

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

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INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - 2000 - NIGHT

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TONY BAEZ and his father CUCO sit on a dilapidated couch, watching an old sixteen inch television. Tony is a vibrant, Hispanic six-year-old; his eyes glowing with intensity.

*

*

CUCO, thirty and nursing a can of domestic beer, is sloppily dressed and a little drunk. They are both clad in YANKEE CLOTHES, captivated by the television, literally on the edge of the couch.

*

*

TELEVISION: WORLD SERIES GAME 5 - METS VS. YANKEES. The Yankees win and celebrate on the field at Yankee Stadium

*

*

Tony and Cuco explode, leaping to their feet and SCREAMING in victory as they maniacally bound about the cramped, unkempt apartment.

Tony's mother CARMEN, a stout, joyless woman in her early thirties, comes out of the bedroom, visibly irritated with all the noise. She barks at them in Spanish.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

My god, stop screaming!

Tony and his father SCREAM even louder. Cuco jumps up and down and Tony emulates him. They keep screaming.

*

*

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Stop it, both of you! You're gonna wake up the whole damn neighborhood.

CUCO (SUBTITLE)

The neighborhood is already awake! Tony, open the window. See?!

Tony OPENS THE WINDOW and we hear victorious SCREAMS and CHEERS coming from the adjacent apartments. Tony SCREAMS into the night; Cuco runs to the window and follows suit.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Stop it! Shut up, shut up, shut up! In the name of the Lord our Father, we both have to be at work in seven hours and it's your first day so the last thing you need is to show up with red eyes and...

*

*

*

*

CUCO (SUBTITLE)

Okay, okay, my god woman. We just won the fucking World series...

*

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
 Watch your language. Just because
 you have a sewer for a mouth
 doesn't mean our son has to also.

She disappears into the bedroom and SLAMS THE DOOR. Cuco can only shake his head. He looks over at Tony and smiles.

CUCO
 World Champs kid!

TONY
 World Champs!

They both smile, slightly out of breath.

CUCO
 Okay, bed time.

TONY
 What? I can't sleep right now!

*

CUCO
 I know, just...pretend, okay? Help
 me out here.

Cuco and Tony pull the cushions off the couch and pull out the rusted, CREAKING sofa-bed. Tony grabs a pillow and a tattered blanket that are stashed in the corner. Tony gets in bed and Cuco pulls the blanket over him. He looks at him softly and smiles.

CUCO (SUBTITLE)
 Remember this night. We will
 always have this night.

TONY (SUBTITLE)
 World Champs!

CUCO (SUBTITLE)
 World Champs. Good night kid.

Cuco kisses him on the forehead and disappears into the bedroom, closing the door behind him. Tony lies on his back, staring at the ceiling, still glowing from the win.

We see two PHOTOGRAPHS standing on a crooked endtable. One features Tony and Cuco playing baseball, the other is the two of them standing in front of Yankee Stadium.

*

A small table-top CALENDAR reveals that it is **OCTOBER 2000.**

*

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - 1990 - MORNING

A new CALENDAR on the endtable now reads **SEPTEMBER 2010**. The two photos have been replaced by two recent PHOTOS of Tony and Carmen. The apartment has aged; the paint peeling and the furniture faded from time and wear. *

We see a YOUNG MAN sleeping in the same sofa-bed, his face obscured by a different but equally tattered blanket than the one featured in the opening scene.

Carmen emerges from the bathroom, dressed for work. Her hair has grayed significantly for a woman her age, her wrinkles more pronounced; the last four years having taken their toll.

She RUMMAGES through the kitchen; the sink is filled with dirty dishes and the counter is a cluttered mess. While tidying up, she awakens the young man on the couch in the process.

Tony pulls the blanket off his face, wipes the sleep from his eyes and GRUNTS. He is now sixteen; handsome and thickset for someone his age, with a stoic strength about him.

TONY

Morning.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Good morning. Sorry to wake you.
I wouldn't have if you would clean
up after yourself.

He looks at a CLOCK on the wall and notices her clothes.

TONY

I forgot. You get a job?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Sewing. Just for two days. But
I'll take what I can get.

Tony sits up on the sofa-bed.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Last day of summer, you doing
anything fun?

TONY

Baseball. And um...I need to get
some school clothes mama. And we
were gonna talk about getting me a
cell phone...

*
*
*

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

You need a cell phone, I know. And
I need a real job and a roof that
doesn't leak when it rains. And we
both need your father to come home,
don't we. But we make due with
what he have...and we get by, yes?

*

TONY

Yeah, Momma. We get by.

She grabs her purse and kisses Tony on the forehead before leaving and closing the door behind her. Tony, dejected but accustomed to it, gets up.

EXT. TONY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Tony exits the front of his dilapidated apartment building. He is dressed in sweatpants, carrying a pair of worn down CLEATS and a BASEBALL MITT.

He takes off down the street and we catch our first glimpse of his Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood. He strolls past boarded-up buildings, abandoned cars, homeless people and miscellaneous miscreants who mill about.

A COP CAR with SIRENS BLAZING tears by. And then another. Tony continues on unphased; passing but ignoring a group of MEN who are SMOKING CRACK on the sidewalk.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony rounds a corner and a shoddy, unkempt BASEBALL DIAMOND unfolds before him. His face lights up at the sight of it and he breaks into a jog. When he reaches home plate, two African-American KIDS his age are there waiting for him.

BOBBY HAMPTON, precocious, hyper and lanky, smokes a cigarette while talking on his cell phone. The other boy, GRANT HODGE, stretches his legs. He is athleticism personified; tall and chiseled with a boyish charm and an endearing cockiness.

*

*

BOBBY

Bout time you got here.

*

TONY

What? We said ten, what time is it?

GRANT

Ten.

BOBBY
It's after ten.

TONY
It's ten, so quit whining, get off
the phone and get walkin.'

*
*

BOBBY
Yeah, I'm walkin.' Yo, I'll hit
you back.

*
*

He hangs up and starts walking towards the outfield.

*

GRANT
You gonna shag flies with a
cigarette in your mouth?

BOBBY
Menthol sharpens my skills dog.

TONY
Yeah, I think Pujols smokes
Newports too.

*
*

BOBBY (O.S.)
(yelling) Yes, he do!

GRANT
Kid's crazy. He'll be dead before
he's thirty.

*

TONY
Twenty...tops.

Grant laughs.

GRANT
Alright, move yo ass.

Tony runs out to the infield, stopping at second base. Grant takes turns hitting grounders to Tony and flyballs to Bobby. Bobby exhibits athleticism but also laziness, running half-speed when he chases down fly balls.

Tony on the other hand, fields every ball as if it's Game Seven of the World Series. He dives and he hustles; running at full throttle on every play. They alternate positions, hitting and fielding from all three spots.

Grant is by far the most gifted of the three; displaying an elegant swing, lightning reflexes and a cannon for an arm. After they have all rotated, Grant takes the bat once again.

GRANT

Alright Chico, you catch this one,
I'll buy your ass a burrito.

TONY

Call me 'Chico' again and I'll
shove that burrito up your coolo.

Grant laughs, turns and hits a pop fly towards the other side of the baseball field. Tony takes off running, traversing the width of the entire diamond.

Just as the ball is about to land in a yard neighboring the baseball field, Tony dives over the fence, CRASHING LOUDLY into a cluster of garbage cans. He stands up with the ball in his glove, wearing a huge smile.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tony stuffs a burrito into his mouth as he walks down a shady street with Bobby and Grant. Bobby is laughing.

BOBBY

Man, you gonna kill yourself
playin' like that.

TONY

No, I'm gonna make Varsity playin'
like that.

GRANT

That's right kid.

BOBBY

Nobody gets called up to Varsity as
a sophomore...except maybe Jose
Reyes over here.

*
*

They come across a group of teenage GIRLS with one white girl among them; FLACCA. She is pretty and feisty but poor and scraggly dressed. The boys banter with them as they pass.

FLACCA (O.S.)

Hey Tony.

Tony stops to see Flacca walking towards him. Bobby shoves him in her direction.

BOBBY

Go boy. Make a woman out of her!

*

Tony walks over to Flacca. There is a platonic intimacy and comfort between them that almost conceals the sexual tension.

FLACCA
What are you dummies up to?

TONY
Baseball...burrito.

FLACCA
You gettin' clothes later?

TONY
Wanted to but nah, she ain't got no money. You?

FLACCA
Broke as a joke. So...tomorrow...tenth grade...you ready chump?

TONY
Who you callin' chump bitch? *

FLACCA
Who you callin' bitch faggot? *

Flacca knocks Tony's baseball cap off his head and runs off.

FLACCA (O.S.)
See you tomorrow. Sucka!

Tony picks up his hat and grins.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MORNING

Tony slaloms through a mob of hyperactive STUDENTS en route to his locker. The hallway percolates with urban tension and undercurrents of hostility. After finally opening his locker, someone SLAMS IT SHUT.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Yo!

TONY
Hey. *

BOBBY
Check it out, Keith Banks. Best Center Fielder in Brooklyn. I hear he's goin' to Boston College.

TONY
Yeah? *

KEITH BANKS, a cocky senior, walks past them.

BOBBY
Keith, wuss up my brutha?

Bobby raises his hand and Keith high-fives him. Bobby beams.

BOBBY
That's my boy.

*

TONY
Uh-huh.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony pretends to pay attention as his TEACHER struggles to maintain control of a raucous classroom. After accidentally knocking his PENCIL off the desk, he picks it up and puts it on top of his NOTEBOOK. He stares at the pencil and drifts off into a daydream.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - 2003 - NIGHT

*

A nine-year-old Tony sits at the kitchen table staring at a PENCIL that lies on a NOTEBOOK. He listens as Carmen and Cuco ARGUE in the bedroom, too distracted to do homework. The bedroom door swings open and an enraged Cuco emerges with a suitcase in his hand.

*

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Good, do it! Go! That's always
your answer...run. Run from your
problems instead of solving them.
Run from your job instead of doing
it better. Run from your son
instead of being a father to him...

Carmen is silenced by a RIGHT CROSS TO THE FACE. Tony jumps in his seat as Carmen falls to the ground. A long silence as Cuco looks over at his son and struggles to find the words.

CUCO (SUBTITLE)
I never knew my father. So...
maybe you'll be better off without
one.

*

Without another word, he turns and walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony snaps to attention and his teacher is hovering over him.

TEACHER

Mr. Baez, nice to have you back.
Care to join the discussion?

TONY

Um...I uh...I'm not sure...

TEACHER

You're not sure what we were
discussing? Then pay attention and
maybe next time you will.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tony exits the school amidst swarms of scrambling, yelling STUDENTS. From out of nowhere, Bobby slaps him in the back of the head and runs off. A moment later, Grant also slaps him and dashes off. Tony chases after them.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

MONTAGE. Tony, Bobby and Grant take turns hitting and fielding; bantering with each other as they play. Tony constantly illustrates his inexhaustible hustle, Bobby, his half-assed approach to everything and Grant his smooth, effortless athleticism.

*
*

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The three kids are now dressed in winter clothes. Snow accumulates on the diamond's overgrown crabgrass and they expel clouds of breath as they play.

BOBBY

I can't feel my hands yo.

