

Glory Road



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**An Adapted Screenplay for PG use
Based on a True Story
by
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Section 1

EXT. OKLAHOMA – SERIES OF IMAGES – 1950'S – DAY

Little Jimmy Dickens plays "Country Boy". We see farmers and oil wells, railroad tracks in a dusty landscape.

INT. BEDROOM – SOMEWHERE IN ENID, OKLAHOMA – DAY

Don Haskins, a tall, Oklahoma boy, 18, dresses into a bad rental tuxedo for the prom: he admires the velveteen lapels.

EXT. "ENID FEED AND GRAIN STORE" – SAME TIME

A "WHITES ONLY" drinking fountain. A sign reads: "You Breed It, We'll Feed It!" Herman Carr, 18, handsome, black, unloads grain bags as convertibles barrel past with laughing, white high school kids heading to the prom. He watches with yearning. The store's owner comes out. Carr quickly turns back to his work.

INT. ENID HIGH SCHOOL GYM AND AUDITORIUM – THAT SAME NIGHT

Teens dance to country music. A line at the girl's bathroom. Mary Gorman, 17, pretty, comes out and goes to the punch bowl looking for someone. We hear a bouncing basketball. She moves to a curtain dividing the auditorium and peeks behind it. On the other side, Don Haskins obsessively drills free throws into a hoop. She rolls her eyes and smiles.

MARY

Don Haskins! Come on. Dance with me.

[Later on the dance floor... Haskins and Mary dance together.]

HASKINS

(in a heavy Oklahoma drawl) I'm sure havin' a good time, Mary.

MARY

Me too, Don.

HASKINS

Did I tell you I got accepted to A & M?

MARY

Just about ten times tonight.

HASKINS

Guess I'm just excited.

MARY

Oh, it'll be nice for you—goin' off to college. Much as you love to play basketball. Sometimes I think there's nothing you love more...

HASKINS

No, Mary, I—I love you... too... Fact is, there's somethin' I'm wantin' to ask a long time now—and I don't always say things right—but Mary, you're my girl. I want to spend my life with you—will you marry me?

MARY

(a slow beaming smile) Guess I'll take second place—for now.

[He picks her up and twirls her in the air on the dance floor.]

EXT. ENID FEED AND GRAIN—LOADING AREA—NEXT DAY

Haskins and Carr play basketball behind the store.

CARR

Brother, you fall hard. But—Mary's a nice girl. She'll make you a good wife.

HASKINS

Yeah, yeah. Come on: last point.

[Carr lifts off with breathtaking agility. The ball floats through the net. Haskins groans. Carr grins back]

CARR

You hate to lose, man.

HASKINS

I don't hate to lose, I just like to win. My Daddy always drummed it into me: 'You play to win'.

CARR

(looks at basket, thoughtfully) You ever get that feeling when you're playing?—that feeling like you're moving like Sam Cooke sings. Sounds funny, but when I play—I feel like that.

HASKINS

Sam Cooke? Is he from Enid?

CARR

Brother, you one Okie.

HASKINS

Well, make fun, but I ain't never felt like that. But I reckon' I don't play like you neither. I'll sure be glad when I can play with you not against your skinny butt. Did you get your letter yet from A & M?

CARR

We ain't gonna be playin' together.

HASKINS

What do you mean?

CARR

I got my letter. They don't play black folk. Told me to stay home and work my job.

HASKINS

They can't do that! You're the best player in the state.

CARR

Guess that don't matter.

HASKINS

Well—if you ain't goin' neither am I!

CARR

Stop talkin' like a fool, man! Playin' basketball's your life. You better be goin'! At least—At least one of us—

HASKINS

(pained for him) What are you gonna do now, Herman?

CARR

I'll be alright. You know. That's just how it goes. Wasn't my time.

HASKINS

But it just ain't right. Wish there was somethin' I could do.

CARR

Play for me, Don. You make it big, alright? You go all the way, Don.

[Don nods. Carr pulls him in, emotional. They embrace.]

HASKINS

I better go now.

[Carr nods, tight. Don turns to his car. He gets in and starts the engine. Carr comes out as Don pulls away. Don looks in the mirror and sees Carr on the sidewalk, broom in hand, next to the "Whites Only" drinking fountain.]

INT. OKLAHOMA A & M – SPORTS ARENA – TWO YEARS LATER

Mary is in the stands, cradling a newborn. She watches Haskins sink a shot. The crowd goes wild. The opposition loses the ball and Haskins goes after it fiercely, colliding with a Texas player. The crowd rises as Haskins falls back, hitting on his elbow. Mary gasps. Don lies writhing, clasping his arm.

INT. BUICK – MOVING – TEXAS HIGHWAY – DAY

Don drives to Buck Owens and Rose Maddox's "Mental Cruelty". Mary holds a new baby in her arms. Their first son bounces in the back as they pass a sign: "BENJAMIN, TEXAS. POP 250."

HASKINS

It'll be great, honey! I'll coach. We'll have a house with a yard for the kids! They'll even let me drive the bus to make ends meet! Honey, it'll be paradise!

INT. GYM – FORT WORTH – STATE CHAMPIONSHIP – MONTHS LATER

Haskins exhorts the Benjamin Girls Team playing the defending state champs. The clock runs down as the crowd, cheers.

HASKINS

Winnaker! Get on Robinson! Play the ball! What are you doin' out there! You're not stickin' to your man. What are you, a bunch of girls? Come on, hustle.

[In the crowd, George McCarty, a collegiate athletic director sits watching Haskins with interest. The buzzer sounds. The girls leap in the air. Swarming around Haskins, they try to lift the big man on their shoulders, but quickly collapse under his weight.]

INT. HASKINS HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Trophies line a shelf. Don watches TV. On screen is a NCAA game: Adolph Rupp, the legendary coach of the Kentucky Wildcats, an arena full of screaming fans.

TELEVISION ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The 'Baron of the Bluegrass', Adolph Rupp, does it again! Winning the Southern conference berth and returning to the NCAA Tournament for the thirtieth time. The question now is: can Rupp, the greatest coach in the game, win an unprecedented fifth National Championship?

[Haskins flicks off the TV, moody as Mary enters.]

HASKINS

There's gotta be more than this, Mary—more than Benjamin, Texas.

MARY

Always restless. Always gotta have better. You got a family now. You're a winning coach. Is that so bad?

INT. HASKINS HOUSE – DAY

On the television, we see young Bill Cosby and Robert Culp as gun toting partners in the "I Spy" series. Through the window outside, Don is coaching his three year old son, Mark.

HASKINS

Come on! I pass, you catch and put it up!

[Don zips a ridiculous pass at Mark. It bounces off his chest.]

HASKINS

Catch it with your hands—not your arms!

[Mark's lips quiver and he cries. Haskins tries to console him as Mary comes and takes him, flashing a look. Haskins goes in and stops at the TV as the old crank phone on the wall rings. He picks up; we hear a voice.]

Dr. RAY (V.O.)

This is Dr. Ray at Texas Western University. We'd like to speak to you about an opportunity.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE – TEXAS WESTERN UNIVERSITY – DAY

Dr. Ray, college president, sits with George McCarty, the University's Athletic Director, facing a neatly combed Haskins.

DR. RAY

I'm pleased to hear you're interested in the coaching job, Mr. Haskins. The Texas Athletic Association recommended we take a look at you. McCarty here caught your last championship game. He says you're a winner.

HASKINS

Yes, sir. I sure 'preciate that.

DR. RAY

We're a small school and we can't pay very much. You'd have to live in the men's dorm with your family. But you get free meals at the cafeteria. How's that sound?

HASKINS

If that's what it takes to coach Division One Basketball, that's alright with me.

DR. RAY

(shaking his hand; smile) Welcome to Texas Western.

INT. DON'S BUICK – Moving – TEXAS INTERSTATE – DAY

Mary holds a new baby. Two sons in back, they tow a cattle truck of their belongings to Marty Robbins' "El Paso". The town sprawls out in the middle of vast, desolate nothingness.

HASKINS

Baby, this is a step up. It's college basketball! We're in the big time now!

EXT. TEXAS WESTERN CAMPUS – OUTSIDE MINERS DORMS – DAY

Families drop off their kids with suitcases and hugs and tears as Don's Buick pulls up. Haskins gets out. A dark haired boy, Jerry Armstrong, stands with his father, a hard farming type.

ARMSTRONG FATHER

How long you gonna waste your time, boy? Playin' a kids game when you got your whole future right there on the farm?

JERRY ARMSTRONG

I made up my mind, Pa. It's what I wanna do.

[Don notes it and walks ahead when he hears a whistle and turns. Mary is surrounded by kids and suitcases. He turns, sheepish.]

HASKINS

Sorry, baby. Guess I'm just excited.

INT. MINERS DORM HALLWAY – MOMENTS LATER

Rowdy students run past. Don walks with Moe “Squeaky” Iba, 25, a very short, earnest Assistant Coach with horn-rimmed glasses. His voice is high, hence the unfortunate nickname.

MOE

We’re clearing out our best rooms for you, Mr. Haskins. I think you and your family are gonna like it.

[He opens a door to a room full of taxidermy and fishing gear. An alligator hangs from the ceiling. Ross Moore, Team Trainer, 65, a wild grinning Cajun with crew cut, stands in his underwear.]

MOE

This is Ross Moore, Our team trainer. He’s movin’ to a smaller room down the hall.

HASKINS

I hate to put you out—

ROSS

Don’t you worry about a thing. I’m even willing to lend you my prize gator here. Makes a real nice ceiling ornament.

HASKINS

(Eyeing the snarling gator) That’s real kind of you, Ross. But the wife doesn’t take to wildlife too much. But I thank you. I do.

EXT. MINERS HALL KITCHEN – SAME TIME

Mary stands with her baby as Guadalupe, a domestic from Juarez, is warming milk, smiling at the baby.

GUADALUPE

Qué cariño. Can I hold him?

[Guadalupe radiates so much warmth that Mary hands her the baby. Guadalupe coos with the baby. Mary smiles, happy.]

INT. “MEMORIAL GYM” – TEXAS WESTERN – NEXT DAY

Moe walks with Don into Memorial Gym. A bunch of short, slow white guys pass the ball around.

MOE

Got some good players. Signed Baudoin outta Albuquerque. Put up twenty a game last year. Got us a strong farm boy outta Missouri, too. Kid named Armstrong.

[The gym has worn seats, loose boards, crooked rims, threadbare nets. Lights buzz and flicker. Hardly a place of champions.]

MOE

David Palacio’s the top prep scorer in El Paso. Still waiting on some junior college transfers. And on Taco Night—we get a real good crowd.

HASKINS

Taco night? My girls had better moves than these kids. What’s in the budget for recruiting?

MOE

The budget’s in the lights.

INT. GEORGE MCCARTY’S OFFICE – DAY

Don stands across from McCarty, the Athletic Director.

HASKINS

How in Sam-heck can I put a winning team on the floor when I got no players and no budget to get them?

MCCARTY

I could shake down a few more bucks from the boosters. Get a couple scholarships.

HASKINS

A few bucks?!? I can't go recruit with one or two scholarships.

MCCARTY

Don, you know darn well we ain't Kansas, Duke, Kentucky. We're a poor school. We can't afford blue chip players, and they wouldn't want to play in this dusty town even if we could. Reality is, we're lucky to put a decent team on the court.

HASKINS

Well, decent ain't good enough for me. I play to win.

INT/EXT. SERIES OF IMAGES – EL PASO – DAY/NIGHT

Don drives by the Rio Grande; through night time streets; to the top of Mt. Franklin; staring out, discontent.

EXT. GAS STATION – NIGHT

Don stands by his car in a jacket with "Miners" logo. Two fans, White and Hispanic, look at him from their pick-up truck.

HISPANIC FAN

Hey, you're the new coach. Gonna get us some wins this year?

HASKINS

I'll do my best.

WHITE FAN

Good luck, man. You're gonna need it.

[Don nods, depressed. They laugh and drive off.]

EXT. DON'S BUICK – DRIVING – EL PASO – LATER THAT NIGHT

Don stops as something catches his eye: a black teenager on a basketball court. Don watches the boy lift into the air and soar. We flash to the image of Herman Carr clearing the rim. As Carr jams the ball into the hoop, Haskins watches the boy lay the ball off the board in a silky motion.

INT. EL PASO BAR – LATER THAT NIGHT

Martin Luther King is seen on television, as he speaks at a rally in D.C. Haskins sits with Moe and Ross at a table.

MOE

You're beatin' a dead horse, Coach. We're never gonna compete with the Kentucky's of the world.

ROSS

Best players won't even look at us.

HASKINS

Best white players, you mean.

ROSS

Say that again, Sonny?

HASKINS

Best players aren't all white. (looks around at them)

What if we find us the best black talent in the country and bring 'em here?

MOE

You got to be joking. Why would you wanna go do a thing like that?

HASKINS

I don't care what color anybody is, black, white, green. If they can play, they can play for me.

MOE

How many are you talkin' about?

HASKINS

As many as we can get.

MOE

Coach, there are rules—unwritten rules. You know the quotas. 'One at home. Two on the road. Three when you're losing. But loading up on black kids: it just isn't done.

HASKINS

Who cares about rules? Rules are meant to be broken.

ROSS

Now you listen, Sonny. You bring in a bunch of colored boys—you risk the whole program.

HASKINS

I'm not afraid of risks. I'm not afraid to gamble. Not if it means winning.

INT. JUNIOR COLLEGE NATIONALS – ATLANTA – NIGHT

Close up: Bobby Joe Hill, a black kid from Detroit with a fancy conk, leans back on a sideline bench in the middle of a noisy Junior College Nationals game, dozing, half-asleep. On the floor, all of the players are white. They play the super conservative, pass and set-shot ball of the day. In the stands, Don sits with Moe and Ross.

MOE

Three days, nine games, and you ain't liked nobody yet.

HASKINS

I'm waitin' on that guard.

ROSS

That kid? He looks asleep!

HASKINS

'Cause nobody's playin' him.

[On the court, the team is being destroyed. The coach gruffly shakes Bobby Joe awake and signals him into the game. Bobby Joe, once awake, has intelligent, playful eyes and a cocky demeanor. He quickly takes the court. Immediately the game changes. Lightning quick, he finds openings where there aren't any and dribbles past players with dazzling speed.]

HASKINS

That's the one. Let's us go talk to him.

INT. TOURNAMENT OFFICE – LATER

Haskins stands with a beer-belly redneck Tournament Director

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

You wanna talk to Bobby Joe Hill? You can't win playin' *their* game. Can't control 'em. Sure they can jump, but they can't lead. That boy is particular. He's just a no-account smart mouth. Showboatin' like a Globetrotter clown.

HASKINS

Just tell me where to find him.

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

Y'all must be real hard up.

EXT. LOCKER ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Bobby Joe Hill is clearing his locker. Don walks up with Moe and Ross. Bobby Joe sees them, wary.

HASKINS

I'm Coach Haskins. I wanna talk to you about playing for me at Texas Western.

BOBBY JOE

Thanks but—I'm done playin' this game.

HASKINS

I'm offerin' a full scholarship.

BOBBY JOE

I know how that works. You sign me and sit your token black player on the bench. I'd rather hang it up, do somethin' else. Ace. Be the next Smokey Robinson. Or I could run for President.

HASKINS

I watched you out there. You got somethin' special. Why would you throw it away?

BOBBY JOE

Because ever since I was a kid I only loved one thing and that was playin' ball. But being a black mascot, ridin' the bench like some Stepin' Fetchit while White brothers with half my game get the glory may be good enough for most brothers, but not for Bobby Joe Hill, not anymore. I'll walk away from the game rather than play that crap. *(He grabs his duffle bag and walks out of the locker room)*

INT. ARENA HALL – MOMENTS LATER

Haskins follows Hill, trying to keep up.

HASKINS

I didn't come here to sit you on the bench. I intend to let you play—to play with other black men.

BOBBY JOE

What are you thinkin', Jack?

HASKINS

I ain't thinkin' nuthin', Bubba. Now you just told me about a big ol' dream you have. I can let you play, and I can help you make that dream come true faster than a twister'll take your socks off.

BOBBY JOE

You know, you talk funny.

HASKINS

So do you.

BOBBY JOE

What's this team anyway?

HASKINS

The Miners.

BOBBY JOE

I never ever heard of them. They any good?

HASKINS

You can help make them good.

BOBBY JOE

Are you for real, man?

HASKINS

(holding up the papers) Try me.

EXT. DON'S BUICK – DRIVING TENNESSEE FREEWAY – DUSK

A long stretch of highway in the setting sun. Don's Buick seen from way on high over Bobby Fuller's "I Fought The Law".

INT. ROADSIDE BAR – NIGHT

Music continues on juke box. Ross is on a pay phone. Don watches some 'good ol' boys' shoot pool. Moe flips through scouting reports.

MOE

Okay. According to the scouts, here's who we need to see. Harry Flournoy. Indiana. Great rebounder in high school. Gave it up to work in the steel mills. Orsten "Little O" Artis. Can shoot the lights out. Lot of schools want him. David Lattin. He's a long shot. Down in Houston. They say he's a hot head, but he's one of the top big men in the country. Everybody says he's leaning to Tennessee A & I, the all black school.

HASKINS

We'll get him. We have to get him.

MOE

And how we gonna do that? We ain't even got enough gas money to get home.

ROSS

(Ross hangs up the phone and sits down, excited.) I got through to Hilton White in New York. He's got three kids we should look at. Now they're just playground kids, but Hilton knows talent and he says they can play with anybody.

HASKINS

Moe, you're on the first flight out.

MOE

You're sendin' me to New York for some school yard players?! Who's payin' for all this? You gotta be outta your mind.

HASKINS

Bubba, I'm just getting' started.

[Haskins grabs a pool cue and puts a quarter on the pool table.]

HASKINS

Ya'll mind if I give it a run, fellas?

GOOD OL' BOY

We play for real money here, Mister.

[The 'good ol' boy' lays a c-note down, grinning. Ross and Moe watch as Haskins empties his pockets of the last quarter.]

ROSS

What the heck you doin', Coach?

HASKINS

Just layin' down the corn...

[The 'good ol' boy' sinks quick shots, rimming out of the corner pocket. Then, Haskins runs the table—down to the eight ball. The 'good ol' boy' is speechless. Haskins takes the c-note.]

HASKINS

There's one rule in pool, boys: don't play with amputees or strangers. (tossing the money)
Here's your plane fare, Squeaky.

INT. DON'S BUICK – DRIVING ON FREEWAY – DAY

Don and Ross driving. Ross sings to Big Bill Lister "There's a Tear in my Beer" at the top of his voice, annoying Haskins.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE STEEL FACTORY – GARY, INDIANA – DAY

In the car, Haskins and Ross watch two black workers from the mill play one-on-one on concrete with a hoop and no net. Harry Flournoy, tall, powerful, slams in a basket-rattling two point basket. His friend grins, shaking his head. They rap hands.

BLACK FRIEND

You comin' over? I got the new Otis Redding. That cat's on fire, man.

FLOURNOY

Dig, man, but I can't stay long. Mama baked some pie. There's only one piece left and I been thinking about it all day.

