

THREE HOURS ON SUNDAY

Written by

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INT. U.S. BANK STADIUM - CONCOURSE - DAY

The seventy-thousand faithful have long since headed for the exits, putting to bed another 6-11 season.

A JANITOR sweeps up popcorn, AirPods in. He enters:

INT. OWNER'S SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Head down, he trudges on for a beat. Then, finally looking up, he's startled to find a MAN hunched over a foldout seat, chin on his fist. This is AL LAWRENCE (60s), owner of the Minnesota Vikings.

JANITOR

Oh... Sorry, Mr. Lawrence. I'll circle back.

AL

Could you imagine being happy? I mean, could you imagine if your day, your week, your entire fucking existence wasn't dictated by these three hours on Sunday?

JANITOR

(looks at broom, then)
Not really.

AL

Where do we keep going wrong then, huh? You tell me?

JANITOR

As far as custodial?

AL

I never should've left Kentucky. Maybe that's it. Could've worked a farm, managed a distillery -- something.

The janitor looks around, uncomfortable, unsure if he's the intended audience.

AL (CONT'D)

There, you invest the time, at least you get something out of it. But this-- this is suffering. This is getting taken behind a woodshed, year after year, with nothing but a bullet to the eye.

JANITOR
You mean like they do with cattle?

AL
Not just cattle.

Al stands, releases a long SIGH.

AL (CONT'D)
Not just cattle.

INT. PRESS ROOM - LATER

Al speaks into an assembly of microphones.

AL
...And I wanna apologize to the fans. They deserve better, and we're gonna look at all avenues to improve this offseason.

REPORTER #1 (O.S.)
Does that include retaining Jerry Olson?

AL
(nods)
Jerry's the head coach of this football team. We have a hundred-percent confidence in him. That's true now, and it'll be true going forward.

INT. OWNER'S OFFICE - DAY

Glass walls, taxidermy steers. Al addresses the team's head coach, JERRY OLSON (60s).

AL
So, here's the thing, Jerry: you know we appreciate all you've done for this organization, but we're going a different direction.

Jerry's eyes go wide.

JERRY OLSON
(incredulous)
What? What the fuck are you talking about, Al?! You said I had one more year!

AL

We can be gracious about this.

JERRY OLSON

What happened to a new DC?! What happened to a quarterback in the same system?!

AL

Couple years, you're back in the chair.

JERRY OLSON

Where's this coming from, Al?!

AL

(offering handshake)

Really wish things went different.

The coach considers the hand, but isn't ready to capitulate--

JERRY OLSON

No. No. You can't-- look, you got all these generals whispering in your--

AL

(snapping)

-- Goddammit, Jerry, this is what's happening! I didn't see the ceiling rising, and frankly, you couldn't make a decision. On the Road to Damascus, you'd stop to ask if you should run a 4-3. And that wasn't getting the job done. So you wanna wear the headset again, you sign the papers, and promise to do better the next time out.

Acceptance finally comes in the form of a SIGH and a limp-wristed shake.

AL (CONT'D)

Okay then. There ya go.

(standing)

Now I'm late to the war room, but we'll send you a draft of the press release.

JERRY OLSON

(piecing it together)

War room... You're having a meeting to replace me already?!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A table stocked with the heads and VPs of every department.

The VIDEO COORDINATOR (30s) gives the lay of the land to his ASSISTANT (21).

VIDEO COORDINATOR
Congrats, dude, you made it into
the temple. Look at this. You see
this?

(indicates water bottle)
Fiji. Stick with me, you'll be
bathing in the stuff.

ASSISTANT
Why would I do that?

VIDEO COORDINATOR
Invisible. We're invisible,
alright? That's how we earn our
seat. That's how we get a sideline
pic for our Hinge profile, instead
of being back outside, disinfecting
tackling dummies.

ASSISTANT
(scanning)
Hey, where's Mr. Lawrence sit?

VIDEO COORDINATOR
Jesus Christ, what'd I just say?
You know what?
(snatching it)
Give me back the Fiji.

