARTMENT - DAY

CRACK! An MMA fighter delivers a lights-out knee strike to another fighter's jaw.

Chris lounges on his couch, UFC on the TV, a PBR on the table.

A hard POUNDING on the door. Chris is startled and winces, his ribs aching. He ignores it.

The POUNDING at the door repeats, louder this time.

MARCO (O.S.)

Open the damn door, Chris! It's
Marco!

Chris gets up, peeks through the peephole, cracks the door.

CHRIS

Marco, you doing house calls now?
Here to check on my ribs?

Marco shoves the door wide and drives a fist into Chris's gut. Chris collapses onto the couch, winded.

MARCO

Chrissy, how's your ribs? Listen
up. Nine AM tomorrow. Orlando
Wetlands Park, north lot. Get in a
white Escalade. Kenny Fisher wants
to meet you.

CHRIS

Kenny Fisher?

MARCO

Yeah, the boss. If you are one
second late, I will kick your head
off your shoulders.

CHRIS

Do we ever meet without you hitting
and threatening me?

MARCO

Do not fuck this up, Chris!

Marco leaves and SLAMS the door. Chris lies there, breathing hard. He grabs his phone from the table and makes a call.

INT. GARY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sarah's in the adjacent kitchen, assembling a smoothie. CHOP, CHOP, CHOP, as she slices through strawberries and a banana on a wood cutting board.

Gary sits in the living room watching Jabari highlights. Brutus snores next to him. Gary answers a call from Chris.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

GARY

If you and the Grim Reaper called me at the same time, I don't know who I'd decline first.

Sarah looks up between CHOPS and registers Gary's call. She drops fruit, protein powder and yogurt into a blender.

CHRIS

Very funny. Kenny Fisher wants to meet tomorrow at 9:00 AM. I need you there, Gary. You have to come with me.

The blender motor WRRRRRRR's to life, Sarah delightfully watches the tornado of fruit and yogurt, oblivious to Gary's words.

GARY

Who's Kenny Fisher?

CHRIS

Marco's boss.

Gary looks over his shoulder into the kitchen.

GARY

I don't want to go meet some bookie. This is not my problem, Chris.

CHRIS

Too late, man. This is too valuable for them to ignore. They'll figure out who you are and come looking for you. You want that?

GARY

Damn it, Chris! I'll go with you,
but only to tell them to their face
I'm out and won't do it. I'll be at
your place at 8:00 AM.

Chris hangs up and the WHIRRING slows and stops. Sarah pours
the smoothie into a cup and joins Gary on the couch.

SARAH

Who was that?

GARY

Chris. He's spiraling. I'm gonna
grab coffee with him, go over his
options.

SARAH

That's why he always comes to you.

GARY

It's his mess, but I don't want to
leave him hanging.

He gives a small, forced smile.

SARAH

You're a good brother. Please be
careful.

GARY

It's just coffee. How much trouble
can we get into?

Sarah nods. Brutus has resumed snoring with Jabari on the TV.

EXT. ORLANDO WETLANDS PARK-DAY

Chris's beat-up truck crunches into the gravel lot beside a
gleaming white Escalade. The shotgun window lowers and a song
like "Ring of Fire" by Johnny Cash spills out. A voice booms.

KENNY

Morning, boys. Who's Chris and
who's the tag-along?

CHRIS

I'm Chris, this is my brother Gary.

KENNY

Gary, the Magic man. Get in.

Gary gets into shotgun. Chris takes the back seat.

Kenny hands a foil-wrapped lump back to Chris.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Brought three breakfast burritos.
One for me, one for Chris, and one
for me later. Didn't expect the
third wheel. You're out of luck.

GARY

That's fine.

They sit. Kenny unwraps a burrito. Chris follows, chewing nervously. Gary stays stiff, empty-handed.

KENNY

Chris owes me one-oh-six. Big hole.
Lucky for him, you work for the
Magic.

GARY

Yeah, lucky Chris. Kenny, I'm here
as a courtesy to see if there's a
way to help my brother without
torching my career. But I'm not
sure there is.

KENNY

The draft. Talk.

GARY

It's Jabari. The safe pick. Nothing
you don't already know.

KENNY

Jabari's 3-to-1 at first pick.
That's lunch money. It's gotta be
Paolo. He's 18-to-1. That's a honey
pot.

GARY

What? The team is set on Jabari.
Trying to switch that now would be
career suicide.

Kenny takes another bite, then reaches across Gary, opening the glove box, pulling out a .40 caliber Glock.

He rests the gun on his lap, placing the half-eaten burrito on top. Gary and Chris sneak a tense glance at each other.

KENNY

Choose then. Career suicide or
Marco feeding your brother to those
gators.

Kenny nods to the swamp in front of them and takes a big bite.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Make no mistake, Chris, those gators will eat you just as quick as we're eating these burritos. Probably quicker.

CHRIS

I guess quick is better than slow.

GARY

Even if I wanted to, I'm not certain I can convince the execs and owners.

Kenny palms the Glock and leans over to Gary, resting the pistol menacingly on his shoulder.

KENNY

You're not hearing me. You'll get me Paolo. Capisce?

Gary takes a deep breath and looks over his shoulder to Chris who's staring back, wide-eyed.

GARY

Can I have a day to think it through?

Kenny takes another bite of his burrito. Chris joins.

KENNY

Nope.

CHRIS

Come on, Gary.

GARY

Great. Risk my brother or my career. I definitely like one more than the other.

KENNY

Don't kid yourself, you're risking both.

Gary glares at Chris chewing. He exhales in surrender.

GARY

Capisce, Kenny.

Specks of egg dot Chris's lips.

CHRIS
Thanks, baby bro.

GARY
Shut up. And use a napkin.

Kenny grabs a phone and tosses it into Gary's lap.

KENNY
That burner has my number. It's all
we talk on. Now get out.

GARY
Let's go, Chris.

CHRIS
Nice meeting you, Kenny. Thanks for
the burrito.

Chris wraps the foil around the remains of his burrito and
exits the SUV and Gary follows.

Kenny cranks the tunes up and PEELS OUT. Gravel SPRAYS,
pelting them like buckshot.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Nice of him to bring breakfast. You
want what's left, baby bro?

Chris extends the leftovers. Gary ignores him.

Suddenly, tall grass parts down the road. A massive gator
lumbers out, scutes glistening in the sun.

Kenny punches the gas. Tires SQUEAL as the Escalade veers
toward it. The gator's huge torso THUNK-THUNKS under the
wheels and it's flung lifelessly back into the grass.

The SUV SCREECHES to a stop. Kenny jumps out, Glock in hand.
He strides to the gator and unloads. BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG!
Round after round into the twitching beast. Chris and Gary
flinch at each shot.

Kenny looks up and locks eyes with them. He points the Glock
straight up and FIRES until it CLICKS empty and the slide
locks back.

He strolls to the SUV whistling "Ring of Fire", tosses the
smoking gun in like a frisbee, and drives off.

Chris and Gary are still as statues. The silence breaks as
Chris VOMITS breakfast burrito all over the parking lot.

EXT. DOG PARK - DAY

Brutus happily chases a tennis ball in a sun-drenched field. Dogs of all breeds run in a swirl of chaos.

SARAH
So how'd it go with Chris?

GARY
Still trying to figure out the best option. He owes a lot.

SARAH
What kind of options?

GARY
Maybe a payment plan, maybe Chris picks up extra work. Still working on it.

SARAH
You're not going to help these gamblers are you?

Brutus trots up, a slobber-coated tennis ball wedged in his tiny mouth. He drops it at Gary's feet.

Gary picks up the ball, buying precious seconds. He hurls it back into the canine scrum. Brutus rockets after it.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Well?

GARY
No, I'm not going to do that.

SARAH
Good. I'm worried about you getting dragged into this. Risking your job. The draft. Us.

GARY
Us?

SARAH
Yeah, us. We're in a good place. I don't want some gambling mess screwing that up.

Gary grabs her hand and looks her in the eyes.

GARY
It won't. I'll fix this. Chris's problem stays his problem.

SARAH
Promise me.

A beat as Gary holds her gaze.

GARY
I promise.

She squeezes his hand, relieved. Brutus returns with the ball, a schnauzer close behind. Gary hurls the ball and both tear off.

SARAH
God, your brother can be dumb.

Sarah leans her head on Gary's shoulder.

GARY
Well, I have my moments too.

EXT. BAR PATIO - DAY

A nearly empty patio. Bowls of peanuts on every table. Chris sits alone, cracking shells, with a couple beers on the table.

Gary appears. Chris flicks a peanut high, opens his mouth to catch it. It bounces off his non-bruised eye.

CHRIS
Damn, baby bro. That got me in the good eye.

Gary pulls out a chair with a harsh SCRAPE and sits.

GARY
Sarah says you do dumb things.

CHRIS
She's not wrong.

Chris hands Gary a beer.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
So, uh... how you holding up?

GARY
Not great. I just lied to Sarah.
Looked her in the eye and lied.

CHRIS
Have you talked to Kenny?

GARY

I plan to. I'm getting a cut.

Chris stops mid-shell crack. Stares at Gary.

CHRIS

A what?

GARY

I want in on the winnings.

CHRIS

Are you insane? He'll kill you.

GARY

He needs me. He's not killing anyone.

CHRIS

You work in the NBA, you can't bet on it!

Gary leans forward, voice low and hard.

GARY

Kenny makes a fortune. You get your debt cleared. I'm risking my job, my life, lying to Sarah. If I'm risking everything, why should I be the only one not getting paid?

Chris points to the fading, yellow bruise on his eye.

CHRIS

Because Kenny would rather hurt you than pay you. Hello?

GARY

I'll leave him no choice.

CHRIS

You must be suicidal. If you're gonna do this, call him. Don't go in person. He'll shoot you on the spot.

Gary yanks the burner phone from his pocket.

GARY

Good idea. Let's get this over with.

Gary selects Kenny's number and dials.

CHRIS
Jesus, don't do this.

Gary raises the phone to his ear and stares coldly at Chris.
Chris pantomimes slitting his own throat, mouthing "HANG UP".

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - DAY

Kenny parks his cart near a green. Incoming call, the burner.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

KENNY
Talk to me.

GARY
I can lock in your win and max out
your profit.

KENNY
Good. What's the plan?

GARY
I convince the Magic to take Paolo.
Then I leak that Jabari's the lock
at one. That tanks Paolo's odds and
boosts your payout.

KENNY
Now we're talking.

GARY
How much are you going to bet?

KENNY
Heavy. Probably looking at several
million if your info's a lock.

Gary's eyes bulge. He's speechless.

KENNY (CONT'D)
You there?

