



by

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1. Our business is change.
2. We're on offense. All the time.
3. Perfect results count -- not a perfect process.  
Break the rules: fight the law.
4. This is as much about battle as about business.
5. Assume nothing.  
Make sure people keep their promises.  
Push yourselves push others.  
Stretch the possible.
6. Live off the land.
7. Your job isn't done until the job is done.
8. Dangers  
Bureaucracy  
Personal ambition  
Energy takers vs. energy givers  
Knowing our weaknesses  
Don't get too many things on the platter
9. It won't be pretty.
10. If we do the right things we'll make money damn  
near automatic.

**INSERT - TV COMMERCIAL**

The unmistakable smile of MAGIC JOHNSON - he's holding a CONVERSE SNEAKER and rapping along to a cheesy jingle.

MAGIC JOHNSON

The Converse Weapon - that's the shoe that let Magic do what he was born to do!

ISAIH THOMAS.

ISAIH THOMAS

That may be so, but that's not all... they let Isaih play like he's ten feet tall!

LARRY BIRD. *This could be a commercial for the NBA Hall of Fame.*

LARRY BIRD

You already know what they did for me. I walked away with the MVP!

"Converse - the official shoe of the NBA!"

**BLACK**

OVER "IF I RULED THE WORLD" by NAS.

**EXT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

BEAVERTON, OREGON

Even if you don't know what the modern Nike headquarters looks like, you can imagine it. A sprawling green campus. Lots of glass. Lots of money.

An "employee first mentality". Great benefits. Unlimited vacation (unless you take too much). They match the fuck out of your 401k.

Now... imagine the exact opposite of that.

**TITLE CARD READS: 1984, NIKE WORLDWIDE HEADQUARTERS**

Two buildings. They look more like IRS offices in Iowa than the headquarters of a sneaker company.

STRASSER (V.O.)

Well... Orwell was right. 1984's been a tough year.

We drift down the hall, passing framed pictures of Olympic athletes hoisting gold medals, track stars, runners, etc. Notably absent are pictures of basketball, football, or any other sport an average American would consider popular.

Until we reach...

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

STRASSER

Sales down. Growth down. Ratings down. But I know I'm not worried.

ROB STRASSER, VP of Marketing. 6'3, 280 pounds with an extra helping of shoulders. His red beard a bonfire on his face.

Giving a presentation to...

STRASSER (CONT'D)

How about you guys?

...the bored group that makes up Nike's Basketball Division. Pencil pushers. Collared shirts. Note pads. Coffee mugs. *Yawns.*

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Bids are going in next week. *Let's run through ideas?*

He looks around the room....

Nothing.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Alright. Olajuwon is off the table. #1 pick isn't coming here. We're not getting Jordan either. Word is he's going Adidas. Maybe Converse if they're willing to pay. So... same plan as always: we'll identify three players, and split the baby. We know we're going after Barkley and Bowie. Any other ideas?

Pencils TAP. TAP. TAP.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Anyone?

BILL

I like Marvin Turpin.

STRASSER

Great. Let's get him on the board.

Strasser writes TURPIN across the board.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

(off dead air)

Anyone else?

TIM

What about John Stockton?

STRASSER

Interesting. From Gonzaga?

TIM

Yeah.

STRASSER

Alright. Well, let's go into...

SONNY (O.S.)

Why do you like Melvin Turpin?

Everyone at the table turns. Their gazes drifting to the very back of the room, where we find...

JOHN PAUL VINCENT VACCARO. To make it easy, we'll call him what everyone else does: SONNY. 45. Short and squat. Italian-American. A determinism in his eyes, the bags under which tell us how much sleep he gets (none).

SONNY (CONT'D)

Melvin Turpin. What do you like about him?

BILL

Me?

SONNY

You're the one who said you liked Melvin Turpin, right? Jim?

BILL

Bill.

SONNY

Bill. Right. Bill the big Melvin Turpin fan.

BILL

He made the Final Four last year.

SONNY

So did forty other players.

BILL

Kentucky puts good players in the NBA. I mean, he was the fifth pick...

SONNY

Have you watched him?

BILL

Of course, I...

SONNY

So what do you like about his game?

BILL

He's got a good feel for the court. Good vision.

SONNY

He only had 33 assists last year, which would tell most observers otherwise.

BILL

Listen, I...

SONNY

No, actually I agree with you. Mel Turpin is going to be good.

(wait for it)

In Europe, when he's out of the league in four years. Maybe we can sign him then. We have an office in Paris, right? You like Mel Turpin because he was the fifth pick in the draft. You like him because it's an easy answer and no one is going to give you shit for saying you like the fifth pick in the draft.

STRASSER

Alright, alright. Any other ideas?

*Silence.*

Strasser looks to Sonny, who sticks two fingers up to his temple. BANG.

STRASSER (OVERLAP) (CONT'D)

What the hell is wrong with you?

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - CAFETERIA - DAY**

A sea of faces in line for the same slop. Corporate lunch hour.

Sonny and Strasser sit across from each other. Strasser already eating what everyone else is in line for.

SONNY

So who are we thinking?

STRASSER

We just sat in a conference room for an hour trying to answer that exact question.

SONNY

I like Stockton some.

STRASSER

That would have been nice to discuss in the meeting. He was brought up.

SONNY

I didn't want to discuss it in the meeting. I wanted to discuss it with you. What happens in there is bullshit.

STRASSER

That's because people are scared to speak.

SONNY

Why would they be scared?

STRASSER

Because you chew their heads off!

SONNY

I wouldn't do that if they had good suggestions. *Mel Turpin?*

STRASSER

I didn't say Melvin Turpin was a good idea.

SONNY

Then why defend it?

STRASSER

Team mindset, Sonny.

SONNY  
I prefer the truth.

Strasser lowers his voice, taking a more serious tone.

STRASSER  
We have 250k for three players. How  
do we want to spend it?

SONNY  
Can we get more?

STRASSER  
No chance. I'd say Barkley is the  
most interesting, the most  
marketable... the round mound of  
rebound. It's there already. We  
don't have to do anything - just  
have to print it on a billboard.

SONNY  
What about Jordan?

STRASSER  
Converse or Adidas. For sure. I sat  
in Falk's office for three hours  
last month. Just too expensive.

SONNY  
Guy never shuts up.  
(pivoting)  
I do like Stockton some.

STRASSER  
Gonzaga though...? I don't think  
people even know where that is.

SONNY  
I'm not saying it's ideal.

Sonny looks out the window. Gazing through the flat fields  
surrounding the office.

STRASSER  
Listen, what I said in there? About  
not being worried? I was lying.

SONNY  
*No shit.*

STRASSER  
You saw the numbers. One of these  
three needs to be star.  
Otherwise...  
(MORE)



STRASSER (CONT'D)

Nike may well be out of the basketball business. And we'll be out of jobs.

SONNY

*I'm out of a job. You'd be fine. We're on the brink. It's just a matter of time before we hit on the right player.*

STRASSER

Unfortunately, time is the one thing we're short on.

A deep sigh. Strasser stares a hole through the ceiling.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

OK. So, Barkley. Stockton. And Bowie.

(trying to convince himself)

These are good players.

SONNY

Yeah. They are.

STRASSER

Then what's wrong?

SONNY

Just a feeling.

STRASSER

The time for feelings was six months ago. Now it's time to pick players. Nike needs a basketball icon. It's as simple as that. But icons are like money... they don't grow on trees.

SONNY

Money's made with paper. Paper comes from trees.

STRASSER

Yeah, well I...

RICHARD

Excuse me. Mr. Strasser...

He's interrupted by RICHARD, who screams middle management. Beige green button up with khakis.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
I... sorry to interrupt you.

STRASSER  
That's fine, it's good to see  
you...  
    (trying to figure out who  
        the hell this is)  
Uh...

RICHARD  
I just wanted... could I get some  
time on your calendar next week?  
We've been discussing some  
marketing strategies on the Air  
Sole expansion and I'd love to pick  
your brain on it.

STRASSER  
Of course. Just stop by my office  
and we'll get it on the books.

RICHARD  
Great. Great! Looking forward to  
it!

Richard walks off. Proud of himself.

STRASSER  
I have no idea who that is.  
    (off Sonny's laugh)  
You know there was a time I could  
name everyone who worked here?

SONNY  
Things change. Places grow.

Strasser looks around the cafeteria. Everyone milling about.  
So many people. All going about their day.

STRASSER  
I guess so.  
    (looking up at the  
        counter)  
You want dessert? Sundae bar today.

SONNY  
Can't.

STRASSER  
    (surprised)  
What, you have other plans?

SONNY  
Have a meeting.

STRASSER  
With who?

SONNY  
The shoe dog.

Off Strasser's raised eyebrows. *Shit.*

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

PHIL KNIGHT, CEO and FOUNDER of Nike. Orange-red beard and long hair. He doesn't look like a CEO - he looks like a long distance runner. A bohemian capitalist.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Sonny.

Sonny makes the long walk from the door to Phil's massive oak desk. Picks up a plastic basketball resting on it. Tosses it up and down.

There's an OREGON DUCKS mini-hoop on the wall. Right next to the infamous WAFFLE IRON - the one that produced the first Nike shoe.

SONNY  
I'm missing the sundae bar, Phil.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Who's this lunatic that keeps  
skateboarding in the parking lot?

They both look out the window, where there is indeed a MAN SKATEBOARDING around the parked cars.

He's wearing a leather jacket and a large cowboy hat, both look designer even from the second floor.

SONNY  
No idea.

The SKATEBOARDER jumps OVER the back of a car.

SONNY (CONT'D)  
Jesus Christ.

PHIL KNIGHT  
(back to business)  
How was the strategy meeting?

SONNY

Oh, just enlightening.

PHIL KNIGHT

Do we have a plan in place?

SONNY

Well, if you ask Strasser, the plan in place is the plan that's always been in place. Split our budget in three, sign three players... and cross our fingers. Maybe we can try pressing the Magic Money Button while we're at it.

PHIL KNIGHT

Don't fuck around, Sonny. First quarterly loss in history. I just had to lay off a quarter of the fucking company.

SONNY

There's no escape hatch, Phil. We need to increase spending.

PHIL KNIGHT

That's not going to happen.

SONNY

Is Strasser's number right? 250k?

PHIL KNIGHT

Yes.

SONNY

What about five?

PHIL KNIGHT

No. Profits have dropped, we should be dropping the budget along with it. You're lucky to have 250 as is.

SONNY

It's not enough. We need to invest more in basketball.

PHIL KNIGHT

Why? We took four golds at the Olympics.

SONNY

No one gives a fuck. That's a morale boost. Kids don't care about running.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, but it's the truth. Not everyone is you, Phil. Track and field doesn't sell.

PHIL KNIGHT

But at least we know what we're getting with a runner. Their performance and fame isn't reliant on the team that's around them.

SONNY

I know you--

PHIL KNIGHT

(cutting him off)

People don't know what you do here.

SONNY

You know what I do here.

PHIL KNIGHT

That's not the point. I have a board to answer to. And guess what they're asking me about?

SONNY

The rules of basketball?

PHIL KNIGHT

You.

(frustrated)

You don't make shoes, you're a pain in the ass in meetings, you don't work normal hours. You're off running high school tournaments half the year. So... Sonny... What the hell do you do?

SONNY

(spinning the basketball  
on the desk)

I bring you players. I find basketball players.

PHIL KNIGHT

Then where are they? I brought you in to grow our basketball business and it's shrunk every year.

SONNY

I'm telling you, we just need more--

PHIL KNIGHT

I would have hired a parrot if it's only job was to ask for more money. I've got the board on my ass asking why we even need basketball. It's a wasted investment.

SONNY

Because basketball is the future.

PHIL KNIGHT

Sonny, the NBA finals are on tape delay. They don't tape delay the future.

SONNY

This is why I told you not to go public. These things happen when you go public.

PHIL KNIGHT

Investing in basketball is not a reason to put off going public. It's done now, there's nothing--

SONNY

It's called plateauing. It happens to every company. Well, almost every company. Every boring company for sure. Every company with limited aspirations. Every company that doesn't see the bigger picture. That only cares about the P and L statement and the board being happy.

PHIL KNIGHT

Don't use the company's failings to mask your own. Personal ambition is a danger.

SONNY

The line between personal ambition and group success is thinner than you think.

PHIL KNIGHT

That's what someone who values personal ambition would say.

Phil leans back in his chair. Breathes out.

PHIL KNIGHT (CONT'D)

Do you run?

SONNY

Is this going to lead to some  
Buddhist aphorism I don't want to  
hear?

PHIL KNIGHT

Do you run?

SONNY

(gesturing to his stomach)  
Phil, look at me.

PHIL KNIGHT

It's painful, it's hard. The act  
itself is a destination. It's  
suffering.

SONNY

There's a thought within the  
Catholic Church that suffering is  
the only true path to salvation.

PHIL KNIGHT

And are you willing to suffer?

SONNY

I don't know, Phil, but the longer  
you have me at this desk the more  
I'm thinking the answer is yes.  
(looking up at his shoes)  
So are you going to tell me why you  
run?