*

TONY

Is it me or does he never stop
complaining?

*

GRANT

Never.

*

BOBBY

It's snowin.'

*

TONY
He's still goin', right?

*

GRANT
Yup.

BOBBY
It's a blizzard, yo!

*

GRANT
He might never stop. Might just
keep goin' on forever.

TONY
Till Jesus Christ himself returns
to silence him.

*

GRANT
And pass judgement on him for all
his bitchin.'

BOBBY
Fuck you and fuck you...I'm takin'
my frostbitten ass to get some hot
chocolate.

He starts walking off the field.

GRANT
Did he just say he's goin' to get
some hot cocoa?

BOBBY
I think so. (yelling) Yo, you
gonna get pink marshmallows in it?

*

Bobby shakes his head and keeps walking.

*

GRANT
Actually, hot chocolate sounds
pretty good right now.

TONY
Real good. It's a blizzard out
here and I can't feel my hands
anyway.

*

*

*

EXT. BODEGA - DAY

The three exit a trashy bodega with STEAMING CUPS of hot
chocolate. A group of older KIDS loiter on the corner. JEFF
DIABRO, a slick, imposing KID with a gold tooth, walks over.

DIABRO
Sup Bobby.

BOBBY
Yo, Diabro.

DIABRO
What'chall doin'?

BOBBY
Chillin'...just...gettin' some
coffee...you know, to warm up.

GRANT
Yeah. Coffee.

DIABRO
Yeah, it's cold as shit. We's
about to light up, you down?

BOBBY
Hell, yeah. You two wanna...

*

GRANT
Nah, I gotta get home and watch my
sister.

TONY
Yeah, I...told him I'd help so...

BOBBY
Your loss.

*

Diabro flashes them a gold-toothed smile before he and Bobby
take off down the sidewalk, walking down the snowy street.

EXT. GRANT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Grant and Tony stand outside Grant's graffiti-coated housing
project. The snow continues to fall and we hear GUN SHOTS in
the distance.

GRANT
I'm sick of that sound man.

TONY
Yeah.

GRANT
Probably don't hear that too much
in Arizona.

TONY
What's in Arizona?

GRANT
My brother. Cactuses. Arizona
State. But no snow...and no gun
shots.

TONY
Yeah.

GRANT
Some day baby. Some day. You like
the desert?

TONY
Doesn't matter. That ain't
happenin' for me.

GRANT
That's bullshit. Total bullshit.
And fuck anyone who tells you any
different.

*

*

*

We hear more SIRENS in the distance.

TONY
Maybe. I'll see ya.

GRANT
Yeah.

Tony lowers his head and walks off.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Diabro swings a crowbar and a car window SHATTERS. He opens
the door, gets in and unlocks the other door. Bobby gets in
and they slide under the dash, each holding a screwdriver.

DIABRO
Once you get the dash panel off,
you gotta disconnect the ground
wire and then the positive and
the...

BOBBY
Why don't you just rip it out?
Hardly anybody buys these anymore
anyway.

*

*

*

DIABRO

'Cause if someone do buy one, they
ain't gonna buy one with the wires
all messed up, that's why.

*
*
*

BOBBY

What kinda cut am I gettin' for
this anyway?

DIABRO

Cut? Nah cuz, you're doin' this
pro bono baby.

*

Bobby laughs.

BOBBY

What's that mean?

Suddenly the CAR ALARM goes off. Bobby and Diabro take off
running down the street.

*
*

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony, Bobby and Grant enter a house party in full swing.
KIDS mill about, DRINKING, SHOUTING, LAUGHING and SMOKING.
The three friends mingle with the other kids.

Flacca and her FRIENDS are there, hanging out in the corner
of the high-end, upper-east side apartment. Bobby lights a
blunt and offers it to Tony who shakes his head 'no.'

*

BOBBY

Why not?

*

TONY

I tried it with you last year and I
didn't feel anything.

*
*

BOBBY

So try it again. It's a party yo.

*

Tony looks at Grant who shrugs with indifference. Tony
shakes his head and grabs the joint.

INT. APARTMENT - CLOSET - NIGHT

Tony, Grant and Bobby sit on the floor of an enormous walk-in
closet packed with expensive clothing. They are all stoned;
glassy-eyed and giddy as they pass a 40 around.

BOBBY

This closet's bigger than my
apartment.

*

Tony strokes a fur coat hanging above him.

TONY

This is real fur ain't it? Wow,
that's...that's the most beautiful
thing I ever felt. It's incredible.

He pulls it off the hook and rubs it on his face.

GRANT

What the hell are you doin?

*

TONY

You gotta feel this.

GRANT

You crazy.

*

TONY

Seriously, rub it on your face.

*

Grant laughs and gives in, rubbing the coat against his face.
He MOANS in ecstasy and Tony smiles approvingly.

GRANT

That's...that's the most amazing
thing I've ever felt.

TONY

I know. Bobby, get in on this.

BOBBY

I don't want to rub it on my face,
I wanna fuckin' steal it.

GRANT

Try it man, seriously.

Bobby shakes his head and crawls over. He grabs the coat and
the three kids rub the fur coat on their faces, emitting a
series of MOANS and CHUCKLES.

FLACCA (O.S.)

Oh my god.

The three kids look up to see Flacca standing in the entrance
of the closet, somewhere between disgust and amusement.

TONY

It's...it's real fur.

FLACCA
And you're all real gay.

They laugh and Bobby downs the rest of the 40.

BOBBY
Way too gay for me. I'm outta
here. *

GRANT
I'm with you. You comin' Chico?

TONY
Huh?

They laugh at Tony before getting up and staggering out.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Chico, if you fuck that coat, wear
a rubber man.

Flacca sips her beer and looks inquisitively at Tony.

FLACCA
Are you...you're baked aren't you?

TONY
No. Maybe. Yup.

He laughs. And so does she.

FLACCA
This apartment's crazy. Who lives
here anyway?

TONY
No idea. Sit down, make yourself
at home...this is my place
now...casa del Tony.

FLACCA
Yeah, I'll sit down. But if you do
try and screw that coat, I'm
leavin.' *

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The party is roaring now; the energy having risen in proportion with the volume. LAUGHTER and YELLING fill the room along with clouds of smoke. The crowd COUNTS DOWN from 'ten' to 'one' and then in unison, screams "HAPPY NEW YEAR."

INT. APARTMENT - CLOSET - NIGHT

Flacca and Tony sit, turning their heads at the sounds of the CHEERS outside.

TONY

I guess it's New Years. Happy New Year.

*

FLACCA

Whatever. New year, same shit.
So you failed the driver's test,
huh? Dumbass.

TONY

At least I took it sucka.

*

He shoves her playfully.

FLACCA

You're a sucka. Go hump your coat.

*

He picks up the coat again.

TONY

I love this coat.

FLACCA

I can see that.

INT. APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Bobby and Grant piss into the bathtub; they are both quite drunk. Another KID pisses in the sink while yet another VOMITS into the toilet.

BOBBY

See you can't just tell her you
wanna fuck her on your Facebook
wall and think she gonna give it
up. You gotta drop some serious
English on her. Then you gotta
show some class and sophistication.

*
*
*
*
*
*

The kid GAGS and VOMITS into the toilet.

BOBBY

Like my man here. You just
swimmin' in ass ain't ya?

*
*

More GAGGING. Bobby and Grant laugh.

INT. APARTMENT - CLOSET - NIGHT

Tony and Flacca are now immersed in a serious conversation.

TONY

It just sucks. She's always mad,
we're always broke. It's like,
he's gone, you know. He just, he
left us, he's gone, get over it.
It's like I live in a morgue and
there's this cloud hangin' over us
and it just kills anything happy or
good or...I can't even remember the
last time I heard her laugh.

*
*
*
*
*

FLACCA

She probably just needs to get
laid. Hey, maybe if your mom and
my dad...

TONY

Don't even say it.

Flacca laughs.

FLACCA

Come on, maybe if he took your mom
out and...

*
*

TONY

I'll kill you I swear to god.

Tony jumps on top of her and tries to cover her mouth.

FLACCA

Maybe if my dad had alot of sex
with your mom, they'd stop bein' so
damn miserable!

*
*
*

TONY

You want me to throw up on you?

FLACCA

No.

TONY

You want me to throw up on you?

Tony playfully pins her to the ground and they look at each
other, their lips inches apart.

*

FLACCA

No. I want you to...

*
*

TONY
You want me to what?

*

FLACCA
I want you to...

They inch closer. Their lips are about to touch when...

KEITH (O.S.)
What is this?

*

Tony and Flacca look up to see KEITH, snobby and snippy, and two of his FRIENDS standing in the doorway.

KEITH
Get the hell out of here man!

*

FLACCA
Why don't you get the hell outta here.

*

KEITH
Because I live here asshole!

A brief silence. Tony and Flacca look at each other.

TONY
You got a real nice apartment.

KEITH
Thank you very much. Now, would you leave?

*

*

Tony and Flacca get up and start walking out.

KEITH
What are you retarded?

Tony stops and turns to look at him.

TONY
What?

KEITH
That's my mom's coat.

Tony realizes that he is still holding the fur coat. He hands it to Keith.

TONY
It's...it's real nice.

KEITH
Get the fuck out of here.

Tony and Flacca walk out, snickering to themselves.

INT. SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Tony, Grant and Bobby sit at a table finishing their lunches. The cafeteria festers with energy as students bustle about.

GRANT
Nothin' happened?

TONY
Naw man, we're just friends. I've
known her longer than I've known
you two.

*
*
*

BOBBY
You still shoulda at least hooked
up with her. That closet was your
best chance.

*
*

TONY
Shut up.

BOBBY
Can't try it at her house, her
father beat yo ass.

*

Tony shakes his head.

*

BOBBY
And you can't do her on that
Transformer you call a bed.

*
*

TONY
Say one more word, see what
happens.

*
*

BOBBY
Can't bring a white bitch home and
fuck her on a Deceptacon, just
won't work.

Tony tackles Bobby to the ground. Grant laughs.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

Tony slurps up the last few bites of cereal while Carmen
CIRCLES items in the CLASSIFIED SECTION of the paper. There
is a comfortable discomfort between them.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Don't, forget, Uncle Armando's
birthday party is tonight.

TONY
What time?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Six.

TONY
I have my first game today...in
Jamaica.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
You can go after.

Tony nods. Silence follows as he searches for the conviction
to speak.

TONY
Or...maybe...you could come to the
game. And afterwards, we...

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
I can't. I have to go to Marta's.
She has a friend who is a manager
at a uniform company. She might be
able to get me some work.

Another silence. Tony is noticeably dejected.

TONY
You're never gonna come to a game
are you? Are you?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
It has nothing to do with you, I
just don't like baseball.

TONY
But I love it.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
I know you do.

TONY
And do you love me?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Don't be ridiculous, of course I
do.

TONY

So...?

Tony looks at her pleadingly. A flash of pain washes over Carmen's face but she quickly suppresses it and buries her face in the newspaper. Tony shakes his head, throws down his spoon and grabs his bookbag off the table.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

You gonna put your bowl in the...