GARY
Yeah. Your payday is tens of
millions on a bet that size. It
doesn't happen without me. My price
is five percent.

Chris mouths "Tens of millions?" silently, then slumps
backward in his chair.

KENNY

Five percent?! Your brother breathing is your cut. Maybe as a bonus you stay alive too.

GARY

Five percent is my term. Cutting me in makes me a partner, not a hostage. No threats. Just business. I'll make certain this bet wins.

KENNY

You little shit. Think you're clever? I oughta leave you on the side of the road with that gator.

GARY

We both calculate outcomes for a living. You can have 95% of a fortune, or 100% of nothing. I bet I know which you'll choose.

Kenny's knuckles go white. He cocks back to hurl his phone but stops.

KENNY

I work with a team. This has to be discussed.

Kenny's body tightens. He boils with anger.

KENNY (CONT'D)

God, I wanna kill you.

GARY

Discuss it. But my term is final. Let me know what you decide.

Kenny hangs up. This time, he lets it fly, hurling his phone onto the green, it nearly lands in the cup.

Gary hangs up. Breath shallow. Drops the phone on the table and slams the beer.

CHRIS

So...are we rich? Because I was with you the whole way, baby bro.

INT. KENNY'S HOME - DAY

Through a massive bay window, Isleworth's fourteenth hole glows green outside Kenny's immaculate home. Inside, his elite gambling crew gathers:

DANE ORION (40s), WALTER ROTHSTEIN (72), MAURICE WHITMAN (30s), and Marco. Ruthless pro gamblers that wager at the highest stakes and throttle sportsbooks.

Dane lines up a putt on Kenny's indoor putting green.

DANE
The whole brain trust? Must be a monster play.

WALTER
"Brain trust" is generous with Marco here.

MARCO
Nursing home shuttle drop you off?

WALTER
I drove, wise ass.

MARCO
Florida issuing licenses to fossils?

WALTER
Who says I have a license?

They all share a laugh at both men's expense.

FREEZE ON MAURICE'S GRINNING FACE.

His thin-framed glasses slip down his nose. He's wiry, with the posture of a banana and complexion to match.

KENNY (V.O.)
Maurice is a double Ph.D., Ivy League stats geek. Builds models that break sportsbooks. Sweet guy, takes care of his mom. But for all his brains, couldn't read a room if you gave him a map. Emotional intelligence? Ph.Zero.

CUT TO QUICK MONTAGE:

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

KENNY (V.O.)
His claim to fame is the 2018 *Preakness Payday*.
(MORE)

KENNY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 His model found a jockey weight
 outlier no one else clocked.

Maurice punching away at laptop keys and running stat models.

KENNY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 We bet huge on an 8-to-1 long shot.
 Cashed \$4.6 mil. He didn't even
 watch the race, he was driving his
 mom to brunch.

Footage of horses thundering at the Preakness, followed by a
 newspaper headline that declares: "Preakness Payday: Long
 Shot Pulls Off Stunning Win!"

END QUICK MONTAGE. UNFREEZE MAURICE.

KENNY
 Alright, good to see all of you,
 too. Some primo intel is coming our
 way.

DANE
 Yeah, what's that?

Dane's physique shows he *used* to work out, now he's a bit
 soft, a bit bald, and entirely unbothered.

Dane putts and it veers two feet wide, nowhere near the cup.

FREEZE ON DANE'S DISAPPOINTED FACE

KENNY (V.O.)
 Dane knows bodies like a mechanic
 knows engines. Former Broncos
 trainer. Cashed in on injury intel
 before sportsbooks caught on. Now
 he's got eyes in every locker room.
 Hangovers, sprains, jet-ski
 mishaps... he knows first.

CUT TO QUICK MONTAGE:

INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM EQUIPMENT ROOM - DAY

KENNY (V.O.)
 Dane made us a small fortune off
 Deflategate. A Pats trainer tipped
 him off about equipment guys
 deflating balls before the AFC
 Championship.

Two staffers are in the guts of a stadium in a locked room, releasing air from every ball with a PSSSSSSSSSSSS.

KENNY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The Pats were 6.5-point favorites.
 We all knew Brady, with perfect
 footballs, would cover. We bet big.
 Pats blew out the Colts, and we
 walked away with \$2.8 million.

Footage of Tom Brady lasering perfect passes. Final seconds of the 2015 AFC Championship. Pats fans go bonkers.

END QUICK MONTAGE. UNFREEZE DANE.

KENNY
 Intel on the NBA Draft. The Magic
 are leaning towards Jabari, but we
 can get them to Paolo.

The group exchanges intrigued glances.

WALTER
 How you gonna pull that off?

KENNY
 Gary Walker, VP of Player Analysis
 for the Magic. His brother's into
 us for one hundred large. Paolo
 goes first, or it's Gary's last
 breath.

WALTER
 What are Paolo's odds at going
 first? 10-to-1?

Walter pulls a cigar and matches from an inside pocket.

KENNY
 18-to-1. Walter, don't smoke that
 in here.

WALTER
 18-to-1! My pacemaker skipped a
 beat.

Walter strikes a match and puffs the cigar to life.

FREEZE ON WALTER'S SMOKEY GRIN.

KENNY (V.O.)
Walter's the godfather. Been fixing
odds since Vegas still used
typewriters. His sources feed him
info no algorithm can touch.
Genius, paranoia, and luck, all
hereditary.

CUT TO QUICK MONTAGE:

Grainy footage shows the White Sox warming up before the 1919
World Series.

KENNY (V.O.)
And I mean that literally, it's in
his blood.

A White Sox shortstop botches a routine grounder.

KENNY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
His old man helped rig the 1919
World Series and redefine what's
possible for gambling crews.

A White Sox batter watches strike three fly right by.

A White Sox pitcher throws a meatball that the batter jacks
out of the park.

KENNY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Walter's carried the torch ever
since. Hell, Walter's probably
swung games you've watched, you
just never knew it.

A newspaper headline—"WHITE SOX THREW WORLD SERIES! SCANDAL
ROCKS BASEBALL!"

END MONTAGE. ROOM REMAINS FROZEN.

Kenny scans the room, looking at each person.

KENNY (V.O.)
Kenny, Maurice, Walter, Dane, and I
each have our edge. Together, we're
a sports book's worst nightmare.
Five elite gamblers tilting the
game in our favor. We're not the
good guys, but if you like seeing
the house lose, you'll love rooting
for us.

ROOM UNFREEZES, VOICEOVER ENDS.

A sudden BANG! Everyone flinches, except Kenny. A stray golf ball smacked against the window. A collective release of profanities from the group.

Marco reactively grabs into his jacket for his handgun, then sheepishly puts it away, realizing there's no threat.

WALTER

Marco, don't shoot! That Titleist is unarmed.

MARCO

Jesus! That scared the shit out of me. How do you live with that?

KENNY

Keeps me spry. Bulletproof glass pays for itself over and over.

Kenny wanders over and inspects the impact point of the ball.

KENNY (CONT'D)

I've had an investigator tail Gary and dig into his background.

MAURICE

And?

KENNY

He's clean. No criminal record. Cute girlfriend. Ugly dog. Quiet life. Couldn't be more boring.

WALTER

Honest people make me nervous.

KENNY

Gary looks like a saint. Investigator said he was walking his dog at the park, saw someone leave their dog's crap behind, and went over and picked it up.

The group is collectively repulsed.

DANE

That's so gross.

MARCO

Doesn't scream master criminal.

MAURICE

Sounds like he cares about the cleanliness of parks.

KENNY

It gets weirder. At the grocery store, Gary inspected eight strawberry cartons before picking one.

WALTER

What a strange man.

KENNY

If he scouts berries that hard, imagine what he does for the draft.

DANE

Paolo at 18-to-1 has my attention. I'm not chasing Jabari at 3-to-1.

KENNY

Agreed. If Gary gives us the green light, we hammer Paolo for the big payout.

MARCO

How much are we talking? Shots like this don't come often. This is retire-on-the-beach money.

WALTER

This is buy-the-beach money.

MAURICE

I'm good for five hundred.

DANE

I'll do a million.

MARCO

Depends what New York floats me.

WALTER

So we're betting millions on intel from a guy who picks up random dog shit? Sure. Count me in.

KENNY

Beautiful. That wager clears us an eye-watering \$45 to \$90 million.

Dane raises his hand for a high five. Maurice doesn't notice. Leaves him hanging.

KENNY (CONT'D)
One more thing...

Kenny takes time to look each one in the eyes.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Gary wants 10% of the winnings.

MARCO
Gary and his brother are lucky they still have a pulse! Now he wants 10% of our money?

KENNY
Our options are kill him and get nothing, or cut him in and get stinking rich.

DANE
Ten's a bite, but on \$45 mil, I can stomach it.

MAURICE
Ten's fine.

WALTER
I can do ten. But if he's wrong, we dead him. And when I say we, I mean Marco.

All eyes turn to Marco. He stares at Kenny.

MARCO
I don't like paying hostages. If he fails, I bury both brothers.

Kenny nods approvingly at the group.

KENNY
Done. 10% for Gary and a burial if he fails. Fund your runners and be ready to bet.

BANG! Everyone but Kenny ducks, crouching and cussing. Kenny's unfazed as a second golf ball smacks the glass.

He walks back to the glass, stares out at the fourteenth hole, then rehearses a delicate putt in front of a giant oil portrait of himself doing the same.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Terrible golfers today. I should go take their money too.

He holds the putting pose.

EXT. CHRIS' APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Chris stands just outside his apartment building, taking drags off a cig. His eye is nearly healed.

A shadow falls over him. He looks up to see Marco in a velour tracksuit.

MARCO

Your brother's got some balls. I oughta put 'em in a vice.

CHRIS

What now?

MARCO

Your bro wants a cut. Says we either pay him or kill him. That your bright idea?

CHRIS

News to me. But he's risking a lot.

Marco snatches the cigarette from Chris's hand and flicks it back into his chest. Sparks fly off Chris and the cig falls into a puddle, extinguished with a PSSSSS of steam.

MARCO

Shut up, Chris! We're risking millions. Remind Gary, if his intel's bad, he won't have to worry about his career. Or breathing.

Marco steps close, getting in Chris's face.

CHRIS

Alright, alright. I'll talk to him.

MARCO

Make it crystal clear. If this goes south, I'm tossing you both out of a helicopter.

CHRIS

Where do you get a helicopter?

MARCO

Don't worry about it, just know you'll be in it.

CHRIS

If anyone can pull this off, it's Gary.

MARCO

You both better pray that's so.

Marco sulks away and Chris grabs a new cig with a trembling hand. He fumbles the lighter before he finally gets it lit.