Al then stalks past, trailed by his assistant, JULIE (30s).
He takes his seat; the room falls quiet.

AL
So... where we at with Ernie Seco?

Despite the full room, it's clear this interaction is mainly
intended for the owner and the team's GM, RASHAD DOLEMAN
(late 30s, black).

RASHAD
We're out to his team. But we're
also looking at other candidates.

AL
Naw, don't bother. Let's find
Seco's number.

RASHAD

Right, well, the perception across the league is this a premier opening. Quarterback on a rookie deal--

AL

-- I know, I get it. And you should see our summers.

RASHAD

Well, I think it'd be hasty to move on Seco without a full picture.

AL

Hasty. Hear that guys? Someone forgot how to play musical chairs.

RASHAD

Frankly, Al, hiring Seco's at this point's like hiring Knute Rocke.

AL

(tossing hands up)
Oh, here we go! Here comes the thirty-four-year-old holding a calculator instead of a play sheet!

RASHAD

Innovation's something we covet, yes. Among other things. Our analytics like Billy Zimmer.

AL

Elwood? What do the Delphian's say?

Al seeks recourse in his Director of Scouting, ELWOOD REID (80s, inch-thick glasses). For pockets of time, Elwood tends to stare into the distance.

ELWOOD

Huh? Ernie? Yeah, I guess I was with him in Philly. '95.

RASHAD

(doing the math)
You mean Ernie Scheyer?

ELWOOD

Wasn't that who you were saying?

DAMIEN OLIVER (Manager of Analytics) reminds everyone why he's getting paid--

DAMIEN

Zimmer's impressive, and we like Devon Winston. Tampa lead the league in scoring. Two-ninety a game passing. One-thirty-five rushing.

AL

Yeah, okay. You're all mathematicians, and two plus two equals four and to you, that's all it'll ever be. But the thing is: in a contract year, it equals five. And if you're an undrafted rookie, it comes to three. 'Cause numbers don't measure the value of relationships, and that's what wins football games in this league.

The owner stands, ending the debate.

AL (CONT'D)

Start with the Seco interview. We'll work our way from there.

INT. MANSION - MIAMI, FLORIDA - NIGHT

BRETT CASTNOR (24), quarterback of the Minnesota Vikings, slices tomatoes in his "Architectural Digest" kitchen.

BRETT

(calling O.S.)

Nikko, get in here and help.

NIKKO MANNION (24) enters from the living room, shrouded in vape smoke.

NIKKO

Can't now, bro, the money men got a call.

BRETT

Do you hear yourself?

NIKKO

What? I got a get-rich plan.

BRETT

(re: upscale kitchen)

Look around. We're already rich.

NIKKO

When I look around, you know what I see? I see Johnny Manziel. You think he didn't have all this? I'm not gonna let you become another mid-20s podcast host.

BRETT

Whatever. You have my proxy.

As Nikko crosses away:

NIKKO

Yep, I got you. Although a podcast ain't a bad idea actually. I'll set the meeting.

Brett plops a chicken breast onto the skillet. Shakes free a handful of Excedrin migraine relief pills. As he tosses them back, he hears his name mentioned on TV.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He wanders in. "ESPN First Take" is playing. STEPHEN A. SMITH debates DAN ORLOVSKY. A banner onscreen poses the topic: "DOES BRETT CASTNOR DESERVE TO BE IN THE ELITE QUARTERBACK CONVERSATION?"

DAN ORLOVSKY (ON TV)

...He played behind a banged-up offensive line. The run game was basically non-existent the second half of the season--

STEPHEN A. SMITH (ON TV)

-- But Dan Dan Dan, let me stop you. Let me stop you right there.

Intrigued, Brett lays down on the couch.

STEPHEN A. SMITH (ON TV) (CONT'D)

I want you to think about how many quarterbacks are better than Brett Castnor right now, okay? You taking him over Allen? I know you're not taking him over Mahomes--

DAN ORLOVSKY (ON TV)

-- Better situation, but--

STEPHEN A. SMITH (ON TV)

No, hold on! No, that's not what we're saying.