The DOOR SLAMS SHUT. Tony is already gone.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

INSERT: Spring Training May 2nd, 2011

*

Tony, dressed in his baseball uniform, stretches with the rest of the TEAM. He looks around, taking in his teammates, the blue sky, the SPECTATORS that fill the bleachers. A gentle smile unfolds as he continues stretching.

CUT TO:

A PLAYER rips a ground ball headed for the hole between first and second base. Tony gracelessly stabs it and throws over to Grant at second base who fires back to first, completing the double play.

While jogging back towards the dugout, Tony scans the faces in the crowd as if he's looking for someone. Seeing no one, he slaps gloves with Grant and they head into the dugout.

COACH MUELLER, warm, jovial and in his forties, greets them.

MUELLER

Nice turn Hodge. Baez, you're like a fat, drunk ballerina out there, you know that?

TONY

Thanks Coach.

MUELLER

Yeah, that wasn't a compliment. Nice stab.

*

TONY

Thanks Coach.

GAME MONTAGE. Bed-Sty High School is a well-oiled machine; one of the elite highschool programs in New York and they illustrate this in every facet of the game.

*

Grant makes fluid plays at shortstop, evidencing his range and rifle arm. Offensively, he showcases his flawless stroke and blinding speed on the base paths. Two MEN wearing **Bed-Sty Varsity Baseball** JACKETS watch Grant closely and are noticeably impressed.

Bobby, the right fielder, plays recklessly. He dives after fly balls instead of playing them conservatively. At the plate, he over-swings, often at bad pitches. If there is a weak link on this exceptional team, it is him.

Tony is a coach's dream; adequate skills, all heart and all hustle. He legs out an infield hit and dives after line drives he has no chance of catching. His uniform is dirty after one inning and gets filthier as the game progresses.

The final score: **Bed-Sty 12 Jamaica 2**

INT. SCHOOL - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Tony, Bobby and Grant change out of their uniforms along with the other members of the team. Coach Mueller walks over to them with the two MEN that were watching Grant so intently.

MUELLER

Hodge, lemme grab you for a second.

Grant nods and walks over to the corner of the locker room with Coach and the two men. Tony and Bobby watch.

BOBBY

Oh shit, is that...

TONY

Coach Hansen. Yeah.

They watch as the three men speak with Grant. After a beat, Grant nods enthusiastically and an enormous smile consumes his face. He shakes their hands and walks back over to Tony and Bobby. He eyes them for a moment and then SCREAMS.

BOBBY

You kiddin' me dog? After one game?

*

Grant SCREAMS again. Tony embraces him emphatically.

TONY

Congrats. I hate you but congrats.

*

GRANT

Thank you. (yelling) And thank you
Bed-Sty Junior Varsity.

*

(MORE)

GRANT (cont'd)
I'm off like a prom dress, peace
out, thanks for the memories.

He SCREAMS again and runs out of the room. TAYLOR, the
team's catcher, walks over to Tony.

TAYLOR
What's he screamin' about?

TONY
He got called up.

TAYLOR
Yeah? Good for him. Sucks for us.

TONY
Yeah.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony sits in class daydreaming. As students banter and throw
wads of paper at each other, the TEACHER wanders down the
aisle handing the STUDENTS back their graded tests.

TEACHER
That's three in a row Mr. Baez.

The Teacher is now hovering over Tony.

TEACHER
Mr. Baez? Mr. Baez?

Tony finally looks up at him. The teacher shakes his head
and hands him a test with an "F" on it.

TEACHER
See me after class.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The students boisterously file out of the classroom and Tony
awkwardly walks up to the Teacher's desk.

TEACHER
You know, when my stupid students
fail, it bothers me. But when my
smart students fail...it really
bothers me.

TONY
I'm sorry.

*

TEACHER

Don't be sorry. Just work harder
and stop failing all your tests.
Think you can do that?

TONY

Yeah.

The teacher nods and Tony shuffles off.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony fields ground balls, struggling to turn double plays with SHANE, the shortstop that replaced Grant. Tony, takes a moment to show Shane the proper way to catch and throw in one fluid motion. Coach Mueller watches and grins in approval.

Bobby takes fly balls in the outfield and as usual, is practicing at half speed. He looks over at the adjacent diamond where varsity practices. He watches Bobby practicing and an expression of jealousy flickers across his face.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony takes batting practice and although he does not crush the ball, he makes consistent contact. He has a ferocious intensity about him; a laser-like focus. After he finishes taking his swings, Mueller walks over.

MUELLER

You've got a nice short
stroke...like Ichiro.

*

Tony expels a dismissive huff.

MUELLER

What are you huffin' about? He hit
.315 last year, you should be so
lucky.

Tony nods and grins.

*

MUELLER

Saw you workin' with Shane.

TONY

Yeah. Yeah, he just, he needs to
catch it while he's steppin'
towards first, not before.

MUELLER

Now, yeah. But wait till next year. Something about the end of puberty, kids start learnin' how to break up double plays.

TONY

How's that?

MUELLER

You'll figure it out when your balls drop.

Tony laughs.

MUELLER

Last game of your JV career tomorrow so go rest up.

TONY

I will.

Tony starts to run off but Coach stops him.

MUELLER

Baez.

TONY

Yeah.

MUELLER

You're a good ball player. I'm gonna miss your work ethic.

TONY

Thanks.

MUELLER

You make the squad, you're gonna be with Coach Hansen next year...but I'm always here, you understand?

TONY

Yeah. Thanks.

Tony turns and runs off.

EXT. PARK - DAY

*

Tony shoves a hot dog into his mouth as several FAMILY MEMBERS mill about, EATING and CONVERSING during a mid-summer picnic. A group of KIDS PLAY SOCCER near a group of MEN who pass a blunt around.

*

*

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Tony, come here.

Tony walks over to Carmen who stands with UNCLE ARMANDO, a charismatic and muscular man in his late thirties.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Your uncle was just telling me some incredible news. Tell him Mando.

ARMANDO
We just went Union and they're starting a new apprentice program where members can bring in their family members once they turn eighteen. So come this time next year, you're in if you want.

TONY
In...what...your job?

ARMANDO
That's right. New York Department of Sanitation. I know it ain't so glamorous but I make thirty-one grand a year, full benefits, retirement fund. *

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Retirement fund, I still can't believe it! Isn't that unbelievable? *

Tony is not remotely as impressed as Carmen but conceals it.

TONY
Yeah. Unbelievable.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony and Grant watch the WORLD SERIES on Tony's small, black and white television. Grant's face glows as he watches the Philadelphia Phillies celebrating. *

GRANT
Look at them. How amazing must that feel?

TONY
I can't even imagine.

GRANT
I can. Shit, that's all I do is
imagine it.

INT. SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Tony gazes out the window, watching the snow fall. A sudden COMMOTION forces him to look up. He sees Bobby in a confrontation with another STUDENT. Bobby shoves the boy and he retaliates with a right cross to Bobby's face.

Tony explodes from his chair and runs over to assist Bobby in a fight that almost consumes the entire cafeteria. Tony suffers a blow to the face in the ensuing brawl.

INT. BATTING CAGE - NIGHT

Tony hits in the "High Speed" batting cage. A SIGN indicates that the high speed cage fires balls at seventy miles per hour. Grant takes swings in the adjacent cage.

Tony makes solid contact every time and after the last swing, he WINCES in pain. He removes a BATTING GLOVE peppered with holes to reveal a large, open BLISTER on his finger.

Grant watches as Tony pulls a NAPKIN out of his pocket, wraps it around the wound and puts his glove back on. He continues and again, makes solid contact. He grimaces in pain but he doesn't relent, taking swing after swing.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

INSERT: Opening Day April 25th 2011

*

Grant jokes around with several other TEAMMATES as they stretch in preparation for the first day of varsity try-outs. He walks over to Bobby and Tony, who are also stretching.

GRANT
Yo, yo. Who's ready baby?

*

BOBBY
Let's do this.

*

GRANT
How 'bout you?

Tony nods nervously.

GRANT
Hey, you left this at my house.

He tosses Tony a brand new batting glove. Tony catches it and grins. Grant looks intently at him.

GRANT
You got this Chico.

Tony nods. Grant grins reassuringly and runs off.

BOBBY
Nigga think he's all that. *

TONY
No he doesn't.

BOBBY
What you mean, no he doesn't, how often I seen his ass in the last year?

TONY
Shit changes man.

BOBBY
I ain't changed.

TONY
I know.

Tony's response has a subtle undertone of condescension. Bobby notices but opts to laugh it off.

BOBBY
Come on. Let's ball.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Coach Hansen, a cold taskmaster in his forties, runs a hundred PLAYERS through a series of drills. The kids are grouped at each position on the field; ten kids for every spot. Of the hundred kids, only twenty will make the team.

Those in the outfield shag fly balls and make throws to the infield. Bobby makes several flagrant mistakes; failing to take the proper angle on a fly ball on one play and missing the cut-off man on a throw to home on another.

His negative body language does not go unnoticed by Coach Hansen and his ASSISTANT COACH, who are both constantly scribbling on their clipboards.

Those in the infield practice turning double plays and fielding grounders, line-drives, pop-ups and bunts.

Grant is the most gifted athlete on the field, making every play look simple and effortless.

Tony, as always, plays his heart out. He makes the plays he should and chases down balls most people would not. He displays neither speed nor grace, but an uncanny ability to make plays with effort alone. Hansen watches him closely.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The hundred eager hopefuls congregate in the infield. Coach Hansen and his assistant walk over and stand on home plate.

HANSEN

I want to thank all of you for coming out and I want to thank you for your effort. As you may know, Bedford Stuyvesant Boys and Girls High School has one of the best baseball teams in the country; ranked in the top ten for six years running. Because of that, we can only afford to keep the very best. There will be a list of twenty names posted on the locker room door when you get to school tomorrow. If your name is on that list, I'll see you at practice. If not, again...thank you. There's always next year.

INT. SCHOOL - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Tony and Bobby wade through a sea of STUDENTS either walking towards or away from the locker room door. Most are visibly disappointed. One STUDENT angrily shoves his way through.

STUDENT 1

Move! Get out the goddamn way!

*

Tony and Bobby eventually reach the door and Tony scrolls down until he sees **Tony Baez** on the list. He exhales and smiles. Bobby scrolls down as well and after the name **Brendan Gilmartin**, the next name is **Grant Hodge**. Robert Hampton is not on the list.

TONY

I'm...I'm sorry man.

BOBBY

Fuck it.

*

Bobby turns and storms off.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Bobby walks out of the school, a lit cigarette already in his mouth. He is the only one leaving the school, fighting against the sea of STUDENTS walking into it.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony sits in class while the Teacher lectures. He gazes out the window at the baseball diamond and smiles.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Coach Hansen hits a ground ball to Tony. He snags it and hurls it to Grant, who throws it to first for a double play.

GRANT
Every time Chico.

Grant smiles as Hansen hits another grounder to Tony and he stabs it. And then another. He fields them flawlessly.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony and Grant walk off the baseball field.

GRANT
So?

TONY
It's uh, it's cool man. It's a little faster, a little harder but, yeah, definitely cool.

GRANT
You did good man. No sweat, right?

Tony nods but it is obvious that something is on his mind.

GRANT
What's got you? You should be psyched.

TONY
It just sucks about Bobby.