HASKINS (O.S.) Hey, Kid—you have a minute?

[Don pulls up, country music blaring.]

FLOURNOY

We don't want no trouble, Mister.

HASKINS

No, you don't understand, just get in the car and we can—

FLOURNOY

Like heck, I'm getting' in no car with a couple' a crackers!

[Haskins stops the car. Flournoy looks at his friend. On cue they both run. Haskins watches them, and drives ahead.]

INT. HARRY FLOURNOY'S HOUSE – KITCHEN – LATER

Harry enters through the back door and flings his factory pail down. His mother carries a tray of coffee to the next room.

FLOURNOY

Hey, Ma. You won't believe happened to me and Alvin. Almost got jumped by a couple of red-necked crackers. (looking around) I'm just dying for that piece of pie.

[Mrs. Flournoy enters the living room with Flournoy following. He stops, shocked when he sees Haskins sitting at a table next to Flournoy's father eating his piece of blueberry pie.]

HASKINS

Ma'am, this is plumb delicious—

[Mrs. Flournoy pushes her speechless son into a chair.]

MRS. FLOURNOY

This is Mr. Haskins. He comes all the way from El Paso, Texas. Wants you to play basketball for him on a scholarship!

FLOURNOY

Play for him? Why would I go to Texas where they soon as string up black men as set off Fourth of July fireworks?

FLOURNOY'S FATHER

Harry's got a good job right here in Gary. At the factory. With me.

FLOURNOY'S MOTHER

But he can get himself an education.

FLOURNOY

And a Texas-sized beating for being black.

HASKINS

El Paso's not like the rest of Texas. We do things different. You'll be playing with other black players.

FLOURNOY

Why should I trust you?

HASKINS

'Cause I mean what I say.

[There is tense silence. Flournoy glares at Haskins.]

FLOURNOY

You ate my pie.

HASKINS

(Haskins leans in close.) Harry, forget about me and your parents. What is it that you really want?

FLOURNOY

What anybody wants: dignity...respect—

HASKINS

That's what this is all about. You can earn that for yourself by doing what you were born to do. *(Haskins slides the commitment papers across the table.)*

FLOURNOY

Papa?

FLOURNOY'S FATHER

They're right, Harry. You have a chance to follow your dream. Don't let it go.

[Flournoy looks at his father with emotion and signs the paper.]

EXT. YMCA PARKING LOT – LATER THAT DAY

Haskins' car pulls up in front of the YMCA and parks.

INT. YMCA GYM – MOMENTS LATER

Orsten Artis, a good looking player with a smooth, easy manner sinks a shot with a bevy of girls swooning. Haskins beside him.

ORSTEN

I got lots of offers. But I just made up my mind to play with the Globetrotters.

HASKINS

And act the fool with *your* talent? What I'm offering you is better. I can make you a champion.

ORSTEN

Is this a joke?

HASKINS

I never joke about winning. *(Haskins lays a letter of intent on the free throw line.)*

HASKINS

Tell you what. I'm not really a gamblin' man, but—how 'bout we shoot for it? Best of twenty. You win, and I'm outta here; I win, you play for me.

ORSTEN

You want to take me on?!

HASKINS

That's the general idea.

ORSTEN

Let's do it.

[Orsten shoots as his friends count along. He misses the last shot and tosses the ball to Haskins, cocky.]

ORSTEN

It's all yours cowboy.

[Haskins first shot rims and drops in. Orsten and friends' expressions change as Haskins drills shot after shot. Orsten's mouth is agape as the last shot slithers through.]

Section 2

EXT. FREEWAY – DAY

Don's Buick barrels into frame and disappears down the highway. We hear Tammy Wynette's "My Elusive Dreams".

EXT. NEW YORK STREET – PLAYGROUND – DAY

Moe stands at a phone booth while three black players blur past in the background shooting baskets with amazing skill.

MOE

These New York kids may be from the street but they sure can play! Little guard plays like he's a giant. Forward who runs like an antelope. A swing man who can play anywhere! Never seen anything like 'em!

HASKINS (V.O.)

When can you have them out?

MOE

Week maybe. How's it going with Lattin? We got to have a big man.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH – TEXAS – GAS STATION – SAME TIME

Don stands, one hand covering his ear from traffic noise.

HASKINS

The odds are long, but I got one more roll in these dice.

EXT. ATHLETICS OFFICE – TENNESSEE A&I – DAY

Haskins sits with A & I black coach. Beside him is David Lattin, huge, powerful, with shaved head and intimidating self-assurance.

HASKINS

David, this is a good school, and they give lots of players a chance they wouldn't get somewhere else. But it's still just the black league. You're not out there being tested in the real world. David—the way you

play—you could be the next Bill Russell. But you'll never know unless you play NCAA competition and win. And frankly, that means playing the best white centers in the country and beating them.

LATTIN

I can beat any white boy. Big Daddy D can play with anyone.

HASKINS

Then prove it. Sign with me.

COACH

How's he gonna play anybody at all at Texas Western? A red-neck town with a team that's never won? We know that game. You'll take David and make him ride the bench like any plantation slave.

LATTIN

You think I could be the next Bill Russell?

HASKINS

You play for me, and I promise you'll get that chance.

LATTIN

You're too late. I already made up my mind. I'm signing with Tennessee.

[The coach smiles at Haskins, smug. Haskins finally nods.]

HASKINS

So that's how it is, huh? You're better than this, David. You change your mind, you call me—you hear? Just call.

INT. SCHOOL VAN – MOVING – EL PASO – LATER THAT DAY

Ross drives the New York players and Moe. Willie Worsley, short, urbanite, militant, with a 'Napoleon complex' sits next to Moe who is eyeing Worsley's high-heeled boots.

WORSLEY

What you lookin' at? I sky with anyone.

MOE

I know that, Willie

[In the back row is Willie "Scoops" Cager, a lanky player with a cocky attitude and a good heart. His childhood friend and protégé, Nevil Shed a tall, skinny "Mama's boy" beside him. They pass tumbleweeds and waterless Rio Grande.]

SHED

This don't exactly look like them *Lone Ranger* movies. You know, with them rollin' hills and huge prairies.

CAGER

Where the heck is this Coach bringin' us?

ROSS

El Paso, Texas, God's country.

SHED

If this is God's country, good Lord must be mad at somethin'.

ROSS

There ain't a place like El Paso. Beautiful West Texas sunlight three hundred and thirty days a year. It's 'bout heaven on earth.

[They almost believe him. Then a pick-up truck full of roosters swerves ahead. Chickens fly over the van as Ross curses something Cajun. The players are jolted back to reality.]

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CAFETERIA – THAT EVENING.

Five white players look into the cafeteria through a window in the door: Jerry Armstrong, the farm boy we saw with his father; Dick Myers, a tall, clean-cut Kansan; David Palacio, a tough, proud Hispanic with a gold cross around his neck; Louis “Flip” Baudoin, a prankster with buzz-cut and horn rimmed glasses, and Togo Railey, a skinny kid who brings more enthusiasm than game.

BAUDOIN

Well, look who’s just come to dinner.

ARMSTRONG

Those our new team mates?

MYERS

There’s more blacks than us whites! How’s he gonna play all them players?

PALACIO

You think Coach knows what he’s doing?

TOGO

He said things are gonna be different this year. Guess he wasn’t kidding.

INT. STUDENT DINING HALL – CAFETERIA – MOMENTS LATER

Nevil Shed waits in line, towering over Willie Worsley.

SHED

Don’t that smell good? I can’t wait to eat me a whole tray full of food. This big ol’ boy’s starvin’!

[Meanwhile, the black recruits sit at one end of a table while the white players sit at the other end. They nod a silent greeting. There is an awkward silence and tense smiles.]

BOBBY JOE

Where you brothers from, man?

ARMSTRONG

Missoura. Dick here’s from Kansas.

CAGER

Wow. So you guys had cows, chickens and pigs and stuff.

MYERS

Armstrong’s the farm boy. We just had some sheep, that’s all.

ARMSTRONG

You got animals where you come from?

CAGER

In New York City they got all kinda animals. Most of them talk though.

SHED

[Cafeteria line: Shed looks at the Mexican dishes, confused.] You said it was-- what?!

MEXICAN SERVER

Menudo. Muy bueno.

SHED

I never even heard of that.

[At the table: Togo smiles at the wary Flournoy.]

TOGO

So—you from Harlem or whatever?

FLOURNOY

You think all Blacks are from Harlem?!

PALACIO

Take it easy, cabrón. He didn't mean nothing.

FLOURNOY

Yeah! And so where you from?

PALACIO

From right here—El Paso, Texas.

FLOURNOY

Really? I thought all you people were from Mexico.

CAGER

Peace, man. Brothers, peace.

BAUDOIN

I'm from New Mexico. That's not even considered America.

[He smiles. Flournoy doesn't smile back.]

[Cafeteria Line: The server hands Shed a plate of enchiladas.]

MEXICAN SERVER

Rojo es bueno, si. Muy caliente

SHED

(enunciating clearly) Thank you. Thank you very much. *(At the table: Shed drops his tray down, rubbing his hands.)* This Black is ready to eat ala Mexicana!

[Shed scoops a mouthful of chili smothered enchilada. Blood runs from his face. He lets out an 'I'm on fire' scream and douses his mouth in water as the others laugh.]

INT. DON AND MARY'S KITCHEN – THAT EVENING

Don studies diagrams in playbooks as his sons, Mark and Michael clumsily demonstrate juggling tricks with oranges.

BOYS

Look, Daddy, look, look, Daddy, look!

MARY

Go on, boys, Time for bed. Daddy's got work to do.

[The boys walk out, head hanging. Just then loud music rises from the street. Haskins looks out, puzzled.]

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF DORMITORY – SAME TIME

The wheels of a green Plymouth Fury convertible roll into frame. As the car approaches, a crowd forms around it. In the backseat there are speakers wired to the stereo with the Rolling Stones "Get Off Of My Cloud" playing. The car stops. Door opens, and a pair of white shoes step out. Cager, Worsley, and Orsten come to the front, gaping.

ORSETN

Oooh, Mama, look at them wheels.

CAGER

That brother is stylin'.

[Angle on David Lattin with shaved head, green silk shirt, and Ray Bans, looking around.]

FLOURNOY

That is one bad car.

CAGER

That is one bad man.

[Haskins comes walking outside, looking speechless.]

HASKINS

David? What happened?

LATTIN

I'm the best. I came to be the best.

[Haskins looks back at him a moment. He slowly smiles.]

HASKINS

Welcome to El Paso, David

[They shake hands. The others gather and slap him on the back. Worsley has his hand out held for a shake. Lattin drops his suitcase in Worsley's hand and walks off. Worsley frowns.]

WORSLEY

Mercy Jesus—we in for trouble.

EXT. CAMPUS – THE NEXT MORNING

Ross leads some of the black players across campus.

ROSS

Straight ahead is the gym, fellas.

[Shed and Cager follow. As they pass a mariachi band practicing with guitars and violin, Shed looks at Cager.]

SHED

Willie, we still in America?

INT. MEMORIAL GYM HALLWAY – SAME TIME

Orsten and Worsley pass by friendly, smiling students in cowboy hats. They glance back at them.

EXT. STAIRWAY – DORM HALL – SAME TIME

Bobby Joe comes down as two girls smile at him.

GIRL #1

Groovy. You play for the Miners?

GIRL #2

I didn't know they played Black kids.

BOBBY JOE

If they don't, I took the wrong plane.

INT. LOCKER ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

The black players are dressing. A Hispanic janitor comes in.

JANITOR

You the new players?

BOBBY JOE

The mighty Miners.

JANITOR

Mighty Miners?! This team ain't had a winning season since Pearl Harbor! Mighty Miners. That's funny.

[He walks out, chuckling. The players look at each other grimly.]

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – MOMENTS LATER

The players follow Ross into the rickety gym dressed in grey Russell t-shirts with orange shorts. They look around.

ROSS

This is it. This is the place. Your new home. You boys have no idea the things gonna happen around here.

BOBBY JOE

That's what I'm worried about, bro.

[Ross opens the door of Coach's office. The players look in and see the trophies above Haskins' desk, impressed.]

ROSS

We got lucky findin' Coach Haskins. He won state last year, you know.

CAGER

Yeah, man? No kidding.

ROSS

Had those gals playin' so tough, nobody could stop 'em.

[The players stare at the photos next to the trophies. In each, Don stands smiling with the "Benjamin Eight" girls.]

BOBBY JOE

You tellin' us the man coached a girl's team? A high school girls team?!

ROSS

You bet. He's a winner.

[The players look at each other, bleak.]

INT. GYM – LATER

Haskins walks before the assembled players. He stops at Lattin, who is wearing his sunglasses. Haskins leans in.

HASKINS

Lose the shades, Lattin.

[Reluctant, Lattin takes off his sunglasses. Shed snickers and Lattin gives him a withering look.]

HASKINS

In three months the 1965 Miners take the floor for the first time. This season won't be like any other before it because you aren't like any other team. You will face challenges nobody else will face. The mountain will be higher—the rewards greater. (pacing in front of them) You are here for one reason and that is to play the best basketball that you can—and to win. (eyes boring into each player) Getting there ain't gonna be easy. I don't wanna hear the words 'can't' or 'won't' or 'Mommy'. When you play for me, you play basketball my way. And my way is hard.

BOBBY JOE

(grinning) Unless your point guard got herself a nice body.

[The players chuckle. Haskins flashes a withering smile.]

HASKINS

That's funny, Bobby Joe. That really is. But I guarantee after one work out with those girls, everyone here would be crawlin' the floor with your tongues a-hangin'. (moving among the players) Now you follow my rules. That means discipline on and off the court. No booze; no girls; just fundamental basketball.

[Haskins' expression shifts into a new, quiet seriousness.]

HASKINS

Do your best, push yourself beyond where you ever thought you could go, and I guarantee—people are gonna be hearin' from Texas Western. Let's get to it.

[Series of images. Haskins barks out commands military style, as the players sprint the floor, groaning and sweating. Later: Bobby Joe steals a pass, dribbles through his legs and makes a huge shot. Haskins calls him over and gets in his face.]

HASKINS

What the heck was that?!

BOBBY JOE

Jest playin' my game, Coach.

HASKINS

Well, that's street ball and street ball is not what we play here! You don't dribble between your legs. You don't go above the rim. And you don't fish for steals. You miss that pick your team is four on five and that's two for the enemy. So leave the street ball for the streets.

[Later: Players pair up at the basket. Cager goes against Orsten and makes a huge play, with huge physical effort.]

HASKINS

Way to put the effort in, Cager!

[Shed covers Lattin. Shed is faster, but Lattin more powerful]

LATTIN

Get out my way, Gumby. You in my office!

[Shed backs off scared. Lattin slams and rattles the backboard. Shed struts away, trying to disappear.]

HASKINS

Shed?! What was that?! We don't back down here! Ever!—And Lattin? Stay in front of the basket. No flushing.

ORSTEN

(high-fiving Lattin) Nice shot, big man.

[Lattin doesn't slap him back, turning away, mute and angry.]

ORSTEN

'Scuse me, Wilt.

[Later: Flournoy goes up for the shot. J. Armstrong blocks it and crashes onto Flournoy, knocking him down. Flournoy leaps up, eyes flashing, and shoves the white player backward.]

FLOURNOY

Take your white hands off me, Farm Boy!

ARMSTRONG

Back off, I didn't do nothin'!

[Flournoy lunges back at Armstrong, and they begin to fight, but Haskins grabs Flournoy and Armstrong's jersey and pulls them close, face in their faces, lifting them off the ground.]

HASKINS

Next person opens his mouth is outta here. Flournoy. Is there a problem Flournoy?!

FLOURNOY

No.

HASKINS

I didn't HEAR you, Flournoy!

FLOURNOY

NO! No, sir!

HASKINS

That goes for all of you. Anymore of that crap and I'm on you faster than a rat on a cheeto. We're a team! And we're gonna act like one! Got me? Now get back to work.

[Haskins drops them both and walks off. Shed whistles.]

SHED

That man is a bear.

INT. MEMORIAL GYM HALLWAY – LATER

Haskins walks down the hall as Dr. Ray comes up.

DR. RAY

You signed some colored boys, Don. Seven, ain't that right?

HASKINS

That's right. Got some talent.

DR. RAY

That's a lot of—'talent'. I'm not sure how our boosters are gonna take it, Don. This is a little different than what they're used to.

HASKINS

You just let me coach, Dr. I'll let you handle the boosters. How 'bout that?

[He claps him on the shoulder. Dr. Ray watches him go, concerned.]

INT. LOCKER ROOM – SAME TIME

Myers is dressing next to Baudoin who is washing his face.

MYERS

Coach ran us so hard, I thought I was gonna be sick.

[Baudoin grins & lies down on the bench and moans in mock illness. Togo puts on Baudoin's "Clark Kent" glasses.]

TOGO

Aha! An acute case of dehydration!

[He pumps Baudoin's leg like a pump handle. Baudoin squirts water from his mouth in a high arc, dousing Myers and Palacio who yell out. The other guys laugh. Flournoy turns away.]

FLOURNOY

White boys havin' fun.

PALACIO

Not everybody's funny as you two vatos.

[Flournoy stops and glares. He looks at Lattin.]

FLOURNOY

Back me up, brother. This dude says we ain't funny.

(when Lattin turns; arrogant) Brother, you think you're somethin' special?

[In the showers: Players shower, bodies sagging. The spigots spray water and soap together. Worsley pushes Shed playfully.]

WORSLEY

You looked like Lattin's shadow out there, Shed. Big guy like you, afraid?

SHED

How would you know if I'm afraid? All you see is my knee caps.

WORSLEY

You callin me short?

SHED

Dig, I don't even need to.

[Worsley shoves up against Shed, but it makes him slip on the soapy water, and he disappears from frame. The others laugh.]

ARMSTRONG

Hey. Any of you guys seen the soap?

BOBBY JOE

It's comin' right at you, man.

ARMSTRONG

Jeez, soap comin' out of the walls! How do they do that?! We got nothing' like that in Eagleville!

BOBBY JOE

You in the big time now, Farm boy.

INT. CAGER'S ROOM – SAME TIME

Cager is dressing at the mirror, lip syncing into his hairbrush to The Supremes "Stop In The Name of Love" on a radio.

INT. FLOURNOY AND WORSLEY'S ROOM – SAME TIME

Flournoy stares at the poster over Worsley's bed: a black man raising his fist, "Power To The People". Flournoy picks up the book on his bed. Eldridge Cleaver's "Soul On Ice". The bathroom door opens. Worsley comes out. Grabs his book back.

WORSLEY

Don't touch my stuff, brother. Leave that to the big boys. You probably ain't even heard about the Panthers back in Indiana.

FLOURNOY

Man, I know about 'em.

WORSLEY

It's one thing to know about 'em.(making a fist in his face) And it's another to live the life.

FLOURNOY

I don't need a book to live the life.

EXT. DOWNTOWN EL PASO RESTAURANT – LATER THAT NIGHT

A ranchero band plays on a small stage. Shed, Orsten, Bobby Joe, Cager, Flournoy and Worsley sit waiting for their order.

BOBBY JOE

Coach is one crazy white man. You'd think he was up for a national Championship instead of playin' on some bush league team.