(MORE)

STEPHEN A. SMITH (ON TV) (CONT'D)

We're saying is he an elite
quarterback in the National
Football League. And I'm saying
he's still got a long ways to go.

Brett shakes his head. Mutes the volume. Sinks further into
the couch. And slowly, his eyelids grow heavy...

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The TV glow illuminates Brett's face, showing us he's asleep.
Gradually, a trail of smoke swirls into frame. The FIRE
ALARMS SHRIEK.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Brett and Nikko huddle in the driveway, firetrucks strobing
in the background. A FIREMAN approaches.

FIREMAN

So, only real damage is in the
kitchen area. There's some light
ash down the hallway. But you're
gonna have to get someone in here.

BRETT

Alright, thank you.

The firemen pack up to leave. Nikko turns to Brett:

NIKKO

This is exactly why I said we
needed a full-time staff.

BRETT

I forgot the--

NIKKO

-- *Forgot!* You can't forget. Do
we need a sports psychologist in
the guest suite?

BRETT

I laid down, and... I don't know.
I'm fine. It was my bad, alright?

NIKKO

Oh, you think?

Nikko shakes his head, looks over the house.

NIKKO (CONT'D)

So what now? Airbnb? My vote's a penthouse on Ocean.

BRETT

My parents'll put us up.

As Brett walks off:

NIKKO

Parents? Well-- but they don't live in Miami. Brett? Hey! What are we gonna eat?

INT. OWNER'S OFFICE - DAY

Al is cross-legged on the floor, AirPods in, impatiently tapping at his phone screen.

THERESA LAWRENCE (30s), Al's daughter and the EVP of Revenue, enters.

AL

(re: phone)

Do you know-- it says, "Bluetooth connected." How do I get the volume on here?

THERESA

You feel better? Getting your barking out?

AL

Yeah, everyone down there hears an idea over a podcast or something and acts like they were the first to ever think of it.

As she sits on the couch:

THERESA

Winston could work here.

AL

I know what I'm getting with Ernie. And I don't wanna be back here in three years, having 'em throw pie charts at me.

THERESA

Only more reason to be thorough.

AL
I plan on it.

THERESA
That's not how it sounded to me.

This shuts him up.

THERESA (CONT'D)
I'm just saying, you can get a Civic with 100,000 miles on it, and it might even get 100,000 more, but what's the point if no one turns to watch when you drive down the street?

AL
So Winston's charismatic. I need someone who can hold a locker room.

THERESA
Dad, you hired Rashad because he's sharp and innovative and all the things you claim to wanna embody in partner meetings. So maybe consider what he has to say. Alright? Can you do that for me?

Proud of herself, Theresa heads for the exit.

THERESA (CONT'D)
At least entertain him on Zimmer. You never know, you might like him.

AL
You know how I am with children.

THERESA
(as she leaves)
There's your opening line when you guys meet.

INT. WAR ROOM - LATER

A clatter of keyboards, text alerts, gulps of coffee. Rashad glances at his phone.

RASHAD
(to himself)
Here we go.
(then, to others)
Here we go! We got the go-aheads on Winston and Zimmer!
(MORE)

RASHAD (CONT'D)

I want no leaks! Hear me? I don't want a bidding war with the Jones family.

Rashad dials, then, into his phone:

RASHAD (CONT'D)

Brian? Hey, it's Rashad Doleman with the Minnesota Vikings, how you doing?

(smiles at response)

Good, man, good. Hey, so, we're setting up meetings, and obviously, Billy Zimmer's at the top of our list.

(listens)

Okay, great. Perfect. Well, let's get him in then.

Collective fist pumps from Rashad's team.

EXT. CASTNOR PROPERTY - HAMPTON ISLAND, GEORGIA - NIGHT

An Uber drops Brett and Nikko at the end of a gravel drive, leading to a Greek-revival estate. Nikko hefts three suitcases.