EXT. KENNY'S HOME - DAY

Kenny steps onto his patio, the Isleworth golf course stretching beyond. He dials the burner.

INT. GARY'S HOME - DAY

Phone buzzes, Gary answers, distracted.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

KENNY

You walk Brutus in the park every morning, right? Weird looking dog.

GARY

You've got someone tailing me?

KENNY

Meet me at the Wetlands. Four o'clock. Same spot.

Kenny hangs up. A golf ball rockets toward him. He ducks. It bounces off his house and back onto the fairway.

EXT. ORLANDO WETLANDS PARK-DAY

Gary pulls into the lot. The decomposing gator lies near the entrance, rib cage exposed, black with flies. A bird flutters from its chest cavity.

Kenny's white Escalade sits alone. Gary parks and gets in. A song like Tom Petty's "Yer So Bad" plays low.

KENNY

How you doing?

GARY

Creeped out. What'd your spy find out about me?

KENNY

Enough to decide your worth betting on.

Kenny smirks, leans over-CLICK-pops the glovebox. He grabs two Glocks, sets one between his thighs, slaps the other on the dash.

GARY

Why two?

KENNY

Gators galore out here. One for them, one for whatever else needs killing.

Kenny grabs the Glock between his legs, and racks the slide, CLICK-CLACK, chambering a round.

KENNY (CONT'D)

My team's good with your 5%. We're all in on Paolo. Jabari ain't worth it.

GARY

I've still got a lot of work to lock up Paolo at first pick. Big meeting with the execs soon. Your team decide how much to bet?

KENNY

Between 2.5 and 5 million, depending on our confidence in you.

GARY

Jesus... that's a \$45 to \$90 million payout.

KENNY

When's the exec meeting?

GARY

Few days out. I'll keep you posted.

KENNY

Every detail. Every whisper. That 5% means we own you until Adam Silver says, "The Magic select Paolo Banchemo."

Kenny taps his fingers on the Glock between his legs. TINK-TINK-TINK.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Get out. And Gary, tell Sarah I
said hello.

Throat tight, Gary nods and exits the SUV.

Kenny idles for a moment. He locks eyes with Gary and stares
at him until Gary looks away. Kenny drives away slowly.

Gary stands alone, looking at the gator carcass. Bullets
scattered in the rot glint from the sunlight.

INT. GARY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sarah stirs a pot on the stove. Gary enters, drained. Drops
his jacket on a chair and kisses her cheek. She leans in,
then recoils slightly, sniffing.

SARAH

Whoa. You smell like...pond water.

GARY

Yeah. Walked through the park.
Needed to clear my head.

SARAH

The park? I thought you were
getting coffee with Chris.

GARY

We did. Coffee first. Then I
walked.

SARAH

Right.

She turns back to the stove. The silence stretches.

SARAH (CONT'D)

So what's the plan with Chris?

GARY

We're trying to work something out.
Maybe a payment plan.

SARAH

A payment plan? With bookies? The
guys who beat him up don't seem
like the "payment plan" type.

GARY

What do you want me to say, Sarah?
I'm trying to keep my Chris alive!

He instantly regrets the outburst. She just stares, caught off guard by his aggressiveness.

SARAH

I know. Are you hungry?

GARY

Maybe later. I need to wash off.

He disappears down the hall. The shower starts.

Sarah exhales. Her eyes drift to his jacket on the chair. A black phone is half-visible in the pocket. Not his smartphone.

She glances down the hallway, shower's still running.

She slips the burner from the pocket. Presses the power button. The screen lights up: *RECENT CALLS: 1 CONTACT*. No name. Just a number.

She jots it down on a scrap of paper and slips it in her pocket. Then she tucks the burner back exactly how it was.

The shower shuts off. Sarah quickly returns to the stove and stirs the pot.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Gary sits with Scott, Linda, and Liz. Coffee cups, laptops, and stat sheets litter the table. Jabari's highlight reel loops on a screen.

GARY

Exec presentation's Monday. I'll finish the binders this weekend.

SCOTT

Need a hand?

GARY

Nope, I got it.

LIZ

Should be easy, Jabari's a lock.

Gary grabs the remote and switches to Paolo highlights.

GARY

Let's not hit autopilot. Paolo's reads are improving. Court vision, body control, decision-making.

Collective groan.

SCOTT
We've been through this.

LINDA
Paolo's great. At number three.
That's not an insult.

GARY
His playmaking metrics in clutch
situations...

SCOTT
Gary. The models say Jabari. The
scouts say Jabari. Vegas says
Jabari. The universe says Jabari.

LINDA
If you walk into that exec meeting
with Paolo at one, they'll have you
drug-tested.

LIZ
Maybe all of us. And I'm not
prepared for that.

Gary nods, seeming to yield.

GARY
Right. Just making sure we're not
missing something.

Gary gathers his things and exits the room.

LINDA
He sounded like he was pitching
Paolo.

LIZ
He's just tired, right?

SCOTT
He'd better be. If he puts Paolo on
that binder, we're screwed.

Paolo's highlights continue playing on screen. A vicious
dunk, a no-look pass, lockdown defense.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - DAY

A private room decked out in sombreros and maracas. A mariachi cover of Talking Heads' "Naive Melody" hums under the noise. The table's a war zone of tacos and cooling fajitas. Kenny reigns at the head. Walter's margarita is nearly drained, a purple cocktail umbrella tucked over his ear.

WALTER

You should buy food every time.

KENNY

We're splitting the check, Walter. Let's lock in. We own Gary. He's taking the 10%, and he knows his ass is grass if he doesn't deliver Paolo.

WALTER

How much faith do we have in Gary? I checked LinkedIn, his profile picture is him sitting in a car, wearing a seat belt. Who does that for their professional portrait?

DANE

You're on LinkedIn?

WALTER

Yes, Dane. We're connections. You've liked my posts!

MAURICE

Maybe the seat belt implies responsibility, or "Gary's in the driver's seat." A metaphor for leadership.

WALTER

It doesn't imply that.

MARCO

What the hell is LinkedIn?

KENNY

Enough! I don't care if Gary took his headshot in a bumper car. All I care about is 18-to-1.

Dane bites into a taco. Lettuce tumbles onto his spotless white shirt.

DANE

Hot damn! Not a single shred with
salsa. It's a Mexi-miracle.

He holds the taco aloft like evidence.

DANE (CONT'D)

Maurice, what are the odds?

MAURICE

Odds of food missing your mouth?
One hundred percent.

DANE

Not that, the dry lettuce. Kenny,
that's a good omen!

KENNY

I'll take whatever luck we can get.
Have your runners ready. This is
our biggest bet ever.

THE SCENE FREEZES EXCEPT FOR MARCO, WHO DIRECTLY ADDRESSES
THE AUDIENCE.

MARCO

What's a runner? Sportsbooks won't
let us dump five million bucks on
one bet, so we use an army of
middlemen. Two hundred nobodies
betting twenty-five grand each
looks like ordinary action instead
of one giant play. Runners get
paid. We get rich. The sportsbook
gets cleaned out.

THE SCENE UNFREEZES AND EVERYONE SNAPS BACK INTO ACTION.

KENNY

When Gary gives the green light,
I'll text. Every runner bets within
ten minutes.

DANE

Ten minutes? Two hundred max bets?
Tight window.

KENNY

Once sportsbooks see a tsunami of
bets on Paolo, they'll shut it
down. We hit before they blink.

WALTER

Two hundred people getting five
million down in ten minutes? Sure.
Easy, peasy, lemon squeezy.

Dane takes another bite. Direct hit. Bright red salsa seeps
into his white shirt. The table ERUPTS, laughing.

DANE

God damn it. Twice?

MAURICE

One hundred percent, Dane.

INT. GARY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The house is quiet. ESPN murmurs on the TV. Sarah sits on the
couch with her laptop, the scrap of paper beside her.

She types the burner number into Google. Nothing.

Reverse lookup. Still nothing.

A glance down the hall, Gary's office door is closed.

Sarah hesitates, then picks up her phone and dials the
number.

INTERCUT - SARAH / KENNY

INT. KENNY'S SUV - NIGHT

Kenny sits parked in darkness, engine off. His phone VIBRATES
— UNKNOWN NUMBER. He answers immediately, voice sharp.

KENNY

Who's this?

SARAH - LIVING ROOM

Sarah freezes.

KENNY (V.O.)

Hello?

She hangs up and drops the phone to the couch.

KENNY - SUV

Kenny stares at the screen: MISSED CALL - 407 area code.

He takes a screenshot. Texts it to Marco with: "Run this"

SARAH - LIVING ROOM

She folds the scrap of paper and slips it into her pocket.

Gary steps out of the closed door, stretching.

GARY

You coming to bed?

Sarah forces a small smile.

SARAH

Yeah, right behind you.

He disappears and she sits still on the couch.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

The sleek room gleams in team blue and silver. Framed jerseys of Shaq, Penny, Dwight, and T-Mac echo past glory.

A massive screen loops highlights: Jabari's smooth J, Chet's blocks, Paolo's bruising drives. Three futures, one pick.

At the polished table, Gary and his analysts sit on one side. GM JOHN MENRAD (40s) and VP KEVIN GETZ (50s) sit opposite.

Three binders, emblazoned with the Magic logo, sit in front of the executives. Gary hands matching binders to Scott, Linda, and Liz. They set them down, unread.

GARY

Good morning, John. Kevin. We've spent hundreds of hours on this decision. Thousands of models. Every possession. Every interview. Every weakness. Our recommended player will return the Magic to greatness and be a league superstar for years to come.

Gary carefully locks eyes with both executives.

GARY (CONT'D)

That player...is Paolo Banchero.

John and Kevin exchange surprised glances.

Scott's face drains. Linda stiffens. Liz opens her binder enough to see a photo of Paolo in a Magic jersey, then shuts it immediately.

GARY (CONT'D)

The binders detail why Paolo is the best player in this draft. He's explosive, NBA-ready, dominant. A freight train on offense, a brick wall on D. Paolo's relentless, nasty in the way champions have to be. He's only nineteen, million-watt smile, charismatic, global appeal. Every kid in Orlando will have his jersey. Paolo is the future. Our future.

John cracks his binder, thumbing pages without reading.

JOHN

League consensus has Jabari first.
What are we seeing differently?

Scott clears his throat, the careful tone of a man trying not to contradict his boss.

SCOTT

Gary, if I may?

GARY

Floor is yours.

SCOTT

John, you're right that Jabari is the overwhelming favorite. If Jabari doesn't turn into a superstar, nobody faults the Magic. He's the safe bet. If we zag, take Paolo, and he's a bust while Jabari shines? That's a catastrophe that sets this organization back for years. You don't gamble with the first pick.