SHED

I ain't gonna be alive for no national nothin' if he keeps workin' us like that.

FLOURNOY

They all talk like that in Oklahoma?

ORSTEN

It ain't even a civilized state.

CAGER

Who cares where he's from? Doesn't mean he don't know what he's doin'. Maybe he's right. Maybe people *will* hear from us someday.

FLOURNOY

You kiddin' me? Look at this place. We're in the middle of nowhere, playin' for a nowhere team. We ain't got a chance.

WORSLEY

You got a chance. We all do. We can get an education. Only thing that matters anyway. It ain't basketball that's gonna make the future for any of us.

[A platter of tacos arrives. Shed and the others stare.]

SHED

What the heck is that?

CAGER

Brothers. When you're in a foreign country, you got to respect the customs.

[They pick up knife and fork and delicately slice the tacos.]

CAGER

Hey, where's Lattin tonight?

SHED

I dunno. That is one big, mean black kid. He's probably out eatin' babies.

BOBBY JOE

I say we cross the bridge tonight. I hear Juarez jumps. Fine lookin' ladies.

CAGER

What you gonna do when you find 'em, fool? You don't speak no espanol.

BOBBY JOE

Bobby Joe Hill speaks the universal language—the language of love.

ORSTEN

What about Coach? He set the rules.

BOBBY JOE

Brother, can't let the rules cramp your style, know what I'm sayin'?

INT. "BODEGA EXCELSIOR" CLUB – JUAREZ, MX – LATER THAT NIGHT

Bobby Joe checks his conk as Shed, Cager, Orsten, Worsley and Flournoy follow him in. Inside there is shouting, laughter, mariachis wailing canciones. They take a table in the middle. People turn and stare. The room falls silent. The players look nervous. A gruff bartender comes up, wiping his hands.

SHED

Forget it. They don't want us here.

BOBBY JOE

Beer for the table.

[The bartender nods and leaves. Slowly the music begins again.]

SHED

What if Coach finds out? We ain't supposed to be here.

BOBBY JOE

Relax, Shadow. You worry too much.

[The bartender returns with some bottles of beer.]

CAGER

What's he sayin'?

SHED

Could be some kinda Mexican voodoo thing.

WORSLEY

That's some nasty crap, man.

CAGER

Hell, I'll try it.

[Shed shakes his head, as Worsley and Cager try it. Bobby Joe holds out a glass to Flournoy. He shakes his head, dour.]

BOBBY JOE

Man, is there anything you don't take too seriously? You gotta lighten up, man.

[Flournoy glares a moment. Then he takes the glass and knocks it back. The other guys hoot and clap. Flournoy risks a smile. Bobby Joe turns and sees a beautiful, dark skinned señorita walking past with a tray of margaritas. He flashes a smile.]

BOBBY JOE

Hey, baby. What's your nombre?

[She looks back at him, with a confused smile].

BOBBY JOE

You probably don't understand a word I'm sayin' to you, huh? Well, that's good cause I speak the language of love.

[Her look suddenly changes and she speaks perfect English.]

WAITRESS (TINA)

You bet your sorry self I don't. *(She walks off. Bobby Joe looks stunned.)*

BOBBY JOE

Wait up, wait up, come on, baby. You playin' with me? What's your name? How come you speak such good English?

WAITRESS (TINA)

The name's Tina. I go to the same school you do and I don't fall for bull. My Momma taught me better than that.

BOBBY JOE

(gazing after her) Mercy Jesus. A black Señorita.

[On the dance floor, Orsten and Worsley dance with Señoritas. Worsley, taller than the girl, steps on her foot. She looks at his platform boots and giggles. On stage, Cager sings with a mariachi in a huge sombrero and silver studded outfit, "crying" to the Mariachi violins and trumpet.]

EXT. WALKWAY BEFORE MINERS HALL – DAWN – NEXT MORNING

Ross walks in fishing gear. The players stumble up, in sombreros, singing "La Cucaracha". Shed supports them.

BOBBY JOE

Right on, brother. You look like one of them men from mars.

ROSS

You guys better hit the showers and get that cantina stink off you. You got practice. If coach finds out—

BOBBY JOE

He ain't gonna find out, Daddy-O. We too cool to give ourselves away.

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – LATER THAT MORNING

The players lined up in a row, looking nervous. Haskins paces in front of their faces, his eyes boring into each player.

HASKINS

Gonna be a long practice today, huh?

BOBBY JOE

Sir?

HASKINS

You don't look too good, Bobby Joe.

BOBBY JOE

Huh? What?

HASKINS

Huh, what? I'll tell you what. When I set rules, I set rules. And if you break 'em—I'm on you like ugly on a baboon's butt. *(one snickers to the others)* Anybody—bitten by the evil worm last night runs me one hundred lines right now. The rest of you get to watch.

[Bobby Joe, Orsten, Cager, Worsley, Flournoy jog onto the court. Haskins looks at Shed. He holds up his hands.]

SHED

I never touch the stuff, Coach.

[Later: The players drag down court as the others count “ninety-nine, a hundred!” They collapse. Moe blows whistle.]

MOE

Time for drills! Pick and roll!!

[Later: Shed eats up Baudoin and scores. He claps his hands, grinning, strutting his trademark victory strut.]

HASKINS

Cut that out, Shed. You look like a goddamn hyena out there.

SHED

Just feelin’ the joy, Coach! Feeling’ the Joy!

[Later: Cager charges down court with frantic energy. He makes the basket but stumbles. He gets up quickly, smiling.]

HASKINS

You made the team, Cager. Don’t need to kill yourself for every basket.

CAGER

Willie Cager give 110 percent. Every time.

BOBBY JOE

Coach—I need a drink.

HASKINS

I don’t see no sweat, Hill.

BOBBY JOE

Bobby Joe Hill don’t sweat.

[The players laugh, calling “Alright-- “No Sweat Hill!”]

HASKINS

Well, seeing you don’t sweat, why don’t we work double time tonight? Ross, cancel dinner.

EXT. DORMITORY STEPS – SAME TIME

Don’s boys sit on the steps, dressed in Daniel Boone outfits, water flasks, toy guns at their sides. They’ve been waiting for hours, crestfallen. Mary comes out and puts down a tray of Oreos and milk and ruffles their hair. Consolingly.

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – LATER THAT DAY

The players drill sprint and cover, sweat drenched, exhausted.

HASKINS

I never saw a sorrier bunch’ a guys. We ain’t gonna make it to the opening of the season, much less win any darn games, you guys don’t’ shape up. Come on, come on, let’s get your feet burnin’!

[Haskins blows his whistle. The players slump in a circle.]

HASKINS

Because a few players screwed around last night, I missed 'Gunsmoke' and the rest of you burned holes in your shoes. Now I don't like missing 'Gunsmoke'. So follow the rules—no beer, no women, no Juarez. It happens again, you're off the team—Now get some sleep. We start early tomorrow.

INT. HASKIN'S HOUSE – LATER THAT NIGHT

Haskins drags himself inside. Throwing his playbook on the couch he sees Mary in the kitchen door. She is not happy.

MARY

Your boys sat outside for three hours waitin' on you. Where you been?

HASKINS

Darn, I forgot. I was workin'.

MARY

Working... working all the time.

[Mary walks off. Don stands, miserable. He walks to the boys bedroom. Mark lies in bed with his toy gun, still awake. Don kneels by him, speaking with tenderness.]

HASKINS

Hey, partner—we're partners, right? And partners don't let each other down, do they?

MARK

No, sir.

HASKINS

Well, I forgot I was taken' you coyotes huntin' today. And I let you boys down. I want you to know I'm real sorry for that. But—we'll get 'em next time, okay? They'll be running under rocks and duckin' in the dust. Right, partner?

[Mark nods, smiling. Don ruffles his hair and smiles lovingly.]

Part 2**EXT. CLASSROOM – DAY**

In a geology laboratory full of white students, Flournoy, Shed, and Bobby Joe sit at a table, wearing goggles, sifting through rocks, trying to identify them. The teacher paces, watching all the white students scribbling feverishly as the black players turn the rocks in their hands, totally confused. The girl from the Juarez bar, Tina, comes up and takes a rock from Bobby Joe's hand. She lays it on the matching chart. He looks at her and smiles. She smiles back a small smile.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE – DAY

Flournoy stands before Haskins as he reads his transcript.

HASKINS

You're a smart kid, Harry. But these grades ain't pullin' the truck up the hill.

FLOURNOY

I know. But every class is about rocks. I'm a black man. I don't do rocks.

HASKINS

But you get the importance of an education. Trying your best on and off the court?

FLOURNOY

Yeah. I guess so.

HASKINS

Then you bring your grades up in two weeks, Harry. Or else. You got me?

INT. CLASSROOM – WEEKS LATER

Palacio and Flournoy leave together at the end of a class.

PALACIO

Hey, man, you wanna study together?

FLOURNOY

I'm not gonna study that crap.

PALACIO

Didn't you get a warning from Coach?

FLOURNOY

What is he gonna do? He's already run my butt ragged.

INT. DORMITORY HALLWAY – DAY

Mrs. Flournoy stomps down the hall, nostrils flaring. Flournoy and Palacio round the corner. Flournoy's eyes widen in shock.

FLOURNOY

Crap!

INT. CLASSROOM – DAYS LATER

Mrs. Flournoy is in the back of the classroom, in coat and hat, hands folded over her purse. Flournoy in the front, miserable.

TEACHER

Who can tell me the field classification of phaneritic rocks?

MRS. FLOURNOY

(raising her hand; pointed)

My son, Harry, can.

FLOURNOY

(looking down; chagrined)

Yes, Ma'am. Granitoid, Syenitoid, Gabbroid...

[Mrs. Flournoy smiles, smugly satisfied as the students stare.]

INT. HALLWAY OF DORMITORY – SHED'S DOOR – NIGHT

Shed stands at the door, The Impressions "Gypsy Woman" plays inside. He hesitates, then opens the door.

[Inside: Lattin is on the phone singing to a woman.]

LATTIN

You never ever enter when I'm entertaining a lady friend you understand me, Gumby?

SHED

Hey man, I—I—didn't know. I—

LATTIN

(pointing at vent in door) Check the vent, Gumby. That vent's open, it's too hot for you to come in. You dig?

EXT. HALLWAY – LATER THAT NIGHT

Shed sits next to the door, bored. Music still plays. He looks at his watch. Then, he looks around. No one is in sight. Slowly, he inches his way toward the vent until he is crouching close enough to peek inside. His eyes widen.

ROSS (O.S.)

Lock yourself out, Sonny?

[Shed screams, turning to see Ross standing there with fishing gear. Shed hurries away. Ross watches him go, puzzled.]

Section 3**INT. LOCKER ROOM – SINKS – DAY**

The players are dressing for practice throwing towels. Togo stands with Armstrong demonstrating a bizarre cheering technique, hyperventilating, his cheeks bulging, face red.

ARMSTRONG

You're gonna pass out like that, Togo.

TOGO

(catching his breath) Naw. It's just to get me pumped up to cheer the team on. I never pass out.

[Baudoin is at a sink, dousing his jersey with water, grinning slyly. The others gather around him, watching suspiciously.]

MYERS

Hey, Flip? What are you doing' there?

BAUDOIN

Nothing, man. Not-a-thing.

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – LATER

Baudoin charges down court, shirt drenched with water.

HASKINS

Everybody take a look at Baudoin. He's working hard. He's drippin' some sweat. Let that be an example to the rest of you.

[The others glare as Baudoin grins. Lattin pounds Shed at the basket. Shed bails, tangling his feet. Lattin pushes Shed, making him fall, and scores.]

HASKINS

Shed??? You're like a duck! You wake up in a new world every day.

SHED

He keeps foul'in' me, Coach!

HASKINS

What the heck he's fouling! You're backing up! What are you gonna do when it's a real game? Back down every time somebody puts a body on you? How many times do I have to tell you? You go sit down. Come back when you're ready to play! All the way!

[Later: Cager makes a flying jump-hook. As he releases the ball he teeters, disoriented, looking shaken.]

HASKINS

What was that, Cager?

CAGER

Nothin', Coach. I slipped.

HASKINS

No, that was a playground shot. Why don't you try that again and do it right?

CAGER

I got it in, didn't I?

HASKINS

It's not just about the hole, Mister Cager; it's about the path you take to get there. (to snickers of others) You think that's funny? This team does not play playground ball. We play fundamental, disciplined, defensive basketball! Togo. Show Mr. Cager how to shoot a basket.

[Nervous, Togo dribbles and makes a shot. Cager mimics Togo.]

CAGER

You want me to do that?! What about my stylin'? I got too much style to do that.

HASKINS

You leave the stylin' for your Mama's shoes. Show me you belong in the NCAA.

[Cager takes it to the basket, makes the shot, looking pained].

HASKINS

Good. Let's all try that now.

[The black players try to play stiff and disciplined. Bobby Joe finally breaks out the dribbles through his legs for a layup.]

HASKINS

Hill?!

BOBBY JOE

Had to do it, Coach. All that set shoot honkey ball. My arms are cramping up.

HASKINS

(in his face) You do not make a joke out of my practice!

BOBBY JOE

Yes, sir.

HASKINS

You think you know it all? You think you got nothing to learn from me, Hill? I got nothing to teach you, Hill?!

BOBBY JOE

No, Coach, I didn't say that.

HASKINS

Then how you gonna beat Division One talent playing like you're on a playground?

BOBBY JOE

It's not just up to me, Coach.

HASKINS

No, it isn't! That's cause you got a team playin' with you! I wanna see you play with that team, if you plan on winning any games. So any one of you Globetrotters your flashy, no account basketball behinds around, you'll find yourselves on the bench! Tomorrow I wanna see real basketball! Now get outta here.

[The players drag themselves from the gym. Ross walks up.]

ROSS

You wanna take it a little easy, Sonny? You're getting' the guys kinda down.

HASKINS

Ross, those boys are playing like they're on two different teams. They don't know what it's like out there. They need to play the enemy's game. And that takes discipline and control. We've got two weeks left before the season starts and they don't know anything yet. Nothing.

INT. HALLWAY TO MEMORIAL GYM – DAY

Dr. Ray stands with Wade Richardson and other boosters. They look inside at the players through a window in the door.

WADE RICHARDSON

There's seven of them.

DR. RAY

Actually twelve in all, sir.

WADE RICHARDSON

Yes, but seven of those other ones.

DR. RAY

Coach thinks he's got a real strong team this year.

WADE RICHARDSON

Where'd you find this coach?

DR. RAY

He's from Oklahoma, sir.

[Richardson just nods, staying silent.]

INT. ARMSTRONG'S ROOM – LATER THAT NIGHT

Roger Miller plays on a radio the white players sit, moody.

MYERS

Coach is more interested in the black players than us. Don't we play just as hard?

PALACIO

We might as well not even be out there.

INT. MEN'S LOUNGE – MINERS HALL – LATER THAT NIGHT

The black players look dejected. A TV shows a pre-season college basketball: Images of white teams like Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, smiling wide, a bright shining world of basketball.

SHED

Coach ain't human. I think he rides our black butts harder than anyone.

ORSTEN

It ain't fair. Pickin' on us like that.

FLOURNOY

Far as I'm concerned, he's like all the rest. The back of his neck is a shade too red.

[Worsley takes off his shoes. His feet are bleeding. He winces.]

BOBBY JOE

Playground basketball. If he don't want us to play our game why'd he bring us here at all?

[They look at the grinning white faces of the big white schools.]

ORSTEN

Look at that. Smilin' like that.

BOBBYJOE

Nah...

[They fall silent. Shed finally stretches.]

SHED

I'm beat. I'm going to bed.

FLOURNOY

Least tomorrow's Sunday. I'm gonna sleep 'till noon.

INT. DORM HALL – MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

A flash light weaves through the hall. Ross walks into frame, a mining helmet on his head. He is dressed half fly—fisherman, half astronaut. He throws open a door. Yells.

ROSS

Rise and shine, boys! I got good news!

[He bangs on another door. Faces appear, sleepy, disoriented.]

WORSLEY

What the heck, Ross?—

ROSS

You boys been workin' so hard, I figure a little change' a scenery'll do ya good! We're gonna have some fun, El Paso style.

[Lattin glowers at him. Ross slams a fishing net into his chest.]

ROSS

You too, Big Daddy, No arguments. We're goin' frog giggin'.

EXT. ROW BOAT – CANAL IN EL PASO – LATER IN DARKNESS

We hear Roy Orbison "Blue Bayou". Frogs croak in a shallow river bed. Ross, Flournoy, Worsley, Cager, Togo, Shed, Armstrong and Lattin sit in row boats, wearing mining helmets. Ross plunges his hand into the water and tosses a frog in the sack. The frog bounces inside. Ross holds it up in triumph. They stare back.

CAGER

Ross. This brother don't hunt no frogs. I'm from the Bronx, man!

ARMSTRONG

Hey, this is better than huntin' back country coon! Come on guys, try it.

[The black players sit, unmoving. Suddenly, Lattin plunges his big bare hands into the murky water. He comes up with a frog.]

LATTIN

Got one!

CAGER

Hey, we in the Wild Kingdom now!

SHED

Big Daddy D's a regular Marlin Perkins!

[Lattin grins and tosses a frog at Shed. Shed howls and flings it away. The scene dissolves in laughing, splashing, and frogs flying into the sack. Shed suddenly looks worried.]

SHED

Ross? What are we gonna do with them once we got 'em?

INT. GYM SHOWER ROOM – LATER THAT MORNING

Ross flicks on all the showers, water raining down. Armstrong is dumping the bags into the showers. Frogs are everywhere.

ROSS

It's a French delicacy type deal. You cut 'em up and fry 'em.

CAGER

Black people don't eat that stuff, Ross. I'm tellin' you, we don't eat no frogs.

[Armstrong and Togo scamper after frogs. Ross brings up a huge knife to slice the legs off a frog. Shed doubles over, heaving.]

FLOURNOY

The French are screwed up.

EXT. MINERS HALL – LATER THAT NIGHT

Worsley and Lattin sit on the steps, eating frog legs.

WORSLEY

This ain't bad. Not bad at all.

[Lattin grunts and nods, chewing.]

WORSLEY

You know, Big Daddy, I always hated angry big guys like you. But you alright.

LATTIN

That's nice of you to say, Willie. Coming from an angry short man like. You.

WORSLEY

Big Daddy, what made you come here?

LATTIN

I wanna be the best. Best at my game.

WORSLEY

I come to go to school. I mean, I'll jump and run and play this game, but I ain't playin' fool forever. That's where they wanna keep you, you know. Playin' games. Not Will Worsley. I got a plan. I'm gonna graduate. I'm gonna get ahead. Basketball's just a way to get there.

INT. HASKINS'S OFFICE – MOMENTS LATER

Shed stands across as Haskins holds out a sealed envelope.

HASKINS

Here's a ticket. I'm sending you home.

SHED

Home?! The season's ten days away! You can't send me home!

HASKINS

Yes, I can. One minute you're running around like a clown; like some crazy wild man; then you back down, afraid to go up for rebounds. That's when I send you home.

SHED

Coach. Mama's gonna beat me.