PHIL KNIGHT

Because the alternative is  
stopping.

They're interrupted by PHIL'S SECRETARY, who peeks her head  
through the large doors.

SECRETARY

Mr. Knight? Your lpm...

PHIL KNIGHT

Tell them just a moment. Mr.  
Vacarro was just seeing himself  
out. And can you have security  
figure out why there's a cowboy  
skateboarding in our parking lot?

SECRETARY

Of course, sir.

As Sonny exits...

PHIL KNIGHT  
You cannot travel the path until  
you become the path.

SONNY  
Don't pull your Namaste bullshit on  
me, Phil.

Sonny finally SHOOTS the plastic basketball.

It misses.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

The WHIRRING of a carpet cleaner. Soap and cleaning solution  
SPIN.

A uniformed JANITOR nods his head to whatever he's listening  
to on his headphones.

He's the only one in the office.

Or so he thinks...

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

You can hardly see Sonny among the MOUNTAINS OF VHS TAPES  
stacked all around the office.

Each has a strip of masking tape across it with a player's  
name written in **sharpie**.

He's chewing through tape. Watching **STOCKTON**. Watching **BOWIE**.  
Watching **BARKLEY**.

Old standard definition highlights. Sonny replays Stockton  
going to the hoop. Forward and backward. Examines his jump  
shot. Forward and backward.

Yawns. Leans back in his chair. Looks up at his wall, where  
Nike's MISSION STATEMENT is neatly framed. Ten rules. The  
commandments.

*#1. Our business is change.*

*#3. Perfect results count - not a perfect process. Break the  
rules: fight the law.*

Sonny piles a few of the tapes up. Puts them in his bag and  
heads out.



**INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT**

Sonny wanders the pale aisles of the grocery store. The wheel of his plastic red cart squeaking.

He passes boxes of cereal, in all of their neon 80's glory. Stops to gaze at...

A BOX OF WHEATIES - LARRY BIRD on the cover. He's holding...

CONVERSE SNEAKERS.

GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEE

Sir...?

Sonny turns around. An EMPLOYEE waits with a cart full of milk gallons, ready to stock.

GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

SONNY

No, sorry... just...

GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEE

We're closing soon.

SONNY

Got it. Thanks.

She continues rolling down the aisle....

SONNY (CONT'D)

Hey... do you know where Gonzaga is?

GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEE

Excuse me?

SONNY

Gonzaga. Do you know where it is?

GROCERY STORE EMPLOYEE

...Switzerland?

SONNY

Never mind. Thanks.

As Sonny makes his way back down the aisle... he catches his altered reflection in the slightly tinted glass of a freezer.

And what he sees is what he feels... tired and old.

**INT./EXT. SONNY'S CAR - NIGHT**

Sonny sits in the front seat of his car. Driving home...

He pulls over. Parked on a suburban street.

He takes a deep breath. Reaches into one of the grocery bags in the backseat. Takes out a box...

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE ICE CREAM BARS. He tears the box open and removes one. Rips open the wrapper...

Technicolor pink. Undoubtedly some sort of poisoned food coloring, but childlike in its artificial wonder.

SONNY SCARFS IT DOWN. Four or five bites, but he eats it so fast it's hard to tell.

He chews and chews. Like he's racing against someone invisible sitting shotgun. Finally swallows. And then...

*Reaches for another one.* Same routine. Rips it open. Devours it down in just a few bites. Gulps it down. Takes a breath...

Starts his car again. He drives slow. Turns the wheel as we see...

**EXT. VACARRO HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT**

He was right around the corner from his house. He pulls into the driveway and steps out of the car.

He rips the strawberry shortcake box into so many pieces, you'd never know what it was in the first place.

He disposes the pieces in the trash can outside the garage along with the four uneaten bars.

**INT. VACARRO HOUSEHOLD - SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Sonny sits in his armchair, his two TV's the only light in the room.

He's watching tape on one. ESPN on in the background of the other one.

Close on Sonny's face, bathed in the blue light of the television. Flickering as we hear the sound of a crowd CHEERING.

Something on the other TV catches his attention...

A TENNIS COMMERCIAL, featuring ARTHUR ASHE. Sonny turns up the volume.

ARTHUR ASHE  
(holding up a racket)  
This is the racket I won Wimbledon  
with. And you could've bought it.  
Really.

Sonny digests what he's watching. He turns back to the other screen.

We can see his wheels spinning as he watches the tape. He leans in closer.

It's almost otherworldly. A moment of transcendence that only comes a few times in one's life. When everything seems to click together, if only for a second. It all makes sense. When you finally see what you've been missing this whole time.

We see the empty VHS case. The tape he's watching. It reads:

**JORDAN**

**INT. STRASSER'S OFFICE - DAY**

You can learn who a person is by what they keep on their desk. Strasser's a lifer. A native Oregonian. The type of guy who knows that what he's doing can be bullshit, but does it anyway.

Framed pictures of him with NBA players, standing with his son at the Finals, the Olympics, etc.

He sits across from an EXECUTIVE, we'll call him RICH. Climb the corporate ladder long enough and you are.

STRASSER  
Unfortunately, our commitment will  
have to come down this year.  
Budgets and all. But that doesn't  
mean...

The door opens. Sonny pokes his head through.

STRASSER (CONT'D)  
I'll be done in twenty.

SONNY  
I need you done now.

STRASSER

Sonny.

RICH

(getting up)

No worries at all. I understand.  
It's the busiest time of year.

STRASSER

Sorry about this. Thanks for  
coming, Rich. We'll follow up.

SONNY

(almost shooing him out)

Yeah, we'll follow up.

STRASSER

What the hell is--

SONNY

I found the icon tree.

STRASSER

I don't care what you found, we  
have relationships to--

SONNY

It's in North Carolina.

He clicks on the TV. Pushes in a VHS. A beat as it loads  
before--

Michael Jordan's game winning shot against Georgetown.

SONNY (CONT'D)

It's Jordan.

STRASSER

He hits the shot. I've seen it.  
We've all seen it.

SONNY

No. Stop. Don't watch the shot.  
Don't watch Jordan.

STRASSER

You *don't* want me to watch Jordan.

SONNY

Correct. In fact, watch everything  
*except* Jordan.

(as he lets the tape  
continue)

Look at Dean in the huddle.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

Look at how he draws up the play.  
(he lets a little more  
play before *pausing* the  
tape again)

That's James Worthy. First overall  
pick, as you know. Another player  
we had no chance at signing.

STRASSER

Correct.

SONNY

So why isn't he taking the shot?  
Why is this skinny freshman from  
Wilmington, North Carolina taking  
the shot?

STRASSER

Because he was open.

SONNY

The play was drawn up that way. No  
one else was taking that shot. It's  
because they saw the same thing I'm  
seeing.

He lets the tape play out. Jordan catches the pass. Seventeen  
seconds left. Seventeen feet from the basket. Pulls up for  
the jumper. *It's good.*

Sonny pauses the screen. Close on Jordan's face.

SONNY (CONT'D)

You can see it in his eyes.

STRASSER

Sonny... There's no way we can...

SONNY

If Nike wants to get serious about  
the basketball business then Nike  
needs to get serious about the  
basketball business.

STRASSER

I... don't know what that's  
supposed to mean.

SONNY

*I don't want to sign three players.  
I want to sign one.*

STRASSER

What the fuck is wrong with you?  
Are you high?

SONNY

No. It all came to me last night.  
We can build a shoe line around  
him. *Just him*. Think about it...  
the shoe deal has hardly changed  
since the beginning of time. Why  
are we beholden to this archaic  
model? We can tap into something  
deeper... the player's identity.

STRASSER

(dumbfounded)

You're looking to personify... A  
shoe.

SONNY

Yes! Have you seen that Arthur Ashe  
commercial?

(switching to Arthur Ashe  
voice)

"This is the racket I won Wimbledon  
with. And you could've bought it."  
What if we do that with a shoe?

STRASSER

Even if Jordan *wanted* to come here,  
it would cost too much.

SONNY

That's not true. We have 250k. We  
can get him for 250k.

STRASSER

And what's your genius pitch?

SONNY

I told you, we can offer him  
something that no one else can.

STRASSER

Which is...?

SONNY

*Nike doesn't have a strong  
basketball department.*

STRASSER

(hands in his face)

Oh, good god.

SONNY

Think about it. It's what Converse won't do. They can't upset any of their players by elevating one above the other. *We can*. Converse has Magic, Bird, Dr. J. But the sneakers aren't *theirs*. Every player wears the same Converse Weapon... there's only one Jordan.

STRASSER

Sonny he wore converse in college. Adidas is the hot commodity. I mean, god, Spot-Bilt can probably offer him more money.

SONNY

That's not--

STRASSER

He got cut from his High School team.

SONNY

Exactly - people missed on him before, and they're missing on him again.

STRASSER

That's an interesting perspective to take on it. Come on, we have to be realistic. What happened to Stockton?

SONNY

No one knows where Gonzaga is.

STRASSER

Enough. We're going to distribute it to three or four players. If Jordan wants 75k... *maybe* 100k. We can discuss. But...

SONNY

It's the only way. You want an icon... let's go get a fucking icon.

STRASSER

Phil will never go for this.

SONNY

Let me handle that.

STRASSER  
You really couldn't have brought  
this up yesterday?  
(off Sonny)  
Have you slept?

SONNY  
Not really.

STRASSER  
Please don't take us on a wild  
goose chase, Sonny. This is too  
important...  
(off Sonny)  
I mean have you even talked to--

He's cut off by a RINGING PHONE.

SONNY  
Jordan's agent?

STRASSER  
Yes.

SONNY  
(calling outside)  
Who's on?

SECRETARY  
David Falk.

Strasser shakes his head. Trying not to smile.

SONNY  
Coming!

Off Strasser. Worry overtaking. *Thinking...*

#### **INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY**

Sonny sprints into his office, some disheveled papers falling off his desk as he does. He picks up the phone.

Waiting on the other line, as promised, is...

#### **INT. PROSERV AGENCY - DAVID FALK'S OFFICE - DAY**

DAVID FALK, Jordan's agent. Shiny bald head, five figure pressed suit. The prototype power agent. He came out of womb negotiating commission structures.



DAVID FALK

Sonny, Sonny, Sonny. Here comes the Sonny.

SONNY

Good morning, Falk.

DAVID FALK

It's afternoon for those of us in the real world. Regardless, I've been waiting to hear from my favorite Italian in Oregon. I hear Nike is getting out of the basketball business.

SONNY

Who told you that?

DAVID FALK

You know I have clients in other sports. I just signed Boomer Esiason.

SONNY

You heard wrong. I'm calling about...

(taking a deep breath)  
Jordan.

DAVID FALK

(laughing)

I talked to Strasser about Michael in June. He's not signing with you. In fact, he's not taking a meeting with you.

SONNY

What do you mean?

DAVID FALK

A meeting? A group of two, maybe four to five, executives in a room? They discuss business? Hear a pitch from a company? Does any of this sound familiar? Michael's not going to be doing that at Nike.

SONNY

Falk, don't fuck with me here. What are the bids looking like?

DAVID FALK

It's not about the money.

SONNY  
Of course it is.

DAVID FALK  
We've decided to stretch the envelope. It's not just about dollar value. We want to hear what each company can do to promote Michael.

SONNY  
OK, we're thinking along the same lines then. All I'm asking for is a meeting.

DAVID FALK  
He's the #3 pick in the league, Sonny. #3 picks don't wear Nikes.

SONNY  
Just get us in the room. What's one more flight? One more day?

DAVID FALK  
I have one directive from Michael: *do whatever it takes to get me with Adidas.*

SONNY  
You're fucking with me.

DAVID FALK  
Frankly, Sonny, I'm too busy to fuck with you. Off the record - even though UNC's a Converse school, Michael wore Adidas during practice. He would put on Converse just before the game started. The second the final buzzer sounded? Adidas' back on.

SONNY  
Bullshit.

DAVID FALK  
On my word. Ask Dean.

SONNY  
I thought that was off the record.

DAVID FALK  
I didn't say you had to tell him where you heard it.  
(MORE)

DAVID FALK (CONT'D)

And trust me, Converse isn't happy about it either. I've already seen a mockup of their presentation. It's something. Three words: *state of the art*.

SONNY

That's four words. But I get it.

Falk counting. 1. 2. 3. Fuck.

DAVID FALK

Now, if you're interested in submitting an offer that I can use to drive up Adidas' price, by all means... go ahead. Makes my job easier.

SONNY

What are they offering?

DAVID FALK

Offers aren't in yet. But we're anticipating anywhere between 200 and 250.

Sonny holds his hand over the receiver. Silently mouths *FUCK*.

DAVID FALK (CONT'D)

Why? What's your budget?

SONNY

We can be... competitive.

DAVID FALK

That's annually. Not total comp.

SONNY

I'm aware.

(takes a breath)

Come on, it's a shit show over at Adidas. Has been ever since Adolf croaked.

DAVID FALK

Adi, Sonny. He went by Adi.

SONNY

His name was Adolf. That's not my fault.

DAVID FALK

He was a good man.