GRANT
Yeah.

*

TONY

He left this morning...after he found out.

GRANT

He ditched? Aaahh, he's probably just jackin' off with Diabro and them clowns. Gettin' into some shit no doubt.

TONY

I'm gonna go try and find him if you wanna come with.

GRANT

Can't man. Gotta go watch Kiah.

TONY

You should...I don't know...

GRANT

I should what?

Tony considers for a moment.

TONY

Nothing. Forget it.

EXT. BODEGA - NIGHT

Bobby and Diabro suck on 40s as they loiter in front of a bodega with other loud and belligerent YOUNG MEN. Tony walks tentatively up to them and Diabro is first to spot him.

DIABRO

Sup kid. B, it's your boy.

Bobby turns to see Tony.

BOBBY

Sup.

TONY

Hey. What's goin' on?

BOBBY

Chillin.'

Tony looks over at Diabro and his friends and they look back. There is a tension between them that borders on hostile.

BOBBY

Be right back. Don't spark that
without me.

*

He ushers Tony a little ways down the sidewalk.

BOBBY

What, you come to gloat or
something?

TONY

No, I just...wanna see what's up.
You left school all mad so...

*

*

BOBBY

Man, fuck school, fuck the team,
fuck all that noise!

*

*

Bobby's unprovoked anger catches Tony off guard.

TONY

Alright. So...what? You gonna
drop out or something?

BOBBY

What's the point?

TONY

What's the point? What are you
gonna do? Spend all day with those
guys? Every one of 'em been in
jail or juvy...what do you think's
gonna happen to you?

*

*

BOBBY

What other options I got, huh? My
mom's cookin' rocks all day, her
welfare dries up, I'm out on the
fuckin' street. What else I got
Chico?

*

*

Diabro and his boys walk over.

DIABRO

You cool Bobby?

BOBBY

Yeah.

The group eyes Tony menacingly before walking off.

BOBBY

Go home cuz. You got school
tomorrow. Practice too.

Tony looks at Bobby for a moment before turning to walk away.

BOBBY

Yo.

Tony stops and turns back. Bobby is a little choked up.

BOBBY

You were right man. Shit changes.
But you're still my boy. And
that'll never change. Got it?

TONY

Yeah, I got it.

Bobby takes a long swig of his 40, nods at Tony and then walks back over to Diabro and his friends.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony enters, sits on the couch and exhales, drained from a long and taxing day. Though muffled, he hears Carmen CRYING in the bedroom.

He walks through the kitchen past a table littered with dirty dishes. He opens the bedroom door and Carmen, sitting on her bed, wipes tears from her face.

TONY

Why you cryin'?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

I'm not.

TONY

Uh-huh. What happened?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Nothing. Nothing happened. I
spent a month working twelve hour
days expecting it to lead to a full-
time position and nothing happened.
No, that's not true, something
happened. I lost another job,
that's what happened.

TONY

So what now?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

I don't know. I don't know
anymore.

Tony's face fills with pity as he sits on the bed beside her. He speaks to her in Spanish.

TONY

Well, we'll just have to...figure something out. And we'll get by. We always do.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

I'm sick of 'getting by.'

TONY

So am I. So am I momma.

They sit beside each other in silence...in close proximity but with miles between them.

INT. SCHOOL - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Tony exits the locker room and walks down the hallway, eventually reaching Coach Hansen's office. He KNOCKS on the door but no one answers. He is about to leave when...

MUELLER (O.S.)

That you Baez?

Tony turns to see Coach Mueller exiting his office.

TONY

Oh, hey Coach.

MUELLER

How's the season going?

TONY

So far so good.

MUELLER

Yeah, I saw you guys play Lafayette. You looked good out there. Graceless as usual, but good.

TONY

Thanks.

Tony is lost in thought; Mueller notices.

MUELLER

Coach Hansen left for the day.
What's on your mind kid?

*

TONY
I don't know. My options I guess.

MUELLER
Options?

TONY
Yeah. Baseball. College maybe, I don't know.

MUELLER
Sounds like a long conversation.
And sorry but...it's been a long
day and I'm starving so...

*
*

TONY
Yeah, I understand.

Tony turns and is about to walk off.

MUELLER
So you're gonna have to keep me
company while I gorge myself. You
could eat too I suppose...unless
you got something better to do.

TONY
Actually, I have choir practice on
Tuesday nights.

MUELLER
Are you shittin' me?

TONY
I am actually.

Coach laughs.

MUELLER
Well done.

INT. DINER - EVENING

Tony and Mueller sit in a downtrodden diner in booths held
together with duct tape, digging into a couple cheeseburgers.

MUELLER
So we've established that you're
not as athletic as your boy Hodge.

TONY
No.

MUELLER

Or as strong or as fast or as talented.

*

TONY

Not even close.

MUELLER

How are your grades?

TONY

I never really cared enough to do well so...I mean, I pass my classes...well, most of 'em...some of 'em.

MUELLER

So getting into college would be tough?

TONY

Couldn't afford it anyway.

Coach wipes his mouth and studies him closely.

MUELLER

What about work? You ever thought about what you'd like to do for a job?

TONY

Play baseball.

MUELLER

And on the off chance you couldn't do that?

TONY

Not sure.

MUELLER

What does your father do?

TONY

Couldn't tell you.

MUELLER

He's not around or...

*

TONY

No.

A long silence.

MUELLER

So, hypothetically, if we lived in a world where money, athleticism, grades, none of that mattered. Say we actually lived in that world... what would you wanna do after highschool.

TONY

Play college ball.

MUELLER

So make it happen.

TONY

I can't.

MUELLER

Can't? That's a word you should get out of your vocabulary as soon as possible. Otherwise you're in for a long, hard life with nothing but shitty options.

Tony looks at him and contemplates but says nothing.

EXT. TONY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Tony emerges from the ominous shadows that blanket his street and walks up to his apartment building to find Flacca sitting on the steps. *

FLACCA *

'Bout time. I been sittin' here over an hour. I would've texted you but you're the only guy on planet earth without a cell phone. *

TONY *

You think I don't want... *

She lifts her head, revealing a fresh black eye. *

TONY

Jesus.

FLACCA *

No. Jack...Daniels. More than usual.

TONY

He does this one more time, I swear to god I'll...You okay? *

FLACCA
My face hurts.

He rubs the side of her face softly. She winces.

TONY
Come on. I'll get you some ice.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony puts a dish towel filled with ice on Flacca's face.

FLACCA
Where's your mom?

TONY
I don't know. My uncle's probably.

They both lean back onto the sofa, sitting in silence.

FLACCA
You know what I think about some
times? What's worse...being you or
being me.

Tony looks at her but says nothing. *

FLACCA *
You know, like, what's worse...not *
having a dad...or having mine. *
That's what I think about.

TONY
Ever come up with an answer?

She is about to answer when she starts crying. He puts his
arm around her awkwardly, holding her as she cries.
Eventually, she composes herself and they share a silence.

FLACCA
What do you think about?

TONY
Me? I think about what's
worse...not knowing what you want
to do with your life...or knowing
and not being able to do it.

FLACCA
I have no idea what I want to do. *

TONY
What's that like?

FLACCA
It sucks. Why, you know?

TONY
I do.

FLACCA
Yeah? So...do it.

TONY
Yeah.

She rests her head on his shoulder and they sit in silence.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony steps up to the plate and knocks the dirt off his cleats with his bat. The scoreboard reads:

Bed-Sty	4	Prospect Heights	5
7th Inning	3 Balls	2 Strikes	2 Outs

Tony stares down the pitcher. One of his teammates is on first base taking a modest lead. The pitcher delivers and Tony fouls the pitch off. Then another. Then another.

The pitcher is exasperated by the lengthy battle. On the next pitch, Tony rips an opposite field line drive towards the right field gap. He runs hard, headed for second as the ball rolls to the wall. The other player scores as Tony heads for third.

The throw from the outfield reaches third as Tony slides in head first. The throw caroms off the third basemen's glove and rolls far away enough for Tony to make a dash for home. The throw home beats him but he slides around the tag, grazing home plate with his hand.

UMPIRE
Safe! Safe!

Tony leaps to his feet in celebration and is mobbed by Grant and the rest of his teammates. Once again, Tony scans the faces of the spectators as if he's looking for someone. He eventually spots Flacca, who is cheering maniacally.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony walks into class and several STUDENTS recognize him.

STUDENT 1
Yo, you the man bro. Good game.

TONY

Thanks.

Tony beams with pride and sits as the TEACHER enters.

TEACHER

Good morning. Um...Mr. Baez.

TONY

Yeah?

TEACHER

Miss Feldman would like to see you.

TONY

About what?

TEACHER

I'm sure she'll tell you herself.
Go ahead.

INT. SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY

Tony sits across from KELLY FELDMAN, a warm but firm woman in her fifties who speaks with a serious tone. *

FELDMAN

Tony, we take alot of pride in the quality of our athletic department. And we pride ourselves not just on having excellent athletes...but excellent student-athletes.

Tony nods nervously, listening to every word.

FELDMAN

And for our student-athletes to truly maximize their potential, we need them to excel both on the field and in the classroom...which you have failed to do. So as of today, you are suspended from all extracurricular activities...including baseball.

TONY

What?

FELDMAN

Over the last two years, your grades have gotten consistently worse.

(MORE)

FELDMAN (cont'd)
 You are failing three classes and
 your overall GPA is well below that
 which we require...

TONY
 You can't...I don't understand...
 why didn't anyone tell me?

FELDMAN
 We are telling you. Mid-terms are
 two weeks away and you could get
 back on the team if you ace them.
 If not, you will miss the rest of
 the season. But Tony, if you have
 any aspirations of college...or
 even if you just want to graduate,
 you need to get your grades up.
 Now, Coach Hansen told me how hard
 you work in practice. If you work
 that hard in the classroom, there's
 really no telling what you might
 accomplish.

*

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony, dressed in street clothes, slowly ambles out to the
 field where the team practices. Coach Hansen spots him.

HANSEN
 Shouldn't you be in a library
 somewhere?

TONY
 I thought...I don't know...that
 maybe I'd watch or...

HANSEN
 I don't need you to watch Baez. I
 need you to get back on this team
 if we're gonna make a run for
 State. That's what I need. So I
 suggest you go do whatever it is
 you have to do to accomplish that.

Heartbroken, Tony nods, turns and walks off.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Tony and Bobby stumble down the street with 40s. Drunk and
 belligerent, they stagger past a group of HOMELESS MEN.

INSERT: All Star Break May 14th 2011

*

BOBBY

Now, yeah, I'm just jackin' stereos and radar detectors but you know, I might start dealin.' Diabro's brutha pushes herb, rocks too. He always lookin' for help movin' his shit.

TONY

So you're gonna what...deal for him?

*

BOBBY

Why not man?! Look where we at! I ain't goin' to Harvard. I ain't got no Wall Street job prospects. Shit man, this all I got. What you got?

*

TONY

I got nothing.

*

BOBBY

You got nothing. Bed-Sty high and dry baby. Nobody got shit.

*

A tinted, souped-up CADILLAC pulls up and Diabro sticks his head out the window.

DIABRO

Sup dog.

BOBBY

Sup.