HASKINS

I can't have a big man who's afraid to play like one. That's just the way it is.

[Haskins looks back down at his papers. Shed turns away, crushed.]

INT. DORM GROUNDS – THAT EVENING

Bobby Joe stands in the darkness, dressed to the nines. Cager and Flournoy pass him by.

CAGER

You lookin' sharp, Bobby Joe. You in for some trouble tonight?

BOBBY JOE

Brothers, I am on the trail of love.

FLOURNOY

What about the rules, man?

BOBBY JOE

Only one rule tonight. Bobby Joe Hill's gonna have some fun.

[The others slap his hand.]

BOBBY JOE

Stand back. Bobby Joes' got work.

[The others grin as he walks away. Just then Haskins passes by. His eyes narrowed he sees Bobby Joe walking.]

HASKINS

What's he doin'?

[They shrug. Haskins looks back at Bobby Joe, wary.]

INT. BOBBY'S ROOM. – LATER

Candle light and Otis Redding's "Try a Little Tenderness".

TINA

You know all the moves, don't you?

BOBBY JOE

This ain't no move, baby. I'm comin' from the heart.

TINA

But how many hearts do you have?

BOBBY JOE

I like to have a good time. The Magic Man tries not to take anything too seriously.

[Bobby leans in and tries to kiss her. Tina pushes him away.]

TINA

This isn't a game for me, Bobby.

BOBBY JOE

I know, baby.

TINA

You don't know anything.

[Tina kisses Bobby Joe. His eyes widen as she pushes him back, smiling. Suddenly the door busts open. Haskins comes in. He looks at Bobby Joe with frightening calm.]

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – LATER THAT NIGHT

Haskins drills Bobby Joe up and down the stairs. Sweat drenched, he's been at it a long, hard time, breathless.

BOBBY JOE

Please, Coach, I can't go no more!

HASKINS

I think you can go some more. You got energy for all kinda nonsense. Instead of puttin' it in your team. Instead of respecting yourself.

BOBBY JOE

I got no team. We ain't goin' nowhere. You tellin' us all the time how bad we are. We know we ain't never gonna win. What have I got to respect?

HASKINS

You don't get it, Bobby Joe. The guys look up to you. Any one of them would give anything to have your talent. You're my best player. But what do you do? You act the fool, make it all a joke... when you could be the leader of this team.

[Bobby Joe looks struck. He reaches the bottom and looks at Haskins. Then he bends over and vomits.]

INT. KITCHEN – HASKINS KITCHEN – MORNING

Don sits at the table, reading the paper. Photos show police officers beating blacks under the headline: "RIOTS BREAK OUT IN WATTS" Mary sets down steak and eggs and sits across.

HASKINS

It's getting' crazy out there.

MARY

Honey, I was thinking. Don't you think you're being a little hard on those guys?

HASKINS

You too, Mary?

MARY

Well, you work so hard all the time, sometimes I think you lose sight of what really matters. It's not like there's some pot at the end of the rainbow. What's it all gonna bring, all the pain you're puttin' those kids through.

HASKINS

They need to be strong. They have no idea what's out there. Now maybe it's painful. Maybe they hate me for pushing them so hard. But you have to understand, nobody out there thinks black kids can play NCAA basketball—everybody wants them to fail.

MARY

They're just kids, Don. What good is winning if you break their spirit?

INT. SHED'S ROOM – DAY

Shed is packing his suitcase, alone, full of turmoil. He turns the shirt in his hand, staring. Then he throws it down and turns and walks out.

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – LATER THAT DAY

The players are gathered before Haskins.

HASKINS

In a few days we open the season. Some of you may think that I've been too hard on you these last three months. And maybe I over did it sometimes. But if I pushed you, it was to see if you could keep going. If I made you hate me, it was to see you play through that hate. If I was the enemy, it was only to see you bond together as a team. Because the enemy—is out there.

[The players listen, silent.]

HASKINS

You spend three months learning to play the enemy's game on the enemy's terms. You see, out there they think a team like you can't win. They think players like Bobby Joe ain't mentally tough enough. That Worsley or Flournoy will fold under pressure. Or Lattin'll run outta control 'cause he can't think. Or that Cager doesn't have the heart to win.

(beat)

So nobody expects us to do a thing this year. We're just Texas Western to them. But I expect big things because I know—if you just play as the team that I know you can be—you will beat the enemy's game. Just remember to play—(the players chime in, smiling) fundamental, disciplined, defensive basketball! Let's go out there and play Texas Western basketball and for the first time—make those words mean something.

[The boys cheer. Haskins turns and sees Shed walks up to him.]

SHED

Coach. I can do this. Give me one more chance. I want to be a part of this team.

HASKINS

No more ducking? No more Shed in dreamland?

SHED

No, Coach. No more.

HASKINS

You got one more chance.

SHED

Guess I don't need this anymore.

[Shed holds up the envelope. Haskins takes it, pulls out a blank piece of paper and shreds it up.]

SHED

You mean—it was never a real ticket?

HASKINS

You prove me right, Shed.

SHED

I will, Coach. I will.

INT/EXT. SERIES OF IMAGES – DAY/NIGHT

Memorial Gym: Armstrong holds the ladder as Ross fixes the ceiling lights. Mary comes in with a Banner for the miners. Armstrong helps her and lets go. Close on Ross. He looks down, teetering. Suddenly he disappears from frame.

[In the hallway outside Lattin and Shed's room: Shed and several other black players are crouched at the vent of the door, crowding each other out, trying to get a peek inside. Memorial Gym: The players pose for a team photo. Everyone grimaces a tense smile as the flash whites out screen.]

INT. BOBBY JOE'S ROOM – NIGHT

Bobby Joe and Orsten lie in their beds in darkness.

ORSTEN

I hear you breathin'.

BOBBY JOE

I breathe, man.

ORSTEN

You nervous about the game?

BOBBY JOE

I ain't nervous. I ain't never nervous.

ORSTEN

What'd Coach say to you after the dance anyway? How come you're still on the team?

BOBBY JOE

He said I should be a leader and stuff.

ORSTEN

That's funny.

BOBBY JOE

What's funny about that?

ORSTEN

You know. You a leader.

BOBBY JOE

That ain't funny. Why is that funny?

ORSTEN

Okay. Don't worry about it.

(a silence)

What you think's gonna happen tomorrow?

BOBBY JOE

I don't know.

ORSTEN

You nervous?

[Bobby Joe throws his pillow and hits Orsten in the head.]

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE:

TEXAS WESTERN vs. EASTERN NEW MEXICO

[Fans dot the gym. A brass band plays. Cheerleaders dance the school fight song. Opposing Eastern New Mexico warms up as Jud Milton, a short chain-smoker announcer speaks into a mike.]

JUD MILTON

This is Jud Milton. 'Voice of the Miners' comin' to you from Memorial Gym where Texas Western will open the season against Greyhounds from Eastern New Mexico. We'll be back for the tip off after this word from the sponsor of Miners Basketball, Wade Richardson West Texas Furniture Emporium!

[We hear a jingle: a women's chorus sings "Who's the biggest in the furniture business? Wade Richardson".]

INT. LOCKER ROOM – SAME TIME

[The players are dressing. Shed keeps looking into the gym.]

SHED

What time is it, scoop? Is it time?

CAGER

Coach'll let us know. Take it easy.

[Flournoy is obsessively tying his shoe.]

WORSLEY

You tied that shoe five times. They put people away for stuff like that.

FLOURNOY

Just makin' sure it's right.

[Togo goes to Bobby Joe who sits dozing, toothpick in his mouth.]

TOGO

Look at him. He's sleeping! Nobody can be that relaxed.

[The others gather round him, impressed.]

BAUDOIN

That guy has nerves of steel.

[Moe sticks his head in and blows his whistle. Bobby Joe wakes startled. He sees the faces around him.]

BOBBY JOE

What you lookin' at?

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – SAME TIME

The Eastern New Mexico players stand on the court, all white.

JUDD MILTON

This is a night of questions. Will Don Haskins, the little known Oklahoma coach of the Benjamin championship girls team, be able to lift the Miners to respectability? Will the "new look" Miners, and I do mean new look, be able to compete on a national level against the country's top recruits?

[The Miners enter to a small cheer from the crowd. The stands are half empty. Haskins sees Mary and the boys. They wave. A referee blows a whistle.]

STADIUM ANOUNCER

And now your 'Texas Western Miners'! At guard, El Paso's own, David Palacio!—
(cheers for the hometown boy) Forward, Jerry Armstrong. (more cheers)
From Detroit, Michigan, guard, Bobby Joe Hill! (a surprised silence falls)
From Indiana, Forward, Harry Flournoy... At center, David 'Big Daddy D' Lattin!

[In the crowd: people are looking at the black faces, murmuring, confused and wary.]

[In the stands: Wade Richardson sits with another booster.]

WADE RICHARDSON

We look like the darn Tuskegee Institute out there. All those blacks he's playin'. Just when did we become a black school?

BOOSTER

Guess that ol' boy got used to doin' things his way down in Oklahoma.

WADE RICHARDSON

This isn't Oklahoma and he doesn't write the checks at Texas Western. Wade Richardson does. And it's about time he found that out.

[On the Floor: The Announcer speaks into the microphone.]

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

El Paso! Let's hear it for your 1965 Texas Western Miners!

[Slowly, the crowd breaks into cautious applause.]

[First Half: Lattin stands in against the opposing center. Tip off goes to the Miners. The Miners break out but play stiff. Bobby Joe gets the ball to Orsten but Orsten misses.]

BOBBY JOE

What was that, Orsten?! Come on!

[Cager spins off a hook shot but Eastern New Mexico intercepts. Haskins leaps off the bench.]

HASKINS

What do you think you're playing, a zone?! Stick to your man! Worsley! You're in for Palacio.

[Texas Western is behind 18-22. Fans look on, skeptical.]

[On court: Determined, Bobby Joe dishes a perfect pass to Cager for two. They high five. Armstrong holds a hulking forward back. Worsley slips under and scores. 32-34 Texas Western. Togo leaps up, cheering them on, hyperventilating.]

BAUDOIN

Togo. Stop actin' like a white man.

[Bobby Joe dribbles through his legs in a dazzling move.]

[In the crowd: A kid's mouth drops at Bobby Joes' playing.]

HASKINS

Stop showboating, Hill!

[Series of images: Miners battle for every shot. The score stays close. Haskins paces the sideline, yelling, exhorting.]

JUD MILTON

Texas Western's sure playing competitive basketball tonight. With Coach Haskins going against all convention, starting three blacks and two whites—if nothing else they are bound to stand out on the floor this season.

[Final buzzer. Texas Western 62—Eastern New Mexico 58. Silence, then a huge cheer from El Paso fans. Don slaps his players as they run off court. The Forward sneers at Shed.]

FORWARD

You got lucky tonight, Buckwheat. It's a long season.

INT. TEAM BUS – MOVING ON HIGHWAY – LATE DAY

"Shotgun" by Jr. Walker & the All Stars. The players celebrate, high fiving, singing to the radio. Bobby Joe grabs Armstrong's hand in a brother shake, singing.

BOBBY JOE/ARMSTRONG

I said shotgun—shoot him 'fore he run now...

CAGER

That was close one, Sweepee. But we had it goin' on. You see that twenty five footer I put in? All net baby.

SHED

He called me Buckwheat.

CAGER

Let him call you Buckwheat. Cream of Wheat. Scoreboard is all that counts in the end.

SHED

Maybe. I guess so.

INT. BUS – TRAVELING – LATER THAT NIGHT

Haskins sits in front with Ross. The radio plays Johnny Rivers "Poor Side of Town". Ross sings along loudly.

BOBBY JOE

Poor side' a town, right. Johnny Rivers white ass wouldn't know the poor side of town if you dropped him off in the middle of it.

[Baudoin turns up his radio looking at Flournoy. We hear Bob Dylan "Times They Are A Changing".]

BAUDODIN

You hear the new Dylan? He's got a social conscience, man.

FLOURNOY

Too bad he can't sing.

[Armstrong brings his radio up front blaring "The Ballad Of The Green Berets" by Sgt. Barry Sadler.]

ARMSTRONG

Check this out! You guys know this song? This dude is real talented.

WORSLEY

A singing sergeant? Only white folks could dig that.

[He turns up his radio: Four Tops "Reach Out I'll be There".]

WORSLEY

Now we got a groove on.

[As he lip synchs, Lattin slowly adjusts the volume on his rigged radio with giant speakers in the back.]

LATTIN

You cats gotta get with it, man.

[He cranks Rolling Stones "Satisfaction", drowning out the rest. Haskins looks pained as the song blasts through the bus. He exchanges a look with Ross who shrugs and shakes his head.]

EXT. TEXACO GAS STATION – ROSWEL, NM – LATER THAT NIGHT

An attendant fills up the bus. As Black players buy "Cokes" at a vending machine, hot rods pull up with a drunken gang of thugs. The leader looks at the black guys.

LEADER

Well, what do we have here?

[On cue the thugs circle the bus and shake it on its wheels.]

MOE

Hey! Hey! Cut that out!

[The black players come running, but Haskins waves them on the bus. The bus rumbles to life. Moe quickly turns and is the last on the bus as it drives off.]

INT. BUS – MOMENTS LATER

The players watch the thugs recede in the distance, disturbed. Flourney sits by Armstrong. He looks at him, sarcastic.

FLOURNOY

Friends of yours, Farm Boy?

ARMSTRONG

(sneering back) How do you play with that giant chip on your shoulder?

[Flourney frowns and moves to another part of the bus.]

EXT. COMMERCE, TEXAS – SERIES OF IMAGES – DAY

The Miners' bus rolls into Commerce, Texas, home of "East Texas State University". There are cattle trucks. Men in Stetsons lingering on street corners.

INT. ARENA – EAST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY – THAT NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE:

TEXAS WESTERN vs. EAST TEXAS STATE

[The East Texas Announcers watch, stunned, as the Miners field three black players amongst the whites in their lineup.]

EAST TEXAS ANNOUNCER

This ole boy Haskins sure is raisin' some eyebrows playin' those coloreds. What's he got—three out there?

SECOND ANNOUNCER

Jest shows you how desperate this program is to get a few wins this season.

[First Half: Miners battle East Texas. But East Texas muscles in shots the Miners can't stop. Miners behind 12-28. Bobby Joe loses the ball. Haskins paces the sideline, aggravated.]

HASKINS

Bobby Joe! Dang! Defense! What was that?!

[An East Texas player trash talks Orston. Orsten hesitates and East Texas picks him and scores. Haskins throws up his hands.]

HASKINS

Keep your head in the game!

[The buzzer. Haskins looks at the Halftime score: TEXAS WESTERN 30, EAST TEXAS 46]

INT. LOCKER ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Haskins stands with Bobby Joe, alone.

HASKINS

What are you doing out there?

BOBBY JOE

Coach. We can't play like this.

HASKINS

Just stick to the plan, Bobby Joe.

BOBBY JOE

You want me to be a leader? How can I lead if you don't let me? We're handcuffed out there. You need to let us loose a little bit. You know all about their game, but we got some game of our own. (beat) You made a lot of promises, Coach. But you just the same as the rest.

[Bobby Joe walks off. Haskins watches him, frustrated.]

SECTION 4**INT. ARENA – LATER**

Second Half: Miners continue to struggle. Score is 38-57 East Texas. Haskins sits, arms folded, thinking. Staring at the score...watching his players...watching the clock. East Texas scores. Haskins calls a time out and signals Bobby Joe over.

HASKINS

You saying you can get this done?

BOBBY JOE

Just give us a little room, Coach.

HASKINS

Alright. I'll roll the dice on you, Bobby Joe. But just a little room.

[Bobby Joe grins and nods and runs back onto the court.]

[Series of images: The Miners battle hack, looking like a new team, Bobby Joe spurs each player on, as Miners come back.]

[Lattin muscles in shots above the rim. Bobby Joe steals balls for lay-ups. Cager makes flying jump hooks. Ross paces the sideline, tossing his towel. Haskins watches everything. Shed comes on a big man. For a moment he could back down, but he doesn't and makes the bank shot. Even Haskins leaps up.]

HASKINS

Shed! You wild Man! That's the way!

[An East Texas guard is all over Bobby Joe. The guard sneers nasty, But Bobby Joe goes into a dribble drive and scores. He passes the guard, grinning.]

BOBBY JOE

You dropped something', brother.

GUARD

What's that?

BOBBY JOE

A step.

[As the Miners pull ahead, the crowd becomes more and more hostile. Flournoy skies for a rebound and the fans "BOO".]

EAST TEXAS ANNOUNCER

What is it we're watching here, Hank?

SECOND ANNOUNCER

Can't say, Bob. I don't know what's gotten into the Miners, but East Texas better pull something' out of the hat or Commerce is outta business tonight.

[Bobby Joe scores layup after lay up as the final buzzer sounds. Scoreboard reads: TEXAS WESTERN 74 – EAST TEXAS 63. Haskins leaps off the bench, together with Togo, excited.]

INT. MINER'S BUS –MOVING – LATER THAT NIGHT

The bus parks as the team files into hotel. Hostile stares from people in the lobby. The players note it as Haskins checks in.

INT. HALLWAY TO MOTEL ROOM – LATER

Haskins passes a stranger as he fumbles for his key. He reaches the door and goes to unlock it but the door opens by itself.

[Inside the room: Haskins enters, on edge. He flips on the light. He looks around when something catches his eye.]
[CLOSE UP: a note on the table. He picks it up: "You hang out with blacks. People like you get what's coming."]
[Stay on Haskins look of concern.]

INT. CAGER AND SHED'S ROOM – LATER THAT NIGHT

Cager and Shed lounge on the beds when Worsley sneaks inside.

WORSLEY

Brothers, you ain't gonna believe this! There's a party on the edge of town. Bobby Joe met some chicks. Who in?

[Cager and Shed grin at each other and leap up.]

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF COMMERCE – LATER THAT NIGHT

A small house under a starry sky. Smokey Robinson "ooh, Baby Baby". Cars parked outside

INT. PARTY HOUSE – SAME TIME

A house party underway. The lights are low. A table covered in biscuits and ribs. Shed helping himself, licking his fingers.

SHED

Mmmm-mmmm. Almost as good as Mama's.

[People dancing and drinking.]

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOUSE – SAME TIME

The Temptations "Papa Was a Rolling Stone". Cager and the girl pass Worsley, Flournoy and Orsten talking, drinking beers.

WORSLEY

I'm tellin' you, it's gonna get bad out there. The white racist establishment ain't just roll over and make room for us.

ORSTEN

Why. We're just playin' a game.

WORSLEY

Don't matter. We're breakin' their rules, brother, and they'll come after us for it. But doesn't mean we have to take it. I mean, in New York we don't take no crap from white folk.

FLOURNOY

Yeah, but we ain't in New York.

INT. STADIUM – ABILENE, TEXAS – NIGHT

A loud crowd packs the stadium.

SUPERIMPOSE:

TEXAS WESTERN vs. ABILENE

[An usher leads a black family to their seats. They follow the usher to the top of the arena, far away from any other people seated. The father takes out his tickets].

BLACK FATHER

These aren't our seats.

USHER

They are now.