A tense silence. Gary nods, masking umbrage.

GARY

Championships aren't built on safe decisions. Teams that see greatness where others see risk hoist trophies. Steph. Giannis. Jokic. Kawhi. None of them were taken first, none of them had consensus. But each one of them is an NBA champion and Finals MVP.

Gary gestures at the screen: Paolo bulldozes a defender, finishes through contact.

GARY (CONT'D)

The easy pick is Jabari. I'm
telling you Paolo is
the right pick. It's bold moves
that put banners in the rafters.

John and Kevin sit in consideration. Gary's team looks like
they've seen a ghost.

KEVIN

I like the pitch. Give us forty-
eight hours to consult ownership.
Be ready for follow-ups.

GARY

Of course.

JOHN

Good work, all of you.

The execs exit. The door shuts. The room is frozen.

SCOTT

What was that, Gary? We're hanging
our ass out if we go Paolo. You
just risked all our careers, and
blindsided us!

LIZ

I think my heart stopped beating
several minutes ago. It's still
stopped.

GARY

I expected you'd feel that way. But
it's my call. If we go Paolo and
he's a bust, I'll fall on the
sword. But if he's Rookie-of-the-
Year you get zero credit. Fair?

SCOTT

I don't care about credit. I care
about this team not making a
historic mistake.

Gary leans in uncomfortably close to Scott.

GARY

Just because it's safe doesn't make
it right. And if you're afraid of
high-stakes decisions, maybe this
isn't the place for you.

The room goes still. Even Gary seems shocked he said that.

Scott SLAMS his laptop shut, and grabs it along with a binder. He heads for the exit and on the way out drops the binder in the trash.

GARY (CONT'D)

You two can go. Thanks again.

Linda and Liz gather their things in silence. Linda pauses at the door.

LINDA

I hope you're right about this.

Linda exits. Gary reaches into his bag for the burner.

After slipping out of the meeting, Linda moves quickly to John's office.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John sits with the pitch binder in front of him. Linda leans in.

LINDA

Hi, John. Linda Doyle, Player Analysis, do you have a minute?

John looks at his watch.

JOHN

I've got two. What do you need?

Linda steps inside and closes the door.

LINDA

Whether we want Paolo or Jabari, we can draft Chet at one and flip him to OKC at two for our guy plus the twelfth pick.

JOHN

That's nice if we can pull it off. What makes you think OKC bites?

LINDA

Already lined up. OKC's in.

John leans back, studying her.

JOHN

You already talked to OKC?

LINDA
Didn't want to waste your time if
it wasn't real.

JOHN
Clever. I'll keep it in mind.

LINDA
We get our guy either way, plus
another pick.

JOHN
Thanks, Linda.

Linda flashes a tight smile, exits. John stares after her,
wheels turning. He then looks down again at the Paolo binder.

INT. GARY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gary stands over his laptop, rubbing his eyes, drained.

GARY
My brain is fried. I'm going to
take Brutus for a walk.

SARAH
Sounds good. See ya soon.

He clips the leash, heads out. The door closes.

Sarah watches through the window until Gary and Brutus
disappear down the street.

She moves to Gary's laptop. Sighs and opens search history.
Search history: "Paolo Banchemo Duke stats", "Chet Holmgren
injuries."

Then: "Jabari Smith draft odds" and "Paolo Banchemo odds to
go first."

She keeps scrolling. An unfamiliar name appears: "Kenny
Fisher Orlando."

She opens her laptop and searches: "Kenny Fisher Orlando".

Results are sparse, but an old article from the *Las Vegas Sun*
appears. Headline: "High-Roller Gambler Acquitted in '08
Murder of Rival Bookie."

She skims the article: "...key witness recanted... case
collapsed... Fisher left Nevada for Florida shortly after the
verdict..."

The article includes Kenny's mugshot, it stares back at Sarah.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Oh, my god.

The front door OPENS. Brutus's collar JINGLES.

Sarah SLAMS her laptop shut just as Gary appears with Brutus.

GARY

Quick walk. Brut did his business
right away.

Sarah forces a smile. Gary unclips the leash, already back at his laptop, oblivious.

Sarah sits rigid, Kenny's mugshot burned into her mind, and Gary only a few feet away.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Gary sits across from John and Kevin, fingers tapping the armrest.

KEVIN

You threw us a curveball with Paolo. I've always liked him, but I didn't want to influence your decision. John?

JOHN

Talked to Coach K. He called Paolo one of the best he's ever had. Sky-high ceiling. Said passing on him would be a huge mistake. That's gospel coming from him.

GARY

Hell of an endorsement. Is ownership onboard?

JOHN

Ownership found your team's analysis very impressive.

GARY

Sounds like Paolo's our guy?

KEVIN

We're taking Jabari.

GARY

What?

JOHN

Ownership wants the certainty. Play it safe, less risk with Jabari.

KEVIN

If we had the second pick too, Paolo's ours. But we don't.

Gary exhales, frustration bubbling.

GARY

This is a mistake. He's going to make us regret passing on him.

JOHN

Your objection's noted. If Jabari flops, that's not on you.

Gary rises from his seat, exasperated.

GARY

Damn it.

JOHN

We'll keep you looped in as things develop.

Gary hesitates at the door, jaw tight, then exits without another word.

EXT. MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Gary bursts through the doors and into the open campus of HQ, phone already at his ear.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - DAY

Kenny's ripping down the fairway in his cart, nearing hole four. His phone BUZZES and he snatches it up.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

KENNY

Tell me good news.

GARY

The Magic are taking Jabari.

Kenny SLAMS the brakes. The cart SKIDS to a halt. He's thrown forward, catches himself on the steering wheel. Sits back, face crimson with rage.

KENNY

Are you shitting me?

GARY

Ownership sees Jabari as the safe pick.

KENNY

God damn it, Gary! You assured me it would be Paolo.

GARY

First time they've ignored my recommendation.

KENNY

So, are we screwed?

GARY

Give me a few days. I need to see how firm this is.

KENNY

I don't have days. My team's sitting on five million. Either make Paolo happen, or tell me it's over. But if this bet dies, so do you and Chris.

Kenny ends the call with a slammed phone. Gary exhales a jagged breath and marches back to HQ.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - PARKING LOT - DAY

Kenny walks to his SUV, clubs over shoulder, still fuming. Marco leans against the vehicle, waiting.

KENNY

What?

MARCO

That unknown number. It's Sarah Griffin. Gary's girlfriend.

Kenny freezes, his anger from the Gary call transforming into cold, calculating focus.

MARCO (CONT'D)

She called from her cell.

KENNY

She's sniffing around. Bet Gary doesn't have a clue.

MARCO

Want me to scare her off?

KENNY

No. Let her dig. If Gary can't deliver Paolo, she's leverage.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - PARKING LOT - DAY

Kenny walks to his SUV, clubs over shoulder, still fuming. Marco leans against the vehicle, waiting.

KENNY

What?

MARCO

That unknown number. It's Sarah Griffin. Gary's girlfriend.

Kenny freezes, his contempt for Gary transforming into cold, calculating focus.

MARCO (CONT'D)

She called from her cell.

KENNY

She's sniffing around. Bet Gary doesn't have a clue.

MARCO

Want me to scare her off?

KENNY

Let her dig. If Gary can't deliver Paolo, she's bait.

INT. GARY'S HOME - NIGHT

Gary chops veggies in the kitchen. ESPN murmurs from the living room. Sarah sits nearby on the couch, petting Brutus.

SARAH

How was work?

GARY

Exhausting. Still battling for Paolo.

ESPN BROADCASTER (V.O.)
 A scary moment today when Jabari Smith turned his ankle in a pre-draft workout for the Houston Rockets. X-rays show no major damage, but it's the same ankle that kept him out of ten Auburn games.

Gary stops chopping. Stares at the TV.

GARY
 Oh. Yes.

He sets down the knife, grabs his phone, sends a text.

GARY (TEXTS) (CONT'D)
 Jabari's ankle=ticking time bomb.

SARAH
 Good news?

GARY
 Jabari's injury could push the execs toward Paolo.

SARAH
 Is it bad karma to celebrate someone getting hurt?

GARY
 Probably. But I need all the help I can get.

His phone BUZZES. He checks it.

JOHN (TEXT)
 We'll talk to ownership. Update tomorrow.

Gary pumps both fists, unleashes a Ric Flair howl.

GARY
 WOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

SARAH
 Would it help Chris if Paolo was the pick? Since his odds are so much higher?

GARY
 What do you mean?

SARAH

I was reading about the draft online. Paolo's 18-to-1 to go first. Jabari's only 3-to-1. Doesn't that matter to bookies?

GARY

Chris is paying those guys back in installments. Doesn't matter to them who goes first.

SARAH

Right. Installments.

Sarah sighs and pulls Brutus closer.

GARY

Why are you asking about odds?

SARAH

Trying to understand the draft. You talk about Paolo a lot.

GARY

Because he's the best player.

SARAH

That's what you keep saying.

Silence hangs between them. Gary's phone BUZZES again.

KEVIN (TEXT)

Lets meet tomorrow at 9 AM.

GARY

We're meeting tomorrow morning. This is it.

SARAH

That's great, Gary.

GARY

I need to prep.

He grabs his laptop and heads down the hall.

SARAH

I'll be in bed.

The door CLICKS shut as he disappears into his office.

Sarah sits alone with Brutus close, the only light coming from ESPN highlights of Jabari limping. Brutus whimpers and Sarah clicks off the TV with the remote.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

John, Kevin and Gary gather in a conference room. Gary's leg bounces under the table. Kevin leans back, studying Gary.

KEVIN

You manifest that Jabari injury?
Convenient timing for you.

GARY

If I could twist ankles with my
mind, the Heat would've missed the
playoffs.

John and Kevin are stone-faced.

KEVIN

Ownership debated Jabari versus
Paolo for three hours last night.

JOHN

Jabari's ankle is a red flag.
Medical staff raised concerns about
long-term durability.

KEVIN

So Jabari's not the lock he was
yesterday and Paolo's back in the
conversation.

Gary keeps his face neutral.

JOHN

We'll monitor the ankle, keep
evaluating both players, and see
what the trade market looks like.

KEVIN

Ownership wants every option on
the table for now.

GARY

Then let's get them to Paolo.

John and Kevin stare back at Gary.

EXT. MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Gary barrels to his car, getting in, phone out, dialing
Kenny.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - DAY

Kenny's zipping a cart along the 16th hole. He slams his spiked shoe on the brake and answers Gary's call.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

KENNY

Tell me good news.

GARY

Jabari's ankle changed everything.
Ownership reopened all options.