SONNY

Well, he died all the same. Wife's running the show now?

DAVID FALK

We're meeting with the whole family.

SONNY

She's rich, has five heirs, and probably isn't long for this earth. Do you think her spawns are thinking about shoe endorsements or succession plans?

(off silence)

When's his Adidas meeting?

DAVID FALK

What time is it?

SONNY

11:02.

DAVID FALK

71 hours and 58-minutes from now.

SONNY

OK. Let me get back to you.

Sonny hangs up. Bites his lip. Paces back to...

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - STRASSER'S OFFICE - DAY**

Sonny slips back in. Strasser is watching Jordan tape. Re-evaluating. Looking for whatever it is that Sonny sees.

STRASSER

What'd he say?

SONNY

We have a great shot. He'd been waiting for my call for weeks.

STRASSER

(rolling his eyes)

How much?

SONNY

I already told you. Our entire budget.

STRASSER  
Jesus, Sonny. You're really going  
to take this to Phil?

SONNY  
Yes.

STRASSER  
When?

SONNY  
After my lunch.

STRASSER  
What lunch?

SONNY  
The one I'm going to.

STRASSER  
With who?

SONNY  
The man who already passed on  
Jordan.

#### **INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

Some upscale bullshit restaurant that was the hardest  
reservation in Portland for two years before going out of  
business. Sonny sits across from...

STU INMAN, General Manager of the Portland Trailblazers.  
Sleight, the frame of a former power-forward, which he was. A  
pressed collar lapping over a well-fitting sweater.

A WAITER stands over them, ready for their orders.

STU INMAN  
Two steaks. Medium rare?

SONNY  
No red meat.

STU INMAN  
You're off red meat?

SONNY  
Yeah, for my heart.

STU INMAN  
Bullshit. You don't have a heart.

SONNY  
Chopped salad please. With grilled chicken.

WAITER  
Yes, sir.

SONNY  
Thanks for meeting last minute.

STU INMAN  
I hear Nike is getting out of the basketball business.

SONNY  
Why is everyo...  
(catches himself)

STU INMAN  
Honestly, it makes sense. I never saw how you could compete with the big boys. Not enough capital.

SONNY  
We have capital.

STU INMAN  
Yes. Just not enough. Gossip aside, you strike me as a Stockton-guy.

SONNY  
Why's that?

STU INMAN  
Because Gonzaga is risky and you like rolling the dice.

SONNY  
He's a hell of a player. I would have taken him ten picks sooner, for sure.

STU INMAN  
But...?

SONNY  
But nothing. I like him.

STU INMAN  
Who's on your mind?

SONNY  
Why'd you pass on Jordan?

STU INMAN

Oh, come on, Sonny. You're not signing Jordan.

SONNY

But what do you think of him? As a player?

STU INMAN

I think he's a good player. Have you talked to Falk?

SONNY

Then why didn't you draft him?

STU INMAN

My advice would be to leave it alone. The Bulls are a mess. He's not going to be in the playoffs for years.

SONNY

A player can transcend his situation.

STU INMAN

Sure, but this isn't a *situation*. It's a mess. And the playoffs are where the money is. You know that. You want to pay top dollar for a player that's going to be on national television once a year? Twice with the all star game if you're lucky?

SONNY

I mean, you watched the tape?

STU INMAN

Of course we did. We knew he'd be there at #2. We have Drexler and Paxson. We didn't need another guard - we *needed* a center.

SONNY

I don't think you can draft based on needs that high... you have to draft on talent.

STU INMAN

He's not going to be better than Drexler.

(frustrated)

What do you see in Jordan?

SONNY

It's in his eyes.

STU INMAN

I see two brown eyes. 60% of the world has brown eyes, Sonny. It's the most common eye color in the world.

SONNY

It's not the color. It's something else.

STU INMAN

So you came all the way down here to tell me you didn't like our draft pick?

(off Sonny)

What, you think I'm going to be remembered as the man who passed on Michael Jordan? Come on, Sonny. Players come and go. No one's remembered for just one player.

Close on Sonny. His eyes tell us differently.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - DAY**

Sonny paces up to Phil's office, where Phil's secretary sits expectantly.

PHIL'S SECRETARY

They're already in there.

SONNY

Who?

PHIL'S SECRETARY

Phil said he had a meeting with you and Mr. Strasser?

Sonny shakes his head as he opens the door to...

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY**

Strasser sits across the desk from Phil. An empty chair next to him - like it was waiting for Sonny.

Strasser turns to him. Mouths "sorry". Sonny can only shake his head.



PHIL KNIGHT  
I hear you had lunch plans.

SONNY  
Hi, Phil.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Before we get into things, let me  
just say this: no.

SONNY  
Let me explain.

PHIL KNIGHT  
No.

SONNY  
You told me something the day you  
hired me: *We're not in the shoe  
business, we're in the  
entertainment business.*  
(off Phil)  
This is entertainment. Michael  
Jordan is the guy we've been  
waiting for.

PHIL KNIGHT  
You both said the exact same thing  
about Bobby Jones and Artis  
Gilmore.

SONNY  
If perfection is the goal than we  
were doomed from the start. You  
can't expect us to be right every  
time

PHIL KNIGHT  
How about *some* of the time?

SONNY  
That's part of gambling. You don't  
win every hand. It's time to change  
our strategy.

PHIL KNIGHT  
This is a business, Sonny, not a  
craps table. We don't have  
unlimited checks to write.

SONNY  
I'm not asking for unlimited, I'm  
asking for 250.

PHIL KNIGHT  
You want to pay him \$250,000?

SONNY  
Yes. More if possible.

PHIL KNIGHT  
A rookie. Who hasn't set foot on an NBA court yet?

SONNY  
That's the literal definition of a rookie, yes.

PHIL KNIGHT  
A player who was cut from his High School team?

SONNY  
Yes.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Magic Johnson doesn't even have a shoe line.

SONNY  
Exactly.

PHIL KNIGHT  
(thinking it over)  
No. I can't justify paying one player that much...

STRASSER  
Phil, we're thinking this has a chance to--

SONNY  
Let me put it like this: I'm willing to bet my career on Michael Jordan. If this doesn't work... I'm gone. No questions asked.

PHIL KNIGHT  
This isn't the time for theatrics.

SONNY  
I'll put it in writing. No severance. Gone like I was never here at all.

PHIL KNIGHT  
*Why?*

SONNY

Because you asked me what I do here... *and this is what I do here.* I find players. And I feel it right now. I wish I could explain it better... I just know. We can't split the baby. Not this time. When you were slinging sneakers out of the trunk of your Plymouth Valiant under the name Blue Ribbon Sports... I know you envisioned more than this. You had grander dreams. Strasser's in the cafeteria booking meetings with people he doesn't even know... we can't afford to play it safe. Not this time. Not now.

PHIL KNIGHT

(begrudgingly)

What's the competition?

STRASSER

The Germans.

CUT TO:

#### **EXT. ADIDAS HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

Even if you don't know what the modern Adidas headquarters looks like, you can imagine it.

But you don't need to. Because in 1984, *this place already looks like it will in 2020.*

A monolithic building, an almost cartoonish Soviet-style fortress, topped by a neon blue trefoil spinning in the fog. The finest German glass reflecting water shimmering.

**The Adidas Museum:** Spikes worn by Jesse Owens at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Boxing shoes worn by Muhammad Ali. Stan Smith's Stan Smiths, and the pair of soccer cleats that would become known as the Copa Mundial.

#### **INT. ADIDAS HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

The Adidas braintrust sits around a conference table, each with a folder and neat stack of paper in front of them.

KATHE DASSLER - the matriarch. She's not in good health, but is running the company anyway.

HORST DASSLER - her son, controlling everything behind the scenes (or trying to), round face anchored by a square jaw.

FOUR DAUGHTERS - they all look vaguely similar, only twelve years between the youngest and the oldest. Almost like each one was cloned three years apart and now they're growing up in order.

JOHN O'NEIL - Adidas' Head of Operations in the States, sits at the end of the very long table.

JOHN O'NEIL

I know the last thing we want to be discussing is business.

They all turn to a giant portrait of ADOLF "ADI" DASSLER. Founder of the company, recently deceased, his presence still looming from the grave.

JOHN O'NEIL (CONT'D)

I can only imagine the grief.

KATHE DASSLER

As Adi would say... We must go on.

JOHN O'NEIL

Yes. We must. And we have an incredible opportunity in front of us.

They all flip to the first page and we see...

JORDAN.

JOHN O'NEIL (CONT'D)

We believe we have a real chance.

HORST DASSLER

Very good.

PHIL KNIGHT (V.O.)

Anyone else?

STRASSER (V.O.)

Well...

#### **EXT. CONVERSE HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

NORTH READING, MASSACHUSETTS. A towering brick edifice. A refurbished factory. CONVERSE HQ. Their STAR logo imprinted on the building.

"CONVERSE ALL STAR" in big letters. Coincidentally, or perhaps not, it describes the type of players they endorse.

**INT. CONVERSE HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

JOHN O'NEIL - CEO and JOE DEAN - VP of Basketball. Converse's top execs. The guys who signed Bird and Magic.

Their big board. OLAJUWON is already circled. The top name on the list. They don't fuck around.

Continue down the list. BOWIE is already crossed out. The next name is unavoidable: JORDAN.

They look at each other. *Nod.*

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY**

PHIL KNIGHT  
So everyone's in.

SONNY  
Yeah... everyone's in.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Can we get a meeting?

STRASSER  
You're signing off on this?

PHIL KNIGHT  
I didn't say that. I said can we get a meeting?

**CUT TO:**

DAVID FALK  
No.

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Sonny's on with Falk. The twisted phone cord wrapped around his clenched fist. Trying to play it cool.

INTERCUT with Falk in his office. It's late.

SONNY  
Falk. Come on.

DAVID FALK  
Submit an offer and then we can  
talk meeting.

SONNY  
I just had Phil give the exact  
opposite order.

DAVID FALK  
Chicken or the egg?

SONNY  
(biting his lip before...)  
The offer is 250k.

DAVID FALK  
No shit.

SONNY  
Shit.

DAVID FALK  
Can you get me that in writing?

SONNY  
Do you need it?

DAVID FALK  
It's not an offer if it's not in  
writing. It's a long ass plane  
ride. Why can't you get a base on  
the east coast like a normal  
company?

SONNY  
They love it here.

DAVID FALK  
Well, great, I'm glad they're  
happy.

SONNY  
How're the parents?

DAVID FALK  
Good family. No funny business. No  
clingers. Smart as hell. You're not  
going to pull any bullshit on them.  
They don't want to be sold to.

SONNY  
Are they home now? In Carolina?

DAVID FALK

Why?

SONNY

I'm just asking.

DAVID FALK

You don't need to call them. That'd be extremely unprofessional.

SONNY

So is outright refusing a meeting.

DAVID FALK

That's just business.

SONNY

Let me ask you something. Why does Michael want Adidas?

DAVID FALK

Sonny.

SONNY

Why does Michael want Adidas?

DAVID FALK

Because he likes their tracksuits.

SONNY

Come on.

DAVID FALK

I'm serious.

SONNY

We will give him every tracksuit he's ever wanted.

DAVID FALK

He's a kid. He's not thinking about what he *will* have, he's thinking about what he *doesn't* have right now.

SONNY

How'd you sign him? He could have gone with anyone. Pro Serv? What'd you see in him?

DAVID FALK

The exact same things you're seeing. Let me make some calls.

(MORE)

DAVID FALK (CONT'D)  
I'll have an answer for you  
tomorrow at the latest.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT**

Sonny walks into the conference room. Strasser leans back in his chair and takes a deep breath.

STRASSER  
What's the word?

SONNY  
Holding pattern. But I think we  
have a shot.

STRASSER  
Did he ask for an offer?

SONNY  
I'm thinking of reaching out to the  
parents.

STRASSER  
I don't know if--

SONNY  
And 250k. That was the offer I gave  
him.

STRASSER  
Jesus Christ, Sonny.

SONNY  
It will get them in the door.

STRASSER  
No shit. But it's not real.

SONNY  
Should I call the parents?

Sonny SNEEZES and COUGHS. Strasser looks at him. "You OK?"

SONNY (CONT'D)  
Just got a cold.

STRASSER  
Sounds like a nasty one.

SONNY  
Thank you, Doctor. Any  
recommendations?



STRASSER

More sleep.

SONNY

Something realistic.

STRASSER

Any sleep.

SONNY

Why does Michael want Adidas?

STRASSER

They have cache. They have style.  
They're cool.

SONNY

It's the track suits. That's what  
Falk told me. How do we fight  
against track suits?

STRASSER

It's not the track suits. Track  
suits aren't just track suits.

SONNY

There has to be something. I feel  
like if I could just talk to  
them...

STRASSER

Don't chase the rabbit, Sonny. It's  
not worth it.

SONNY

This isn't a fucking rabbit,  
Strass.

STRASSER

How do you know? You're halfway  
down the fucking rabbit hole  
telling me we're not chasing  
rabbits.

SONNY

You run at all?

STRASSER

Run? God no. Why?