[The huge white crowd chants "ABILENE!", "Abilene!", "Abilene!!" On the floor: Haskins watches all white, athletic Abilene warm up with precise and rigorous drills. Their coach comes up.]

ABILENE COACH

You got some balls takin' on those boys. I could see playin' one, but two or three—that's like lettin' the animals outta the zoo.

HASKINS

I don't recall asking your advice.

ABILENE COACH

I hope you know the risk you're runnin. We have rules in this game. Unwritten rules. You break 'em, you might find yourself out of the coaching business for good.

[The coach walks off. Haskins gathers his players, mad.]

HASKINS

Last game we played great, but Abilene is bigger and stronger. Just stay focused, stay clear, boys. Keep your head in the game and we can win this baby! On three!

HASKINS PLAYERS

MINERS!!!

[The players cheer and take the floor for the tip-off.]

MOE

Center. Lattin. Guard. Hill. Forward. Armstrong. Forward. Baudoin. Guard. Worsley.

[Game: The buzzer. Tip-off. Miners get a fast start. Freed now, they play loose and confident, going deep and playing above the rim. Bobby Joe sets up scores, feeding Lattin, Shed, Orsten. Abilene just can't keep up.]

[In the stands: Disgruntled Abeline Fans sneer.]

FIRST ABELINE FAN

That ain't basketball. All that fancy jumpin' like monkeys.

SECOND ABELINE FAN

Let 'em try that against the big boys. They'll be shootin' circles 'round them coons.

[Half Time buzzer: 51 to 46 Miners.]

[Second Half: Miners keep scoring, pulling out of reach for Abilene. A sneering Abilene forward, a red-head, clutches the ball tight, and taunts Cager with the others in earshot.]

FORWARD

Your coach need a special license to bring you spades here?

[Angry, Cager goes up for a flying jump-hook, but he loses his bearings suddenly and falls back, losing the ball, shaken. The forward quickly makes a move for the ball, but Shed fights it away from him and scores. He does his victory strut as the others high five him.]

[End buzzer. FINAL SCORE: Miners 84 to 67. Abilene fans jeer and “boo”. Haskins runs from the court, into the locker room tunnel with Moe, Ross and the players. Fans throw programs and half-empty cups as the players duck the onslaught. Inside the tunnel Cager and Bobby Joe stop, watching the rain of trash, with grim expressions.]

CAGER

Look at ‘em, man. They hate us. The more we win. The more they hate us.

EXT. UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT – LATER THAT NIGHT

The Miners come outside, talking, laughing with Haskins and Ross. Several drunken Abilene fans appear in the darkness, walking past. They see the Miners and jeer.

DRUNKEN FAN

Hey Shoeshines, you’re in the wrong part of the country!

SECOND DRUNKEN FAN

Yeah! Why don’t you coons play real basketball next time?

[Flournoy lunges at them and Worsley right beside him.]

WORSLEY

I can take ‘em, coach!

FLOURNOY

Nobody calls me a coon! I swear, I’ll take them out—

[Haskins hold Flournoy. The other black players press up.]

HASKINS Nobody moves! Nobody!

[Flournoy stands, chest heaving. Lattin behind him, with Bobby Joe, Orsten. They watch the hecklers walk off.]

HASKINS

We got more important things to think about. We have basketball games to win. Let’s win the battles that count.

[The black players look back at Haskins, with dark looks.]

HASKINS

You keep playin the way you play, you can keep winnin’ games. Don’t be thinkin’ about them. They don’t matter.

BOBBY JOE

Coach is right. We’re okay. Right?

[The others reluctantly nod.]

BOBBY JOE

Come on, team. Let’s us go win some games! We gonna get us some r-e-s-p-e-c-t! Find out what it means to be me—

[The others join in singing Aretha Franklin’s “Respect”.]

PLAYERS

R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Take care, TCB (Shed Bellowing: ‘Sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me, etc.)

INT/EXT. ON THE ROAD – GAMES - SERIES OF IMAGES – DAY

Little Eva's "The Locomotion". Intercut: the Miners taking on various teams. They suffocate on defense, run the break with dazzling speed, crash the boards, winning game after game. Intercut: images of hecklers in the crowds, and skeptical announcers sneering into their microphones.

INT. WADE RICHARDSON FURNITURE STORES WAREHOUSE – DAY

With a huge Elk looming over his large office desk, Wade Richardson sits, addressing Dr. Ray.

DR. RAY

We couldn't have done any of it without you, Mr. Richardson.

[Richardson rises and looks out at his furniture warehouse.]

WADE RICHARDSON

But I got a little problem with this Coach Haskins and all the colored boys he's playin'. He's got three, four of them out there every game. Why's he do that? He doesn't need them to win, does he?

DR. RAY

Mr. Richardson. We're undefeated.

WADE RICHARDSON

It's not just about winning. The Miners reflect on my business. When we were just a losing team, we loved 'em anyway. They were our boys. Now we got all these black kids from who knows where. Those ain't our boys. Now that may be fine for El Paso. But I got stores in Lubbock and Amarillo, and our new look doesn't play real well over there. And that hurts my business. And what hurts my business, hurts the Miners, you understand?

DR. RAY

I can't tell coach Haskins how to coach his team.

WADE RICHARDSON

His team? That team doesn't have jock straps if I don't pay for them. You tell him to bench those black players or I withdraw my support. And that's the end of Texas Western Athletics. Understand me?

EXT. IOWA CITY, IOWA – DAY

The Midwest. Green hills, hay bales. Barns and weather vanes. "God Bless America" signs with flags and smiling white people.

INT. PRESS ROOM – UNIVERSITY OF IOWA – DAY

Don sits with Iowa Coach Ralph Miller, fielding questions.

FIRST REPORTER

The A.P. has you at number six, Coach Miller. You're undefeated. Do you anticipate any problems against Texas Western tonight?

COACH MILLER

Well, they come at you with a little different look, if you know what I mean. (as the reporters laugh knowingly) But if we play Iowa basketball, we should be able to pick this one off easy. I'm more concerned about Kansas...Kentucky...you know—the big schools.

SECOND REPORTER

Coach Haskins, as a small school, how do you plan to take on a program with the pedigree of Iowa?

HASKINS

We're just lucky to be playin' a team with such a great tradition.

FIRST REPORTER

Coach Haskins, you're playing a lot of colored kids and you've had some success. Do you really think black players are capable winning at this level?

HASKINS

I guess that's why they keep score.

INT. LOCKER ROOM – SAME TIME

The players are dressing. Flournoy stands looking at the white fans streaming into the arena. Baudoin stops Haskins.

BAUDOIN

Coach, you gonna give me some court time this game?

HASKINS

We'll, see, Flip. We'll see.

EXT. HAWKEYE ARENA – NIGHT

Miners and Hawkeyes warming up in the packed arena.

SUPERIMPOSE

TEXAS WESTERN vs. IOWA

[In the crowd: Several black fans take their places, ignoring dirty looks, trying to catch a glimpse of the Miners, excited.]

FIRST IOWA ANNOUNCER

Texas Western sure has gotten a lot of attention this season, playin' his high risk basketball, but let's all remember they have yet to play a top program. Until tonight.

SECOND ANNOUNCER

Well, Bob, Coach Miller has wanted to test his bench. It's safe to say he'll get his opportunity tonight.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT KITCHEN – OKLAHOMA – SAME TIME

Reveal Herman Carr washing dishes. A TV plays in his view. On screen: Texas Western lines up for the tip off. A fellow employee flips it to "Green Acres".

CARR

Stop! Leave the game on! I know that guy!

INT. HAWKEYE ARENA – SAME

Miners win the tip as the Hawkeye crowd shakes the rafters. Miners swarm all over, stealing balls, causing turnovers. The press corps stare in shock as Coach Miller jumps, screaming, waving his arms in vain. Shed leads the way, scoring at will. Haskins catches him as he passes by and gives him a big clap on the back. Shed grins, wide as the Iowa announcers sit at their microphones.

FIRST IOWA ANNOUNCER

The Miners sure are playing a kind of basketball like we've never seen in Iowa. Ten minutes into the first quarter and the Hawkeyes have yet to score a field goal! I don't know what's going on here but this Texas Western team has silenced the crowd at Hawkeye Arena and is taking apart the number six team in the nation!!

SECOND ANNOUNCER

Iowa just seems unable to counter Texas Western's unique brand of ball. Their defense has shut down the Hawkeyes. They're getting three shots off to every one set shot. Shooting deep and taking the ball above the rim. Looks like Coach Haskins has abandoned basketball for street tactics just to gain the upper hand tonight!

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN – SAME TIME

Carr has forgotten his work and cheers each shot. Excited, he accidentally knocks over a stack of plates, shattering to a thousand pieces. Fellow workers look at him like he's crazy.

CARR

You got 'em! Go inside! Sweet. Sweet.

INT. HAWKEYE ARENA – SAME TIME

Orsten scores with his trademark sky "J's". Armstrong muscles up to the Midwestern boys, not letting anybody through. Cager and Lattin crash the boards and thunder home points.

IOWA ANNOUNCER

Time is running out with the score a decisive 86-68, and Texas Western is about to make off with the biggest upset in the nation! Holy Toledo!

[The final buzzer sounds. The Miners leap in each other's arms. Iowa fans are stunned.]

SECOND IOWA ANNOUNCER

One can only wonder where this will end up! Haskins and his team have put the great tradition of American basketball on notice tonight.

[On Haskins, reporters crowd him. Photographer's bulbs flash.]

REPORTER

Coach Haskins. I'm with Sports Illustrated. We'd like to write an article about your team.

[Coach Miller, with his coaches, are watching Haskins being mobbed. His eyes narrowed, his arms crossed, his look grim.]

COACH MILLER

He's gonna get his. He's not gettin' away with this.

EXT. IHOP RESTAURANT – IOWA - NEXT MORNING

Haskins and team file in. Open stares come from other tables. They try not to notice and sit. Shed hands Cager his menu.

SHED

Order me some huevos rancheros.

CAGER

Dude, this is IHOP! It's pancakes. They got no huevos rancheros here!

SHED

Darn! I was cravin' some chili.

INT. RESTROOMS – MOMENTS LATER

Shed pushes the door open and goes inside when he is suddenly grabbed from behind by two collegiate football types. They pull him into a stall and push his face into the toilet bowl. He sputters and fights, but he is held down again into water. They throw him to the ground, sprawling, gasping for air, blinking, coughing water, and walk out quickly.

ATTACKER

Take your ball back home where you belong!

INT. DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

The players are placing their orders to a waitress, as Shed comes up. His clothes are wet. He is shaking, shell shocked. The waitress stares. It takes a moment longer for the players to register. Cager and Bobby Joe quickly rise to go to Shed. Ross is there a split second later. Everyone looks shocked.

ROSS

What happened?! What happened to you?!

EXT. RESTAURANT – MOMENTS LATER

Lattin is the first outside. He stands, his face in fury, scanning the parking lot and the street for any sign of the attackers. Armstrong comes up, upset. Lattin points.

LATTIN

Coach—look.

[In a palm tree, a huge stuffed animal hangs, noose around his neck, a Texas Western jersey pulled on him.]

PALACIO

(walking up)

Holy Mother of Jesus...

HASKINS

(with a dark expression)

Get in the bus. Go on. Right now!

[The players look spooked. Slowly they turn away. Cager's arm is around Shed. Haskins stands, looking around. Face tight.]

INT. MINERS BUS – DRIVING – LATER THAT DAY

Marvin Gaye "Heard It Through the Grapevine". The players sit silent. There are subdued glances from the white to the black players. Worsley sits with Lattin. He looks at him, quiet.

WORSLEY

Big Daddy. You ever get scared?

LATTIN

When I was a kid in Houston, white gang strung me up on a fire escape 'til I peed my pants. I came back down and never took crap from nobody again. Fought every honkey on the block 'til they left Big Daddy D alone. But—this is different. This is worse. It ain't just the neighborhood. This is the whole world.

EXT. MINER'S HALL - EL PASO – LATE AFTERNOON

The Miners bus pulls up. A crowd of students hold up signs: "MINERS NUMBER ONE IN OUR HEARTS" and "WELCOME HOME MINERS" as the players get off. Mary stands with the boys who run and embrace Haskins as he appears. Don puts his arms around them. Several students stop Bobby Joe as he gets off the bus.

STUDENTS

Texas Western! All the way!

[Bobby Joe nods with a faint smile and goes inside. None of the players stop to talk to the fans. At the steps to the Administration building Dr. Ray stands, watching the Miners go inside with a serious look.]

INT. HASKINS KITCHEN – LATER THAT NIGHT

Haskins is eating soup as Mary comes inside with his jacket.

MARY

Can we talk?

HASKINS

Baby. What is it? I'm tired.

[She sits down and brings out a hate letter, reading, upset.]

MARY

Black lover. Play those coons and you're a dead man. Don. What are you gonna do?!

HASKINS

Nothing. I get those all the time.

MARY

You get them all the time?! You have to do something! You have to notify the school! Call the police!

HASKINS

And let my players see fear? I can't do that. We can't win afraid.

MARY

Win? Why is it always about winning?

HASKINS

If I give in to that—what would I be teaching them?

MARY

This is not some interesting coaching lesson, Don. This is about people's lives. Your life. Your children. Me. You can't gamble with people's lives.

HASKINS

You don't understand. I promised those boys. We're on our way to winning the conference. If we do, we make it to the tournament. We can't stop now.

MARY

But you've got a family, Don! Do you ever think about your family?!

HASKINS

I'm thinking of everybody, Mary. I got a big family now.

(reaching for her hand)

Come on, Mary. I'm trying, honey. I'm trying to make you happy.

MARY

I learned a long time ago not to count on my husband for happiness.

[Mary turns and leaves the room.]

EXT. BOBBY JOE'S CAR – MOUNT FRANKLIN – THAT SAME NIGHT

Bobby Joe sits with Tina overlooking El Paso. A lit cross rises atop the Juarez mountains.

TINA

You're quiet tonight.

BOBBY JOE

What? Sorry. Just thinkin' I guess. I was thinking how I forgot what it's really like in the real world. Things are good in El Paso. But when you go out there—it's somethin' else. I never thought about what would happen if we actually won. People really hate us for that, you know? Hate us even more.

TINA

It must be hard for you.

BOBBY JOE

I never let things bother me before. I always knew I could walk away. That's how I protected myself. I just said I don't care.

(beat)

But I do care. And that scares me now. If I care about something, if I want something, that means I could lose it.

TINA

Baby there is nothing you can't lose and no one can ever take your desire away, no one ever.

[He looks at her. Her face is luminous in the moonlight.]

BOBBY JOE

I'm talkin' too much. All this serious stuff is messin' up our moonlight drive.

[Bobby Joe turns up the radio and slides close to her. Percy Sledge's "When a Man Loves a Woman" washes over them. Tina puts her hand on his mouth and pulls him into a kiss.]

INT. HASKINS' OFFICE – NEXT DAY

Haskins is sitting with Moe and Ross going over the season schedule when there is a KNOCK. Dr. Ray looks in.

DR. RAY

Can we talk, Don—one on one?

[Moe and Ross look up. Haskins nods to them. They get up and leave. Dr. Ray waits until the door has closed.]

HASKINS

What's going on?

DR. RAY

I don't know how to say this. Some of the boosters are a little concerned. They think you're playing—too many blacks in the games.

HASKINS

How many blacks do the boosters want me to play? One? Two? What if we lose a game? Then three's okay?

DR. RAY

I don't know. You're playing more and more of them all the time.

HASKINS

I'm playing my best players.

DR. RAY

You're going against convention. And people are noticing, and they don't like it.

HASKINS

You mean Wade Richardson doesn't like it. What does he want from me?

DR. RAY

He wants you to bench the blacks or he's pullin' out of the program. And that means there's no more program.

HASKINS

We are on our way to winning the conference! I can't change my line up. I'd be risking the season.

DR. RAY

Look. Nobody ever expected you to win like this. It's already more than we hoped for. It's gotta end somewhere. Think of the long run. Is it worth the future of the program?

HASKINS

I promised these kids I'd give them a chance. I *have* to play them.

DR. RAY

But you know as well as I do, what you're doing just isn't done.

HASKINS

I also know we have three more games and we're in the tournament. I'm not taking away what I promised. We set out to win, and that's what we're gonna do.

DR. RAY

(holding his look)

Alright. Don. You do it your way. But I can't guarantee anything after this point not even that you'll have a job when it's all over.

HASKINS

That's a gamble I'm gonna have to take.

INT. FLOURNOY AND WORSLEY'S ROOM – DAY

Worsley paces, reading from a book of Malcolm X speeches.

FLOURNEY

Why do you keep reading that stuff? They don't care about fancy words out there.

WORSLEY

Words give you power. That's why you need to learn and graduate. Education gives you power. Only thing a black man can do is get for himself and get ahead. You want change you got to change yourself.

FLOURNOY

All your books. All your education. It's not gonna help. Nothin's gonna change. There's a party and we ain't never gonna be invited.

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – DAY

Cager and Shed are dressed in their street clothes. Cager is shooting baskets as Shed stands by, watching.

SHED

You know, Scoop, sometimes I don't even feel like going back out there again.

CAGER

(snaps ball at Shed)

You can't let them take basketball away. You can't let them win.

SHED

(snaps ball back)

I just don't know how much more I can handle. I'm not like you. All brave.

[Cager goes up for a twisting lay-up to the basket. Suddenly he stumbles. He catches himself, disoriented. Shed goes to him.]

SHED

Scoop. You alright?

CAGER

Nothin' ! Nothin, I'm fine.

SHED

Tell me what's goin' on!

[Cager tries to walk but crumples on the floor. Shed kneels by him.]

SHED

Scoop? Willie? Willie, man. What's wrong?! Tell me what's wrong!

INT. DORM HALLWAY – EARLY MORNING

Haskins walks in the early darkness, with a tense look.

INT. CAGER'S DORM ROOM – SAME TIME

Cager stands by his bed folding his clothes into his suitcase. Just then Haskins comes inside.

HASKINS

Can we talk?

CAGER

Sure. What's up?

HASKINS

How long have you known you had a problem, Willie?

CAGER

I don't know. I started fainting in High School. Mamma took me to the doctor and he told me my heart was too big. Ain't that a kick?

HASKINS

You're a darn fool. Cager. Why didn't you tell me? You could've died out there playin' basketball like that.

CAGER

My whole life I only loved playin' ball. I couldn't play in high school. Had to work to support my sister, but I never stopped playin' on the street. 'Cause to not play was like lettin' something die in me. That was when Squeaky told me you had a place for me. You gave me my dream back. Gave me another chance.

HASKINS

I didn't know all that, Willie.

CAGER

I can still play. This heart thing ain't nothin'. I lived with it this long. I plan on dyin' an old man with it. Let me play Coach. I've gotta play.

HASKINS

Scoops. I'm not gonna be able play you anymore. You know that.

CAGER

Coach. I gotta be out there. I'm not afraid!

HASKINS

That's what I'm afraid of. I can't be responsible for what could happen, Willie. As much as I want you out there, I can't take the risk. I'm sorry.

[Cager looks down, crushed. Haskins puts a hand on his shoulder.]