KENNY

That doesn't sound like Paolo's first.

GARY

Not yet.

KENNY

Jesus Christ, Gary.

GARY

Kenny, yesterday we had no shot.
Today we do.

KENNY

When do you know?

GARY

Could be tomorrow. Could be draft night.

KENNY

Draft night?

GARY

That's exactly why you bet now.
Paolo's still eighteen-to-one
because the public thinks it's
Jabari.

KENNY

You're asking me to put five
million on maybe.

GARY

I'm asking you to trust that I get
Paolo over the finish line.

Long silence.

KENNY

Getting this wrong costs me millions. Costs you and Chris a whole lot more.

GARY

I know.

KENNY

Gary, this is life or death. Do I bet Paolo?

Gary looks back at Magic headquarters. The biggest decision of his life.

GARY

Yes. Bet it all.

KENNY

God help you if you're wrong.

Kenny hangs up. Gary exits his car and walks back to headquarters.

BEGIN MONTAGE OF \$5 MILLION BEING BET:

MUSIC CUE - A song like "For the Love of Money" by the O'Jays begins playing.

Kenny's perched on his cart. A digital timer appears in a bottom corner of the screen, counting upward from 0:01. A money counter flashes \$0.00 in the opposite, bottom corner.

Kenny punches out a text to his team: "PB1. Full order. Book it." He looks around the serene golf course, weighing the cost of the decision. Finally, he taps SEND.

Dane, at a baseball game, spills popcorn reading the text.

Walter, on a massage table, naked but for a towel, twists to grab his phone.

Maurice, mid-computer build, snatches his buzzing phone.

Marco puts down a barbell, sweat drips on the phone as he reads the text.

All four quickly send texts to their runners with a version of "NBA Draft. Banchemo #1. Max. Now."

Across various locations, runners are activated by the text.

A teacher glances at her phone during class.

A priest peeks at his phone mid-sermon.

A man in a juror's box reads the text and opens a betting app.

An Uber driver bets at a red light, passenger oblivious.

A lifeguard, a daycare operator, an electrician, fingers fly and bets are placed in rapid succession.

The money counter shoots past \$3 million as the timer nears 4:00 minutes. "Done", "Booked", "Placed" texts come flooding back from runners.

The money counter begins slowing near \$4.5 million.

Dane, Walter, and Maurice text follow-ups to unresponsive runners: "???" "Problems?" "U good?"

Marco doesn't text, he's dialing runners, shouting and spitting into the phone, his face burgundy.

Runners scramble and frantically submit wagers on their phone. Screens are lighting up with "BET RECEIVED!" on gambling apps.

The timer passes 9:00 minutes. More "Done" confirmations trickle in, pushing the counter higher, \$4.7 million...\$4.9 million...

At the gym, Marco tensely glares at his phone. A text from his last runner buzzes through: "Done." Marco exhales and types his own message to Kenny: "Done."

The counter clicks to \$5,000,000.

The timer freezes at 9:58.

Kenny sees the final confirmations. A slow smile creeps across his face. He texts the team, "Full amount booked." Then texts Gary: "It's done. Keep PB1."

Kenny drops the phone into the cup holder, lights a cigar, and accelerates toward the seventeenth hole.

Gary is back at his desk, reading Kenny's text. He looks up as Liz, Linda, and Scott walk past his office and disappear down the hall.

END OF MONTAGE AND MUSIC.

INT. BETPULSE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

TIM CALICO (50s), VP of Operations, types in his sleek office. Cell rings, he answers.

He listens to the caller, expression souring.

TIM
How much was bet? In ten minutes?
Shut it down! In my office now!

He slams the phone down, face pale.

INT. BETPULSE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Tim storms in. Three execs already at laptops, PAT HURLEY (40s), BRIAN GUERRA (30s), and JENNIFER COLE (40s), faces grim. Hot-pink BetPulse logos scream from the walls.

TIM
What just hit us?

PAT
Fifty-six bets. All on Banchero to go first. \$1.4 million total.

Pat looks like he's delivering a terminal diagnosis.

PAT (CONT'D)
At 18-to-1, that's over \$25 million in exposure.

An F-bomb slips out under someone's breath.

PAT (CONT'D)
Before today, we had 184 bets on the draft for \$73k total. Average bet of \$396. These 56 bets today are all maxed at \$25k.

TIM
Jesus Christ. Fifty-six max bets in ten minutes?

Tim closes his eyes and grinds his temples with his thumbs.

TIM (CONT'D)
Brian, what bets are our competitors taking on the draft?

Brian plucks away at the laptop, which projects onto the room's huge wall screen.

BRIAN

MGM locked all draft betting.
Caesars too. Action Arena still
open but Paolo's crashed to 3-to-1.

TIM

They're bleeding too. Brian,
monitor that. They twitch, I wanna
know.

JENNIFER

If Paolo goes first, this is the
biggest loss in company history.
And we never saw it coming.

PAT

I'll scrub these 56 accounts. If
there's a reason to void these
bets, I'll find it.

TIM

There are maybe five crews in the
world who could pull this off. Find
out which one just declared war on
us.

Everyone scatters like it's a fire drill.

INT. TIM'S OFFICE - LATER

Tim scrolls his contacts. Stops. Dials.

INT. ACTION ARENA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

DAN WEISSER (50s), CEO, tosses an apple in the air. He looks
bored, but his eyes are cold.

The Action Arena logo is on everything—obnoxious,
unavoidable. Just like they wanted.

His phone buzzes: Tim Calico. He let's it go to voicemail.
The phone buzzes again, and Dan answers on speaker.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

DAN

Hello, Tim.

TIM

You get hit on the draft?

DAN
Did Paolo Banchero just set your
balance sheet on fire?

TIM
Yes.

DAN
How much?

TIM
You go first.

Dan scowls and tosses the apple upward again.

DAN
\$1.8 million. At 19-1. A \$34
million guillotine blade is
dangling over my neck. And you?

TIM
\$25.2 million in exposure.

DAN
Almost \$60 million between us. If
this were illegal, it'd be the
heist of the century.

TIM
Any suspects?

Dan snatches the apple midair, eyes coming to life.

DAN
Kenny Fisher. Has to be. Dracula
himself. Fangs in our necks,
draining us dry. And loving every
drop.

TIM
Kenny, huh? Call if you hear
anything. I'll do the same.

DAN
Wouldn't dream of suffering alone.

Dan hangs up and stares out the window. He winds up and hurls
the apple like a fastball—SMASH! The window EXPLODES, glass
shards and fruit rain on the street below.

A car ALARM blares. Dan picks up his phone and dials.

DAN (CONT'D)
Send up another apple. Maybe two.

Dan hangs up the call.

EXT. ANIMAL RESCUE PARKING LOT - DAY

Sarah's car is parked crooked, hood propped open. She stands beside it, phone in hand, pretending to be concerned.

Chris pulls in. He's blaring a song like Outkast's "ATLiens" and rapping along.

CHRIS

You're lucky you caught me. I was just about to head to the bar.

SARAH

Chris, it's one o'clock.

CHRIS

Exactly. I'm late.

He grins, pops his trunk, grabs jumper cables.

SARAH

Thanks for coming. I didn't want to bother Gary, he's been so busy.

CHRIS

He is a busy dude.

Chris hooks up the first set of clamps.

SARAH

When Gary mentioned your situation, the debt...

Sarah tries to read Chris' expression, but he's focused on the cables.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I know Gary's taking some chances, but I'm glad he's helping clear your debt.

Chris pauses. The clamps hang loose in his hands. He glances up at her and pauses.

CHRIS

Yeah. He's been helpful. Working on a plan.

SARAH

That's good. I was worried about you.

Chris goes back to the cables, but the ease is gone now.

CHRIS

It'll be nice to have it behind me.
Go ahead and try to start your car.

Sarah smiles as the engine REVS to life.

SARAH

Thank you. Really.

Chris forces a smile back.

CHRIS

Anytime.

They disconnect the cables. Chris shuts his trunk, already half thinking about something else as he gets back in his car.

Sarah closes the hood, watches him drive off.

The smile fades.

INT. BETPULSE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Tim looms at the table's head, flanked by Pat, Brian, and Jennifer. Coffee cups steam. He reviews a report, jaw tight.

TIM

In ten minutes, they hit us for
1.4. Others took 3.6.

BRIAN

All at 18-to-1 or higher.

TIM

This gang isn't winning a bet.
They're winning the damn lottery.

PAT

Nearly a hundred million. Biggest
online sports haul ever.

TIM

Un-goddamn-believable.

JENNIFER

Of the 56 bets, we can loosely tie
five to Marco Barese. Suspicious,
but not enough to cancel the bets.

TIM

Marco and Kenny Fisher are thick as thieves. Obviously, Kenny is the brains.

PAT

How is he \$5 million certain that Paolo is going first?

TIM

I'm calling him. That smug SOB's probably dying to gloat.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - DAY

Kenny's phone chimes—"Tim Calico-Jerk" appears onscreen. He flashes a wolfish grin, answers.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

KENNY

Tim! To what do I owe the pleasure?

INT. BETPULSE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

TIM

I've got a \$26 million grenade in my lap with the pin pulled. Paolo going first is your bet, right?

KENNY

\$26 mil? Oh boy, the shareholders will skin you alive. Sounds bad, but that's not mine.

TIM

Cut the shit. I need to hedge. I need a layoff bet.

THE CONVERSATION FREEZES. KENNY LOOKS DIRECTLY AT US.

KENNY

A layoff bet is when the house needs to dump risk. Johnny's Sportsbook takes a hundred grand on the Broncos. Johnny gets spooked and sends runners to bet the Broncos at Paulie's Sportsbook. If the Broncos win, Paulie's money pays Johnny's customers.

(MORE)

KENNY (CONT'D)

If they lose, Johnny keeps his customers' money. Either way, Johnny survives. That's a layoff bet.

FREEZE ENDS. THE CONVERSATION RESUMES.

KENNY

Problem is, Paolo's odds are 6-to-1 now. You'd need to lay down \$4.3 million to hedge. If he doesn't go first, you lose \$2.9 million. But if he does, you spare yourself a \$26 million funeral. Tight spot.

TIM

Thanks for the math lesson, Kenny.

Kenny smirks, savoring every second.

TIM (CONT'D)

I may place that \$4.3 million. If Paolo's odds slide back to 18-to-1 and you're still sold he's first, I'll pay for the whisper.

KENNY

Yeah? What's that worth to you?

TIM

5% of the take.

KENNY

Not enough. Ten. Or forget it.

TIM

Jesus. You might as well be a bank robber.

KENNY

And you're the bank. No one cries when the bank bleeds, Tim.