SONNY

Phil asked me if I did.

STRASSER

Phil asked you if *you run*?

SONNY

Yeah.

STRASSER

So what? Everything between you and him is a fucking game of code.

SONNY

So I'm asking you the same thing.

STRASSER

No. No, I don't run.

SONNY

Why?

STRASSER

Look at me.

SONNY

That was my answer. But you don't think it's funny? We work at a running company and we don't run.

STRASSER

Doctors are the people most likely to smoke. Cops break the laws. Therapists have the highest rates of divorce. No, I don't think it's weird.

(sighs)

You know my birthday's in two days? What should I ask for?

SONNY

The fuck do I care? A blowjob.

STRASSER

(laughing)

What about a boat?

SONNY

A boat? What the fuck are you going to do with a boat?

STRASSER

I don't know. Fuck it, maybe I'll just go for a run.

(getting up)

Alright, I gotta get outta here.

(MORE)

STRASSER (CONT'D)  
(off Sonny, not getting  
up)  
You coming?

SONNY  
No, gonna stick around for a little  
bit longer. Work on some strategy.

STRASSER  
Got some sleep you crazy mother  
fucker. And Sonny?  
(off Sonny)  
Whatever you do, don't call the  
parents.

Close on Sonny as the door clicks shut.

#### **INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Sonny picks up the phone. The DIAL TONE sounds increasingly  
loud in the silence of the office.

He hangs up. Leans back in his chair. *Thinking.*

Picks the phone up again. *Dials.*

OPERATOR  
Operator, how can I connect you?

SONNY  
Wilmington, North Carolina. Jordan  
residence... James Jordan?

OPERATOR  
One moment sir.  
(after a long beat)  
I'm putting you through now.

SONNY  
Thanks.

A LONG BEAT. The silence is potent. We're waiting to hear  
that first RING.

But before we do...

Sonny hangs up.

Looks out the window. The moon shines bright over the only  
car in the parking lot. His.

#### **TIME LAPSE**

We hold on the car as the sun rises above it. A new day.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - SONNY'S OFFICE - MORNING**

We're angled on the door to Sonny's office. It OPENS.  
STRASSER pokes his head in. Raises his eyebrow. We see why...

Sonny's not in the office. Strasser looks back to the secretary.

STRASSER  
Where is he?

SECRETARY  
He hasn't been in this morning.

STRASSER  
Is he home? He was feeling sick  
last night.

SECRETARY  
I haven't heard from him.

STRASSER  
(looking out the window)  
What the hell... his car is in the  
parking lot.

A faint RING from down the hall. Strasser looks back. It's his office phone.

He hustles back. From his form, it's quite clear why he hasn't taken up running.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - STRASSER'S OFFICE - MORNING**

RING. RIN---

He grabs the phone off the cradle. Just in time.

STRASSER  
Hello?

SONNY  
Strass.

STRASSER  
Where the hell are you?

Great question. We're tight on Sonny, so we know as little as Strasser. But it's clear he's at an indoor PAYPHONE.

SONNY  
Listen, I don't have much time.

STRASSER  
Sonny what the hell is going on?

SONNY  
I need you to hold Phil off. Just  
for another day. I... I made up my  
mind.

STRASSER  
What? On what?

SONNY  
I'm going.

STRASSER  
Going where??

SONNY  
To Carolina.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL--

**INT. PDX TERMINAL - DAY**

SONNY IS IN THE AIRPORT.

STRASSER  
Sonny, no... this is... What  
happened to a phone call?

SONNY  
You were right. Calling out of the  
blue would have been  
unprofessional.

STRASSER  
So you're going to show up at their  
door??

SONNY  
I gotta run. I'm about to miss  
boarding.

STRASSER  
Good!

SONNY  
If anyone asks I'm sick.

STRASSER  
You are sick.

SONNY  
I'll be back for your birthday,  
don't worry.

The line clicks dead. Strasser looks like he's seen a ghost.

AND OVER THE SOUND OF AN ENGINE WE...

SMASH TO:

**TITLE CARD READS: WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA**

**EXT. WILMINGTON AIRPORT - DAY**

Sonny exits the sliding glass doors of the airport.

He looks around. This is a whole other world. A humid August afternoon. The muggy air of a long Indian Summer.

**EXT. RENTAL CAR PARKING LOT - DAY**

Sonny walks across the rental lot, trailed by...

RENTAL CAR EMPLOYEE  
Sorry, sir! We don't usually get  
walkups.

A RENTAL CAR EMPLOYEE, a pimply college-grad, bad hair gel and even worse cologne. His Southern accent is so strong it sounds fake.

SONNY  
This is really all you have?

They both turn to see Sonny's rental:

A MINIVAN. Toyota's 1984 "The Van". It looks like a divorced dad-mobile crossed with an oversized taxi-van. Truly hideous.

RENTAL CAR EMPLOYEE  
I kind of like it. My step-dad  
drives one.

**INT./EXT. - SONNY'S RENTAL CAR - DAY**

THE MINIVAN, NOW ON THE HIGHWAY. Cruising down the wooded freeways of North Carolina. U.S. Highway 117. The Blue Ridge Mountains off in the distant horizon.

Sonny has a MAP folded out across the entire dashboard. He looks at the highway exit signs. Examines the map closer.

SONNY  
Where in the hell...

Continues down the highway....

**INT./EXT. - SONNY'S RENTAL CAR - DAY**

He pulls up to a gravel driveway. The low hum of cicadas in the air.

And gazes upon...

**EXT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - DAY**

4647 Gordon Road.

A middle-class, split-level house. It's surrounded by woods on all sides. Patches of shade provide the only respite from the hot summer sun.

A CAR sits in the front lawn, its hood propped up. As Sonny approaches, he sees...

JAMES JORDAN, 48, thin mustache, wrench in hand, twisting something on the engine.

He sticks his tongue out as he concentrates on the inner-workings of the machine, a habit passed on from his grandfather.

He finally hears Sonny's footsteps on the gravel. Looks up and sees the VAN.

JAMES JORDAN  
Hell of a ride you got there. Can I help you?

SONNY  
Sorry to bother you... I'm looking for the Jordans.

JAMES JORDAN  
Well, you're in the right place.

SONNY  
You must be James.  
(reaching out his hand)  
Sonny Vaccaro. I'm with Nike.

JAMES JORDAN  
Oh, here we go.

DELORIS JORDAN (O.S.)  
Who is it?

They both turn to see...

DELORIS JORDAN, 43, bobbed hair, thin frame, small intelligent eyes.

SONNY  
Mrs. Jordan. My name's Sonny  
Vaccaro. I'm here with Nike.

DELORIS JORDAN  
I believe that Mr. Falk made it  
clear that we weren't interested.

SONNY  
Yes, I was told not to call.

DELORIS JORDAN  
Do you typically make a habit of  
showing up at people's front doors  
if they don't answer the phone?

SONNY  
Only if I feel I have no other  
choice.

DELORIS JORDAN  
We do have an answering machine.

SONNY  
It may be the worst of all my  
faults, and, trust me, there are  
many, but... I don't like to take  
no for an answer. And I believe  
Michael should be endorsed by  
someone with that same mindset.

A long beat as both Jordans consider. Sonny looks back and forth between James and Deloris. *Does he have a chance?*

DELORIS JORDAN  
Well, come back and take a seat Mr.  
Vaccaro.

Yes. He smiles.

SONNY  
Please... call me Sonny.



**EXT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - DAY**

Sonny sits alone at a table in the forested backyard. Waiting. He stares deep into the trees.

Deloris emerges from the back door. Notices Sonny looking at the trees.

DELORIS JORDAN

Five generations of Jordan have lived and died in this forest by the highway. Been here since the Civil War. Some of these cypress-tupelos trees are 800-years-old.

SONNY

This place, it seems... personal.

DELORIS JORDAN

Well, every history is deeply personal, Mr. Vacarro.

(takes a breath and looks at him)

It's quite presumptuous of you to show up at our door.

(but....)

But I believe that saying you want something is fine and well, a good start, but *doing something* about it is what really counts.

SONNY

Is he... here?

DELORIS JORDAN

He is. But you don't need to see him.

Sonny looks to the house. *Michael Jordan is in there.* Like a ghost. You can't see them, but you can always feel them.

DELORIS JORDAN (CONT'D)

How'd you get that name? *Sonny.*

SONNY

My mother had trouble bearing children. Went through two miscarriages. Bad ones. And when it finally happened... I wasn't easy either. Delivery took almost twenty-four hours. She said all she saw looking up into that hot bright light in the hospital room was the sun.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

She said it was the first thing that came to mind when she saw my face. *The sun. Sonny.*

DELORIS JORDAN

And is she still with us?

SONNY

She's not.

DELORIS JORDAN

I'm sorry to hear that.

SONNY

It's OK. It was... a long time ago.

DELORIS JORDAN

And your father?

SONNY

Worked in the steel mills. Long days. Long *nights* sometimes. Hard life. But he raised us the best he could.

DELORIS JORDAN

I find it honorable. To give your life for your family's. You give and you give until you have nothing left to give. Then you give some more. But it's worth it.

SONNY

You're good at this. Somehow we're talking about my parents instead of you.

DELORIS JORDAN

Well, I've had practice. There's no doubt about that. You do understand, Mr. Vaccaro, that Michael's intention is to sign with Adidas. With Converse as a second option.

SONNY

I do. And, respectfully, I think that would be a mistake. Listen... here's what I want to tell you: take the Converse and Adidas meetings. I'll tell you exactly what they're going to say to you. What they're going to sell you. And if I'm wrong...

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

then don't take the Nike meeting.  
*But*, if I'm right... you and  
Michael come.

Deloris smiles. Not explicitly agreeing.

SONNY (CONT'D)

(mock businessman voice)

Mrs. Jordan, it's a pleasure to  
meet you.

(back to Sonny voice)

This is Converse by the way. He'll  
have his hair gelled up like an  
asshole, excuse my French. I'm  
guessing a red tie, for the Bulls.  
Rolex for sure.

(back to mock voice)

We sure do appreciate you making  
the long trip out here. You look  
beautiful today, Mrs. Jordan. I've  
seen a lot of basketball, and the  
feeling I get when I see Michael  
play... there are only a few other  
players that gave me that feeling.  
And those players are here at  
Converse... they're the best of the  
best. It's that simple. Magic  
Johnson. Larry Bird. Michael  
Jordan. Those names all belong in  
the same sentence. And they belong  
at Converse.

(back to Sonny voice)

Now, here's the important part. I  
want you to ask them a question.  
Will you do that for me?

DELORIS JORDAN

It depends on what the question is,  
Mr. Vacarro.

SONNY

How will Michael stand out when  
he's next to the best players in  
the world? How will he be  
different?

DELORIS JORDAN

And what will they say?

SONNY

That he'll be amongst hall of  
famers and that's enough.

DELORIS JORDAN

And is it?

SONNY

You tell me what you think your son is capable of.

DELORIS JORDAN

And what about the Adidas meeting? Michael's top choice is Adidas.

Sonny thinks about it for a moment.

SONNY

(a different mock  
businessman voice)

Mrs. Jordan, welcome to...

DELORIS JORDAN

You can just tell me.

SONNY

(shaken a little, giving a  
thin smile)

Here's what they'll tell you: we have the best shoes. Plain and simple. You're not going to see another style like this. All leather. Converse isn't cool. Michael, you're the next generation. You don't want to be grouped in with Magic and Bird. They're on the way out. You want to stand apart.

(takes a breath)

Just to clarify - this is now me talking not Adidas. They're not wrong. I get why Michael is interested in them. But...

DELORIS JORDAN

And what should I ask them?

SONNY

Ask them who's in charge of the company. Who has the final say?

DELORIS JORDAN

And what will *they* say?

SONNY

Well, I think four different people in that room will give you four different answers.

DELORIS JORDAN

Very well.

(she takes a sip of her  
drink)

And, finally... the most important  
question.

(off Sonny, who's unsure)

*What should I ask you?*

Sonny takes a breath. Thinks about. Looks her in the eye.

SONNY

Ask me why I'm in Wilmington, North  
Carolina.

DELORIS JORDAN

Why are you in Wilmington, North  
Carolina?

SONNY

Because I believe in greatness. I'd  
travel anywhere for it. New York,  
Beaverton, the moon... or  
Wilmington, North Carolina.

Deloris doesn't tip her hand. Her poker face could take her  
far in Vegas. Close on Sonny. *Did he get her?*

DELORIS JORDAN

Well, Mr. Vacarro, thank you for  
coming. It was very kind of you to  
make the trip all the way out here.

SONNY

Of course.

They get up from the table. Walk back up the driveway,  
towards the mouth of the property.

JAMES JORDAN closes the hood on the car. Tries the engine. It  
starts. He smiles. A job well-done.

Sonny SWATS away a WASP as he gets close to the van.

DELORIS JORDAN

They're everywhere here. Michael  
and his brother shot up a nest just  
over there when they were young.  
Hundreds of these wasps flew out -  
stingers at the ready. The boys had  
so many welts. Everywhere. It took  
weeks to heal. Thought they might  
miss some of the season.