NIKKO

You believe they don't got Uber Lux out here, man? Face of the NFL, riding in a Prius. I don't need to tell you how devastating for the brand this'll be.

BRETT

(enchanted)

There's a feeling you get out here. You know what I mean? It's like the last bit of serenity.

NIKKO

Yeah, for a country artist, maybe. I don't like being in the South. And I'm sure as Hell not calling anyone "pappy."

Brett smiles to himself, shakes his head.

EXT. VERANDA - NIGHT

Brett and his father, ARTHUR CASTNOR (70s), a former NFL quarterback himself, sit in rocking chairs, sipping whiskey.

ARTHUR
How'd you forget the stove?

BRETT
I don't know. Decision fatigue?

ARTHUR
How long's it gonna take to fix?

BRETT
Well, my genius roommate insisted on getting a seltzer tap, so now it'll be two months.

ARTHUR
Those can't be cheap. Your mother and I are actually thinking of selling. Maybe being closer to Minneapolis.

Lifting his elbow, Arthur accidentally KNOCKS over his whiskey glass.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Shoot. Shoot. I'm--

BRETT
I'll get a towel.

Brett starts to get up--

ARTHUR
No no no. It's fine. Come on, leave it.

BRETT
You sure?

ARTHUR
Yeah, leave it.

Brett sits. His father's arthritis makes for an onerous recovery.

BRETT
Still going to physical therapy?

ARTHUR
When I can, yeah. It's not cheap.

BRETT
NFL doesn't cover it?

ARTHUR

I didn't have much in my pension. The contracts they're giving out now -- you see how much Josh Allen is making?

BRETT

Nikko sometimes sends me the article late at night.

ARTHUR

S'not like it used it be. Used to be a guy made a million bucks, it was rare. Now, if you're smart, it'll trickle down generations.

Brett clocks the echoing financial references--

BRETT

Yeah. You know, I could find you an apartment or something in Minneapolis. I'd hate for you to sell the place.

ARTHUR

Oh, no, we're thinking of downsizing anyway.

BRETT

Well, I can cover payments.

ARTHUR

Brett--

BRETT

-- No, Dad, this is the spot. Right here. You don't sell away your plot in Eden. You guys deserve it.

Arthur drops his sight-line, abashed.

ARTHUR

We'll talk about it another time. Just don't say anything to your mother.

BRETT

Of course. Golden rule.

Arthur smiles. Takes a sip from Brett's whiskey.

ARTHUR

So far it's worked out for me.

INT. TEAM FACILITY - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

The video coordinator (from earlier) picks through the snack station, edifying his assistant.

VIDEO COORDINATOR
 Alright, you fucked up in the meeting, but we gotta move on.

ASSISTANT
 I didn't even say anything?

VIDEO COORDINATOR
 It was your body language, dude. Hands in pockets? Did you grow up in "The Great Gatsby"?

ASSISTANT
 Is that why you're on edge?

VIDEO COORDINATOR
 I'm on day six of the Calm app, you idiot.

The assistant siphons off a water cooler.

VIDEO COORDINATOR (CONT'D)
 No, no, no. Red Bull up. I need you to cut together every play Billy Zimmer's ever called. If he drew something in the dirt at recess, I want that shit fossilized. Got it?

The assistant nods, heads for the energy drinks.

VIDEO COORDINATOR (CONT'D)
 Push the bunkbeds together. We got a long night.

Theresa walks past them. We stay with her through a corridor, where she eventually reaches:

INT. OWNER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Theresa leans in the doorframe, signaling a fleeting visit. Al hangs up the phone upon her arrival.

AL
 (re: phone call)
 That was Mount Sinai. Your grandpa's ankles are swelling up again.

THERESA
(perfunctory)
That can't be good.

AL
I'm gonna try and get up there.

THERESA
I can just send Harry. He's not
doing anything.

AL
He's had a tough life, your
grandpa.