DIABRO

Yo, we need some eyeballs.

BOBBY

For what.

DIABRO

Dru's boy works security for a jewelry shop in Crown Heights. We gonna clean it out, need some eyes out front. Come with, we'll cut you a slice.

The back door OPENS. Bobby and Tony hesitate.

BOBBY

I'm in.

Bobby starts walking towards the car.

TONY

So am I.

Tony takes a few steps towards the car but Bobby stops him.

BOBBY

Naw, you ain't.

TONY

What?

BOBBY

Go home. Go study or something.

*

TONY

No, I'm comin.'

*

Tony makes another effort to get in the car but Bobby shoves him to the ground. His 40 SHATTERS. Bobby looks at him for a moment before getting in and SHUTTING THE DOOR. Diabro flashes Tony a bemused smirk before the car PEELS OUT.

EXT. FLACCA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Tony struggles to climb the fire escape of a decrepit apartment building and eventually reaches the third floor. He KNOCKS gently on a window and after a moment, Flacca opens it. They converse in whispers.

FLACCA

What are you doing?

TONY

Climbin' fire escapes.

FLACCA

Normal people call or text, you know. Jesus, you smell like a Colt 45 factory, where you been?

*

*

*

TONY

Hangin' with Bobby.

FLACCA

Yeah, just hangin' and gettin' trashed on a Tuesday night?

*

*

He doesn't respond and she can tell he is upset.

FLACCA

What's a matter?

TONY
Nothing. Aside from getting kicked
off the team, nothing.

*
*

FLACCA
What? Why?

TONY
Grades.

FLACCA
What kinda grades?

TONY
The failing kind, what do you
think?

*

FLACCA
Sshhh.

She steps out onto the fire escape and shuts her window.

TONY
Sorry. Is he...

FLACCA
Passed out, but still.

TONY
Oh. Sorry.

FLACCA
I'm not. I like him better that
way.

She sits next to him.

FLACCA
What'd they say?

TONY
I gotta get my grades up.

FLACCA
So get 'em up.

TONY
I can't.

FLACCA
God, you're such a vagina. Sure
you can, I'll even help you.

*

TONY

You? Your grades are worse than mine, how are you gonna help?

*

FLACCA

I ain't stupid. I just don't give a shit, same as you.

*

TONY

So you're gonna what, help me study?

FLACCA

What else I got to do? Hell, I might even learn something by accident.

*

TONY

Okay. So, what do we do? How do we...

Flacca laughs.

TONY

What, I don't know how to study, do you?

FLACCA

Wikipedia, chump. Don't worry so much. We'll figure it out.

*

*

TONY

Alright...cool. You know, you're alright for a white bitch.

She laughs, slaps him playfully and flashes him a grin with a hint of longing.

*

INT. SCHOOL - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Tony and Flacca sit at a computer in the library, surfing through various websites. The chemistry between them festers with sexual tension.

*

*

MONTAGE that INTERCUTS scenes of Grant and his teammates in game sequences with scenes of Tony studying. Tony studies with Flacca on one occasion, by himself on another and once with a TEACHER while getting extra help after school.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony sits in the bleachers with a book in his lap. He watches his team play and it is a close game.

MUELLER (O.S.)
You learn how to read?

*

Tony turns to see Coach Mueller standing beside him.

TONY
Nah, I just like the pretty pictures.

*

Mueller chuckles and sits beside him.

MUELLER
Hansen told me about your probation. You gonna pull your head out of your ass and get your grades up.

TONY
I'm trying.

*

MUELLER
Good. Anyone at home helpin' you out?

TONY
No. My my mom works and...well, my mom works so...

MUELLER
How bout you...you got a job?

Tony shakes his head.

MUELLER
Why not? You could get a paper route, flip burgers, maybe get a job strippin' somewhere.

*

Tony laughs.

MUELLER
Seriously though, you do anything to help out your mom?

Tony looks down but does not answer.

MUELLER

Well, if it's just the two of you,
maybe you should think about doin'
your part.

TONY

What's that?

MUELLER

Whatever you can. It ain't easy
bein' a single mother. Ask mine,
she'll tell you.

*
*

Tony hangs his head, taking it in. Suddenly, Grant hits a home run during the last inning of the game, leading Bed-Sty to victory. Tony and Mueller stand and erupt in applause.

*

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony sits on the couch, studying as his mother walks out the door, dressed for work. WATER DRIPS from the ceiling into several pots.

He then looks at the clock that reveals that it is **11:00 PM**.
He yawns, wipes his eyes and continues studying.

*

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Bobby stands on a dark street corner smoking a cigarette. A jittery CRACKHEAD walks up to him and hands him a wad of CASH. Bobby slyly places two vials of CRACK into his hand.

INT. BATTING CAGE - NIGHT

Tony hits in the batting cage; his eyes focused as he rips pitch after pitch.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The teacher passes EXAMS out to the students. Tony looks at the cover page that reads: **American History Midterm 2011**. He inhales deeply and picks up his pen.

*

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony watches the YANKEES GAME on television. Carmen walks in, exhausted from a day at work.

*

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Hi.

TONY

Hey.

She sets down her purse and opens the refrigerator.

TONY

There's uh, some chicken in the fridge.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

You cooked?

TONY

Sort of. It's uh...it's not good but it's edible.

*

She pulls a plate of chicken out of the fridge and stares at it in disbelief.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Wow. Thank you sweetheart.

She sits at the kitchen table with the chicken. She takes a bite and struggles to chew it.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

It's...pretty good. So, how was school?

TONY

Okay. Midterm grades come out tomorrow so hopefully I'll...

*

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Oh, I forgot to tell you, I saw Mando yesterday and he got a raise! He's making forty-two thousand a year now! Unbelievable, huh!

*

TONY

Yeah momma. Unbelievable.

She picks up on his sarcasm and strikes a stern tone.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

It's a good life he has Tony. A good life for his family.

Tony shakes his head and tries to ignore her.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
We have to take the best that we
can sometimes. Even if it's not
exactly what we want. That's just
the way it is.

Tony offers no response and keeps his eyes glued to the TV.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
You hear me Tony?

TONY
Yeah. I hear you.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony sits in class, listening to the Teacher lecture. There is a KNOCK on the door and the Teacher opens it to reveal Kelly Feldman standing in the hallway. *

Tony looks up at her with keen interest, watching as the two women converse. Feldman looks over at Tony and a subtle smirk spreads across her face.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony walks towards the baseball field and as he gets closer, he breaks into a jog...and then a sprint. He is beaming as he rejoins his team for practice and Grant spots him.

GRANT
Ooohh shit! Chico's back baby!
Chico's baaaaack! *

The team greets him enthusiastically and Hansen lets loose an uncharacteristic smile.

HANSEN
Alright, alright, break up the
lovefest here. Baez, since you've
got everyone in such a good mood,
why don't you lead us in a little
run. Five laps oughtta do.

TONY
You gonna join us Coach? *

HANSEN
Yeah, I'll meet you out there.

Coach BLOWS HIS WHISTLE and the team takes off running.

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Grant sits at the kitchen table of a small, scantily decorated apartment. He sifts through a packet of information about **ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY**.

KIAH, an adorable five-year-old, sneaks up beside him and starts poking him. He pretends to ignore her and she keeps poking him.

GRANT
Why you pokin' me?

She smiles but says nothing. She continues poking him.

GRANT
You're askin' for it.

She giggles and continues poking him. Finally, he jumps on top of her and tickles her. She laughs hysterically.

GRANT
This what you want? This what you want?

KIAH
Stop! Stop! Stop!

He gets off her and sits back down at the table. Kiah catches her breath and stands up.

KIAH
Whatcha doin'?

GRANT
I'm growin' wings baby.

KIAH
Wings? Are you gonna fly?

GRANT
I sure am kid.

KIAH
Where you gonna fly to?

GRANT
Far from here.

KIAH
Are you gonna take me and mommy with you?

He looks at her and smiles.

GRANT
That's the plan baby. That's
always been the plan.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tony and Grant walk out of the school to find Coach Hansen and two MEN waiting for them. They stop Grant.

HANSEN
Grant, I'd like you to meet a few
gentlemen. This is Bill Hurley and
Jonathan Gale from Arizona State.

JONATHAN and BILL are both friendly, in their thirties and the only white people among the many departing the school. They shake Grant's hand.

JONATHAN
Grant, great to meet you.

GRANT
Hey.

BILL
Hell of an effort out there today.

GRANT
Thanks.

HANSEN
Baez, why don't you take off, give
these guys some time to talk.

TONY
Yeah. I'll see you Coach.

He looks at Grant and grins before walking off. While walking away, he watches Grant talking with the recruiters. His expression reveals happiness but also a hint of jealousy.

EXT. GRANT'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tony sits on the steps of Grant's housing project. He glances around, reading the graffiti on the adjacent boarded-up buildings. Eventually, he spots Grant and stands.

TONY
Well?

Grant smirks mischievously as he walks over.

GRANT

Well what?

Tony stares at him pleadingly. Grant laughs.

GRANT

Aaaahh, they didn't say much...just that they really want me to come and play for them and they want to pick up the entire check.

TONY

Full scholarship?

Grant nods and Tony shoves him before embracing him emphatically. It is a long, strong embrace.

TONY

I knew it! I knew it.

They detach from each other.

GRANT

Yeah, well, I gotta get in first.

TONY

You will.

GRANT

I don't know, need a sixteen hundred on the SATs.

TONY

Easy.

GRANT

Oh yeah?

TONY

Easy. I'll help you study.

GRANT

Yeah, Mr. Academic Probation gonna help me study.

TONY

I'll tie you to a chair if I have to, sing you algebra lullabies every night, whatever it takes.

Grant laughs. We hear SIRENS in the distance but this time, as he listens to them, Grant just smiles.

GRANT

Arizona.

TONY

Yeah. Cactuses and quiet, huh.

GRANT

Yup. You know, I'm not sure but I think I heard that they let spics go to college there too.

TONY

No shit?

GRANT

No shit.

TONY

Wow. What a country, huh.

They share a brief laugh and then stand in silence; listening as the SIRENS grow louder.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - EVENING

Tony and his TEAMMATES file down the hallway, cloaked in expressions of defeat. They wander past Coach Mueller's office. Mueller spots Tony.

MUELLER

Hey Baez.

Tony stops and stands in the doorway sadly.

TONY

Hey Coach.

MUELLER

You hurtin'?

Tony nods.

MUELLER

I'm sure you are. But did you leave it all on the field?

Tony nods again.

MUELLER

Good. That's all you can do. And remember how this feels. Remember it all summer, all fall, all winter.

(MORE)

*
*

MUELLER (cont'd)
Remember it so come next spring,
you'll do everything in your power
to not feel this again.

It is a potent moment and Tony nods before continuing down
the hallway.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - DAY

Tony and Flacca sit in a booth, finishing up slices of pizza.

TONY
No way. Let me see.

He grabs her cell phone and reads a message on it.

TONY
Thought we could go to Sizzler to
celebrate. Wow.

He hands her the phone back.

FLACCA
Crazy, huh? And uh, I actually got
him... I got him a tie.

TONY
You bought him a tie?

