

FINAL SCORE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE:

"FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP"

The bleachers are packed with excited fans SCREAMING and CHEERING, waiting to erupt in celebration or disappointment.

The SCOREBOARD reads East Orlando High, fifty-seven, Jacksonville Catholic High, fifty-eight with ten seconds remaining in the fourth quarter.

The EAST ORLANDO HIGH TEAM huddles around COACH DUNNING (35). He's tough, but easy going.

JORDAN SYKES (18), a confident, tall, scrawny but athletically built teen, attentively watches as Coach Dunning calmly draws up a play on the clipboard.

COACH DUNNING

(points to each position
on clipboard)

Sean you take the ball out. Drew, I want you to come over and set a pin down screen on Jordan's defender.

Jordan, you pop up to the top of the key and Sean will inbound it to you. Everybody clear out, and Jordan you do what you do best.

Jordan nods, confidently.

DREW TOWNSON (18), high strung, bitterly scowls at Jordan. He scoffs and interrupts Coach Dunning.

DREW

No, give me the ball. I want the last shot. Their whole team is going to load up on Jordan---

COACH DUNNING

If you didn't get beat by your man for a layup, we wouldn't be in this position! I'm going with the guy with thirty points that got us here, not the one who is two for twelve and couldn't throw the ball into the ocean if I put him in the water.

JORDAN
(to Drew)
Chill man, I got this.

Drew gets in Jordan's face, ready to fight.

DREW
Don't tell me to chill. I got this!
It was my team before you got here.

JORDAN
Your team was getting its ass
kicked before I got here!

DREW
FUCK YOU!

JORDAN
FUCK YOU! Punk ass BITCH!

They shove each other and their teammates separate them.

COACH DUNNING
Drew you're out! Simmons, you're in
for him.

The HORN sounds signaling the end of the time-out.

Drew and Jordan continue to glare at one another. They still want to go at it, but Jordan knows he has a job to finish.

The referee hands the ball to Sean. He passes to Jordan. He holds it for a couple of seconds as he sizes up the defender.

He performs a streetball, ankle breaking move to beat the defender; then pulls up and shoots a jump shot...

The clock ticks down... 3... 2... 1, the HORN sounds as the ball swishes through the net. GAME OVER. East Orlando High wins the championship.

The CROWD goes crazy.

Jordan's teammates rush the court and mob him in celebration. Drew watches with envy as they lift Jordan on their shoulders. He goes straight to the locker room.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE:

"ONE WEEK LATER"

The seats are packed with STUDENTS filled with anxious excitement.

The PEP BAND plays the school fight song.

Jordan sits at a table flanked by his PARENTS, MR. and MRS. SYKES, (45), and Coach Dunning.

His high school teammates stand behind him. All of them look happy for him, except Drew.

A sea of MEDIA members are set up with their cameras in front of him ready to capture the moment.

Jordan looks down at his hand written notes.

JORDAN

(reads confidently)

Thank you all for being here to witness one of the biggest moments in my life. After praying and consulting with my parents, I have decided to accept a full athletic scholarship to Orlando State University. This is the best place for me and my family.

His Mom hugs him. A confused HUSH falls over the crowd.

REPORTER #1

(perplexed)

Why did you choose the Vikings?

JORDAN

I want to stay home and play in front of my family and friends.

REPORTER #2

You're the number one high school prospect in the nation. You could have played at any of the blue-blood programs that are a pipeline to the pros. Can you still make the League from an obscure, futile program like Orlando State?

JORDAN

(borderline arrogant)

If you have talent... the pro scouts will find you wherever you are. This is a chance to bring the spotlight to my hometown and put us on the map for hoops.

(MORE)

JORDAN (CONT'D)

The central Florida area should be known for more than theme parks, orange groves and tropical storms.

Drew rolls his eyes as he stewes in his jealousy.

INT. AMWAY CENTER (ORLANDO, FL) - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE:

"ONE YEAR LATER"

The SCOREBOARD reads Vikings forty-five, Titans thirty-nine, with five minutes and thirty seconds remaining in the second half.

The REFEREE hands ERIC SMITH (18), a.k.a Smitty, a shy, modest, six foot nine inch, athletically built man-child, the ball. He in-bounds to Jordan.

Jordan fakes out the defender and goes around him, stops on a dime and shoots a jump shot. It goes in nothing but net.

Jordan intercepts the Titans ensuing inbound pass then throws a pass to Eric who SLAMS it home. They point at each other and exchange a look, expressing just how in sync they are.

The Vikings force the Titans to turn the ball over time after time and quickly convert them into points. The blowout is on.

SAME SCENE - FIVE MINUTES LATER

The clock ticks down and hits zero. The HORN sounds.

The scoreboard reads, Vikings seventy-five. Titans fifty-five.