Kenny hangs up, a delighted grin plastered across his face.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Gary walks down the hallway carrying a coffee.

He knocks twice at Kevin's office door.

KEVIN

Come in.

Gary opens the door.

GARY

Morning. Got your email.

Gary stops. Kevin and John are seated at a table with Magic attorneys.

Legal files cover the conference table. No coffee. No laptops. Six eyes on Gary.

GARY (CONT'D)

What's this?

KEVIN

Close the door.

Gary CLICKS it shut.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Take a seat.

Gary slowly sits and sets his cup on the table. Kevin waits until he's settled.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

The league contacted us. Betting sites flagged massive, coordinated wagers on Paolo going first.

JOHN

\$5 million. In ten minutes.

Gary stares back, expressionless.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You know anything about that?

GARY

That's news to me.

ATTORNEY 1

A coordinated five-million-dollar wager suggests someone had inside information. Who on your team knew?

GARY

Knew what? We still haven't locked in our pick.

The attorneys scribble notes. The pen SCRATCHES grate on Gary's nerves.

KEVIN

Could someone on your staff have leaked something?

GARY

Scott wanted Jabari. If he thought leaking Paolo might pressure us to reconsider...I could see him convincing himself it was for the good of the team.

One attorney writes intensely, the other stink-eyes Gary.

JOHN

So not for money. Just to influence the pick?

GARY

Scott cares about this team. He's wrong about Paolo, but I don't think he'd leak for money.

JOHN

The league's investigating. Right now, nothing ties this to the Magic.

KEVIN

If we determine Scott's responsible, can you function without him?

Gary hesitates, glancing at the attorneys whispering.

GARY

It's a bad time to be short-staffed.

The attorneys keep whispering, distracting Gary.

KEVIN

He'd be replaced. This is about optics.

Gary projects a solemn demeanor.

GARY

I understand the organization needs to protect itself.

KEVIN

Just to be clear, you had nothing to do with any of this?

GARY

I wouldn't do that, Kevin.

JOHN

Legal, that enough for now?

ATTORNEY

For now. We'll be in touch.

JOHN

Thanks. Give us the room.

The attorneys scoop up their files and leave without a word. The door CLICKS shut.

Silence. Kevin rubs his face. John exhales.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Ownership is still considering different options. One of them is taking Chet first and flipping him to OKC for Paolo and the twelfth pick.

Gary goes pale and he forces a laugh.

GARY

Sounds like Linda.

JOHN

She brought it to me. I took it upstairs. Ownership's interested.

Gary sits up straight and resolute.

GARY

That's a bad move. If Paolo is our cornerstone, we shouldn't get cute with this pick.

KEVIN

Ownership sees it differently.

GARY

But--

KEVIN

Gary, enough. We all know you want Paolo.

Gary stands. Starts toward the door. He stops. Looks at his untouched coffee. He quickly exits, and it remains on the table.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Gary marches in, closes the door. Linda looks up.

LINDA

Hey, boss.

GARY

I hired you. Taught you everything.
And you went over my head?

Linda closes her laptop slowly.

LINDA

You taught me to seize
opportunities.

GARY

I didn't teach you to stab me in
the back.

LINDA

I'm helping the team get the best
deal. That's my job.

GARY

You just made this a hell of a lot
more complicated.

LINDA

Gary, we're getting Paolo and
another first-round pick. Win-win.
You're welcome.

Gary turns and walks out.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM IN FITNESS CLUB - DAY

Marco's in parachute pants and a sleeveless shirt. Jacked, veins popping, bench-pressing 315 with no spotter.

Above him, a gym TV on ESPN blares: "SOURCES: Orlando Magic to select Chet Holmgren first overall."

Marco freezes mid-rep. His face darkens to purple. He racks the bar with a furious CLANK, bolts up, and storms out.

EXT. GYM PARKING LOT - DAY

Marco stomps to his truck, yanks open the door. Phone BUZZES—NEW YORK calling. He answers and jumps into the truck.

INT. DARK OFFICE - DAY

A shadowed man speaks beneath a large, ornately framed Sinatra mugshot.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

NEW YORK

Why am I seeing Chet's the pick?

MARCO

ESPN's got it wrong. I'm handling it.

NEW YORK

You're too deep now. Paolo misses, you're finished.

The call CLICKS dead. Marco death-grips the phone, seething, and hurls it to the floorboard. He slams the truck into gear and SCREECHES out of the lot.

INT. GARY'S HOME - DAY

Gary rummages through the fridge, grabbing veggies for dinner.

Sarah's phone pings. She checks it, eyes widening.

SARAH

Gary, was Scott fired today? His wife just texted.

Gary closes the fridge and turns.

GARY

Yeah. He was let go.

SARAH

What happened?

GARY

The league flagged some irregular betting on the draft. Ownership wanted to get ahead of it.

SARAH
Action for what?

GARY
For a potential leak.

Sarah studies him carefully.

SARAH
And they're saying that was Scott?

Gary doesn't answer right away.

GARY
He was in the group that knew a lot
about the pick.

SARAH
So were other people. Why Scott?

GARY
Sarah, they needed a name.

Sarah nods as the truth settles in.

SARAH
He has a newborn.

Gary exhales, controlled.

GARY
I know.

SARAH
How could you do that?

Gary searches for an answer.

GARY
I had to.

Sarah stares at Gary like he's a stranger.

She grabs Brutus's leash and he happily trots over.

SARAH
I need air. I'm taking Brutus.

She heads for the door.

GARY
Sarah--

She exits. The door SLAMS furiously.

Gary flinches, stares at the closed door. Silence.

MONTAGE BEGINS:

We alternate between:

Sarah walking Brutus through the quiet neighborhood, lost in thought, her pace slow and heavy.

Marco gripping the steering wheel, jaw clenched, speeding through traffic, HONKING, his diesel truck ROARING down streets, spewing black exhaust.

MONTAGE ENDS.

EXT. GARY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sarah rounds the corner onto Gary's street. Brutus eagerly pulls toward home. A truck thunders down the street at them.

Sarah's finishing the walk and looks up as Brutus steps on to Gary's driveway. Tires SCREECH.

SARAH
BRUTUS!

The truck SKIDS to a halt on the driveway, inches from Sarah. Brutus YELPS and is gone under the truck.

SARAH (CONT'D)
No, no, no! Brutus!

She drops to her knees, breathless, dreading the sight under the truck.

An awful silence.

Then...Brutus bounds out, tail wagging. Sarah gasps, clutching her heart.

Marco explodes from the cab, storming toward Sarah.

INT. GARY'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Gary chops vegetables in the kitchen, ESPN playing in the background.

ESPN BROADCASTER
(from the TV)
Sources within the Magic say Chet
Holmgren will be the first pick in
the NBA Draft.

Gary turns to the TV and freezes, confused.

GARY
What?

He grabs his phone, pulls up a thread with John.

Movement outside catches his eye. He looks out the window and
sees the truck, a large man, and Sarah.

He sprints to the driveway.

EXT. GARY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sarah's fear gives way to fury. She scoops up Brutus,
clutching him tight.

SARAH
You almost killed my dog, asshole!

MARCO
Dog's lucky. So are you. You Sarah?

SARAH
Who the hell are you?

Over Sarah's shoulder, Marco clocks Gary storming his way.

GARY
HEY, get away from her!

MARCO
There he is. The inside man.

Gary steps between them, eyes locked on Sarah, voice low,
ignoring Marco hulking behind him.

GARY
Take Brutus inside. I'll explain
later.

Sarah can't ignore Marco, glances at him. Brutus GROWLS at
him for good measure.

SARAH
What's going on? Who is this
psycho?

GARY

He'll be gone soon. I'll see you
inside.

Sarah holds Gary's gaze and mouths, "Be careful". She hurries
inside, watching from a window with Brutus, who BARKS loudly.

Gary's overcome with anger and close enough to smell Marco's
breath. He's taller, but Marco has the presence of a wrecking
ball with roid rage energy.

GARY (CONT'D)

Who are you and why the fuck are
you at my house?

MARCO

Kenny sent me. I kicked the shit
out of your deadbeat brother. We've
got five million riding on you, and
mistakes aren't forgiven.

Gary's voice is rising.

GARY

So? Why are you here?

MARCO

You're getting 10%, so how about
some gratitude?

Gary's jaw clenches.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Why's ESPN saying Chet's the pick?

GARY

So I'm getting 10% and Chet's going
first?

Gary is fuming and sneers at Marco.

GARY (CONT'D)

Jesus, you don't know shit about
shit.

Marco steps closer, finger in Gary's face.

MARCO

Watch it, Gary!

GARY

You watch it! And you want
gratitude after nearly killing my
dog and freaking out my girlfriend?

Gary walks towards his garden hose spooled near the garage.
He sees Sarah inside watching. Brutus BARKS. Something snaps.

GARY (CONT'D)
Huh, you want gratitude, MARCO?

Gary grabs the spray nozzle on the hose and cranks the water valve to max. It SPITS to life.

MARCO
What are you doin--

Gary advances toward Marco, the hose unspooling. WHOOSH! He unleashes a high-pressure blast straight to Marco's face.

INT. GARY'S HOUSE - WINDOW

Sarah watches through the glass, heartbroken.
Outside, Gary looks like someone she doesn't know.
Brutus barks incessantly.

SARAH
Oh, my God.

EXT. GARY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A torrent of water douses Marco's big head. He stumbles back, uselessly trying to shield himself.

MARCO
Pissing me off's a death wish,
Gary!

Gary stalks forward, continuing the hydraulic offensive.

Marco balls his fist and takes several threatening steps, closing the gap towards Gary.

Then-WOOOP! WOOOP! A police SUV eases up to the curb, leaning out of his unrolled window. The COP (50s) is extra Florida. Walrus mustache so thick it could be used as a push broom, farmer's tan. He drawls from the unrolled window.

COP
Now what in the world are you boys
gettin' into over here?

Gary slowly lowers the hose like he's setting down a weapon.

GARY

Nothing, officer. Marco was just leaving my property, like I politely asked. Right, Marco?

Marco's drenched, but his eyes are scorched with anger.

MARCO

Sure, Gary. I'll be on my way.

Marco trudges to the truck and gets in, soaking wet.

COP

I appreciate you breakin' up that water fightin'. I once got called to neighbors water fightin' that turned into a triple homicide. Real mess.

The officer chuckles to himself.

COP (CONT'D)

I don't want that paperwork ever again, no Lord.

The officer shakes his head, grinning, reminiscing. Marco starts the truck, dripping.

The cop starts slowly driving away, waving out the window.

COP (CONT'D)

You boys have a blessed evenin'.
Keep them hoses holstered.

Marco's soaking the cab. He backs into the street, irate.