SONNY  
But they healed.

DELORIS JORDAN  
That's the truth. I believe that,  
you know... life is all about what  
we do with our pain.  
(as Sonny arrives at the  
van)  
Goodbye, Mr. Vacarro. And good  
luck.

Sonny wipes a layer of sweat off his forehead. Nods as he  
gets into the front seat. He turns the key to start the car  
and...

It SPUTTERS.

Tries again. SPUTTERS.

SONNY  
(under his breath)  
Shit.  
(looking to the Jordans)  
Just takes a second.

Deloris and James look back. Nodding.

He tries once more. And...

The engine sputters to life. *Barely.*

Close on the Jordans as the car drifts away...

#### **EXT. CAROLINA HIGHWAY - DAY**

Sonny's back on the 117. He gazes out the window. Cemeteries  
and industrial parks. Spanish moss hangs from the trees.

The afternoon sun hangs high, just beginning it's long  
descent into night.

Sonny takes an exit. Into a suburban neighborhood. He glides  
past cookie cutter homes. Finally parks the car at a curb.

#### **EXT. EMSLEY A. LANEY HIGH SCHOOL - DAY**

A big blue sign welcomes him to EMSLEY A LANEY HIGH SCHOOL -  
home of the Buccaneers.

CONGRATS SENIORS 84 - GO BUCS spelled out crookedly.

**INT. EMSLEY A. LANEY HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY**

Sonny wanders the halls. The metal lockers. The art projects. The trophy cases.

As he drifts past blue and yellow classroom doors, Sonny's ears perk up, like a dog hearing a distant echo...

*The sound of basketballs dribbling against a gym floor.*

He presses his way through the wooden doors at the end of the hall to...

**INT. EMSLEY A. LANEY HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY**

It's every high school gym you've ever seen. You can smell it. The aging wooden bleachers, the laundered gym uniforms, the stale floor.

THE BASKETBALL TEAM scrimmages up and down the court. Looks to be the JV Squad. All the players lanky and uncoordinated in their adolescence.

COACH POP HERRING. Tall and slender, his thin black mustache a shade darker than his skin, stands in the center of the court, the field general for these boys.

POP HERRING

Pass the ball, Stevens! Man, if I was half as good as you *think* you are then I'd be in the god damn league.

Sonny smiles as he watches the team run through drills. This is the game at its purest. Before the complications. Before money. Before you're told you can't play anymore.

*It's just the game.* An orange ball going through a hoop.

Pop blows his whistle. Looks at Sonny in the stands. He's casual. Like he's used to strangers showing up in his gym.

POP HERRING (CONT'D)

Alright, fellas. That's good for today. We got two-a-days tomorrow. 8am.

SONNY

Coach Herring?

POP HERRING

Can I help you?

SONNY

Yes, I think you can. I wanted to talk to you about...

Pop rolls his eyes. He's heard this question a hundred times.

POP HERRING

I already told them I'm not doing any interviews about Michael. No journalists.

SONNY

Well, I'm not a journalist. My name's Sonny Vacarro. I'm with Nike.

POP HERRING

Nike? You come with some free shoes?

SONNY

No, but I'm sure we could arrange that.

POP HERRING

You came all the way out here and didn't bring free shoes?

SONNY

It was a last minute trip.

POP HERRING

Michael's favorite shoes are his Adidas. You know that already?

SONNY

I do.

POP HERRING

You got five minutes.

**INT. EMSLEY A. LANEY HIGH SCHOOL - POP'S OFFICE - DAY**

You can learn who a person is by what they keep on their desk. Pop has seen it all. Been through Carolina wars. The walls are littered with framed photos, shelves with trophies.

POP HERRING

I know why you're here.

SONNY

You didn't even know who I was.



POP HERRING

I don't need to know who you are to know what you're doing here.

(a beat)

You want to know why I cut Michael Jordan.

SONNY

I think that's simplifying the matter, but...

POP HERRING

Good. Because I'm all about simple. We complicate simple things all too often for no damn reason. People like the narrative... Michael Jordan cut from his high school basketball team. But you're a smart guy. You're an ad man. You know why people like that story. Because it means Michael Jordan is a human, just like them. They like the story because they can see themselves in it. If Michael Jordan got cut and made it... then *I* can fail and still make it. But that's just a story to sell shoes. The truth is... Michael was always going to be great. He was *already* great. You could tell. And that was the problem. *He* knew he was good. Nah... we saw his talent. But he was too young. So we put him on JV so he could grow... so he could play more. Thought it might light a fire. Which it did. When people tell that story... the story that Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team... what they fail to mention is he was back on Varsity eight months later.

SONNY

What did Michael say when you cut him?

POP

What do you think? He said he was quitting basketball.

(laughing)

But that's how he is - takes everything personally. But it makes him work harder. That's what makes him great.

(MORE)

POP (CONT'D)

(leaning back in his  
chair)

So, listen. I just told you why you  
were here... But let me phrase the  
question this way... what are you  
*looking for* here? What are you  
trying to find?

SONNY

I don't know.

POP

Confirmation?

SONNY

Could be.

POP

Your five minutes were up two  
minutes ago. But let me just say  
this: confirmation's a dangerous  
thing to go searching for. You  
already know Michael's good. That  
he's special. You don't need me to  
tell you that. You don't need  
*anyone* to tell you that. So what  
are you here for? Just so the man  
who cut Michael Jordan could look  
you in the eye and tell you that  
what you're doing is right?

SONNY

I guess so.

POP

Then here you go: I'm the man who  
cut Michael Jordan. And what you're  
doing is right.

Sonny nods. Takes in what Pop is saying. A moment of shared  
silence.

POP (CONT'D)

Free shoes really wouldn't have  
hurt though.

**INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR - EVENING**

Sonny's VAN drifts down the highway... gliding back towards  
the airport. He looks into the trees that surround the road.

A Southern night begins to come alive with the low disembodied drone of insect life. A thin layer of mist drifting through the trees.

Time moves differently in the woods.

**EXT. RENTAL CAR PARKING LOT - EVENING**

Sonny pulls the VAN back into the parking lot. Who's waiting but...

The same employee. Sonny gives a salute as he drops off the keys.

**INT. PLANE - NIGHT**

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT rolls the beverage cart down the aisle. Taking orders. Looks at Sonny.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Peanuts?

SONNY  
No thanks.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Drink?

SONNY  
Ginger ale please. No ice.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Here you go...

SONNY  
You know what? I'll take the  
peanuts. Changed my mind.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
(smiling)  
No problem.

She reaches back into the cart and hands him said peanuts.

Attached to the bag is A PAIR OF PLASTIC CAPTAIN'S WINGS. Sonny takes them off. Turns the wings in his hands. The gold plastic shining. Something about it...

He drops them into the front pocket of his shirt. Leans back. Looks out the window.

Rolling clouds against the purple twilight. Like stock footage of heaven.

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - MORNING**

The sun's rising over HQ. Sonny's in the office before everyone else. Car still in the parking lot. He hasn't gone home.

Those same eyes open. Tap. Tap. Tap. Waiting by the phone.

RING. RING.

DAVID FALK

You have a lot of balls, you know that? What the fuck is wrong with you? You show up at the house?

SONNY

Well, you said it would be unprofessional to call.

DAVID FALK

(sighs)

What the hell did you say to her?

SONNY

That she should find Michael a new agent.

DAVID FALK

How's Tuesday?

SONNY

For?

DAVID FALK

They're coming to Beaverton. Don't make me ask twice.

Sonny covers the receiver. PUMPS HIS FIST.

DAVID FALK (CONT'D)

And don't get ahead of yourself. Michael's not going to be excited to be there. I get the sense that Mom's making him go.

SONNY

I get it.

DAVID FALK

I hope you're ready, Sonny.

Sonny looks out the window, across the vast expanse of Oregon woods.

*Is he ready? He doesn't have time to think about it.*

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - DAY**

Strasser walks down the hall, coming in for the morning. He passes Sonny's office. Looks in. *Empty.*

He shakes his head. Continues down the hall to his office. Opens his the door to find...

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - STRASSER'S OFFICE - DAY**

Sonny sitting at his desk.

STRASSER  
Jesus fucking christ.

SONNY  
Pack some pajamas tomorrow. We're not leaving the office.

STRASSER  
Tomorrow's Saturday.

SONNY  
Michael Jordan's coming to  
Beaverton.

STRASSER  
Holy shit.

SONNY  
Also, we need to get some shoes to Pop Herring.

STRASSER  
To who? Sonny, Phil hasn't approved anything.

SONNY  
Let me worry about that. Now that it's official... I thought we could go see Pete.

Strasser shakes his head. Can't help but to smile. *Game on.*

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - ELEVATOR - DAY**

They shuffle into the elevator. Sonny presses the "B" below "1" and "G". The elevator churns to life and heads...

Down.

Down.

*Further* down.

DING. The doors open to...

**INT. NIKE SHOE LAB - DAY**

THE LAB. A shoe head's dream. Computers everywhere. State of the art (for 1984). Sonny and Strasser snake their way back to the desk of...

PETER MOORE, LEAD DESIGNER. Peter, 29, is a wizard. A mad scientist. His laboratory just happens to be in a basement in Beaverton.

He's prematurely balding, a thin ring of hair all that's left above his sharp jaunt cheeks. He turns in his swivel chair.

PETER MOORE

Suits?? Down in the cave? To what do I owe the honor?

SONNY

We need a shoe.

PETER MOORE

I would assume as much.

SONNY

Ideally the most beautiful shoes you've ever seen.

PETER MOORE

OK, easy enough.

SONNY

We're going up against Converse and Adidas.

PETER MOORE

Even easier. Gentlemen... step into my office.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - SHOE LAB - DESIGN ROOM - DAY**

Sonny and Strasser trail behind Pete as he sits at the end of a long table. Shoe designs pinned all over the walls.

SONNY

It has to be individual. Think of it like this - Converse are plain shoes, right? Nothing much to them. Every player wears the same shoe. The only thing that changes is the color. The difference with this one is that instead of having the athlete wear one of our shoes, we're going to create the shoe around the athlete.

PETER MOORE

OK, I see where you're going. The shoe has to speak to an individual. Yet it needs to be marketable to a mass audience.

(thinking)

Tinker will have some ideas. In fact, he should be in by now...

SONNY

Who?

PETER MOORE

Tinker.

SONNY

Who the fuck is Tinker?

As the words leave his mouth, we hear...

A SKATEBOARD.

TINKER HATFIELD (O.S.)

Am I late?

The Cowboy. From the parking lot. Same designer jacket. Different designer hat. TINKER HATFIELD.

PETER MOORE

You haven't met?

TINKER HATFIELD

No, sir.

(extending his hand)

The pleasure is mine.

SONNY

*Tinker?*

PETER MOORE

Started two weeks ago. He's a wizard.

TINKER HATFIELD

You're too kind, Mr. Moore.

SONNY

You're from the parking lot.

TINKER HATFIELD

Well, I do have a home.

SONNY

Phil sent security to get you.

TINKER HATFIELD

Yeah, I talked them out of it.

SONNY

(shaking his head - *who  
the hell is this guy?*)

Well, I was just telling Pete that we need to create the most beautiful sneakers on the planet.

TINKER HATFIELD

OK. Easy enough. Form or function?

SONNY

Uh...

TINKER HATFIELD

Something can be beautiful or it can be pragmatic. Rarely both. And even then, the balance is never perfect.

SONNY

Let's go for form then. At least to start.

TINKER HATFIELD

Beauty over brains. You know what they say - poetry only makes the world bearable, it's engineering that gets us to the moon.

Sonny's BEEPER starts to sound.



SONNY

Fuck, I'm late.

(looking to Pete and  
Tinker)

Take the day to start. We'll check  
in tomorrow.

PETER MOORE

Tomorrow's Saturday...

SONNY

(beginning to head out)  
And the day after is Sunday.

PETER MOORE

Sonny.

(Sonny turns)  
Who's the player? For the shoe?

SONNY

Michael Jordan.

PETER MOORE

Jesus Christ.

Pete's jaw on the floor. Mouth agape as the elevator doors  
slide shut in front of Sonny and Strasser.

#### **INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY**

Sonny sits across from Phil, who preemptively reaches for the  
PLASTIC BASKETBALL on his desk. He moves it away from Sonny,  
placing it on the windowsill behind him.

PHIL KNIGHT

So, I hear we have a meeting on  
Tuesday.

SONNY

We need a firm offer.

PHIL KNIGHT

And your suggestion is...

SONNY

Our entire budget. 250 this year.  
1.5 million over five years.

PHIL KNIGHT

Sonny, that's just irresponsible.

SONNY

It's not. Converse will offer 100 at least. The Germans could match 250 easily.

PHIL KNIGHT

You really think we can buy him?

SONNY

No. We need to do more. But it starts with the money. It always does. The right amount of money can get you in good with many people. But the special ones? The special ones are the ones that you can't buy.

(deep breath)

I want to give him a percentage of revenue.

PHIL KNIGHT

No. What are you talking about? No player has that deal.

SONNY

Exactly.