HASKINS

You're still on the team. We're gonna need your courage—we need your heart, Willie.

EXT. MINERS HALL - TEXAS WESTERN – MOMENTS LATER

We hear Simon and Garfunkel, "The Sound of Silence". The Miners are getting on the bus. Mary stands with Haskins.

HASKINS

Don't worry, baby. I've wrestled bears, remember? I always come out alright.

MARY

This time's different, Don. There are things uglier and meaner than bears.

[Bobby Joe is in the crowd, looking for Tina. She appears with a friend. She sees him and stops, but she turns away and walks off. Bobby Joe turns to the bus, looking conflicted.]

Part 3

INT. PLANE IN FLIGHT – DAY

The players sit in silence, each lost in their own thoughts. Close on Bobby Joe. He stares out the window, a strange, conflicted look on his face.

EXT. AIRPORT – St. LOUIS, MISSOURI – DAY

Don walks with Moe, Ross, and the team as a throng of people comes toward them. Lights are flashing. reporters. Adolph Rupp, a short, intense man in his 60's, strides with an entourage of coaches and his Kentucky Wild Cats. He has an aura of celebrity about him as he wears a tight smile. Outside the window we see Kentucky's own private plane with the Kentucky Wildcats emblem on the side. Rupp sees Haskins and the Miners and keeps a cool look. He stops as Haskins approaches. The Miners head to baggage claim and the Wildcats check-in. Haskins reaches out his hand.

HASKINS

Coach Rupp. It's an honor to meet you. I'm Don Haskins. I coach Texas—

ADOLPH RUPP

I know who you are. And I know your team.

HASKINS

I can't tell you what it means to me to meet you, Coach. I've learned a lot from watching you over the years.

RUPP

Last I looked at the polls, maybe too much.

HASKINS

We still got a long ways to go.

[Rupp looks at Haskins' team. Black and white faces stare back. Angle on Bobby Joe, Orsten, and Flournoy]

BOBBY JOE

Is that who I think it is?

ORSTEN

The man himself.

FLOURNOY

I don't think that white man likes us.

[Angle on Rupp and Haskins.]

RUPP

That took a lot of nerve, signin' all them colored boys.

HASKINS

I got the best players I could.

RUPP

You done a little more than that. You're shakin' things up, Coach.

HASKINS

Maybe things need a little shakin'.

RUPP

People don't like things shook.

(intensely)

Be careful, boy. You're dealin' with lives. Good people's lives.

(looking back at his team)

Good luck. Maybe I'll see you down the line.

[Haskins watches as Rupp walks off.]

INT. TULSA ARENA – OKLAHOMA – NIGHT

The stands are jammed and the crowd is raucous.

SUPERIMPOSE:

TEXAS WESTERN vs. UNIVERSITY OF TULSA

INT. COACH'S OFFICE – VISITING LOCKER ROOM – SAME TIME

Bobby Joe stands across from Haskins, looking nervous.

BOBBY JOE

Coach, I got something to tell you. And you ain't gonna like it.

HASKINS

What you do this time? Get a girl pregnant or something?

[Haskins waits. Finally Bobby Joe nods and looks down.]

HASKINS

No! Darn it! Bobby Joe! Darn it! You didn't! What were you thinking?

[Bobby Joe meets Haskins look. Haskins' jaw flexes, furious.]

BOBBY JOE

I'm sorry, Coach. I let you down. I let the team down. I know what the rules are. I know I can't stay on the team.

HASKINS

So you're just gonna walk away?

BOBBY JOE

No! I don't want to! I mean, this team means everything to me. For the first time in my life I feel like I'm committed to something. But—

(beat)

You told me I need to be a leader and a man. Well, that's not just on the court. It has to be off it, too. I'm gonna marry her, Coach. I'm gonna be a father. Even if it means leaving the team.

HASKINS

Alright, okay. Let's slow down a minute. Let's think about this, Bobby Joe. No need to rush into anything. I mean, you know—

(trying to sound light)

Well, there are probably a couple ways we can do this. Now you could leave the team and all that—or—I could—heck, I could get you some housing. Nothin' fancy. But I could help you—get you set up. Bend the rules a little bit. Let you stay on the team and play.

BOBBY JOE

You'd do that for me?

HASKINS

Yeah. For you. And—twenty three points a game...Eleven assists.

BOBBY JOE

Thanks, Coach.

HASKINS

That doesn't mean I'm gonna let you forget this. You're a pain the butt: you're reckless, irresponsible, self-centered jerk.

(his voice softens)

You're just like me

(Beat)

God, you get on my nerves.

BOBBY JOE

(Slaps him on the shoulder)

I love you, too, Coach.

HASKINS

You get out there right now. Understand?

INT. LOCKER ROOM – SAME TIME

The players have been eavesdropping and jump back as the door opens. Haskins looks at them. Bobby Joe just behind him.

HASKINS

What ya'll lookin' at?

(looking around)

Now get on the court. All of you. Come on.

INT. TUNNEL – TULSA'S ARENA – MOMENTS LATER

The players run into the arena. Fans cup their hands and shout; their faces twisted.

FIRST TULSA FAN

Oreo, you belong on the plantation!

SECOND TULSA FAN

Hey, Spook, it's huntin' season

THIRD TULSA FAN

Hey, you better watch your backs after the game. We know how to take care of runaway blacks.

[Haskins gathers his players. Flournoy is rattled.]

FLOURNOY

One more honkey shoots his mouth off, I'm going in the stands.

ARMSTRONG

Why do you listen to them?

FLOURNOY

You don't know what you're talking about, Farm Boy!

ARMSTRONG

You think you're the only one getting crap shoved in your face? We're traitors out there. We ain't even considered anymore.

HASKINS

Cut it out! Both of you! Nobody reacts! You understand!? Nobody reacts to them! Now let's get going!

[In the stands: The number of black fans is growing. They hold signs and banners, "Go Miners!" and "We Love Our Team!" Game: The Miners struggle, spooked by the hostile crowd. Score is tied. Bobby Joe in-bounds to Shed, but Shed is nervous and a Tulsa player picks him for a score.]

HASKINS

What are you doin' out there, Shed?! Come on! Don't back down! Find the open man! Get back on D! Block out!

[Baudoin tosses a bad pass to Bobby Joe and Tulsa steals the ball. The official calls a foul on Bobby Joe. Haskins rants.]

HASKINS

What the heck is that call!? Huh?! You got eyeballs in your head?!

[The official tells Haskins to back off, but he steps up threatening. The official calls a Technical Foul on Haskins, gesturing to stay back. Haskins takes another step. The official calls another "T". Ross pulls Haskins back to the bench. Haskins pulls himself free and walks to the other team's side of the court and sits down by the surprised Tulsa coach.]

TULSA COACH

Uh—Coach? You're on the wrong—

HASKINS

Heck. I like the view on this side better.

INT. HASKINS HOME – SAME TIME

Mary watches the game on TV with her four boys around her.

YOUNGEST BOY

There's daddy.

MARK

Is he mad? He looks mad.

MARY

He's not mad. He's just a – stubborn, stubborn man, that's all.

INT. TULSA ARENA – OKLAHOMA – LATER

A Tulsa player trips Lattin at the basket. They fall. The referee calls the foul on Lattin. Lattin charges in anger.

LATTIN

He tripped me! He meant to do it!

[The referee now calls technical foul on Lattin.]

HASKINS

Lattin. Take the bench!

LATTIN

Coach!—

HASKINS

Take the bench! Now!

[Lattin throws himself down on the bench, rattled. Haskins comes up to him, furious.]

HASKINS

You never let your anger get the better of you again, you understand?

LATTIN

Coach, same thing happened to you. They're all against us! It's bullcrap out there.

HASKINS

You got nailed for a dirty play! It wasn't fair! But this ain't about fairness! We're not gonna get any breaks. You wanna be the best? You gotta be better than them! You gotta hold yourself together! There may come a time when you can show all that anger. But I'll tell you when that is. Understand me?

[Lattin looks at Haskins. He nods. Last Quarter: Time running out. Miners pull away from Tulsa. Final buzzer sounds. Final Score: TEXAS WESTERN 82—Tulsa 77.]

INT. PRESS ROOM – LATER

Haskins stands in midst a pushing throng of reporters.

FIRST REPORTER

Coach Haskins, you and Kentucky, the number one team in the country, are now the only two undefeated teams... with one game to go in the regular season. Do you really think your team—a team made up of mostly of—kids from the streets, can compete with a team like Adolph Rupp's?

HASKINS

I only care about making the tournament and advancing as far as we can. If we don't play better than we did tonight, that won't be very far.

SECOND REPORTER

You've been playing your colored boys more each game. Are you at all concerned about whether the black ball player can handle the pressure of playing at a national level?

HASKINS

No, sir, I am not. As long as we play defense and score, we'll win basketball games.

THIRD REPORTER

People want to know what kind of statement you are trying to make by playing so many colored boys?

HASKINS

I'm a basketball coach: I don't make statements.

[The reporters keep shouting questions but Haskins walks out.]

INT. TULSA HOTEL – HALLWAY – LATER THAT NIGHT

The players walk the dingy hallway. Shed and Cager open their door. Across, Flournoy, Worsley open their door. Flournoy goes inside, when he stops in his tracks, shocked. The room has been defaced with animal blood. There is blood all over the beds, cast out in buckets. On the floor, on the walls—words scrawled in blood. Lattin is behind Flournoy, whimpering, shaking.]

LATTIN

Oh god, oh god...

[Worsley supports Lattin as he breaks down. In the background we hear Cager]

CAGER

Ross! Coach! Hurry!

[Shed and Cager's room. Furniture has been overturned. Blood covers floor and walls. Haskins stands looking with Ross.]

HASKINS

Moe, get us checked out. Ross talk to management. How did this happen?

[He looks at the players. They stare at him in rage and shock.]

HASKINS

Okay, listen. We're goin' to Seattle tonight. We'll just get outta here. We'll be alright. Just remember that. Okay? We're okay. We just have to get outta here. We'll be okay...

[But his voice falters. The black players look back at him. There is a strange look in their eyes.]

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PLANE TO SEATTLE – NIGHT

The flight is a somber, silent, with everyone staring ahead.

INT. LOBBY – SEATTLE HOTEL – THAT NIGHT

[The players file in. A bellman comes up to Flournoy. He reaches out to take his bag Flournoy pulls it back.]

FLOURNOY

I take my own bag, thanks.

[He walks off. Haskins watches the other black players follow.]

INT. OUTSIDE THE HOTEL – NEXT MORNING

Haskins stands looking out over the bay. Ross comes up.

ROSS

What you standin' here for?

HASKINS

I don't know, Ross. Sometimes I wonder—what am I getting these guys in?

ROSS

A dream you promised them. That's what.

HASKINS

My whole life I've thought of nothin' but winnin'. And I got these boys winnin' alright. But—is it for them—this whole thing? Or is it just for me?

ROSS

It's for everybody. Everybody gains.

HASKINS

But at what cost? It's hard enough to play the game at this level, but to ask them to withstand all that—how can I ask them to take on all that goes with it?

ROSS

You done the right thing, Sonny.

HASKINS

I don't know, Ross. I don't know.

INT. SEATTLE HOTEL – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME

Shed, Orsten, Worsley, Cager, Lattin and Flournoy sit at a table. They have a silent, locked in look.

Togo and Armstrong walk in, with Myers and Palacio. Togo and Armstrong move to the table of black players. Nobody looks up.

ARMSTRONG

You got some room there?

FLOURNOY

Why don't you take another table?

ARMSTRONG

Fine. Come on, guys. Let's go.

[Togo follows them, glancing back at the black players, upset. Armstrong indicates to Palacio and Myers. They sit together, glancing back, talking amongst themselves.]

INT. UNIVERSITY OF SEATTLE – THAT NIGHT**SUPERIMPOSE:**

TEXAS WESTERN vs. SEATTLE

[The players stand apart from each other. Haskins eyes the crowd. Ross paces. Moe reads his roster of starters.]

JUD MILTON (V.O.)

With number one Kentucky losing yesterday, the *Miracle Miners* have a chance to do the seemingly impossible in their final game of the regular season...thrill the hearts of their dedicated El Paso fans by becoming the nation's only undefeated team and rise to the top of the polls over Adolph Rupp's fabled Wildcats.

[Series of images: Lattin in against Seattle. He loses tip. Immediately, the players play divided. Flournoy ignores Armstrong's signal and passes Orsten, but Orsten loses the ball. Haskins paces, watching them struggle. It's clear the team has become fractured. All of the outside and internal pressures are crippling them.

In the crowd: there are groups of black fans on their feet, cheering, groaning, reacting to the Miners losing the game. On the court: Bobby Joe passes to Shed. Armstrong is too slow and two Seattle big men suffocate Shed and cause a three second violation. Bobby Joe lays into Armstrong who walks away.

Seattle nails jumpers over Orsten and Worsley. Bobby Joe's man beats him off the dribble. The Half-time buzzer sounds. The Miners are behind: 36 to 39. Ross throws his towel down as Bobby Joe fumbles a dribble and throws out of bounds.]

JUD MILTON

It's hard to say what has the undefeated Miners struggling as much as they are today. But they seem to have lost their shooting touch, particularly Bobby Joe Hill. He may be "No Sweat" Hill, but he's sweating now

[Later: Haskins is on the bench, frustrated. At another score for Seattle, Ross jumps off the bench, yelling at referees, as he tosses his towel in the air. It lands on the head of a referee, who throws him out of the game. Last

minutes: Miners make a final push. The teams trade baskets. Bobby Joe is fouled—Miners down by one. Two seconds to go. Bobby Joe steps to the line.]

JUD MILTON (V.O.)

Texas Western's perfect season comes down to Bobby Joe Hill. The Texas Western star has struggled all night, but he can redeem himself with two free throws now.

[Bobby gets into position. He sets and fires. The ball swirls inside the rim, pops out, and falls to the ground. The buzzer. Seattle rushes the floor. The Miners stand stunned. Bobby Joe looks shell-shocked.

FINAL SCORE: SEATTLE 74. TEXAS WESTERN 73...The team files out as a TV Announcer speaks into the camera.]

SPORTS ANNOUNCER

The *Cinderella* Miners had a chance at a perfect season and a shot at unseating powerhouse Kentucky for the number one spot in the nation, but tonight's loss drops them down to number three and raises the questions again about whether this team, and its unorthodox line up, is a legitimate contender for the NCAA championship.

INT. LOCKER ROOM – SAME TIME

The players are getting out of their jerseys. There is a tense, divided silence in the room. Haskins comes inside.

HASKINS

You stunk out there! Squeaky could've played better D than you did tonight! And where are the picks Shed? You were runnin' scared just like the old Shed! Maybe y'all thought that undefeated record means something. Maybe you thought you could sit back and waltz your way into the darn tournament. Well, I got news for you. You keep playing like you did tonight, you might as well unpack your bags, 'cause you ain't goin' nowhere!

ORSTEN

You think basketball's everything, Coach. But that's easy for you to say. You don't have redneck crackers getting in your face all the time.

HASKINS

What are you talking about?

FLOURNOY

I know. You don't get it. None of you. You're all the same.

BAUDOIN

Hold on, man. Not all white people are like those people, man.

FLOURNOY

Yeah, who's different?

BAUDOIN

I'm different! All of us here!

FLOURNOY

That's a nice rap, man. But you don't have people breakin' into your room attackin' you like they did Shed, man. What do you know?

BAUDOIN

You think we haven't had heat come down on us? You think it hasn't been hard being on this team?

FLOURNOY

Well, don't be doin' me any favors.

BAUDOIN

You don't know what it's like to have to take a back seat for you all the time. It's like we don't even count.

FLOURNOY

Yeah, and we have to pull you along like some weight around our necks.

MOE

Stop it! You stop this right now!

[The players push against each other. Shed looks at Haskins].

SHED

Coach, we don't wanna win if it means being treated like dirt. It's not worth it. If that's what it takes, we don't wanna do this anymore.

TOGO

What are you talking about? You guys wanna bag the season with the tournament about to start?! We worked too hard to quit now.

FLOURNOY

Who worked so hard? Who takes all the crap out there to get it done?

ARMSTRONG

Last time I checked we were a team.

FLOURNOY

(shoving Armstrong)
Get outta my face, Farmer!

LATTIN

No. Stop, Man.

ROSS

Settle down, now!

FLOURNOY

You're always talkin' to us like we just gotta go along with the program. Ignore all that stuff. Just take it. You don't know what it's like! None of you.

[There is a long silence. Haskins looks around the room.]

HASKINS

For a whole season we've been a team. This is the first time I've seen you break apart. And over what? Because a few in this room have forgotten why they're here.

[Haskins looks at every one of the black players.]

HASKINS

It wasn't so you would just warm the bench of a white man. It wasn't so you could make the plays while others got the credit. It was because you wanted a chance to show what you could do on a basketball court, no matter what your color, no matter what some cracker coach or some white trash fan said. It was so you could stand on the center stripe after spilling your blood and have the world say—there goes a man. There goes a basketball player.

FLOURNOY

But, Coach, they've taken our dignity away. What kind of man lets his dignity get taken away?

HASKINS

Dignity? No one can take something away from you that you don't give them. Your dignity is inside you. And no one can take it away. You can only give it up.

(he looks each in the eye)

It's your choice: you can walk away or walk through the fire and grab it all. But if you walk away, you'll never know if you could've stood on that center line.

[On the players' silent faces.]

SMASH TO:**EXT. LUBBOCK MUNICIPAL STADIUM – LUBBOCK, TEXAS – NIGHT**

Cameras flash. Miners shove through a police line, a hostile crowd pushing, and yelling epithets. An NBC TV Announcer speaks.

FIRST NBC ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The NCAA Tournament gets off to a rip roaring start as the Cincinnati Bearcats take on the upstart Texas western Miners...

INT. LUBBOCK ARENA – MOMENTS LATER**SUPERIMPOSE:**

NCAA TOURNAMENT MIDWEST FINALS TEXAS WESTERN vs. KANSAS

[Fans yell. The school bands play. The clock is readied. The NBC Announcer looks into a camera.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER

While the Texas Western club has certainly turned heads across the country with its roster of seven Black players it's safe to say that Don Haskins' noble experiment should end tonight against the seven time Missouri Valley Conference champs.

SECOND ANNOUNCER

That's right, Bob! The combination of a weak schedule and the fact that Haskins is relying on Black players who—while great pure athletes—lack the leadership, the intellect and heart to play basketball at a championship level, will likely spell an early exit from the tournament.

EXT. TICKET BOOTHS – LUBBOCK ARENA – DAY

A long line of ticket buyers is cued up. A handful of the faces in the crowd are black. White people eye them.

INT. MINERS' LOCKER ROOM – SAME TIME

Haskins and the Miners huddle, heads bowed and hands clasped.

CAGER

Lord. We've been pulled at. Torn. We've doubted ourselves as men and as players. Thank you for keeping us together. See us through, no matter what the obstacles, no matter how high the mountain.

Amen

[The team cheers and rushes out. Flournoy and Armstrong are the last ones left. They exchange an awkward look.]