MARCO

If Paolo ain't first, I'll be back.

GARY

Good, then I'll never see your wet face again!

Marco peels away with SCREECHING tires. A dark exhaust cloud envelops Gary's face, before blowing away. He COUGHS, adrenaline fading.

He sees an elderly neighbor staring at him aghast from across the street. Gary gives a weak wave. It isn't returned.

He shuffles to the front door. Through the window, Sarah's stare is stormy. His burner BUZZES as he hits the front step.

Gary looks down at the burner, sees Kenny's text.

KENNY (TEXTS)
CALL ME! NOW!

Gary's head hangs, he steps inside.

The hose is still on the sidewalk spurting water.

INT. GARY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sarah stands in the living room. She and Gary tensely lock eyes.

SARAH
He knew my name.

GARY
That shouldn't have happened. I'm
sorry.

Sarah's furious, hands trembling.

SARAH
He almost killed Brutus. He almost
hit me.

GARY
I didn't expect this to get close
to you.

The burner BUZZES in Gary's pocket.

SARAH
Too late! He knew my name, Gary!

GARY
It was a mistake. It won't happen
again.

SARAH
He said he'd be back! At our house!
For a bet you swore you weren't
making!

GARY
I've been trying to save Chris.

Sarah's quieter. Tears well in her eyes.

SARAH
You sacrificed Scott. And you
sacrificed us.

GARY

Three more days. Then this is over.

Tears smoothly glide down Sarah's cheeks. She looks around the house, takes in the life she and Gary share.

SARAH

I hope you win. I do. But I can't be around to see what happens if you don't.

Gary's wounded, collapses to a seat.

GARY

Please, don't go. I don't want this to happen.

Sarah walks to Gary. She leans down, cups his face with both hands, and kisses his forehead.

She closes her eyes and rests her forehead to Gary's. Her tears dampen his face.

SARAH

I didn't want this either, Gary.

Sarah pulls away, and slowly scans the room.

SARAH (CONT'D)

This doesn't feel like home anymore.

She turns, walks out the door, and quietly CLICKS it shut behind her.

Brutus jumps on a chair and watches with his paws on the window, WIMPERING at her fading silhouette.

She gets to the driveway and walks over tire tracks from Marco peeling out.

Gary's dumbstruck, alone. The burner BUZZES again, and goes ignored.

Gary rises and slinks outside to the backyard with Brutus loyally in tow.

EXT. GARY'S BACKYARD - DAY

Gary stares at two phones. Kenny's texts piled up. Missed call from John. Head spinning, mumbling...

GARY
She's not gone, Brutus. We'll get
her back.

He snaps out of it, focuses, and calls John.

JOHN (V.O.)
Hey Gary, I'm not sure where that
Chet report came from, but Paolo's
still our guy.

GARY
And the OKC trade?

JOHN (V.O.)
Still on the table, but Paolo ends
up in our jersey either way.

GARY
I wish we'd drop that idea.

JOHN (V.O.)
You've mentioned that. Maybe the
leak helps us. Misdirects other
teams, maybe OKC thinks we'll
actually take Chet.

GARY
OK, thanks John.

He hangs up. Stares at Kenny's texts. Dials.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - DAY

Kenny's golf cart swerves off the fairway, he frantically
answers.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

KENNY
Tell me the Chet news is bullshit.

Gary paces like a panther, he's growling into the speaker
phone.

GARY
Guess who I just hosed down on my
lawn like a god damn zoo elephant?

KENNY
What?

GARY

Marco. He almost killed my dog,
Kenny!

KENNY

My Marco?

GARY

Yep, your Marco.

KENNY

I didn't send him, but his blood
pressure is probably through the
roof on this ESPN report. Mine too.

GARY

Forget ESPN. I just talked to the
GM. Paolo's still the pick.

Kenny is puzzled and relieved.

KENNY

Thank Christ. So we're still good?

GARY

Better than that. If sportsbooks
believe the leak, Paolo's odds will
plunge. Bet it again.

Kenny processes the unexpected opportunity.

KENNY

My crew emptied their pockets on
the first round.

GARY

Find new money. Double down.

KENNY

I'll make some calls.

GARY

And I get my cut on new bets.
Speaking of, Marco says I'm getting
10%. You promised me 5%. You
skimming?

Kenny winces.

KENNY

Call it a finder's fee. Everyone
wins. You agreed to 5%.

GARY N

New deal. We split the extra five,
or Marco finds out you skimmed him.

Kenny takes a long glance over the course and cracks a smile.

KENNY

Well Gary, now you're starting to
think like me.

GARY

Temporary insanity.

KENNY

Whatever helps you sleep. I know
another group that wants in. Talk
soon.

They both hang up. Gary crumbles to the grass. Brutus walks
over and licks his hand.

Gary's phone RINGS with a call from Chris. Gary lets it RING
several times before answering it on speaker.

GARY

What?

CHRIS (V.O.)

Dude, Marco just FaceTimed me,
drenched. Looked like he fell off a
boat. Says he's gonna rip your arms
off and club you like a baby seal
with'em. Even for Marco, that's
excessive.

GARY

That why you called?

CHRIS (V.O.)

Yes. Figured you should know
Marco's planning your execution.
And what's up with that Chet new-

CLICK.

Gary hangs up and slumps. Brutus climbs to his lap.

Kenny fires off a quick text to his guys.

KENNY (TEXTS)

Chet leak BS. PB still 1st. Bet
more. Gary gets 10%.

INT. BETPULSE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim at his desk. Kenny's call comes in.

TIM

That Chet news must've hurt pretty good.

KENNY (V.O.)

You sound chipper. Think you're off the hook?

TIM

Not chipper, but breathing easier.

KENNY (V.O.)

Don't relax. You're still sunk unless you do exactly what I say.

TIM

What?

KENNY (V.O.)

The Chet leak's a smokescreen. And a gift.

TIM

How confident are you?

KENNY (V.O.)

I'm betting every dollar I can find.

TIM

What's the play?

KENNY (V.O.)

Put \$1.6 million on Paolo. Cover your liability, and cover my cut. Or go bigger and make some real money.

TIM

I'll let you know if we do it.

KENNY (V.O.)

You cut me out, and I'll burn your bets at every book in the U.S.

TIM

You're a real joy, Kenny. Like a paper cut between every finger.

Both hang up. Tim stares distantly, then calls Brian into his office.

TIM (CONT'D)
Shut down all NBA draft betting.

BRIAN
You got it.

Brian exits, door shuts. Tim dials VINCENT THOMPSON (50s).

INT. VINCENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Vincent sits in his home office—crowded with sports memorabilia. A monitor glows on the desk. He answers the call.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

VINCENT
Tim. What do you need?

TIM
Runners. How many you got?

VINCENT
Seventy. More with a few hours.

TIM
No time. Seventy runners. Max them out. Every dollar on Paolo.

VINCENT
Paolo? You must know something the world doesn't.

TIM
Not for long. Move fast.

VINCENT
On it.

Both hang up. Tim checks his watch.

INT. BETPULSE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Tim sips a green juice, reviewing odds with a staffer. Vincent calls. Tim waves the staffer out as he answers.

TIM
How'd it go?

VINCENT (V.O.)

Done. Seventy runners in at \$25k each. \$1.75 million total.

TIM

Odds?

VINCENT (V.O.)

Between 16-to-1 and 19-to-1. You clear \$31 million on a win.

TIM

What site got hit hardest?

VINCENT (V.O.)

Action Arena ate half.

Tim swirls his juice and chuckles.

TIM

Ouch. They'll need a grief counselor after the draft.

VINCENT (V.O.)

I need that 1.75 today. Same account as last time. We'll square up winnings if Paolo hits.

TIM

You'll have it by end of day. Thanks, Vinny.

VINCENT (V.O.)

You got it.

They hang up. Tim exhales. For the first time in days, he looks relieved.

His phone RINGS again—Dan Weisser. Tim answers, puts it on speaker.

It's all CRASH, BOOM, BANG, from the phone. Dan's on a rampage.

DAN (V.O.)

I GOT HIT AGAIN! \$15.5 MILLION ON TOP OF THE FIRST THIRTY FOUR. I'M STARING INTO A \$50 MILLION GRAVE IF PAOLO'S FIRST!

Tim calmly sips his green juice, unfazed by Dan's meltdown. Tim grabs his phone and texts Kenny.

TIM (TEXTS)

Done.

INT. GARY'S TRUCK - MORNING

Gary pulls into the Magic lot, wrecked. The burner RINGS—Kenny. He sighs and answers.

GARY

Hi, Kenny.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. KENNY'S HOME - BACK PATIO

Kenny is sipping a mug of coffee and watching the early golfers.

KENNY

How we looking?

GARY

Draft's in 36 hours. Chaos window's wide open. Trades, deals, calls. Lot of work.

Gary parks, kills the engine, and stays in the truck.

KENNY

No cold feet on Paolo, right?

GARY

I'm fighting for Paolo, but nothing's safe on draft day.

KENNY

Another whale put seven figures Paolo. My guys piled on three hundred more.

GARY

Good God. It's up to \$7 million?

KENNY (V.O.)

That's a nine-figure payout. You walk with nine million, and Chris is off the shit list. Change your life forever, Gary.

GARY

I liked my life before this bet.

Gary's head THUNKS on the steering wheel, a GROAN follows.

KENNY

Don't be a man of conscience now.
Finish the hand you're playing.
Then you can mope around with your
millions.

GARY

How do you live like this? This
cost me Sarah, almost got Brutus
killed, got Scott fired, and I
might be next.

KENNY

There's romance in the risk, Gary.
I'm a romantic. Nobody tells
stories about the safe bet.

Gary's head stays glued to the wheel.

GARY

Yeah, I think your risk tolerance
is greater than mine.

KENNY

Snap out of it! Things can get much
uglier. Lose \$7 million, you're
losing seven pints of blood! That's
a fatal amount, pal!

Gary lifts his head, eyes lifeless.

GARY

Well, thanks for the pep talk.

Gary hangs up, grabs his keys, and trudges toward Magic HQ.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Gary, John, and Kevin huddle with staff. Phones ringing,
screens flickering. Adrenaline pumps in the frenetic room.

JOHN

Ownership's leaning toward the
Chet-OKC swap.

KEVIN

Clock's ticking. Let's work phones
until we know.

GARY
 Paolo's the future. We listen to
 offers, but unless it's prime
 Jordan or Shaq, the answer's no.

START MONTAGE OF GARY SWATTING AWAY TRADE PROPOSALS:

John and Kevin working incoming calls. Gary rejects every
 offer like he's Mutombo minus the finger wag.