FLACCA
No, I stole him a tie but...yeah.
I'm tellin' you, when he apologized
to me, I didn't know if I was gonna
cry or slap him or shit my pants.
It was so...I don't know...

TONY
So what does he, like, go to
meetings every day?

Flacca nods.

TONY
What do they do there?

FLACCA
I think they just drink coffee and
smoke butts and talk about not
wanting to drink any more.

TONY
That's it huh? Well, it's good
that he's tryin.' Maybe, you know,
you guys can make things better.

FLACCA
Maybe.

A long silence follows.

FLACCA
You ever miss him?

Another silence as Tony formulates his response.

TONY
I got these moments sometimes...
during games when I make a play or
get a hit...and I look at the
bleachers and sometimes...sometimes
I wish I'd look in the bleachers
and see him cheerin.' I hate that
I still have those moments but I
do...sometimes.

*

Flacca listens but says nothing.

TONY
It's messed up...but the thing I
love most in my life was given to
me by the guy I hate most.

*

FLACCA
Baseball?

He nods.

FLACCA
Well, just 'cause he gave it to
you...it don't mean it ain't yours
now.

Tony looks at her and they share a moment of understanding.
She grabs the cupcake that sits on the table and gently
breaks it in half. She hands half of it to Tony.

FLACCA
Happy Father's Day.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tony and Grant, carrying their mitts, walk down the street. They pass a panhandling WOMAN and eventually reach the bodega that Bobby and Diabro regularly hang out at. They see Bobby smoking a cigarette.

GRANT

Look at this degenerate right here. *

BOBBY

Oh shit, sup Grant.

GRANT

Sup.

They shake hands and hug.

BOBBY

What'chall doin?

GRANT

It's the end of the summer so we're
goin' down to the park, get silly
for a while, you know. *

BOBBY

Word? You gonna go run into
garbage cans and shit? Crazy
muthafuckas still playin' with
yourselves like your ten years old
but that's cool. That's smooth,
that's your thing, that's your
thing.

Bobby is talking a mile a minute and his eyes are glassy.
Tony and Grant take notice.

TONY

We thought maybe, you know, you'd
wanna come, mess around a little. *

BOBBY

Nah man, got business. I'm a
workin' man, you know. Gotta make
dollars, gotta hunt them greenbacks
baby, know what I'm sayin.' Always
workin', always workin' man. I'm
like Dr. Fulton Street, on call
twenty-four seven.

GRANT

Yeah. Alright. I guess we'll
catch you later.

BOBBY

Probably not...but you never know.

There is an awkward moment before Bobby turns and walks off.

TONY

What's wrong with him?

GRANT

He's high...stratosphere man. Come on, let's go.

*

Grant takes off walking and after a moment, Tony follows.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony hits a ground ball and Grant casually fields it. He throws it back to Tony and then starts walking towards home plate, seemingly disinterested.

TONY

You done?

GRANT

Yeah. It's kinda boring without a body in the outfield.

*

TONY

Without a big ass mouth in the outfield.

GRANT

Yeah. He was funny though.

TONY

He's not dead you know.

*

GRANT

Not dead but...I ain't got nothin' to say to him anymore, you know. I just don't. But I guess that's the way it is.

TONY

Maybe. But he is gonna die if he keeps smoking that stuff.

*

The sound of SHATTERING GLASS and a WOMAN SCREAMING pierce the silence. Grant looks off in that direction.

GRANT

Yeah. This town can kill you real quick if you let it. That's why you gotta get out dog.

*
*

TONY

You don't think I wanna?

GRANT

I think you think you can't. And I think that's some bullshit.

EXT. STREET-NIGHT

*

Tony and Grant walk in silence. Finally, Tony speaks.

*

TONY

You know what Mueller said to me... he said 'can't' is a word I should get out of my vocabulary or I'll be in for a long, shitty life.

GRANT

That's a smart man right there.

TONY

Yeah but let's be realistic. I hit .390 this year, what'd you hit?

*

GRANT

.715.

TONY

I had one homer that was more of a triple with a throwing error. How many you have?

GRANT

Nineteen.

TONY

I ain't had sex once in my entire life. How many girls you been with this year.

GRANT

Shit man, I don't even think NASA could calculate that number.

*

They share a laugh before Grant gets serious.

GRANT

Chico, school starts next week so
 you got a whole year. A whole year
 to get your grades up...to get your
 average up, your power up. That's
 a long time. But let's be honest,
 you ain't never gonna be me.

*

*

Tony smiles and shakes his head.

GRANT

But you work harder than anyone I
 ever met. So you bust yo ass, you
 might be surprised what you can do.
Can. That's a sexy word right
 there. Can.

*

*

Another silence as Tony contemplates.

GRANT

Shit man, you might even be able to
 get laid. Second thought, naw,
 probably not. I mean, it's good to
 dream and all but like you said, we
 gotta be realistic too.

They share another laugh and continue down the street.

*

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

An ALARM CLOCK on the living room endtable BUZZES. Tony
 shuts it off and the CALENDAR reads "**September 2011.**"

*

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony sits, listening closely to the Teacher's lecture. He is
 uncharacteristically engaged; a stark contrast to the rest of
 the rambunctious class.

TEACHER

Starting next Monday, extra help
 will be available in the library
 after school for those who want it.
 It really is a great resource and
 I'd encourage you all to take
 advantage of it. First chance to
 take the SATs is on Saturday,
 November 5th so...circle that date
 on your calendar.

Tony scribbles down the date.

INT. SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY

Tony enters Miss Feldman's office.

FELDMAN

Hi Tony. Take a seat. How was your summer?

TONY

Fine, thanks.

FELDMAN

What's on your mind?

TONY

Umm...college...actually.

Feldman's face lights up.

FELDMAN

Wow. From Academic Probation to college aspirations in what, five months? I love it. What do you want to study?

TONY

Baseball.

FELDMAN

Baseball? Not sure if that's available as a major anywhere on the planet...so...

TONY

No, I know I have to pick a major at some point but right now I don't know what it would be. There's really only two things that I do know...

*

FELDMAN

And they are?

TONY

I know I want to play ball in college and...I know I can't afford college so...

FELDMAN

Okay. Well, most city or community colleges offer some sort of financial assistance...

TONY

No, I wanna play D-1.

FELDMAN

Division One? Okay. Well, those schools are much more expensive and typically harder to get into.

TONY

Yeah but the chances of getting drafted out of community college...just doesn't happen.

FELDMAN

Drafted into what...professional baseball?

Tony nods.

FELDMAN

Tony, it's good to have goals. But you can't plan your entire life in hopes that...

TONY

Actually, I'm tryin' not to use that word any more.

FELDMAN

What word?

TONY

'Can't.' So...will you help me?

She grins, won over by his newfound determination.

FELDMAN

Of course. Where do you want to start?

TONY

I wanna know every D-1 school that gives full athletic scholarships for baseball and what kind of grades I need to get 'em.

FELDMAN

That's a pretty good start.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Tony walks down the hallway when suddenly, someone knocks his books out of his hands. He turns to see Flacca.

FLACCA
Whoops. Sorry, I thought you were
someone else.

*

She smiles playfully as she helps him pick up his books. She notices a small one with a cover that reads:

The Complete Handbook for the College Application Process

FLACCA
Holy shit, you're really...

TONY
Yeah.

Flacca starts laughing.

TONY
What are you laughin' at.

*

FLACCA
You ain't never gettin' into
college chump.

TONY
Says you.

FLACCA
Unless you get a real tutor. And
sorry but I'm booked solid for the
rest of the year.

She knocks his books out of his hands again and runs off down the hallway. Tony shakes his head and smiles.

FLACCA (O.S.)
Sucka!

EXT. PARK - DAY

Tony blows out candles on a birthday cake. Carmen stands behind him with Uncle Armando and other FAMILY MEMBERS. Flacca and Grant are also present but bored. Carmen kisses him and is uncharacteristically jovial.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Happy birthday. My boy has become
a man, I never thought I'd live to
see this glorious day!

*

Family members embrace him and wish him well. Grant flashes him a sarcastic 'thumbs up' and Flacca flips him the finger.

ARMANDO
Eighteen years old! My god.

*
*

TONY
Yeah, I'm an old man.

ARMANDO
Yeah, you tired? You wanna sit
down, crochet for a while, watch
The Golden Girls?

Tony laughs.

TONY
What's that?

*
*

Armando laughs and hands Tony an ENVELOPE.

*

ARMANDO
Happy birthday nephew.

Tony opens it and pulls out a stack of DOCUMENTS. When he
reads it, his smile evaporates.

*

TONY
It's...a job application.

ARMANDO
No. It's a technicality. I talked
to my supervisor already
and...you're in.

TONY
What do you mean I'm in?

ARMANDO
You gotta fill that out and the
rest of the paperwork when you
start but...the job's yours.

CARMEN
He doesn't even have to finish
school, right Mando?

ARMANDO
He just needs a GED, that's all.
But...he should finish.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Why? He takes the GED next week
and passes, he can be working by
Thanksgiving! My god, you could
even get me a Christmas present!
(MORE)

CARMEN (SUBTITLE) (cont'd)
When's the last time you got me
something for Christmas sweetie?!

Carmen laughs heartily and hugs Tony. Tony is repulsed but musters up an artificial smile.

ARMANDO
I think he should graduate and then
start but that's just me. But he
doesn't have to decide today for
Christ's sake, let the kid enjoy
his birthday. Happy birthday Tony.

TONY
Thanks.

They embrace awkwardly and when they separate, Tony looks away, adrift in unpleasant thoughts.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tony washes the dishes in the sink, scrubbing them. Carmen sits at the table, eating chicken with rice and beans.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Mmmmm. Chicken, rice, beans.
You're becoming quite a cook.

Tony says nothing and continues cleaning.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
I want you to know that I really
appreciate your helping out around
the house.

He still says nothing; he just scrubs away.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Sweetheart, you haven't said a word
since the party yesterday, what is
it? Tony?

TONY
Did it ever occur to you to ask me
what I want?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
What are you talking about?

TONY

My life. Did it ever occur to you to ask your son what he wants to do with his life before you make every fucking decision for him?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Watch your mouth. There's no swearing in this home.

TONY

This isn't a home, it's a goddamn motherfucking morgue and I hate it!

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Tony!

TONY

I don't want to be a garbage man, can you understand that?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Stop it. He makes forty-two thousand dollars a year and he can take his family to the doctor when they get sick and when he wants to retire, he won't have to worry about...

*

TONY

(screaming) I don't care!

Carmen is shocked into silence; having never seen her son this enraged. Tony sits down on the bed and catches his breath, allowing the moment to deflate somewhat.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

What do you want?

TONY

I want to go to college. And I want to get the hell out of Bed-Sty.

A long silence as she takes this in.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

I know I never say anything...but I get all your report cards. And you're grades have never been...

TONY

I'm working on that.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Tony, we can't afford college and you know that. We just can't do it.

TONY

Wrong. Maybe you couldn't do it.
But I can...and I will.

*
*

EXT. OTB - ALLEY - DAY

Bobby, standing in an alley between two graffiti-coated buildings, LIGHTS A CRACK PIPE and inhales deeply. As his eyes glaze over, Diabro walks around the corner.