THERESA
Yeah, well, he made everyone else's
tougher.

Al looks over, falling into a trance--

AL
Ever tell ya: you were twelve,
thirteen maybe, he went in for
surgery. Got an infection. But it
was the start of the season here,
and I going through my second
divorce. Nine months, he was in
the hospital. No one went to see
him. Not once.

(short beat, then)
So, maybe he's filled with
resentment 'cause it's the only
thing that ever paid him any mind.

THERESA
Well, just let me know. I can send
Harry.

AL
You're awfully subtle about wanting
him outta the house.

THERESA
(as she leaves)
Yeah, not like you. You spent all
your time with your wives, I'm
sure.

INT. THERESA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Theresa lays in a disheveled bed next to Rashad, hair mussed. The owner's daughter and the team's GM - an affair for the ages.

RASHAD

You want breakfast or something?

THERESA

You know what I was thinking? After you hire Winston, I'll get promoted to VP. But in the meantime, Forbes' "30 under 30" is coming out soon. What do you think? Are you still close with that editor?

RASHAD

I mean, we went to school together.

THERESA

So, what does that mean?

RASHAD

I'm just considering the optics.

THERESA

Optics? I mean, I think it looks like you're supporting a friend's fucking career. That's what I think of the optics.

Sensing the storm a-brewing, he quickly retreats--

RASHAD

No, shit, you're right. I'll give him a call.

THERESA

Oh, you'll give him a call? What about the optics?

She SCOFFS, rises.

THERESA (CONT'D)

You know what? This is beginning to feel awfully fucking one-sided!

RASHAD

We're keeping score?

She hurls a pillow at his face.

THERESA

I see this -- I see what's going on. I'm not part of the boys' club, that's it. It's all smoke-filled rooms and old fashioned and throat clearings. Well, I'm sorry a woman had to break up the fucking picture!

She exits to the bathroom, SLAMMING the door behind her.

EXT. TRINITY COUNSELING CENTER - AFTERNOON

Brett exits a mental health facility, brochure in hand, hat tilted low. As he reaches the family truck:

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

When'd you get into town? I didn't hear the parade.

Brett turns to find SAMANTHA SCHULTZ (22) nearby. Tan, athletic -- the one who got away.

BRETT

Samantha! Hey, holy shit! I didn't know you still lived here.

As they hug:

SAMANTHA

Well, there's a less rude way to say that.

BRETT

Sorry, I didn't-- I mean, how you been?

SAMANTHA

(re: mental health facility)

What, are you still working out the trauma caused by your high school girlfriend?

BRETT

She left me better than she found me.

SAMANTHA

Well, I just got off work. You need to talk or anything? I know which shoulder you like to cry on.

BRETT

(re: brochure)

No, it's for my dad, you know.
He's fine, but some of his
teammates, with CTE, you hear about
depression and stuff.

SAMANTHA

Oh, right. Scary. Well, how are
you? What's new? I only see you
for three hours on Sunday.

BRETT

I'd be better by there was a river
in front of me and a Sam Schultz
beside me. What do you think?

SAMANTHA

I think I've seen your contract.
So lunch first, then the river.

They share a smile.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Al, Rashad, the scouting department, and player personnel
occupy a long table.

At the other end, swimming in a gray sweatshirt, is ERNIE
SECO (60s). Al is the only one with heightened interest.

RASHAD

So, how do you plan to implement
PFF scores into your evaluation?

ERNIE SECO

(clears throat)

Well, uh, we plan to be multi-
dimensional. Different fronts.
And, uh, you know, we'll get in
here, see where the pieces fit.

The interviewers await the rest of the answer, but evidently,
that was it.

RASHAD

...Dame? You had something?

DAMIEN

(consulting notes)

Yeah, in New York, you averaged the
lowest yards per attempt.

(MORE)

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

Just wondering if you think that was play-calling, or personnel-based?

ERNIE SECO

Uh, well, geez. I didn't know that stat, to be honest. But I thought we put our guys in a position to make plays.