PHIL KNIGHT

Sonny, why him? Magic Johnson, Larry Bird... they don't have that.

SONNY

The game is changing. That's their agents' fault. We can get out ahead of this.

PHIL KNIGHT

You told me the same thing when convincing me to give away shoes to colleges.

SONNY

The principle still stands: we can't pay college players, we can't pay to endorse them, so we give the shoes directly to the school because the media is well worth the cost of a few dozen shoes.

PHIL KNIGHT

We're paying to do so.

SONNY

It's working!

PHIL KNIGHT

Theoretical value that can't actually be measured.

SONNY

What was my first idea? A high school all-star game. Pretty soon, every shoe company in the world is holding their own branded all-star game. You think the Adidas Classic just appeared out of thin air? That was my idea and I have zero equity in it. I'm giving away my ideas for free. This place used to value ideas. It's been a while since that was true.

PHIL KNIGHT

Stop seeking attention for yourself. Self is the enemy. The self does not exist. Self is a mirage, a fever dream. To truly know the self is to forget the self.

SONNY

Again, if I wanted a meditation retreat, I'd go sign the Dalai Lama. Half these kids, probably more, don't pan out. There are a thousand reasons why. Don't have the work ethic. Don't have the confidence. The mental fortitude. Their priorities are in other places. There's no math formula. That's the point. There's no science to life. Some people succeed, others fail. All I can fucking do is give you my recommendation. And this is the strongest one I've ever had.

PHIL KNIGHT

Why are you pressing this? What are you trying to prove?

SONNY

That I'm right! That I'm right, god dammit! And that I care. That's the only reason I do what I do. And I'm not going to fucking apologize that I care more than rest of you.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

And, by the way, people have been trying to do exactly what you're doing to me for the last twenty-two years.

PHIL KNIGHT

Which is what?

SONNY

Telling me that they don't know what the fuck it is I do.

(worked up, breathing heavy)

How much of life is being in the right place at the right time? The thing about that moment? You don't get to choose when and where it happens. All you can do is recognize it when it's here. You don't choose the time... the time chooses you. So here it is: we're in the right place and it's the right time. Now it's just a question of what the fuck we're going to do with that opportunity.

PHIL KNIGHT

You know they teach that linear thinking is nothing but a delusion, one of the many that keep us unhappy. Reality is nonlinear. No future. No past. All is now.

SONNY

Which is why we need to act... now.

He looks up to the WAFFLE IRON on the wall.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Do you want to be the guy that was great at selling shoes he found in Japan or do you want to be someone who changes the world? You can be a household name in the apparel industry or you can be a household name full stop.

PHIL KNIGHT

Sonny, enough.

SONNY

I, mean, hey, it will be great speaking at sales seminars the rest of your life.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

It's a good living, who could fault you? But you want more. I know you want more because I want more. And if I want more for a company I didn't even fucking start then I sure as hell know that you want more.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Tell me if I'm wrong.

PHIL KNIGHT

I'm trying to have faith.

SONNY

And what are you doubting?

PHIL KNIGHT

The opposite of faith is not doubt but certainty. And you're too certain.

SONNY

There are hills I'm willing to die on.

PHIL KNIGHT

Give me the weekend. We can always cancel on Monday. You don't need a firm offer to prep the rest of the meeting.

SONNY

It wouldn't hurt.

PHIL KNIGHT

You know the first time I met you I thought you were in the mob.

SONNY

Phil, I have connections with men who wear tacky suits, but they're basketball coaches - not mobsters. I just want to win. Whether that makes me the godfather or not is up to you. But we can still make Jordan an offer he can't refuse.

Close on Phil. *Thinking.*

**EXT. CONVERSE HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

A LIMOUSINE pulls up right in front of the gaping glass doors of Converse HQ.

Falk steps out first. He looks up at the big CONVERSE logo. Smiles a shark's smile.

DAVID FALK

Here we are.

The Jordan family gets out of the car. Deloris followed by James. They turn and wait for Michael to step out. Two long legs emerge from the car... but we don't see Michael's face.

Waiting for them is... JOHN O'NEIL. He has his hair gelled up like an asshole. Red tie (for the Bulls). Rolex heavy on his wrist.

Next to him is JOE DEAN, VP of Marketing.

JOHN O'NEIL

(extending his hand)

Mrs. Jordan, it's a pleasure to meet you. We sure do appreciate you making the long trip out here.

**INT. CONVERSE HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

The lights dimmed in a conference room. Everyone sitting around the table.

Even though everyone in the room is looking at him. We still can't see Michael Jordan.

The same CONVERSE COMMERCIAL we saw at the beginning is just finishing.

LARRY BIRD

You already know what they did for me. I walked away with the MVP!

"Converse - the official shoe of the NBA!"

The lights go up...

JOE DEAN

I've seen a lot of basketball, and the feeling I get when I see Michael play... there are only a few other players that gave me that feeling. And those players are here at Converse...

(MORE)

JOE DEAN (CONT'D)

they're the best of the best. It's that simple. Magic Johnson. Larry Bird. Michael Jordan. Those names all belong in the same sentence. And they belong at Converse.

JOHN O'NEIL

Michael, we're going to treat you like our superstars. Before you even step onto an NBA court.

DAVID FALK

We're looking for a shoe that holds appeal beyond the basketball court.

JOHN O'NEIL

What could hold more appeal than the shoe worn by the best players in the game? Every kid wants to wear what the stars wear.

Head nods. Fair point.

JAMES JORDAN

What's coming down the pipeline? What's the new shoe for Michael going to be?

JOHN O'NEIL

If I may... tradition and history are paramount at Converse. How does the saying go? Don't fix something that's not broken.

DELORIS JORDAN

You have an impressive roster. The best three players in the league in Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and Julius Erving. But the other way to look at that is... the best Michael will be with you is number four. No matter what he does. How do we know that you're going to put Michael above them?

Looks around the room. *Above them?*

JOHN O'NEIL

Well... frankly, ma'am... we're talking about Magic Johnson and Larry Bird here.

JAMES JORDAN

Right, so how is he going to stand out when you have Bird and Magic?

JOE DEAN

He's going to play like them. He's going to be mentioned in the same sentence as them. *What could be better than that?*

Off Deloris and James... searching for an answer. Posters of Magic and Bird behind them. Almost towering.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - SHOE LAB - DESIGN ROOM - DAY**

Sonny and Strasser flip through designs. Nods of approval. Setting certain ones aside.

Pete and Tinker watch them carefully. Waiting for any indication on their work. *Did they get it?*

Sonny finally sets the papers down. Looks up.

SONNY

What can we do to make it special?

No.

PETER MOORE

What's missing?

SONNY

That's the million and a half dollar question.

(thinking)

I think they're too bland. There's too much white - not enough color. Can we get some more red in there?

PETER MOORE

If we're going by the book they literally can't have any more red...

STRASSER

Is that true? What's the actual rule?

PETER MOORE

51 percent rule. Majority of the shoe has to be white. NBA is extremely strict about it. They'll fine him.



SONNY  
The NBA will fine him...

STRASSER  
Yes.

PETER MOORE  
So no red.

They all turn to Sonny. Still thinking.

STRASSER  
Sonny?

SONNY  
What about *more* red.

STRASSER  
You just said they'd fine him.

SONNY  
Exactly.

STRASSER  
(not following)  
And... that's a good thing?

SONNY  
What if we just pay the fines? It's only, what, 5k per game? That's nothing. We can make a commercial out of it. It will make headlines. They're going to fine us for being too colorful.

STRASSER  
Huh.

PETER MOORE  
OK, we'll go more red. At least to start.

TINKER HATFIELD  
I like the way you think.

SONNY  
(looking at Tinker)  
You know, I was so caught up on your first name, that it didn't occur to me that your last name sounded familiar. You're not... an *actual* Hatfield, are you? Not like the Hatfield and the McCoys...

TINKER HATFIELD  
My Grandfather shot Mccoy. Does  
that make me an "actual" Hatfield?

Sonny shakes his head. *Holy shit.*

SONNY  
He teach you to design shoes, too?

TINKER HATFIELD  
No. He taught me to ask questions.

Something catches Peter's eye...

PETER MOORE  
Let me see those?

SONNY  
What?

Moore reaches across the table and into Sonny's shirt pocket...

THE PILOT WINGS FROM WHEN SONNY FLEW TO CAROLINA.

He turns the plastic in his hand before resting it right in the center of his palm. And now, it's impossible not to see the image that's running through Moore's mind...

The center of the wings... a perfect circle... it could fit...

A basketball.

PETER MOORE  
OK, gents, give us another day. I  
think we're close.

**EXT. PORTLAND ROAD - DAY**

Phil Knight walks out from his house. Dressed in running clothes - Nike shirt, shorts, and shoes. 80's fashion.

Stretching. Fingers to toes. Rotating his ankles. Clockwise and counter.

A light layer of fog drifting in. Almost mystical.

*Why is it so difficult to get started?*

Breathe in. Breathe out.

Go.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Sonny and Strasser wander the dark hallways. Weekend at the office. The entire building seemingly empty.

STRASSER

How are you, me, and Pete the only ones here on a Saturday?

SONNY

Here's the real question: why do we divide the week into seven days? All the other calendar units come from astronomical cycles. A year is the time it takes the earth to orbit the sun once. Months are one full moon cycle. Days are one rotation of the earth. But... a week? You can't even divide 365 by 7. It's a prime number. It has no correlation to anything.

STRASSER

I don't know.

SONNY

So not wanting to work on a Saturday is just as arbitrary as Saturday even existing in the first place.

They pass a window overlooking the CAFETERIA. Sonny looks out on the wide expanse of tables and stacked trays. It seems even bigger when empty.

STRASSER

If this doesn't work... Our jobs are gone. Our checks are gone.

SONNY

My job is gone. Phil will keep you. Worst case you can just go work for Adidas or Converse.

STRASSER

My family is here.

SONNY

Where's *here*? Beaverton?

STRASSER

Portland.

SONNY

You have geographic inferiority complex. If Oregon is famous for anything it's an old trail and dysentery.

STRASSER

It's American history.

SONNY

It was just a dirt road, Strass. Same as all the others.

STRASSER

It's home.

SONNY

Home's an illusion. Just like your job and your security. They're words we invented so we could sleep better at night. Besides... I'm the one who has to worry. What I do... you can't put it on a resume. Adidas would hire you in a second. Me? Not so much.

STRASSER

Who wants a resume? You want to dress in nice suits like the rest of us? Sit at tables and discuss bullshit?

They arrive back to...

#### **INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM**

Sonny sits down. Strasser paces to the window. Looks out across the wide campus. The parking lot. The forest.

STRASSER

I never imagined this is what we would become. It feels impossible.

SONNY

The amoeba never imagined it would evolve into a frog. And that frog never imagined it would sing. You can draw a line from the beginning of time to right now. And it all feels impossible.

STRASSER

The thing is... I don't know if I'm proud or depressed as shit. Because we got to where we wanted. But it doesn't feel like I thought it would. Like it was supposed to. It hasn't solved any of the other problems.

SONNY

You know the phrase "meaningful work" didn't even exist until ten years ago? Used to be a given that work was miserable but we did it because we had to. The point is: it's not supposed to solve anything else.

STRASSER

I guess not. But they tell you it will.

SONNY

The problem is believing them. Let this play out, Strass. Stop worrying so god damned much. We're going to change the paradigm with these.

STRASSER

I mean I'd love to believe that. But it's just a shoe. And he's just a player.

SONNY

A shoe is always just shoe until someone steps into it.

Sonny removes a small square BOX. It's bright pink. He slides it across the table to Strasser, who opens it to reveal...

A CUPCAKE. A single candle in the top.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Happy birthday, Strass.

Sonny reaches into his pocket for a LIGHTER. Snaps a flame to life.

STRASSER

How old is this?

SONNY

It's younger than you.

Strasser shakes his head. Smiles. Blows out the candle.

SONNY (CONT'D)  
What'd you wish for?

STRASSER  
I'm not using my wish on you.

PETER MOORE (O.S.)  
Hey... Sonny?

Peter leans against the door.

PETER MOORE (CONT'D)  
We're ready.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - SHOE LAB - DAY**

Sonny and Strasser follow Moore into the lab, Strasser still carrying his cupcake. Tinker is straddled across a chair.

PETER MOORE  
It's your birthday?

STRASSER  
Yes. And don't ask the next question.

PETER MOORE  
Well... Here it is.

And for the first time, we see...

THE AIR JORDAN 1's. They're beautiful. One-of-a-kind.

High-cut. The color blocking giving the appearance that its made of individual pieces.

The Nike swoosh is displayed prominently, and toward the top sits the Air Jordan logo, in the shape of the plastic pilot wings. The shoes look at once timeless and like they've been sent from the future.

On the bottom: AIR SOLES - made up of concentric circles, like ripples in a pond.

SONNY  
Wow.

STRASSER  
Yeah... wow.

TINKER HATFIELD  
It has the logic of water. It's natural. Like the shoe was always here. Before any of us. Like it always existed.

SONNY  
Let's get prototypes processed immediately.

TINKER HATFIELD  
(sounds like his mouth is full)  
When is he coming again? Tuesday?