The ORLANDO STATE fans celebrate as the VIKINGS PLAYERS mob Jordan and Eric at mid-court.

COACH MIRANDA (40), physically imposing, belligerent and ornery with a short fuse, looks annoyed as he watches Jordan gloat in the adulation from his teammates.

A SIDELINE REPORTER and a CAMERAMAN make their way through the celebration to interview Jordan.

SIDELINE REPORTER

Jordan, you guys started slowly, but eventually you looked like the team that is destined to win the National Championship.

(MORE)

SIDELINE REPORTER (CONT'D)

Not many experts thought this team could play you guys as close as they did.

JORDAN

We didn't think so either. But, we needed this kind of game to refocus us. We'll be better the rest of the tournament.

SIDELINE REPORTER

You guys have already won the first conference title for the school in twenty years, now you're just one win away from going to Miami for the national finals for the first time ever. What do you guys have to do to get it done?

JORDAN

Just have one more point than the other guys when the final score is put up.

SIDELINE REPORTER

You guys are the overwhelming favorites, is it championship or bust?

JORDAN

We're the number one ranked team in the country, with the top two freshmen and pro prospects in America. We better win it all.

Coach Miranda interrupts and pulls Jordan aside.

COACH MIRANDA

(annoyed)

Cool it with the arrogance.

JORDAN

I'm confident, not arrogant. That's why you recruited me here, to infuse this program with some life.

COACH MIRANDA

Tone it down. You're giving people reasons to hate us. When people start to hate you, they go out of there way to stop you.

The two square off, exchanging icy stares.

Coach Miranda glares at him as he walks away. Jordan pays him no attention and rejoins the celebration.

INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Dark and dingy. Small college campus housing.

An out-of-shape, disheveled Drew, sits on an old recliner and watches Jordan and Orlando State celebrate on TELEVISION. He throws his half-eaten bowl of ramen noodles at the screen.

DREW

That should be me!

Trey (18) timid, loyal, LAUGHS at him. He puffs on a MARIJUANA JOINT and plays beer-pong with SAM (20), goofy.

TREY

Here we go again with this shit.

DREW

(agitated)

I'm serious. If he wouldn't have transferred to my high school senior year and stole my shine, they would've offered me that scholarship.

Trey dismisses him and continues to play beer-pong and smoke.

SAM

If you were good enough to play division one ball, another school on that level would've offered you a scholarship and you wouldn't be slumming it at our tiny, rundown, Division Three school.

DREW

No. If Jordan wasn't such a selfish, arrogant prick who kissed our coaches' ass, coach wouldn't have turned his back on me.

SAM

(mockingly)

Entertain me. Why would your coach do that to you?

Trey glares at Sam, annoyed he asked.

DREW

Coach is one of those people who believes everything revolves around him, not the players. As soon as he got a puppet that could do what I could do and play his game, he made my life hell.

The room falls uncomfortably silent.

TREY

(beat)

We all had that "other guy" in high school that got all the shine. It happens. But, we're still college basketball stars. Regardless of how small the school.

DREW

(depressed)

I even lost my lady.

Trey shakes his head in disgust.

DREW (CONT'D)

Why the FUCK are you shaking your head?

TREY

This is depressing. You talk about it whenever this dude is on television. You're like a groupie he banged and never called back.

DREW

FUCK YOU!

Several AGGRESSIVE KNOCKS on the front door startles them.

SAM

Who the hell is that knocking like they're the damn police?

Drew panics. He sprays air freshener throughout the room.

DREW

Put the weed away.

Trey scrambles to hide the weed and the alcohol.

The KNOCKS get LOUDER, then the door BURST open. MISTER KULL, a surly, middle aged man enters with an ORLANDO POLICE OFFICER.

MISTER KULL

You're three months late on your rent. I told you last month if you didn't pay I was putting you out!

DREW

(pleads)

I just need a little more time. I got all of this tuition and books to pay for. Division Three players don't get scholarships.

Trey goes to the refrigerator and opens it.

TREY

Look, we can't even afford food.

Mister Kull takes a moment and looks Trey deep in the eyes. A look of empathy fills his face and he gives in.

MISTER KULL

You got two weeks. I don't know how you're going to find almost twenty five hundred dollars in that time.

DREW

I'll figure something out.

MISTER KULL

I don't care how, just get my money.

He storms out. The Officer points his fingers to his eyes then to them, signaling he'll be watching them as he exits.

TREY

Where the hell are we going to find that kind of money that quickly?

Drew shrugs and drops his head, dejected.

EXT. AMWAY CENTER - NIGHT

Jordan and his Viking teammates make their way to the team bus through a throng of screaming FANS. Jordan signs autographs and takes pictures with several of them.

A DERANGED MAN forces his way through the crowd.

He makes his way toward Jordan and lunges at him, but SECURITY quickly tackles him before he can harm him. They quickly drag him away.