*
*

DIABRO

Yo, I must be hallucinatin'.

*

BOBBY

Chill baby. What's a few boulders out of a thousand?

DIABRO

So long as it's just a few. Don't go gettin' strung out on that shit.

*

BOBBY

Never me yo. Come on kid, 2:00 at Vernon Downs 'bout to kick off. My horse gonna whoop some ass.

Bobby walks around the corner and enters an OTB. Diabro eyes him suspiciously as he follows.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Tony and Grant sit amidst a group of STUDENTS in the library as a TEACHER illustrates an ALGEBRA PROBLEM on a blackboard. They both look confounded but are doing their best to follow.

INT. SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

Grant leads Tony through a series of exercises, demonstrating proper technique in each. He walks him through squats first.

GRANT

You want more speed, more quickness
and more strength, you gotta build
up your core as well as your legs.
Squats take care of all that.

*

CUT TO:

Grant walks Tony through a series of shoulder exercises;
dumbbell presses, rotator cuff flies.

GRANT

Shoulders are half the game Chico.
You wanna throw harder...shoulders.
You want more bat speed, more
power...shoulders. And never
forget the forearms.

Grant then leads Tony through several forearm exercises.
Tony GRUNTS and STRAINS but works diligently.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

Tony and Grant exit the school and Tony is limping badly.

TONY

I'm hurtin'.

*

GRANT

Ooooh, you just wait until
tomorrow. You be haitin' me
tomorrow. You gonna be haitin' me
all year long. But come April and
you see those results on the
field...you be lovin' my ass.

They walk for a few moments.

TONY

You ever...you know...take anything
to...

*

*

GRANT

Never. My body is my temple baby.
Besides, ain't never been a short
cut that taste as good as the real
thing. Why? I know you ain't
thinkin' about...

*

*

*

*

*

*

TONY

I don't know.

*

*

GRANT

Well, get that shit out of your
head right quick. Less you wanna
end up in court next to Barry
Bonds. And I know you ain't got a
suit.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Tony forces an awkward laugh.

*

GRANT

Protein and sweat baby. Work, hard
and lift hard and that's all your
body needs.

*
*
*
*

Russ nods and they continue walking in silence.

*

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

*

Tony and Grant sit at desks with two PENCILS in front of
them. A MONITOR stands at the head of the class along with
the Teacher. Flacca enters just before the Teacher closes
the door.

Tony is gazing out the window daydreaming and does not notice
Flacca enter. As she passes his desk, she picks up both his
pencils and SNAPS THEM IN HALF.

FLACCA

Sucka.

She continues down the aisle and eventually finds a seat.

TEACHER

Everybody please make sure that you
have two 'Number Two' pencils and
they must be 'Number Two.' If they
are not, please raise your hand now
and we will provide you with one.

*

Tony fiddles with his broken pencils and contemplates raising
his hand but does not.

TEACHER

Okay then. Good luck.

The Monitor hands out the TESTS and Tony opens his.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Grant and Tony work on turning double plays. It is cold and
grey and they expel clouds of breath as they practice.

GRANT

Jeter in his prime, you watch him
 turn a double play, it's like a
 fuckin' ballet. Watch Orlando
 Hudson and do what he do. He
 catches, he gets out the way and he
 throws in one liquid motion.

*
 *
 *

Grant demonstrates the motion; Tony watches.

GRANT

Now you ain't never gonna be as
 graceful as me and I forgive you
 for that. But with my legions of
 fans watchin' me, I can't have you
 makin' me look bad either so...one
 more time.

TONY

You're such an asshole.

GRANT

Yup. Once more. Here we go.

He flips the ball to Grant who catches, slides across the bag
 and throws to first base in one motion.

GRANT

That's better. Once more.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Tony and Flacca, wrapped in winter clothing, walk down the
 street past a SANTA collecting for the Salvation Army.

FLACCA

So what kinda grades they want?

TONY

'C's are good enough at most of
 'em. So long as I get over a
 sixteen hundred on the SAT.

*

FLACCA

Where you gonna apply?

TONY

Arizona State, Texas, USC, Miami.

A silence as Flacca reflects on this.

FLACCA

They're all pretty far away.

TONY
That's the point.

FLACCA
Good. Get the hell outta here.
Ain't nobody gonna miss you anyway.

*
*

He glances over at her and she smirks shyly.

FLACCA
That's all you can think about
isn't it?

TONY
What?

FLACCA
Gettin' outta here.

TONY
I guess. What else is there
really?

FLACCA
Plenty that your dumb ass is
missin.'

TONY
Oh yeah? Like what?

FLACCA
Like having fun with your friends
instead of just playin' baseball
with 'em. Like havin' sex even
though I know you're doin' the
whole highschool priest celibacy
thing.

*

TONY
You should talk. You're just as
much of a virgin as I am. Flacca
loca.

*
*
*

He shoves her playfully.

*

FLACCA
I ain't crazy, I just got taste.
Like I'm gonna give it up for one
of these Brooklyn chumps? Please.

*
*

TONY
Yeah, taste. Okay, so aside from
sex, what else am I missin', huh?

*

FLACCA

You could, I don't know, get a girlfriend and fall in love or somethin.'

TONY

In Bed-Sty?

FLACCA

Why not? Nothin' else to do in this shithole.

An awkward silence as they continue walking.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony enters his apartment with a slight limp and drops his bookbag on the floor. He winces in pain as he takes off his coat, revealing his sweat-soaked gym clothes.

He grabs a drink out of the fridge and notices an OPENED ENVELOPE sitting on the kitchen table. It is addressed to him. He pulls out the contents and they read:

SAT Critical Reading - 560

*

SAT Mathematics - 510

*

SAT Reading - 520

*

*

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

Is that good?

Tony turns to see his mother standing there.

TONY

Yeah Momma. It's uh...it's good enough.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

For what? To get into a college we can't afford to send you to?

Tony drops the test results and turns on her.

TONY

Do you want me to be unhappy?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

What?

TONY

It's like you want me to fail so
I'll be just as miserable as you
are. You don't even want me to try
to get a better life than you, do
you?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

That's all I ever wanted! For you
to have the life I could never give
you, the life your father promised
us before he walked out that door.
I don't want you to spend the next
fifty years 'getting by.' I want
you to live your life instead of
just trying to survive it, don't
you understand that!

Carmen is breathing heavily, fending off the onslaught of
emotion the best she can. A silence follows.

TONY

Yeah, I understand. But I'm not
even gonna survive it unless I do
what makes me happy. So that's
what I'm gonna do.

There is a long, tense silence; Tony diffuses it.

*

TONY

You eat yet?

Carmen shakes her head. Tony nods and enters the kitchen.
He opens the fridge and starts pulling items out of it.

INT. SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

Tony does dumbbell shoulder presses, sweating and GRUNTING as
he strives for maximum reps. Mueller looks in the weight
room and spots Tony. He watches him finish his set.

MUELLER

You've beefed up a little.

*

TONY

Yeah, fifteen pounds.

MUELLER

You're not taking any short cuts
are you?

*

*

*

TONY
Just the usual. HGH, amphetamines,
Clenbuterol, Mytol. I needed to
get a little stronger, faster.

*
*
*

MUELLER
For what?

TONY
To put up the kind of numbers I
need to get a scholarship.

Mueller grins with approval.

MUELLER
Speaking of numbers, you take the
SATs yet?

TONY
1590.

*

MUELLER
Hey! I knew you weren't as stupid
as you looked.

TONY
Hope not. Cause I look pretty
stupid don't I.

*

They share a laugh.

MUELLER
You been pickin' out schools?

*

TONY
Yeah. Got a list and now I
just...just gotta apply and hope.

MUELLER
And you're 'hoping' for a
scholarship?

TONY
Yeah. I keep my grades where
they're at and you know, have a
good year...maybe...

*

MUELLER
That's good. You know what the best
part about thinking that way is?

Tony shakes his head 'no.'

MUELLER

You don't get what you want, you'll know you did everything you could to try. But if you do get what you want, you'll deserve it.

*

Tony nods.

MUELLER

Take a shower, huh. I can smell you from here.

*

Tony laughs and Coach leaves. He sits for a moment in contemplation before picking the weights back up.

INT. SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY

Tony is beaming as he and Miss Feldman fill out a stack of COLLEGE APPLICATIONS for **Arizona State, Miami, Texas** and **USC**.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Diablo leads Bobby through a smoke-filled dive bar packed with seedy PATRONS. They reach a small back room where Diablo's older brother JAY sits at a table with several other MEN. JAY is slightly older, larger and more menacing than his brother.

DIABRO

This is him.

*

JAY

Sup. Just like to meet all my employees. My brutha tells me you done good by him. So. You think we give you a little more product, you make us a little more paper?

BOBBY

Most definitely.

*

Jay eyes him closely and finally nods. He reaches into a duffle bag and pulls out a large ZIPLOCK BAG filled with CRACK VIALS. He places it on the table and then reaches back into the bag to retrieve a GUN. He places the gun beside the bag and looks at Bobby.

*

JAY

This is for you...in case anybody cross yo ass. This is trust right here Bobby. This is trust. Don't fuck with it.

Bobby nods, a hint of fear in his eyes as he picks up the gun and the bag.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

INSERT: Playoffs - April 23rd 2012

*

Tony's eyes widen as he walks towards the baseball field. A smile spreads across his face and he breaks into a jog. Eventually, he reaches a full sprint as he runs out to join his team for the first day of practice.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Coach Hansen runs the team through a series of hitting and fielding drills. He watches Tony and Grant complete a series of flawless double plays. Though his affect is slight, he is impressed.

At the plate, Tony shows increased bat speed and power. He makes consistent contact but now displays line drive power to all fields. Though not a home-run hitter, he is a legitimate extra-base-hit threat.

At the end of practice, Hansen walks out to the pitcher's mound and BLOWS HIS WHISTLE. The team gathers around him.

HANSEN

Good. That's a good start to the season and that's exactly the kind of effort I'm gonna expect from you every day. You know when I wake up in the morning, I like to set goals...short term and long. So today when I woke up, I said to myself, I want to have the first of many good practices with the team that's gonna win the 2012 New York State Championship. And I think we just did that. That was my goal. And that will continue to be my goal. I want you all to think about what your goals are...and what you are going to do to achieve them.

*

*

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony steps up to bat and knocks the dirt of his cleats with his bat. He stares down the pitcher and swings at the first pitch, driving the ball towards the left field wall.

Tony sprints around the bases as the LEFT FIELDER leaps at the wall. The ball barely clears the fence, just inches beyond the fielder's reach. Tony continues sprinting and it finally registers that he has just hit his first homerun.

He smiles but does not slow down as he rounds the bases. Grant is first to greet him at the dugout as the team congratulates him. Tony sits and Grant sits beside him.

GRANT

Ain't that a feelin' right there?

*

Tony nods; beaming and breathing heavily.

*

GRANT

Didn't get out by much though did it. Gonna have to hit them weights a little harder.

*

TONY

Shut up.

*

GRANT

Lucky you got that short porch in left field.

Tony shakes his head and smirks as Grant licks his finger and holds it in the air.

GRANT

You hit it downwind too.

Tony pounces on Grant, playfully getting him in a headlock. After a brief tussle, Tony lets him go.