They turn to see...

Tinker's eating the cupcake.

TINKER HATFIELD (CONT'D)  
This is really good.

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY**

Sonny back across Phil's desk.

PHIL KNIGHT  
You were here all weekend?

SONNY  
Yeah. To be honest with you, we were the only ones.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Well, it's a big company, Sonny. We're far past the days of needing everyone to work through the weekend.

SONNY  
I asked Strasser about that.

PHIL KNIGHT  
And what did he say?

SONNY  
That this place doesn't feel like it used to.

PHIL KNIGHT  
He's right.  
(a beat)  
So what would you name it?

SONNY

Name what?

PHIL KNIGHT

Our Michael Jordan Line.

SONNY

You're implying that we're going to have a Michael Jordan line.

PHIL KNIGHT

If we're going to make him the offer we're planning to make him then we damm well better have a Michael Jordan Line.

SONNY

So we're good?

PHIL KNIGHT

We're good.

SONNY

Full budget?

PHIL KNIGHT

Full budget.

SONNY

How'd you come to that solution?

PHIL KNIGHT

*I went for a run.*

**INT. STRASSER'S OFFICE - DAY**

Sonny comes blazing into Strasser's office.

SONNY

We need a title. For the line.

STRASSER

You talk to Phil?

SONNY

We need a title.

He looks at Strasser. And that says it all.

STRASSER

Wow. OK. I mean I thought we'd just keep it simple? Michael Jordan.



RICHARD (O.S.)  
We're signing Michael Jordan?

Sonny and Strasser both turn immediately, heads on a swivel, to see...

RICHARD - the guy who approached Strasser in the cafeteria. Standing at the door like he has his hand in the cookie jar.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
We had that meeting scheduled...  
About the air sole expansion?

SONNY  
We're not signing Michael Jordan.

RICHARD  
No, of course not. I figured you  
were talking about... uh, the other  
Michael Jordan.

STRASSER  
Listen...  
(trying to remember his  
name)  
Could we reschedule? I'm sorry.

RICHARD  
No, that's totally fine. I... OK.

He nods and leaves the office. Sonny and Strasser get back to the designs. Until...

RICHARD PEEKS HIS HEAD BACK IN.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Just... speaking strictly  
hypothetically here... because  
we're not signing Michael Jordan...  
but if we're going to be using air  
soles in all the shoes... what  
about... Air Jordan?

Sonny and Strasser look at each other right away. *That's it.*

JOHN FISHER (PRELAP)  
We have the best shoes. Plain and  
simple.

**INT. ADIDAS HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

The ADIDAS meeting is in full swing. Deloris, James, and Michael sitting at the end of the table from the Adidas execs.

And there's a lot of them. John Fisher and his team along with the entire Dassler family. A small army.

We still don't see Michael's face.

HORST DASSLER

Michael, you're the next generation. You don't want to be grouped in with Magic and Bird. They're on the way out. You want to stand apart.

They show Michael SHOE PROTOTYPES.

JOHN FISHER

You're not going to see another style like this. All leather. Converse aren't cool any more.

MICHAEL JORDAN

What color could the shoes be?

JOHN FISHER

Well, the NBA has rules on that. But there are always alternate versions we could create.

DELORIS JORDAN

What about black shoes? Michael's favorite colors are black and red.

JOHN FISHER

Well, Michael, we're a family company. Black shoes... could send the wrong idea. Not to mention... black is banned in the NBA. You'd get fined every game for wearing those shoes.

DELORIS JORDAN

There are a lot of people at this table. Who makes the final decision?

Everyone at the table looks around. And in that split-second... we already know...

JOHN FISHER

Well, unfortunately, the family is dealing with a great loss. Not only a father, but a founder. Kathe is calling the shots.

KATHE DASSLER

Yes, that's right.

HORST DASSLER

It is collaborative though.

DELORIS JORDAN

Collaborative?

JOHN FISHER

Well, hang on there...  
*collaborative* may not be the right description.

HORST DASSLER

No, that's what it is. A group decision.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT**

Sonny sits with Strasser, Phil, and Pete. Meeting prep. The night before.

SONNY

People make the most important decisions in a matter of seconds. Research shows that on a blind date, you know within five seconds whether there will be a second date. That's it. Walk in the restaurant. See the other person. You *know*. That means we have five seconds to make sure Michael Jordan wants a second date.

STRASSER

So people do judge books by their cover.

SONNY

Of course they do. That doesn't mean it's the only factor. But it's the most important one.

STRASSER

Are you saying I should wear my nicest suit tomorrow?

SONNY

If it makes you confident, wear it.  
(moving on)  
Phil, you're going to come in seven  
minutes after the meeting starts.

STRASSER

Shouldn't Phil be there from the  
beginning...?

SONNY

No. That looks desperate. Phil has  
a million things going on. But  
that's not apparent unless he has  
to step in late. Then it really  
seems like he's taking time out of  
his day.

Everyone looks towards Phil. Waiting for his opinion. Phil  
takes a breath. Sighs.

PHIL KNIGHT

He's right.

Sonny keeps going. He knew it.

SONNY

Let's print and bind the shoe  
designs.

PETER MOORE

How many?

SONNY

One.

PETER MOORE

Really?

SONNY

Yup. Just one. You diminish the  
value the second you have  
multiples.

Strasser nods. He's right. Again.

PHIL KNIGHT

(looking at the designs)  
I thought the NBA had a rule on  
color?

SONNY

They do. We're going to pay the  
fines. At least at first.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

See how the NBA responds. The press will cover it. It's free advertising.

PHIL KNIGHT

Theoretical value can't be measured...

SONNY

Come on, you have a soft spot for iconoclasts. You can't deny that. He aligns with your rebellious ethos.

Phil gives a thin smile. He's not denying it.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Everyone wants to be a part of the revolution. Doesn't matter so much where or what it is. People want to feel like they're breaking the rules. Because it's exciting. It's not the same old thing. Every bored teenager is going to be asking their parents for \$65 because they feel like *they're* breaking the rules when they're wearing the shoes. Like *they're* making a statement.

STRASSER

I like it.  
(looking around)  
What else? We have a video.

SONNY

Do we have to show it?

STRASSER

Marketing put good time into it.

Strasser and Peter get up. Sonny sits still. Phil lingers behind with him.

PHIL KNIGHT

You ready?

SONNY

I think so.

PHIL KNIGHT

You think so?

SONNY

No future. No past. All is now.

PHIL KNIGHT

Buddhist bullshit.

(looks at the clock)

I'll see you in fourteen hours and seven minutes.

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Sonny still at his desk late. Moonlight visible through the half-drawn blinds. Strasser passes by the doorway, peeks in.

SONNY

What's up?

STRASSER

You should go home. Get some sleep. There's nothing more you can do at this point.

SONNY

How are you feeling?

STRASSER

Same way I did seventy-two hours ago. I think you're fucking crazy. And I'm now 35 instead of 34.

SONNY

Other than that?

STRASSER

Other than that, I think we're good. Don't kill yourself over this. Many have died for less.

SONNY

And some for more.

STRASSER

(under a thin smile)

And some for more.

Hold on Strasser. Waiting to say something. Searching.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

Sonny?

SONNY

Yeah.

STRASSER

You don't have to be right.  
(Off Sonny, biting his  
lip)  
You don't have to be. It's OK if  
you're not.

SONNY

Stop with that shit, Strasser.

STRASSER

Say it. You don't have to be right.

SONNY

No.

STRASSER

You don't have to be right.  
(a beat)  
You don't have to be right.

He brings Sonny in. Wraps his arms around him.

STRASSER (CONT'D)

You've done enough.

### **TIME LAPSE**

The sun rises over Nike.

It's just another day. Another Tuesday in a lifetime of  
Tuesdays.

Time is a man-made construct.

### **EXT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

Sonny waits outside in the parking lot.

He stares up into the sky. The bright sun shining. He watches  
a plane high in the sky. Just a dot from where he's standing.

It floats through the air in a straight line, as if it was  
being pulled by a string.

He breathes in. Breathes out.

A LIMO PULLS UP.

FALK steps out first. Gives Sonny a thin smile and a nod.  
Like he can't even believe they're here.

Deloris and James next.

SONNY  
You made it.

JAMES JORDAN  
Long time no see. You got that van  
up here?

SONNY  
Had to return it unfortunately.

JAMES JORDAN  
Damn shame.

Sonny goes to give Deloris a hug. She takes a step back.  
Reaches out her hand. Sonny nods. OK, not an ideal start.

DELORIS JORDAN  
(leaning closer to Sonny)  
He doesn't want to be here. But  
he's going to listen. He promised  
me that. So... you have our  
attention.

And from behind them... out walks...

MICHAEL JORDAN. You know what he looks like. He doesn't need  
description. Jordan is the sun of the solar system that is  
any room he's in.

SONNY  
Michael or Mike?

MICHAEL JORDAN  
Whichever you'd like, Mr. Vacarro.

DELORIS JORDAN  
Michael.

Nods. Deloris has spoken. They head through the front doors  
to...

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - ENTRANCE - DAY**

A banner hangs across the entrance: "THE NIKE FAMILY WELCOMES  
THE JORDAN FAMILY"

A table with a full spread from Hardee's. A feast. Everything  
on the menu. Maybe more.



DELORIS JORDAN  
I didn't know they had Hardee's in  
Oregon.

JAMES JORDAN  
(discreetly)  
They don't.

Strasser waits for them by the table.

STRASSER  
Take whatever you'd like. Right  
this way, Michael.

The party all make their way to...

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

The same conference room Sonny and Strasser have been sitting  
in over the past few days. They all find their seats.

MICHAEL JORDAN  
I'm gonna be honest... I liked the  
Lakers. I like Marques Jordan. And  
I like Adidas. I like Adidas shoes.

The AJ1's. They look even better in person. High cut leather.  
Pristine condition. The red and black almost radiating.

MICHAEL JORDAN (CONT'D)  
Wow.

STRASSER  
(handing the shoes to  
Jordan)  
Go ahead, take a look.

PETER MOORE  
I know you like the shoes low to  
the ground. We skived the  
cushioning down so you'll be as  
close to the floor as possible. We  
can tailor them however you like,  
but these are pretty damn low.  
(off Jordan, nodding)  
The shoe will be designed  
specifically for you. We'll build  
it off a cast of your foot.

STRASSER  
What do you think?

MICHAEL JORDAN  
That shoe is red and black.

STRASSER  
Yeah.

MICHAEL JORDAN  
You have to wear white in the NBA.

STRASSER  
Says who? Adidas?

MICHAEL JORDAN  
Well, yeah... those are the  
rules...

STRASSER  
Well, we'll see about that.

PHIL gives a knock at the door and walks in.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Hello. I'm sorry I'm running a bit  
behind. Phil Knight.

STRASSER  
Let's roll the tape...

The lights dim. The projector boots up. And on the screen...

A highlight tape of Jordan's UNC highlights set to the  
Pointer Sisters "JUMP".

Sonny watches the Jordan family closely. Examining their  
faces for any sign or hint.

And it's clear to him. *They look bored.* They don't look  
impressed.

Sonny looks around. At Strasser. At Phil. We see it in *his*  
eyes. He needs to do something.

SONNY  
Hey. Hey. Shut the video off.

Everyone at the table starts to look around. *What the hell is  
going on?*

Sonny stands up. The video abruptly halts.

SONNY (CONT'D)  
Hold on. Forget all this. Forget  
where we are. Forget Nike.

PHIL KNIGHT

Sonny...

SONNY

Let's stop with the bullshit.

Sonny looks right at Jordan.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Forget about the shoes. Forget about the money. You're going to make so much money that it's not going to matter. You'll never want again. Money can buy you almost anything... but it can't buy you immortality. That... you have to earn.

Sonny stares Michael Jordan right in the eye. *He's not scared.*

SONNY (CONT'D)

I'm going to look you in the eyes and tell you the future.

**INTERCUT YOUNG MICHAEL PLAYING - HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE**

SONNY (CONT'D)

You were cut from your high school basketball team. Willed your way to the NBA. You're going to win championships. It's an American story. And that's why America will love it.

**INTERCUT FLASHES OF THE FUTURE:**

The Michael Jordan we all know. Skinny as a rookie, streaking down the court in iconic Bulls red.

SONNY (CONT'D)

People are going to build you up, god are they going to. Because when you're new... *We love you.* Man, we build you up into something that doesn't even exist. The entire nation is going to say they want to be like a black man from rural North Carolina. You're going to change the god damn world.

Battles with the Bad Boy Pistons. Isaiah Thomas. Heartbreak.

The first title. Beating Magic Johnson. Sobbing with the Larry O'Brien Trophy.

SONNY (CONT'D)

But you know what? When they've built you as high as they possibly can... they're going to tear you back down. They're going to say, alright let's find out what's wrong with you. It's the most cyclical pattern with fame, we build you into something that doesn't exist until we find your flaws and then we rip you to shreds.

The death of his father. Found murdered in a car.

His retirement from Basketball. Taking hacks in the minors with the White Sox. Jordan rides the bus.