AL

Absolutely, and we're not expecting you to take us through the play sheet--

RASHAD

-- One more for me. We talk a lot about establishing culture here in Minnesota. So what principles do you think are emblematic of a winning football team?

The veteran coach seems like he's trekking through four feet of snow--

ERNIE SECO

Uhh, well, you know, guys gotta know where they stand. Maintain good attitudes. Those sorts of things.

Vacuous stares around the room.

AL

Elwood? Got anything?

ELWOOD

What, sir, was your impression of "Meathead" in--

AL

-- Okay. Anyone else?

THERESA

I have something.

(to Ernie)

Hi. Theresa Lawrence. Revenue. I'm wondering: what goes into producing an exciting product our fans will want to spend the few hundred dollars to come see?

ERNIE SECO

Oh, well, I'm not sure about--
certainly winning football games
helps.

AL

And we'll worry about the car
commercials later. But we
appreciate you coming in today.
Like to get someone in the door
soon, so we'll be in touch over the
next few days.

Ernie nods, relieved the stoning has concluded.

INT. OWNER'S OFFICE - LATER

Rashad, feeling vindicated, trails Al inside.

RASHAD

So what'd you think?

AL

(settling into chair)
Good. Said some good things...

RASHAD

Yeah? Well, Winston's on-deck, and
we got Zimmer on Thursday.

Al deliberates for a beat.

AL

No, you know what? Cancel 'em.
Get Jimmy Sexton on the line and
find the number.

RASHAD

(bewildered)
What? For-- who? For Seco? You
wanna hire that guy?

AL

Guess we gotta talk to Winston with
the Rooney Rule thing. Maybe do it
over the phone.

RASHAD

(erupting)
We just spent thirty minutes
watching a man lost at fucking sea!

AL

He's gonna bring his hard hat and lunch pail every day. And I believe in him. Just like I believed in you. So--

RASHAD

-- This isn't believing in me! This is you giving me an iPad and telling me to take a seat.

AL

Ernie's steady.

RASHAD

Steady?! Man...

(shakes head, calming self)

We wanna do something special, we can't just rinse and repeat. The Seco's of the world, those old, steady-hands -- they've all left the business. And you're the only one who doesn't see it.

Rashad abruptly turns and storms out.

EXT. DOCK - SUNSET

It's the time in February where twilight comes early and often, but heat still lingers from the day. Brett and Samantha sit on the dock's edge, feet in the Conasauga River.

BRETT

You remember this? Back when there was an afternoon?

SAMANTHA

What, they don't get 'em in the Midwest?

BRETT

It's practice, it's film, it's weights. But never an afternoon.

SAMANTHA

Fame's made you reflective.

BRETT

My girlfriend in high school used to do the thinking for me.

SAMANTHA

(smiles, then)

And look where it got you. Now, you can visit a past life, and the little ol' town you outgrew.

BRETT

(skipping rock)

It's all the same life.

SAMANTHA

Mmm, no it isn't. Not when you're a professional athlete. I want to go to a game. That way, I can turn to the person next to me, and say, (pointing to own shoulder) "That's the place Brett Castnor once stood."

BRETT

I know I wouldn't be here without you.

SAMANTHA

Never taught you how to say thank you, did I? Or how to lie, apparently.

BRETT

What's that supposed to--

SAMANTHA

-- You weren't at the clinic for your dad, Brett. You are aware I know you better than anyone, right?

His face falls.

BRETT

Unfortunately, I do.

SAMANTHA

Good. Plus, I kinda called the clinic after we left.

(then)

So what'd they say?

BRETT

It was nothing. I just... thought I'd get another perspective. I'm fine. Really. Sometimes I get migraines. And maybe I didn't one-hundred percent know if I was okay before. But now I do.

SAMANTHA

You know you can talk to me...

BRETT

I know. I know, but for the first
time in a while, I just want to
have an afternoon.

He smiles at her and they look out over the sparkling
current.