INT. ARENA – MOMENTS LATER

A capacity crowd is in the arena. A lone tall, black player for Kansas, Jo-Jo White, warms up with his all white team.

FIRST ANNOUNCER

Lead by All-American Jo-Jo White and the biggest front line in the tournament, the number six Jayhawks are with Duke, the odds-on favorite to challenge Adolph Rupp and the Kentucky Wildcats for college basketball's holy grail.

The Miners enter the arena and explode into "Showtime" as Bobby Joe does dazzling passes, Shed streaks for a lay-in and Lattin jams one home. A ripple of shock passes through the crowd. Flournoy sees Jo-Jo White's look of surprise.

FLOURNOY

Brother looks lonely.

ORSTEN

Yeah. He does.

[Haskins stands on the floor clapping his hands and exhorting his players as Cager, fully suited up, comes out of the tunnel and onto the court. Haskins catches him in his arms.]

HASKINS

What the heck you doin', Scoops?

CAGER

I gotta play, Coach. I gotta play. In whatever way...I gotta play.

HASKINS

Darn it, Cager. I'll play you. Only off the bench, five minutes at a time. No exceptions.

[Cager grabs a ball and drives for a lay-up and scores. The Miner fans leap to their feet and cheer. Game: Kansas fans chant the Kansas fight song as Bobby Joe streaks up court against Jo-Jo White. He snaps a pass to Orsten who launches a 20-footer that slashes through the net. Haskins pounds his program in his hands and barks commands, as Jo-Jo White brings the ball up. The game is tied at 40. He tosses the ball into one of Kansas' Forwards, a big, nasty looking farm kid. As Armstrong moves in to put a body on him, the Kansas Forward smirks into Armstrong's face.]

KANSAS FORWARD

You shower with all them blacks?

ARMSTRONG

You can just go to heck.

[The Forward elbows Armstrong's gut. Armstrong doubles over.]

HASKINS

That was flagrant! I want a T!

[Kansas scores. Shed charges to the Kansas Forward, enraged.]

SHED

What was that crap, huh?!

FORWARD

Get outta my face, Eightball.

[Shed suddenly unloads a vicious right hook, dropping the Kansas giant. The referee jumps in and signals Shed out of the game. Haskins screams at the official. Lattin looks between the bloodied Kansas player and Shed, impressed.]

LATTIN

Way to go, Shadow!

[Shed leaves to a chorus of "boos", passing Haskins, who grins.]

HASKINS

Shed, you wild man.

[Later in the game. Game is close by two points. Bobby Joe is getting everybody, Cager, Worsley, Lattin and Orsten, into the action. But Kansas and Jo-Jo White stay with them. The Jayhawks bring the ball up, less than a minute to play. Haskins looks at the score: Jayhawks ahead 81-80. It looks bad but Bobby Joe picks the Kansas' Center and lobs a pass to Cager who flies through the air and scores. The crowd goes wild.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER

Willie Cager saves the day! Refusing to go down, Texas Western has beaten the powerful Jayhawks!

[Final score: TEXAS WESTERN 81, KANSAS 80. The Kansas fans stand silent, in a state of utter shock.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER

In what can only be described as the game of the year the Texas Western Miners continue to defy the odds and the wisdom of the experts... as they win the Midwest Championship and move on to Maryland and the Final Four!!!

[As 8,000 spectators file out, the black Miner fans chant "We're Number 1!" holding signs: "TWC: Maryland, Here we Come!!"]

SECOND ANNOUNCER

Well, Bob, whatever else happens, the Miners seem to be playing for something more than just the final score. Something bigger than basketball. And Don Haskins—he looks like a shoe-in for 'Coach of the Year' honors.

INT. MINERS BOEING 707 – DAY

Don walks past players reading a Sport Illustrated headline "Breaking the Barriers". A crowd of rowdy boosters and fans are also on the plane. Haskins shakes hands as Wade Richardson comes up, hand out held, Sports Illustrated in his hand.

WADE RICHARDSON

Don Haskins, you ol' son of a gun! Have you read it already? Have you?

HASKINS

Yes, sir. I have read it.

WADE RICHARDSON

It says here—the selfless support of Texas Westerns' booster, Wade Richardson, which had made this break-out teams' rise a true phenomenon in the sports world.

HASKINS

They got you down, sir. Didn't they?

WADE RICHARDSON

Heck, Don Haskins. You forget all that stuff I said before. I'm sellin' more dinettes than the last four years combined. You ol' sonofagun! You've really done it! We're goin' to the Final Four!! Listen, I wanted to ask you a favor.

[Richardson grabs his 12 year-old son and pushes him forward.]

WADE RICHARDSON

I'd appreciate it if Wade Jr. could sit with ya'll durin' a game.

HASKINS

(Peers at Junior)
You a basketball fan, Junior?

JUNIOR
I sure am, sir!

HASKINS
You can sit with us anytime, boy.

[Junior beams. Haskins pats him on the shoulder and walks on.]

EXT. HOTEL – COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND – DAY

Haskins and his players, dressed in suits and ties, push through newspapermen and photographers and into a posh hotel, as white hecklers taunt them from behind a police barricade.

FIRST HECKLER
You come to the wrong part of the country, boys.

SECOND HECKLER
This is the South. We don't cotton to no uppity coloreds messin' with our basketball!

[Worsley looks at Cager as they pass to safety.]

WORSLEY
Where's Malcolm's black butt when you need him?

INT. BALTIMORE PRESS CLUB – LATER THAT NIGHT

Rupp sits beneath a banner: "Sports Writers of America". The host addresses two hundred dinner guests, mostly reporters.

HOST
It is my great privilege to announce this year's winner of the 1966 'NCAA Coach of the year...'

INT. HASKINS ROOM – SAME TIME

Haskins sits eating dinner with Mary, watching the telecast.

INT. BALTIMORE PRESS CLUB – SAME TIME

HOST
Winner of five National Championships, on his way to sixth, I give you the Baron of Bluegrass, Adolph Rupp!

[The crowd bursts into applause as Rupp waves to the crowd.]

INT. SHED'S ROOM – SAME TIME

The players watch as Rupp is handed an impressive trophy.

SHED
That's Coach's trophy, man.

INT. BALTIMORE PRESS CLUB – SAME TIME

A reporter rises and takes the microphone.

REPORTER
A few questions, Mr. Rupp!

RUPP
What, you lure an ol' man here with wine and food just so you can ask a few more questions?

REPORTER

Indulge me, Mr. Rupp. More and more we are seeing black players on teams. How is it in your nearly 40 years at Kentucky, you've never recruited a single black player?

INT. PLAYERS ROOM – SAME TIME

All the Miners, black and white, stop eating—mid-mouthful.

RUPP

Anybody can go to New York City and find five colored boys who can jump. But basketball is about a heck of a lot more than runnin' and jumpin'. It takes intelligence, skill, and heart.

REPORTER

So you would never—under any circumstances—recruit blacks?

RUPP

(grins cocky)

Last I checked...I won four National titles without one. Way I figure, I must be doin' something' right.

[As Rupp's admiring crowd laughs and applauds, the Texas Western players look at each other, silent.]

INT. MINER TEAM BUS – THE NEXT MORNING

Haskins and the team sit silent, heading for Cole Field House, home of the Final Four. Over the radio, they hear:

RADIO

(V.O.) While today's semi-final game between Texas Western and Utah is widely seen as a battle for third place in the tournament, the arrival of Don Haskins' Texas Western team has stirred up the basketball world, particularly south of the Mason Dixon line...

[The bus turns toward Cole Field House, as white-face rednecks sprint forward, tossing huge chunks of watermelon, landing with violent thuds and leaving ominous red streaks on the windows.]

SHED

I know we're supposed to fuse our anger, Coach, but sometimes I—

[The players see an astonishing sight, pulling up to the entrance: a throng of black men, women, and children line the entrance to Cole Field House, chanting "Go Miners! GO MINERS!!"]

SHED

-- Sweet Jesus!

[The white Miners look at their black teammates and see how moved they are by the spontaneous show of solidarity. Stepping out the black players receive cheers and slaps on the backs. An old black woman steps up to the huge Lattin].

OLD WOMAN

I come all the way from Macon. I don't watch no basketball. But when you play—you be playin' for all of us. You understand me? You be playin' for us.

INT. MINER LOCKER ROOM – COLE FIELD HOUSE – AN HOUR LATER

Haskins stand at a chalkboard, diagrammed with plays.

HASKINS

You think Jo-Jo White was tough, tonight we've got the best player in the tournament to deal with. If we stop Jerry Chambers, we stop Utah. Give me a circle.

[Bobby Joe looks at Haskins and then at his teammates.]

BOBBY JOE

Let's get this for Coach Haskins. Coach of the year!

ALL

For Coach!!

[As the players run out; Haskins stands speechless, moved.]

INT. COLE FIELD HOUSE – LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Cole Field House is packed to the gills. Photographers' cameras flash from behind each basket.

SUPERIMPOSE:

NCAA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

TEXAS WESTERN VS. UTAH

[TV cameras cover the action from all angles as Flourney tries to keep with Utah's only black player, Jerry Chambers.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER

Texas Western is getting a piece of its own medicine tonight as it tries to corral consensus All-American Jerry Chambers...

[The 6'4" Forward is unstoppable as he blows past Flourney for a running hook. The crowd—mostly pro Utah—explodes. Haskins looks up at the scoreboard which shows the Miners trailing 35-33 and losing momentum fast.]

SECOND ANNOUNCER

Look at Chambers! Such raw athletic ability! He's the perfect complement to his white teammates who provide the leadership and poise necessary for victory.

[Haskins looks down the bench, trying to find an answer for Chambers before he causes more harm. He looks at Cager.]

HASKINS

Scoops—get in there.

[Cager runs out and Flourney heads for the bench.]

FLOURNOY

Sorry, Coach. I can't keep up with him.

[Haskins watches Bobby Joe dump a pass off to Orsten who cuts the lane and scores. The Utes get the ball back to Chambers who scores easily on Cager. He is too quick and powerful. Late in the game the Texas Western fans watch, bleakly, as Chambers lights up the net with another 20 footer.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER

The Miners of Texas Western are on the verge of elimination as neither Nevil Shed or Willie Cager can stop Jerry Chambers.

SECOND ANNOUNCER

That's right. Chambers has lit the Miners up for 28 tonight. At this point it looks as if Don 'The Bear' Haskins has finally run out of answers.

[Haskins looks at the clock: fourteen minutes remain. Miners down by eight—Haskins, desperate, scans his bench.]

HASKINS

Armstrong—can you stop that kid?

ARMSTONG

Coach, I may just be a hog farmer, but one thing I can do is cover a man.

[Haskins sends Armstrong out. Chambers looks at Armstrong surprised. He takes the ball into the lane, but Armstrong steps right at him, smothering him. Off balance, Chambers unloads the ball which is picked off by Worsley who streaks in for two. The clock drains away and the Miners start chanting "FARMER, FARMER, FARMER!!!" Chambers gets the ball, but Armstrong suffocates him, lays his body out to take a charge, knocks the ball away and dives on the hardwood securing the loose ball.]

INT. THELMA'S STEAKHOUSE – MISSOURI – SAME TIME

Jerry's father sits with several farmers watching a television over the bar, rooting for the game. Excited.

ARMSTRONG FATHER

Do you see that?! That's my boy! That's my boy!

INT. COLE FIELD HOUSE – SAME TIME

Miners blitzkrieg, filling the net with outside shots by Orsten, daredevil drives by Bobby Joe, and slams by Lattin. As the final buzzer sounds—the scoreboard showing TEXAS WESTERN 85, UTAH 78—the Miners lift Armstrong on their shoulders. He grins, astonished at the attention. Haskins is being hugged by Moe, nodding his approval at the players.

FIRST ANNOUNCER

No fans, it's not a mistake. The scoreboard is working. Texas Western's improbable season continues as they beat Utah and advance to the championship of college basketball!

[Flournoy passes Armstrong with a nod.]

FLOURNOY

Way to play, man.

[Armstrong looks surprised. Filing off the court, Bobby Joe and other black Miners are stopped by Jerry Chambers, sweat running down his face.]

CHAMBERS

Go all the way, man. Take down that championship net.

INT. HASKINS' HOTEL ROOM – THAT NIGHT

Don sits with Mary watching Adolph Rupp exhort his players during the Kentucky-Duke semi-final.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

There's no doubt that the real NCAA Final is tonight as perennial NCAA powerhouse Duke goes up against Adolph Rupp's four time National Champion Kentucky.

EXT. GARDEN BRUNCH – HOTEL – THE NEXT DAY

A lavish brunch for the wives of coaches, team boosters, and tournament VIPs. Mary sits at a table, alone. Kentucky wives in chiffon and elaborate hats make a startling contrast to Mary, who is dressed in a simple but attractive red dress. One of the Kentucky booster wives sips a Mint Julep and talks in shocked tones to her fellow southern friends.

FIRST KENTUCKY WIFE

It's just awful that they're letting that team full of blacks play.

SECOND KENTUCKY WIFE

How that horrible man would be willing to play those colored. It's a disgrace to the tournament, that's what it is.

FIRST KENTUCKY WIFE

Well, they'll be handed a lesson tomorrow they won't soon forget.

(looking at Mary)
And where are you from, sweetheart?

MARY

El Paso, Texas. I'm married to that horrible man you were just talking about.

[The women turn white and quickly move off. A kind faced woman in her sixties comes up to Mary.]

KIND FACED WOMAN

Don't listen to them. They haven't the sense they were born with.

MARY

No, I guess they haven't.

KIND FACED WOMAN

(extending her hand)

My name is Esther. Esther Rupp.

[Mary looks surprised and takes her hand, smiling slowly, but her eyes grow troubled again and trail back to the others, as they chatter snidely between themselves.]

INT. PRESS ROOM – SHERATON HOTEL – LATER

Reporters and photographers pack a crowded press room. Haskins and Moe head to the interview and under a banner that reads "NCAA National Championship". Suddenly Adolph Rupp appears beside him. Haskins extends his hand.

HASKINS

Coach—I had a funny feeling I'd be seeing you again.

[Rupp looks at Haskins; instead of the open, amiable man at the airport, he has his game face on.]

RUPP

That right? Well, enjoy it while you're here, fella. Ain't gonna see it again.

[Haskins is stung by Rupp's naked gamesmanship. He stands beside him at the interview stand, his jaw tight. Flashbulbs blind him as reporters fire off their questions.]

FIRST REPORTER

Mr. Haskins—How do you plan to stop Louis Dampier and Pat Riley?

HASKINS

How are they gonna stop Bobby Joe Hill and David Lattin?

RUPP

Sounds like the coach is pretty excited 'bout those wins he got out west. But at Kentucky, we don't much worry 'bout the man in the other uniform. We just play Kentucky basketball.

[A second reporter rises and looks at Rupp.]

SECOND REPORTER

Coach, you've been around this game a long time. You are college basketball. How do you feel about the racial make-up of the Texas Western team?

RUPP

You mean those Texans from the wide open spaces of New York, Detroit, and Indiana?

[Laughter. Then Rupp's eyes fill with ominous hatred.]

RUPP

I learned this game at the feet of Dr. Naismith in the cradle of basketball. I've been coachin' it near on forty years and the one thing I know is that: there ain't no five colored that can beat five white boys in the great game of basketball! You hear me? No darn coloreds. So you write that down. Put it on the front page. And you tell them you heard it from Adolph Rupp.

EXT. COLE FIELD HOUSE – LATER THAT NIGHT

Haskins stands outside the arena, a lone figure on the street, staring up at the huge billboard of a smiling Coach Rupp and his Wildcats lit up over the empty parking lot of Cole Field House. Moe stands at the distance, listening as Haskins talks. Haskins' voice is hoarse.

HASKINS

He's a great coach. Greatest there ever was. I always admired him—measured myself against him. If I could just be like Coach Rupp...the big man.

[Moe looks down, uncomfortable.]

HASKINS

But maybe—maybe the big man's still got a few things to learn about basketball. About boys that are playin' for more than just a darn championship.

[He turns to Moe.]

HASKINS

Call the players, Moe. Tell them to meet me at the arena. Now.

INT. ARMSTRONG AND SHED'S ROOM – SAME TIME

Armstrong and Shed lie in darkness, staring at the ceiling.

ARMSTRONG

You asleep, Shadow?

SHED

Naw, can't.

ARMSTRONG

My dad called. Says everyone in town's goin' to Thelma's steakhouse to watch the game tonight. He said he was proud of me. He ain't never said that before. I never thought I'd hear him say that.

SHED

You'll show him, Farmer. You will... My folks are drivin' down to the game with Will's parents. My old man's comin' too. He was always a baseball fan, but I think he's finally likin' basketball.

ARMSTRONG

No Kiddin', Shadow? I'll be.

INT. FLOURNOY AND LATTIN'S ROOM

[Flournoy is wide awake, as Lattin tries to sleep.]

FLOURNOY

Talked to my folks tonight. They're taking some savings and flyin' out for the game.

LATTIN

That's nice, Flo, but there's a game tomorrow and I'd like to get some sleep.

FLOURNOY

You know—I almost didn't come here because of a piece of pie. I was ready to give up every dream I ever had because that man ate my piece of pie.

[Harry smiles to himself, the first we've seen, and turns to Lattin who is snoring soundly.]

INT. WORSLEY AND CAGER'S ROOM – SAME

Worsley sits in bed, arms behind his head. Cager is dozing.

WORSLEY

I never thought I'd care this much. It was always just a game to me. Just way out to somewhere else. I never thought it could change anything. But now—feels like a lot more than a game.

CAGER

I know what you mean, brother. Feels like my whole life right now.

[The phone rings. Worsley looks at Cager. Worsley picks it up.]

INT. BOBBY JOES' ROOM – SAME TIME

Orsten looks at Bobby Joe, whose eyes are closed.

ORSTEN

How can you sleep, dude?

BOBBY JOE

I ain't sleepin'. I'm thinkin' about stuff—about Tina- how much I love her and that.

ORSTEN

Yo, man! We playin' for the National Championship and you thinkin' about some mushy stuff?! I'm going to sleep in Big Daddy D's room, you keep on like that.

[At that moment, the door opens and Worsley looks inside.]

WORSLEY

Coach wants to see us at Cole Field House. Hurry.

INT. COLE FIELD HOUSE – MOMENTS LATER

Haskins stands across from seven sleepy black players in the eerily empty gym. His face is full of angry emotion.

HASKINS

My whole life, all I ever cared about was winning. Making my teams the best they could be. I never cared about who I had to play, long as my players had the best chance to win. But all that changed today.

(looking at each player)

It changed because Coach Rupp doesn't think you belong here simply because of the color of your skin. He thinks because you look different than him you're going to lose the National Championship. Now from what I know about you boys, I know that's a load'a bull. And I intend to show that good 'ol boy just what I think.

[The players look at each other, a charge going through them.]

HASKINS

So, I've made a decision tonight

[Haskins face is filled with deep emotion. His eyes dart.]

HASKINS

I'm only going to play you tomorrow in the final game. Just you.

[There is a stunned silence among the players.]

HASKINS

It's your game. I've made that decision because there's--...

[Haskins voice cracks. He gets himself under control.]

HASKINS

-- there's more to this game than just winning.