GARY (CONT'D)
 That's not an offer, that's a
 punchline.

GARY (CONT'D)
 I'd take that deal for the eleventh
 pick, not for the first.

GARY (CONT'D)
 That's actually a good offer. But
 no.

END MONTAGE.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - WAR ROOM - NIGHT

Phones finally quiet.

Gary drops into a chair, exhausted but firm.

GARY (CONT'D)
 That's everyone. Anyone else calls,
 tell them we're taking Paolo.

Kevin nods. John's phone rings. John glances at the screen,
 looking surprised.

JOHN
 Coach K.

Gary looks up immediately. John answers.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. COACH K'S OFFICE - NIGHT

We only see the BACK OF COACH K'S HEAD.

Duke banners and trophies surround him. ESPN draft coverage
 plays on a TV.

A TV plays ESPN draft coverage.

ESPN ANALYST (V.O.)
Orlando still weighing scenarios at
number one...

Coach K lowers the volume.

JOHN
What's going on, Coach?

Gary watches intently.

COACH K
John, OKC's called me three times
in the last two days. Every call
was about Paolo.

On the War Room TV:

ESPN ANALYST (V.O.)
OKC remains aggressive behind the
scenes...

JOHN
What kind of questions?

COACH K
Leadership. Motor. Character. Work
ethic. They're not kicking tires.

JOHN
What'd you tell them?

COACH K
The truth. He's special. He'll set
a franchise up for the next decade.

John processes this, eyes darting.

JOHN
Three calls, huh?

COACH K
Paolo's got fans in OKC.

CLICK. Call ends.

BACK TO WAR ROOM

John grabs a folder with "OKC Trade Proposal" and starts
moving for the exit.

JOHN
I gotta get to ownership.

John's out the door. Gary stares after him.

Gary and Kevin sit in the sudden quiet.

INT. BARCLAY'S CENTER - NIGHT

NBA Commissioner ADAM SILVER commands the podium, the arena buzzing with anticipation.

Prospects sit with their families, holding their breath and clutching hands. Agents sit poised to erupt.

The young athletes are a wardrobe spectacle. Bold suits, glistening diamonds, and confident smiles. Each waiting for their name to be called and life to change forever.

COMMISSIONER SILVER

The Orlando Magic are on the clock
with the first pick in the 2022 NBA
Draft.

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Kevin paces in a tight circle, phone pressed to his ear. The usual chaos, phones, screens, chatter, has gone dead. Everyone's frozen, eyes locked on him.

KEVIN

(into phone)

I'll send it to the commissioner
now.

He hangs up. All eyes on Kevin.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Ownership's made their decision.

Kevin types on his phone. Gary watches his thumb hover over send. Kevin taps it. A pen falls from Gary's hand.

START INTERCUT

INT. BETPULSE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim's nose almost touches the TV, breath fogging the screen. Fists clenched, jaw tight as a drum.

INT. ACTION ARENA HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Dan sits in the Action Arena conference room. His eyes dart between the TV and his phone, both with the draft on. Sweat beads on his forehead.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maurice sits next to his mom on the couch, he squeezes her hand. She pats his knee. Both their eyes glued to draft on TV.

INT. MARCO'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Marco cranks out bench press reps, plates CLANKING. The draft BLARES from a TV. A dart-riddled picture of Gary on the wall.

INT. CHRIS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Chris paces, stress ball in each hand, squeezing relentlessly. An ashtray overflows. Cigarette between his lips. Adam Silver on TV in the background.

INT. SARAH'S CAR - NIGHT

Sarah sits behind the wheel at the side of the road. The turn signal CLICK-CLICK-CLICKS. Draft coverage plays on her phone.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - NIGHT

Kenny paces a green. He holds a phone close to his face and anxiously swings a putter back and forth.

END INTERCUT - RETURN TO DRAFT STAGE

INT. BARCLAY'S CENTER - NIGHT

An ENVELOPE is handed to Silver. The arena goes QUIET.

He opens it. Eyes scan the card. He smiles.

COMMISSIONER SILVER
With the first pick in the 2022 NBA
draft, the Orlando Magic select...
Paolo Banchemo from Duke
University!

The crowd EXPLODES. Paolo jumps up, hugs family and friends, then strides to the stage in a dazzling violet, diamond-studded suit. His icy "P5" chain stuns under the lights.

He puts on a Magic hat, shakes hands and embraces Silver. His smile beams as hundreds of cameras capture the moment.

START INTERCUT

INT. BETPULSE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim pumps both fists like he just hit a buzzer-beater. Kisses the TV screen.

INT. ACTION ARENA HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Dan crumbles in his chair. Then falls forward and his head THUDS against the table. His forehead stays planted there.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maurice SCREAMS and pulls his mom into a wobbly bear hug. They stumble, nearly fall. Mom's laughter fills the room.

INT. MARCO'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Marco locks his arms, the bar trembling above him. His face twists, veins bulging The bar DROPS into the rack. He sits up, grabs Gary's picture, and stares at it.

He crumbles it up, and tosses it to the trash.

INT. CHRIS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Chris hurls the stress balls against the wall, SHOUTING.

CHRIS
Yes, baby bro! Hell yes!

He flicks his cigarette toward the ashtray. Misses. It lands on the carpet, smoldering. He's too amped to notice.

INT. SARAH'S CAR - NIGHT

Sarah pulls over to the side of the road and releases her death grip on the wheel. Head tilts back with a heavy exhale. Relief washes over her.

SARAH

Thank God.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - NIGHT

Kenny jousts the air with his putter and SHOUTS a war cry. He flops to the grass, HOWLING to the gods.

END INTERCUT

INT. ORLANDO MAGIC HEADQUARTERS, NIGHT

The war room ERUPTS. Cheers, high-fives, champagne corks POP and take flight. A cork bounces off the ceiling and lands in Gary's lap. He barely reacts.

KEVIN

Now he just has to live up to the giant expectations we sold ownership.

GARY

He will. No doubt.

KEVIN

Try looking happy before people think you regret something.

Gary stares back, without exposing any emotion.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You don't regret anything, right?

GARY

Nothing that has to do with basketball.

Gary stands and wades into the fray. A glittery Magic wizard hat is placed on his head. A flute of champagne is placed in his hand. He forces a smile.

EXT. SCOTT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Scott climbs from his car, exhausted, moves with muscle memory. Unbuckles the car seat, lifts her gently. She stirs. He kisses her forehead.

One arm cradles the car seat. The other carries groceries and diapers.

He reaches the front door and stops.

A blank manila envelope, taped dead center.

Scott shifts the weight in his arms, scans the quiet street. It's still and empty.

He peels the envelope free, slips it between his teeth, and steps inside.

INT. SCOTT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

His wife greets him, relieves him of the baby. He sets the groceries and diapers down, attention on the envelope.

At the counter, he opens it with a butter knife. Inside is one sheet of paper with a web address: www.electrum.org

Beneath that, a long, seemingly random alphanumeric string: 1LMcKyPmwebfygoeZP8E9jAMS2BcgH3Yip

Scott stares at the page, puzzled.

He sits down at the kitchen table, flips open his laptop, and types in the address. The site loads a Bitcoin wallet.

He types in the string and hits enter. The screen refreshes and his breath catches.

On the screen, a balance appears in the Bitcoin wallet: \$1,038,572.94.

Scott leans back, stunned, heart pounding.

Then, his eyes drift to the couch. His wife warmly cradles their daughter and softly whispers to her.

INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - DAY

A basset hound rests on an exam table. Sarah raises its large ear and swabs with a cotton ball. A COWORKER bursts into the room, beaming excitement.

COWORKER

Sarah! We just got an email. A million dollar donation!

Sarah pauses mid-swab, skeptically looking up from the ear.

SARAH

That can't be right. From who?

COWORKER

It's real. Funds already cleared.
One name, Brutus! I love Brutus!

Sarah lowers the hound's ear, expression unreadable.

SARAH

Will you please take Miles to the
play area? He's all done.

COWORKER

Sarah, a million dollars! We're
rescue rich! We can save so many
dogs.

Sarah forces a thin smile and throws away the cotton ball.

SARAH

I just need a minute to absorb the
news.

The coworker crouches, takes Miles's front paws in her hands,
and does a playful dance with him, pure joy.

COWORKER

C'mon, handsome! Let's celebrate!

She clips a leash onto Miles and exits, energy oozing.

Sarah sinks into a chair and stares at a blank wall. After a
moment, a tear escapes. She wipes it away. Doesn't move.

START MONTAGE OF PAOLO BANCHERO ROOKIE PLAYS WITH MAGIC:

Paolo soars, levels a defender, and hammers a vicious dunk.

Paolo's airborne and rejects a shot into the crowd,
embarrassing the shooter who won't make eye contact.

Paolo shakes a defender, steps back for a three that swishes.
The arena roars.

Paolo threads a no-look pass through traffic. His surprised
teammate catches and jams. The Magic bench goes nuts.

The sounds of the NBA thunder through the montage, sneakers
SQUEAKING, the chant of "PAO-LO" from the crowd.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

"BANCHERO IS A FORCE OF NATURE!"

The screen fades to black. Bold text that reads:

SUPER: Paolo Banchero

SUPER: 2022-23 NBA Rookie of the Year

SUPER: 98 of the 100 first place votes.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Gary sits on a park bench, Brutus roams nearby, sniffing. His phone RINGS, it's Kenny. He answers.

GARY

Hi, Kenny.

EXT. ISLEWORTH GOLF CLUB - DAY

Kenny lounges on his golf cart with a dewy iced tea.

KENNY

How's the new wealth treating you?

GARY

There's less of it. I made a couple payouts.

Kenny takes a long, relaxed sip of the lemonade.

KENNY

Easy come, easy go. Want it back?

GARY

What do you mean?

KENNY

One of my guys used to work for the Broncos. Still gets great intel. You could be our NBA guy.

GARY

You won all that money and you're still chasing bets?

KENNY

I'm a degenerate gambler. It's a calling.

GARY

You and Marco would be the worst coworkers ever.

Gary takes a long look around the park, and up into the sky.

GARY (CONT'D)
I'll think about it.

KENNY
Good enough. Talk soon.

Gary hangs up and pockets his phone.

AT THIS TIME, a song like "Somebody Else" by Jeff Bridges begins playing.

Nearby, a dog squats. The owner scrolls their phone obliviously. They walk away, leaving the mess behind.

Gary closely watches. He and Brutus begin walking towards the droppings.

As Gary nears the waste he does not slow down, and he does not grab a bag from his pocket. He and Brutus just walk right on by.

FADE OUT.

THE BIG BET APPEARS ON SCREEN IN WHITE LETTERS.

CREDITS ROLL.