SONNY (CONT'D)

This person that we built into God isn't a God, and that makes us feel better about ourselves, because we're not Gods. Because that's how it works. We can't help but fall in love, we pretend it's something that it isn't, because we're flawed.

Coming out of retirement. The "I'm back" press release.

The second three-peat.

Hitting the final shot of his Bulls career. The leap. The fist pump.

SONNY (CONT'D)

A shoe is just a shoe until somebody wears it. Context is everything. Boring running shoe right? What if I told you it was the shoe that took the gold medal? Changes everything. Context is everything. All we're doing is providing that context from the start. A shoe that serves as a method of expression. A converse will always just be a converse. Your name isn't on it. Yeah, you could be mentioned in the same sentence as Magic and Bird. But you know what's better than that?

(off MJ)

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

Being mentioned all on your own. A tier of one. We're going to NAME the shoe after you. No one else has that. No one. Not Magic. Not Bird.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Everyone at this table will be forgotten as soon as our time on this cold spinning rock is over. Except for you. You will be remembered forever. Because some things are eternal.

(a long pause as he goes  
for the finish)

You're Michael Jordan... and your story is going to be the history of flight.

The lights come up. Strasser looks to Phil and Pete. *Holy shit.*

Sonny places the shoe on the table.

PHIL KNIGHT

We've shared our offer with Mr. Falk. But if you'd like to take a look...

(he slides stapled paper  
across the table)

This would be the largest endorsement deal in basketball history.

DAVID FALK

We're expecting others to bid in a similar range.

PHIL KNIGHT

Yes, thank you, Mr. Falk. My point stands: Nike has been in search of a basketball star, and we believe you are that star, Michael.

DELORIS JORDAN

Well... thank you, Mr. Vaccaro.  
(she looks around the

room)

Mr. Knight. Mr. Strasser. Thank you.

DAVID FALK

We'll be assessing everything tomorrow. And we should have an answer for you shortly after that.

Sonny catches their eyes on the way out. Nods.

Everyone waits until the Jordan party is out the door. They look around.

Sonny is just standing there. Almost in a daze.

STRASSER  
Where did that come from?

SONNY  
I don't know.

PHIL KNIGHT  
I think we got him.

STRASSER  
I do too.

PHIL KNIGHT  
All we can do is wait for the call.

#### **INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Moonlight shines through the blinds.

He sits down at his desk. Leans back in his chair. And for the first time...

*Sonny closes his eyes.*

#### **INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY**

Those same eyes, now startled awake by...

THE RINGING PHONE.

SONNY  
Hello?

DAVID FALK  
What the fuck is this? You're trying to pull a fast one over us?

SONNY  
What are you talking about?

DAVID FALK  
The contract. Did you think we were going to just miss the clause? Our lawyers have six figure retainers.

SONNY

What clause? Falk, what are you...

We can hear Falk flipping through pages over the phone.

DAVID FALK

(reading directly from the contract)

If Jordan doesn't achieve one of following three accomplishments -- win Rookie of the Year, become an All-Star or average 20 points per game -- in his first three years, Nike has the option to void the deal.

SONNY

What the fuck? Falk, this wasn't me. I had--

DAVID FALK

Well, guess who I just called? Adidas.

SONNY

Falk, come on. We can work this out. Don't fuck me here.

DAVID FALK

Fuck you??? I'm not the one who's trying to slip clauses into the contract at the twenty-fifth hour. Besides... they're matching. 250k.

SONNY

You're shitting me.

DAVID FALK

Sorry, Sonny.

SONNY

I thought it wasn't about the money?

DAVID FALK

Of course it's about the money. It's always about the money.

SONNY

Hang on. What if we can get him a percentage of sales?

DAVID FALK  
You and I both know that's not  
happening.

SONNY  
Give me a beat.

DAVID FALK  
You have sixty minutes.

SONNY  
Give me one-hundred-twenty.

DAVID FALK  
Sixty.

Sonny grits his teeth.

**INT. NIKE HEADQUARTERS - PHIL'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Sonny barges through the door.

SONNY  
Who was it??

PHIL KNIGHT  
Sonny.

SONNY  
You're throwing away the biggest  
bargain you'll ever make.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Sonny... There's nothing  
unreasonable in there.

SONNY  
Unreasonable is not telling them it  
was going to in there. How could  
you not let me know??

PHIL KNIGHT  
Because we knew this would be your  
reaction.  
(deep breath)  
If they can't accept it, then so be  
it. You can't stay at the table too  
long. At some point you have to  
fold. You're gambling recklessly.



SONNY

Adidas matched. We need to give him a percentage of sales. I wrote it in.

Sonny drops the revised contract on Phil's desk.

PHIL KNIGHT

Absolutely not.

SONNY

Phil. We don't have any other choice.

PHIL KNIGHT

We're breaking too many rules.

Sonny gets up from the chair. Walks over to Phil's wall.  
TAKES A FRAME OFF IT.

PHIL KNIGHT (CONT'D)

Sonny...

Sonny turns the frame over. Releases the hatch on the back.  
Takes the paper out.

Places it on Phil's desk. Grabs one of Phil's pens. And circles something. Phil looks down...

It's the NIKE TEN COMMANDMENTS. The circled sentences reads:

BREAK THE RULES: FIGHT THE LAWS.

SONNY

What's the difference between a law and a rule? Laws are penalties by governance. Rules are made arbitrarily by a small group without any electoral power. You have no legal recourse to follow the *rules* yet they directly influence and control almost every facet of our lives. So why are we taught to *follow the rules* from the first day of school? *Follow the rules*. You know what the difference is between you and all the schmucks out there living in their two bedroom houses in the suburbs waking up every morning wondering where the hell their lives went? Dreading going to work?

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

Counting down the days until they  
can retire and make it all stop?  
They followed the rules and you  
didn't.

Sonny holds the commandments back up.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Writing these rules down is easy.  
You know what's actually hard? What  
actually takes suffering? Living  
them. Believing them. Acting like  
they're more than just greeting  
card aphorisms on an eight-and-a-  
half by eleven piece of paper.  
(he puts the paper down)  
What'd you always tell me about  
rules?

PHIL KNIGHT

Sonny...

SONNY

Say it.

PHIL KNIGHT

(reluctantly, sighing)  
You are remembered for the rules  
you break.

SONNY

It's time to be remembered. Sign  
the paper, Phil.

Phil picks up his pen. Looks at Sonny.

*Signs the paper.*

# **INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY**

Sonny on his phone. Waiting as it rings. Until...

DELORIS JORDAN

(from the phone)  
Hello?

# **INTERCUT**

SONNY

Mrs. Jordan. Is Michael there?

**INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - KITHCEN - DAY**

DELORIS JORDAN  
So this time you decided you could  
call?

SONNY  
It was time sensitive.

DELORIS JORDAN  
Let me get him.

A beat as we hear her call for Michael.

MICHAEL JORDAN  
Hello?

SONNY  
Michael. It's Sonny. From Nike.

MICHAEL JORDAN  
I just don't know about these  
clauses. It's a lot to live up to.

SONNY  
You're going to be rookie of the  
year. Trust me.

MICHAEL JORDAN  
How do you know?

SONNY  
The offense is going to run through  
you. Even Hakeem isn't going to  
have that. Not right away.

MICHAEL JORDAN  
What if I get hurt?

SONNY  
Then you'll come back and be an all  
star. Adidas will void their  
contract if you get hurt - I  
promise you that.

MICHAEL JORDAN  
I just...

SONNY  
OK. Look around you. You're sitting  
in your childhood room right now.

MICHAEL JORDAN  
I'm in the kitchen.

SONNY

OK, well your childhood room is upstairs.

Michael laughs.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Think of all those trophies. All the accolades. No one handed those to you. You earned them. Despite the odds... despite everything against you... you earned them. We're asking you to take another risk. Is there a danger in that? Hell yes, there is. Believe me, I know. This contract... you're going to get out of it what you put in. And I know what you're going to put in. You'll regret a lot of things in life... but you're never going to regret betting on yourself. No one can take that away from you.

Close on Michael. Biting his lip. Thinking.

**INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY**

Sonny's back on with Falk.

DAVID FALK

At the buzzer. Always at the buzzer.

SONNY

Faxing it now. Signed, sealed, and delivered.

DAVID FALK

Percentage of sales?

SONNY

Read it. I'm told your lawyers have six figure retainers.

DAVID FALK

Very good.

SONNY

And what about Adidas?

DAVID FALK

They won't give a percentage of sales.

(MORE)

DAVID FALK (CONT'D)  
(Sonny pumps his fist)  
They're pivoting.

SONNY  
To who?

DAVID FALK  
Mel Turpin.

SONNY  
(a thin smile)  
Interesting.

DAVID FALK  
How's Phil feeling?

SONNY  
Like a million bucks. Actually a  
million and a half.

DAVID FALK  
Well, I'd say it's been a pleasure  
doing business with you, but it  
never really is.

SONNY  
You better get me on speed dial. At  
least the next five years.

DAVID FALK  
Five years, huh? That's a long time  
for you to be anywhere.

SONNY  
Talk to me next week, I guess. Or  
next year. Or the next time you're  
representing a once in a generation  
talent.

DAVID FALK  
I have my eye on Ewing at  
Georgetown. What do you think?

SONNY  
I think you can get any player in  
the world after the deal we just  
signed. You're welcome.

Sonny hangs up. Takes a deep breath in. He did it.

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Phil sits alone at his desk. Tossing the plastic basketball up and down.

A KNOCK at the door. He turns to see Sonny standing in the open frame.

SONNY

You got a second?

PHIL KNIGHT

Were you ever born?

SONNY

Was I ever born?

PHIL KNIGHT

It feels like you just walked in here one morning. You know, most people... you can picture them as children. Kind of get an idea what their parents were like... how it shaped who they are today. But you... I can't imagine you any different than you are right now this very moment. You're going to be sneaking through the pearly gates of heaven... and the first thing you'll be looking for is a 6'9 kid with a good jump shot... and you're going to be looking to make a deal.

SONNY

You know I thought it was pronounced "Nicky" the first time I saw the word.

PHIL KNIGHT

I wanted to call the company Dimension Six.

SONNY

That's horrible.

PHIL KNIGHT

You think the company still succeeds if it's named Dimension Six?

SONNY

Who's to say?

PHIL KNIGHT  
We named it after the God of  
Victory.

STRASSER  
Is that true?

PHIL KNIGHT  
No, a team of consultants told us  
to choose Nike because people like  
four-letter words - but I'd like to  
think we would have found it  
anyway.

SONNY  
What about the swoosh?

PHIL KNIGHT  
Well, it's supposed to be a sound.

SONNY  
A sound of what?

PHIL KNIGHT  
*The sound of someone moving past  
you.*

He shoots at the basket. It misses.

PHIL KNIGHT (CONT'D)  
So... we may be out of business...  
but you did it. I... might even say  
it felt like the old days. Just for  
a second there.  
(off Sonny)  
Do you want to say "I told you so?"

SONNY  
No. Maybe tomorrow. We got the  
happy ending.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Only if you believe in endings.

SONNY  
I... I can bullshit you all day,  
but... no one else would have hired  
me. That's the truth. You're going  
to take this place to the top or  
you're going to die trying.

PHIL KNIGHT  
Damn straight.

SONNY

And, fuck it... you might as well  
buy Converse one day.

PHIL KNIGHT

Why?

SONNY

Because you can.

Sonny leaves the room. Phil sits alone, reflecting.

He cracks a smile.

**TITLE CARD READS: THREE MONTHS LATER**

**INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT**

Sonny back at the grocery store.

A BOX OF WHEATIES....

Michael Jordan is on the cover. Holding Nikes.

Sonny smiles. He knows. *This is just the beginning.*

**EXT. VACARRO HOUSEHOLD - EVENING**

Sonny steps out of the door. Almost like he's sneaking out.  
He quietly shuts it behind him.

He's dressed in... sweatpants? And a drab gray nike  
sweatshirt.

He leans down. Tries to touch his toes, unsuccessfully.  
Breathes in. And it's just about now when we understand...

He's going for a run.

He takes off. Breathing heavy. Faster. Faster.

**INTERCUT TITLE CARDS:**

*Nike's revenue goal in year one of Air Jordan was \$3 million.*

SONNY SPRINTS DOWN THE STREET. The humid air heavy in his  
lungs.

*They sold \$162 million.*

He's panting. Drenched in sweat.



*Today, Air Jordan brings in over \$3 billion in annual revenue for Nike.*

HE STOPS. Puts his hands on his knees. Gasping for air.

Looks up. The summer sun shining through the leaves.

He looks back...

He only made it a block.

But that's a start.

**TITLE CARDS CONTINUE:**

*Phil Knight retired in 2015 after 51 years serving as CEO and Chairman of Nike. Nike acquired Converse in 2003.*

*Rob Strasser left Nike in 1987 to serve as CEO of Adidas America. He died of a heart attack in 1993.*

*Sonny was fired from Nike in 1991. He went on to work at Adidas, where he helped court another once-in-a-generation talent... Kobe Bryant.*

**END**