[The players look shocked and emotional.]

HASKINS

That's—that's all I had to say.

(beat)

You show them tomorrow. The world's watchin you.

[He turns and walks out, his players watching him go, stunned.]

EXT. COLE FIELD HOUSE – PLAYERS ENTRANCE – THE NEXT DAY

Miners bus pulls up. A crowd of Kentucky fans press on police barricades. Miners step from the bus, with duffle bags. They endure a barrage of ugly racial epithets. A corpulent woman spits on Lattin. Hooded Klansmen threaten Haskins.

KLANSMAN

You want to be the first white man lynched since the Civil War—you go on and play them Negroes.

[Haskins and the Miners walk past, silent.]

INT. HOTEL KITCHEN – SAME TIME

Herman Carr sits with kitchen staff and friends, gathered around a TV, watching the images we have just seen, excited.

CARR

Come on. Turn it up. Turn it up.

EXT. COLE FIELD HOUSE – DAY

Flournoy's parents push through a throng of people, arms around each other, to a security line at the press entrance. Waiting groupies and fans crowd around. A guard stops them. Mr. Flournoy pulls out his wallet and identification.

FLOURNOY'S FATHER

We're the parents of one of the Miners. Flournoy. You have a pass for us?

[The security guard checks his clipboard as people stare from all around. The guard nods and allows them through.]

INT. MINER'S LOCKER ROOM – COLE FIELD HOUSE LATER

The team is getting dressed—Miner orange and white—as Ross stands at the chalk board and addresses the players.

ROSS

Kentucky's the fastest team in the country so Coach wants to go with speed.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE LOCKER ROOM – SAME TIME

Moe stands with Haskins.

MOE

You sure you wanna do this, Coach? You get only seven players. One of them has a heart condition. They're gonna be more tired. You're breaking up chemistry. You been winning a whole season. You change your lineup and you may gamble it all away!

HASKINS

I know that, Squeaky. But first time in my life—this ain't a gamble. I made my decision.

MOE

What about the others?

[Haskins holds his look.]

INT. LOCKER ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Haskins comes inside and reads off the starting five.

HASKINS

Here's today's starting line up: Bobby Joe and Worsley, you're at guard. Big Daddy, you're at center. Orsten and Flournoy, you're at forward. Shadow, I'll bring you and Scoops off the bench.

The Black players nod, avoiding the eyes of the white players. Haskins looks at his white players.

HASKINS

Some of you may wonder if you're gonna play today—and I wanted to tell you that this—it wasn't an easy decision. Maybe it's not even the right decisions, but I—you won't be playing today.

[He looks at each player. They look back at him, stunned.]

HASKINS

I feel it's the only right thing to do. I hope you understand it.

[The white players look at each other. Armstrong comes forward.]

ARMSTRONG

Coach—

HASKINS

I know what this means to you, Jerry—I know what it means to all of you...

ARMSTRONG

No, Coach. You don't have to explain.

(looking at the black players)

We all heard what coach Rupp said.

[He looks at Baudoin, Myers, Palacio, Togo. They nod. The whites stand together filled with emotion, facing the black players. Armstrong looks at each black player.]

ARMSTRONG

You go out there and beat those boys, you hear? We got folks watchin' back home. This is your moment. You go out there and do us proud, man. Do us proud.

[Armstrong holds the game ball in his hands. He tosses it to Flournoy. Flournoy catches it. He looks stunned. The other black players look at their white teammates, deeply moved. One by one, the other white players reach out their hands for a handshake, Myers, Togo, Baudoin, and Palacio. Emotional, the black players shake in brotherhood. Flournoy, tears in his eyes, pulls Armstrong into an embrace.]

INT. COLE FIELD HOUSE – GAME TIME

A capacity crowd of 14,000 fills Cole Field House. Photographers and television cameras fill the side court. The teaming crowd—almost all Kentucky fans—waves confederate flags as the Miners warm up.

SUPERIMPOSE:

NCAA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

FINAL GAME TEXAS
WESTERN VS. KENTUCKY

[In the crowd: Flournoy's, Shed's, and Willie Cager's parents are all very excited, craning to glimpse their boys. Mary sits court side. Haskins and Moe come from the locker room. He catches a glimpse of her, excuses himself to Moe, and goes to her.]

MARY

I'm so nervous, Don.

HASKINS

Mary, I wanted to say—I know I haven't been the best husband or father—

MARY

It's alright, Don. I understand it. You go out there and give them heck, alright? You show them. You show them.

[She kisses him. Haskins smiles at her, moved. On the floor: the official scorer calls for the two coaches to meet at the scorer's table to exchange their opening line-ups as the NBC broadcast team winds up their national audience.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Texas Western, the Cinderella team from El Paso, Texas takes on the Baron of Bluegrass and his Kentucky Wildcats for the championship of College Basketball!

[Haskins meets Rupp at the scorer's table. They pull out their line-up cards.]

SECOND ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Well, Don Haskins' Miners are going to need more than a golden slipper to beat Rupp's Runts. Led by Louis Dampier and the high scoring Pat Riley, they play with a speed, poise and intelligence no team of mostly—how would you say—raw street players can hope to match.

[Rupp looks at Don as he hands his line up over.]

RUPP

Didn't mean to school you the other day, kid.

HASKINS

That's all right, Coach. We all have things to learn.

INT. HALLWAY TO THE STADIUM – SAME TIME

The black players stand alone together, looking out at the crowd in the stadium, waiting. The sounds of the cheering and the band filter in as we see linger on each of their faces. Their looks are somber, serious, determined. Cager flexes his jaw; Lattin's chest rises and falls heavily; Shed blinds his nervousness; Orsten stares, focused; Bobby Joe nods to himself, getting ready, as they all stare out at the moment ahead of them. In the stadium: the Wildcats finish their precision drills. The buzzer sounds. The announcer comes on. The players exchange looks. Bobby Joe breathes out.

BOBBY JOE

Let's do it, brothers.

[He puts his fist in the middle and the others place their fists over his and raise them in a roar.]

INT. STADIUM – SAME TIME

The lights dim and the stadium announcer reads the starting line-up for Kentucky. The fans go crazy: their band launches into a frenzied version of “Dixie”

STADIUM ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And now the starting lineup of the Texas Western Miners!

[A huge contingent of Miners’ fans, including Mary, Flournoys’, Cager’s and Shed’s parents rise and cheer.]

STADIUM ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

At Guard, out of Detroit, Michigan...Bobby Joe Hill! The other guard, from New York City...Willie Worsley! At center, from Houston...David “Big Daddy” Lattin!...

[One after another, the black players walk out on the court. The crowd sits shocked. Dumbfounded, Rupp looks down at Haskins’ line-up card.]

STADIUM ANNOUNCER (V.O. CONT’D)

At Forward, out of Gary, Indiana...Harry Flournoy! And at the other Forward...Orsten ‘Little O’ Artis!

[The black fans—led by Flournoy’s, Cager’s and Shed’s parents—rise and cheer their heads off. The Kentucky crowd is icily silent. We cut to the announcer’s stand.]

TELEVISION ANOUNCER

In an unprecedented move, Coach Haskins has fielded an all black team, the first in NCAA Championship history!

SECOND ANNOUNCER

He seems to be trying to make a point, Harry. What...I don’t know.

[As the Kentucky fans recover, growing more riled than ever, the band strikes up “Dixie” again and Confederate flags fill the arena. Don pulls his team into a circle. He looks at them, his face filled with emotion.]

HASKINS

When this tournament began, I told you that you had one choice. To walk away or stand on the center stripe and know that you played like a man. To run and hide or step up and have the whole world say, now there goes a basketball player.

(beat)

That center stripe is here. It’s forty minutes away from each and every one of you. Take it. Make it yours! On three!!!

[Moved by his words, the players—black and white—join hands.]

MINERS

Go!!!

[As the Miners take the floor, Haskins pulls Lattin aside.]

HASKINS

David, you remember I told you there would be a time when I want you to use your anger. Well, now is the time. When you get that ball I want you to flush it as hard as you can. Understand me? Let them know that you’re here!

LATTIN

(pumped up)

Nothin’ to worry ‘bout, Coach. Big Daddy D’s in the house!

HASKINS

Bobby Joe. Remember Dampier's got great hands. If you try to take the ball, he'll burn you and score.

BOBBY JOE

(grins)

Is that an order?

[The Miners take the floor as Dampier, Riley and other Wildcats come out. They line up for the opening tip. Lattin faces Pat Riley, his face full of furious energy.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

There can be little doubt among fans here and across the country that Kentucky's superior speed and shooting will carry the day.

[The ball goes into the air. Lattin rises up, his eyes on fire, and swats the ball to Bobby Joe. With the All-American Dampier on him, Bobby rockets up the court. Tossing the ball to Worsley, he uses Lattin for a pick, and cuts into the lane. Lattin fires a pass to Hill who goes in for the layup and scores. The crowd reacts, subdued. Startled by Hill's speed, Dampier takes the inbound pass and rifles it to the Kentucky center Jaracz, who quickly punches it out to Riley at the top of the key. Faking Flournoy to the left, he drives around him, straight into the key. As he lifts off for what looks like a sure bucket, Lattin suddenly appears, his body arching upward and his hand, slapping the shot away like a harmless fly. Stunned, Riley crashes to the floor and the referee calls a foul on Lattin. Big Daddy shoots Riley a menacing look.]

LATTIN

You playin' in my house now, Riley.

[On the court, a shaken Riley hits one of his two free throws, and Flournoy grabs the rebound. Hitting Hill in stride, the blazing guard turns Dampier around and, spotting Lattin near the basket, drills a bullet pass through several Wildcats to Lattin. Lattin turns and looks. This is his moment. He goes up and slams a monster dunk over a startled, ducking Riley.]

LATTIN

Jerks—

[The black fans are on their feet, crazy, cheering. Togo leaps off the bench, whipping a towel like a mad man. Shed passes Riley, grinning.]

SHED

Hey man, you looked like the brothers' shadow out there.

[Riley tries to ignore him.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The big center for Texas Western is dominating the smaller Kentucky Wildcat line up so far. But the real test is whether the upstart Miners can stop Dampier. Once the All-American gets going, nobody can stop him!

[In a quick succession of plays, all directed by Dampier, the Wildcats score on a fast break to Jaracz, Riley hits a jumper from the corner, and Dampier nails an 18 footer. Mary and the other Miner fans, have their hearts in their throats. The scoreboard shows Kentucky ahead 8-5. Flournoy twists his knee, and limps to the sideline, glumly.]

FLOURNOY

I can't go, Coach.

[Haskins pats him on the back and looks at Cager.]

HASKINS

Get in there, Scoops. And tell Bobby Joe to get on Dampier!

[The Miners immediately respond. Orsten hits a 23 footer and Bobby Joe drives for the score. Feeling the pressure, Dampier brings the ball up against Orsten. Crossing the mid-court stripe, Dampier turns, changing his dribble from his right to left hand—but before he can, Bobby Joe sweeps in out of nowhere and knocks the ball away. Streaking down court, he goes in for a layup and scores.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Hill makes an incredible steal for a score from Dampier! A frustrated Dampier brings the ball back up for the Wildcats.

SECOND ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

What happened to Dampier's famous Fort Knox hands, Harry?

[Dampier crosses down midcourt and turns to his left when—in a replay of the last play—Bobby Joe picks him clean again and scores. The crowd reacts with shock.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Hill steals again! Holy Christmas!! We have a game tonight, folks. We have a game!

[Togo is on his feet, screaming. Cheering, red in the face, hyperventilating himself into a frenzy when his eyes suddenly roll back and he passes out on the floor. Ross rushes over and slaps him in the face, bringing him back to consciousness. An excited Haskins exhorts his troops: Hill, Lattin and Orsten, to go at Kentucky like heavyweights trying for the knockout punch.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

I have never seen anything like this. It's like Louis and Marciano out there!

[The Miners score again. Rupp looks at the board where the Miners are up 52-49 with 8:42 left. He calls a time-out and explodes into a tirade at his players.]

RUPP

What the heck you doin' out there?! How can you let a bunch of coloreds playin' street ball do that to you?!

RILEY

(breathless)

Coach, those guys can play.

RUPP

You forget what uniform you wear?! This is Kentucky basketball! Play like it!

[Haskins stands in the middle of his players. Though tired, their dogged look says they can taste victory.]

HASKINS

Listen—these guys don't know what hit them, you hear me? You're faster than them. You're stronger! You're better! This game is yours to win!

With Mary, the players' parents and the other Miner fans on the side of the arena, the Miners take the floor for the final push. The Miners light up the scoreboard. In slow motion, we see Shed go in for a flying dunk and score. The black fans are on their feet, white fans sitting stunned and grim, unable to reply.

In slow motion, Cager buries a spinning hook and scores. Worsley takes a fast break pass in for two.

All Kentucky can do now is foul, and they do, sending Miner after Miner to the free throw line. Finally, Bobby Joe intercepts a Kentucky pass and holds the ball, looking up at the clock. Haskins is looking at the clock, suspended. Mary is in the crowd, her hands to her mouth, not breathing. Ten seconds remain. The score is 71-63. Trying to wind down the clock, Hill is fouled by Riley who has played like a warrior. It is Riley's fifth and final foul. He walks off the court. He passes Bobby Joe and extends his hand.]

RILEY

Great game. You deserved it.

[Moved, Bobby Joe takes Riley's hand. White hand grasping black. Bobby Joe watches Riley walk to the bench and Coach Rupp.]

RILEY

We played Kentucky basketball, Coach. And we just got beat.

[Rupp looks at his great forward, in bitter silence. At the bench, the white players are half off the bench, half on their knees, ready to run onto court, with Haskins holding them back. Meanwhile, Bobby Joe sinks another free throw, and as Kentucky inbounds the ball, all the white Miners—led by Armstrong—rise as one and begin to count with the clock. On the Kentucky bench, players sit with their heads down and tears in their eyes.]

MINERS

Ten, nine, eight...

[Up in the stands, Miners fans join in, screaming deliriously.]

MINER FANS

Seven, six, five, four...

[Shed looks across at Armstrong, his heart beating like crazy.]

SHED

We're gonna be National champions! Mama's not gonna believe it!

[With the clock ticking its final second, Dampier hits a meaningless jumper and the Miners swarm the floor.]

FIRST ANNOUNCER

In the greatest upset in National Championship history, Texas Western beats the Kentucky Wildcats!

[The Kentucky players stand crushed. Bobby Joe leaps into Lattin's arms. Shed does his trademark giraffe trot around the hardwood. The white players surround their black teammates with excitement. Flournoy crushes Baudoin with a hug. The parents in the audience are jumping up and down, hugging and screaming with joy. As the players and their parents go crazy, Haskins looks up into the stands. Mary comes running down the aisle and jumps into his arms. He kisses and twirls her around. Just then, Shed lifts Bobby Joe up on his shoulders. Taking the net from the rim, he lifts it high into the air, the sound of the crowd's roar washing over him and his teammates.]

INT. HOTEL KITCHEN – SAME TIME

Herman Carr is celebrating with his friends, all of them whooping and yelling, Carr in the center, looking overjoyed.

INT. MINER'S LOCKER ROOM – LATER

Ross cracks open a bottle of champagne and pours it over Shed's face. Yelping, Shed pours some on Armstrong who starts to sing Aretha Franklin's "Respect" in a Missouri drawl. Wincing at first, the black players join in just in time.

INT. HOTEL KITCHEN – SAME TIME

Herman Carr is making everybody be quiet, pointing to the television image of Haskins at a press conference.

INT. PRESS ROOM – SAME TIME

Haskins stands with Mary at a podium, drenched with sweat.

REPORTER

When you put this team together, did you want to make a statement about race in America?

HASKINS

Heck, no. I did it for Herman Carr.

REPORTER

Herman Carr? Who's he?

[Haskins looks at Mary a moment and then back at the reporter.]

HASKINS

A real good basketball player.

INT. RESTAURANT – SAME TIME

Close on Herman Carr. He sits quiet, with tears in his eyes.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR – SEVERAL HOURS LATER

Don steps into the elevator. A black elevator man smiles at him.

ELEVATOR MAN

Nice game, Coach. What floor?

[Before he can answer, a man steps into the elevator and takes a flask of whiskey from his pocket. It is a beaten, defeated Adolph Rupp. Haskins looks at the elevator man.]

HASKINS

Fourth.

[Rupp takes a hit of whiskey and stares. His voice raspy, beaten.]

RUPP

You may not know it, Coach, but basketball just changed tonight. It just passed me by.

[Rupp turns to Haskins. There are tears in his bloodshot eyes.]

RUPP

Old men shouldn't play boy's games.

EXT. EL PASO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – NEXT DAY

A silver 707 lands and pulls up toward the control tower where 30,000 fans stand waiting. The hatch of the plane opens. When Cager and the other Miners appear the crowd goes crazy. The cheers rise to deafening levels as Willie Cager raises the 1966 NCAA Championship trophy up over his head.

EXT. MESA STREET – EL PASO – LATER

A triumphal motorcade passes through El Paso, thousands of cheering fans lining the streets and waving to their heroes. At the head of the procession is Don, with Mary and the boys at this side. Ross and Moe bring up the rear.

INT. EL PASO – SERIES OF IMAGES - DAY/NIGHT

All the movers and shakers of El Paso are at a posh dinner in celebration of Texas Western's victory. Mary, dressed to the nines in a beautiful gown, sits restlessly. Seeing Ross, she pulls him aside.

MARY

Ross, have you seen Don? He said he'd be here by seven.

[Ross looks at Mary quizzically.]

ROSS

Gee, Mary, I guess I don't rightly know. It's not like Don to miss an important occasion like this.

[Mary looks at Ross with a look that knows better.]

INT. MEMORIAL GYM – SAME TIME

Haskins stands at the foul line in tux and bow tie. He looks up at the basket, flips up a free throw and hits nothing but net.

[OVER A BLACK SCREEN]

DON “THE BEAR” HASKINS

Turned down offers to coach in the NBA, remaining loyal to the Miners. He has led the Miners to 14 NCAA tournaments, won 7 WAC titles and accrued over 719 victories. In 1997 he was elected into the Basketball Hall of Fame.

DAVID (BIG DADDY) LATTIN

Became a first-round NBA pick. Now a successful businessman, he gives motivational speeches around the country.

WILLIE CAGER

Suffered several strokes in the years following the Texas Western victory. His charitable basketball foundation now helps underprivileged students who are thinking of quitting school.

BOBBY JOE HILL

Married Tina Malichi and lived in El Paso until his death in the winter of 2002. Over ten thousand El Pasoans attended his funeral.

PAT RILEY

Went on to coach the Los Angeles Lakers to four World Championships. He has since coached the New York Knicks and the Miami Heat.

ADOLPH RUPP

Finally recruited the first black player in Kentucky’s history before stepping down from Kentucky Basketball in 1972, having won a record 876 games. Even with all his achievements, he never got over the loss to Texas Western.

Years after Rupp’s retirement, Tubby Smith became the first black Kentucky coach to lead an all Black Kentucky team to the National Championship.

The Texas Western victory over Kentucky has been called the most important game in the history of College Basketball and one of the greatest sports upsets of the century