GRANT

Yo, you got plans tomorrow?

TONY

Not really. Why?

GRANT

I'm signin' my Letter of Intent in the gym tomorrow, CBS news gonna be there, few newspapers.

TONY

Your gonna be on TV?

*

GRANT

Yeah. Crazy, huh?

TONY

Yeah.

GRANT

Anyway, my family's gonna be there
and you know, I thought maybe
you...

Shying from the intimacy of the proposition, Grant clams up.

TONY

One home run and look at you...a
full blown man crush. You want to
kiss me, don't you.

*
*
*

GRANT

Don't nobody want to kiss your ugly
face.

*
*

TONY

'Cept you. You're so gay for me
right now.

*

Grant shakes his head and smiles but says nothing.

TONY

What time's it at?

*

INT. SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

Grant stands at a table beside Coach Hansen and COACH MIKE ROONEY of Arizona State. His MOTHER, his sister Kiah and Tony stand on the other side of him.

A NEWS CREW films Grant and several REPORTERS watch as he signs the LETTER OF INTENT. He shakes hands with Coach Rooney and they pose for PHOTOGRAPHERS. Tony, watches, smiling proudly. After posing for photos, Grant hugs his mother and sister and then embraces Tony.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Between two deserted buildings, Diabro counts a WAD OF CASH. Bobby watches, nervously sucking on a cigarette.

DIABRO

What's this shit?

BOBBY

What?

DIABRO

Whattaya mean 'what' muthafucka?
You're a hundred dollars light,
that's what.

BOBBY
Word? You sure?

Diabro looks at him for a moment and without warning, punches him in the face. Bobby falls to the pavement and Diabro crouches down, grabbing him by the collar.

DIABRO
My brother gave you a hundred grams
for you to sell at ten bucks a
vile, you hand me nine hundred
bucks and then you ask me if I'm
sure you're light? Yeah, I'm
pretty sure. And I'm pretty sure
you ain't never gonna be light
again. You sure?

*
*
*
*

BOBBY
Yeah, I'm sure.

DIABRO
Good. Lay off the pipe, it's
messin' with your math skills.

*

Diabro helps Bobby up.

DIABRO
What'd my brutha say about trust?

BOBBY
Don't fuck with it.

Diabro glares at him before walking off.

*

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony enters his apartment carrying his gym bag. He stops when he sees Carmen and Uncle Armando sitting in the kitchen.

TONY
Hey.

ARMANDO
Hey champ. You have a game?

TONY
Yeah. We won.

ARMANDO
How'd you do?

TONY
Two for four, couple RBIs.

ARMANDO

Nice! You got big too. What are
you batting this year...

*

CARMEN

Mando.

Her tone is firm and he switches gears quickly.

ARMANDO

You're mom wanted me to come over
and...just...talk a little bit.

Tony glares at Carmen, who quickly looks away and stands.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

I'll be in the bedroom.

She enters her room and closes the door.

ARMANDO

Sit down Tony. Please.

*

He sits reluctantly.

ARMANDO

I'm not here to try to persuade you
to do anything, I hope you realize
that.

Tony nods.

ARMANDO

I know you never got to meet your
grandparents and...that's too bad.
They were good people, big hearts,
did everything they could for your
mother and I. My mom died from
anemia when I was fifteen, your mom
was twelve. My dad died two years
later from malnutrition. They
basically died because what little
food they could afford to buy, they
gave to us.

Tony shifts nervously in his seat.

ARMANDO

I know it sounds like something out
of a bad movie but it's true. And
just in case you didn't know,
you're mom hates herself for living
in this dump that you call home.

*

*

*

(MORE)

ARMANDO (cont'd)

All she wants is for you to make a better life for yourself. And I got a good life Tony. It ain't a great life but it's a good one. And it's the right life for me and my family.

Tony drinks in Armando's sincerity despite himself.

INT. BATTING CAGE - NIGHT

Tony rips pitch after pitch in the batting cage. The intensity in his eyes is dialed up and laced with rage.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Tony walks the streets of Bed-Sty lost in thought. He watches a GARBAGE TRUCK pull up to the curb. Two GARBAGE MEN hurl a mountain of garbage bags into the back of the truck.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony enters and makes his way into the kitchen. He sees a letter on the table addressed to him from **ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY**. An eternity passes before he musters the courage to open it. As he reads, all the life drains from his face.

INT. SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY

Tony, dressed for practice, knocks on Coach Mueller's door.

MUELLER

Baez. Ain't you gonna be late for practice?

TONY

I could say the same for you.

MUELLER

Aahh, I'm just the coach, no one'll miss me. They might miss you though so why don't we walk and talk.

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony and Coach Mueller walk towards the baseball fields.

MUELLER

So...?

TONY

So...I've been wondering...how do I
get scouts to see me?

MUELLER

Win. And play good when you win.

TONY

Yeah but Grant already signed with
Arizona. Schools ain't even
scoutin' us any more.

*
*
*

MUELLER

That's true. What's goin' on with
your applications?

TONY

Arizona State, no. Texas, no.

MUELLER

So Miami and Florida State are
still 'maybes?'

Tony nods.

MUELLER

Tell you what, you get into one of
those schools and you make it to
State, a scout'll be there.

TONY

How do you know that?

MUELLER

Psychic Friends Network. Have a
good practice.

Mueller turns and heads for the JV field.

TONY

Coach, how do you know...? Coach?

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

MONTAGE of Bed-Sty on a six game winning streak. Throughout
the streak, Tony illustrates increased strength and quickness
in all facets of his game. His arm is stronger on throws to
first base. His speed on the basepaths, though still not
blinding, is no longer a liability.

His hitting has improved substantially and he rips line drives to every portion of the field. But Tony is still first and foremost a hustler that plays with maximum intensity on every play. He consistently legs out infield hits and dives for any ball within a mile of him.

INTERCUT with scene of Bobby smoking crack on the street.

MONTAGE featuring Grant as the preternaturally gifted star of the team. He makes awe-inspiring plays on defense and delivers clutch hits whenever needed. He belts homeruns, he steals bases and he makes everything he does look easy.

Insert: NEWSPAPER HEADLINES/INTERNET PAGES that follow Bed-Sty through the end of the regular season. The PHOTOS usually feature Grant, citing him as the top prospect in the nation. *

INTERCUT with scene of Bobby dealing crack to an anxious, strung out CRACKHEAD.

MONTAGE of Bed-Sty winning their Division. They then win the first round of Divisional playoffs and also the second.

Insert: NEWSPAPER HEADLINES/INTERNET PAGES that chronicle the Bed-Sty run through the post season. *

INTERCUT with scene of Bobby getting into an altercation with the crackhead. He knocks the man out and beats him unconscious with his gun.

INTERCUT with scene of Bed-Sty celebrating their latest victory. Tony and Grant are joy personified.

INTERCUT with scene of Bobby running from two POLICE OFFICERS, who eventually TACKLE HIM and HANDCUFF HIM.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tony and Grant enter wearing sweat-soaked gym clothes. Grant studies Tony's television while Tony grabs a Gatorade out of the fridge. *

GRANT

Look at this television. You got like the Zenith prototype, no DVD, no computer...this apartment is like some kind of a Mexican ghetto time capsule. *

TONY

Shut up man. I'm the one that has to live... *

Tony freezes in terror when he spots a LETTER addressed to him on the kitchen table from **Miami University**. Grant notices.

*
*

GRANT

What?

TONY

It's...it's from Miami.

Grant snatches the letter before Tony can even move. He watches, petrified, as Grant opens it and reads it.

GRANT

Ain't that a bitch.

Tony studies Grant but his face reveals nothing.

GRANT

Florida's a long ways from Arizona.
I ain't never gonna see you.

*

Tony flashes him a look before Grant finally smiles.

GRANT

Yeah, you got in!

*

Tony grabs the letter and reads it. His face lights up and he embraces Tony for a few moments too long.

GRANT

You ain't never lettin' go are you?

Tony shakes his head 'no.'

GRANT

You're gonna cry on my shoulder
ain't ya?

Tony nods his head 'yes.'

GRANT

Alright, just don't snot on my
shirt, okay.

Tony nods 'yes' again and Grant laughs.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

*

Tony pulls out his pull-out bed and lies down. He listens to RAINDROPS pelting the rooftop. Water drips into several pots placed throughout the hallway.

*

*

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -NIGHT

Tony suddenly wakes up when he hears a RAPPING on the window. Though cautious, he PULLS OPEN THE CURTAIN to see Bobby staring at him, soaking wet, glassy-eyed and disoriented. He OPENS THE WINDOW and they speak in whispers.

BOBBY

Sup.

TONY

What the hell are you doin'?

*

BOBBY

Nothin.' Just...you know...wanted to talk and shit. Can you?

TONY

Can I talk?

BOBBY

Yeah, can you?

Tony eyes Bobby, who is stoned and extremely skittish.

TONY

Meet me on the stoop.

EXT. TONY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Tony exits his building to find Bobby sitting on the steps smoking a cigarette. It is no longer raining as Tony glances around at the silent, shadowy streets. He sits beside Bobby and studies him.

TONY

What's goin' on? Something happen?

BOBBY

I fucked up Chico.

A long silence. Bobby is close to falling apart.

TONY

What do you mean?

*

BOBBY

I mean I got pinched, I got scared
and I fucked up, that's what I
mean.

*
*
*

TONY

What happened?

BOBBY

I'd still be in the clink right now
but I rolled over like a bitch and
now I'm finished.

*
*

TONY

Alright, just...calm down. You can
stay here tonight.

*
*

BOBBY

(laughing) Wrong night for a
slumber party homes. You got
Sectionals tomorrow.

TONY

Fuck Sectionals.

BOBBY

Fuck Sectionals? Nah, that ain't
you. Sound like me talkin,' not
you. Yeah, you been doin' work
son, I know. I ain't at the games
but I got ears and eyes all over
Bed-Sty, I know you upped your
game. What you gonna do with all
that game, huh?

*
*
*

TONY

Well, I wanna, I got into Miami
but...I need a scholarship so I'm
hopin'...you know...

Bobby smiles and shakes his head, suppressing his emotions.

BOBBY

That's a news flash right there.
Miami, word? You go Chico. You
gonna go, Grant definitely gonna
go. Botha y'all.

*
*

A long silence as Bobby stands up and starts pacing.

BOBBY

He thinks I hate him, don't he?

TONY

Grant? No, he just thinks...well,
you know how it is...shit changes.

*

BOBBY

Yes it do. Grant Hodge keep
breakin' school records so records
change. I keep gettin' arrested so
my rap sheet change. But I love
him like a brutha Chico. I hate
him 'cuz he's everything I ain't
never gonna be but I still love his
ass, you know.

*

TONY

I know.

BOBBY

I know you know but he don't know.
He don't know. So you tell him.
You tell him for me, alright?

TONY

I will.

BOBBY

Yeah, shit changes. Last year you
were flunkin' out of school, next
year you're goin' to college.

TONY

Maybe.

Bobby gets in Tony's face with an almost psychotic intensity.

BOBBY

No, you goin' to college. You
goin' to college. You gots to get
outta Bed-Sty or it will kill you.
I'm dead already but you got a
chance so you find a way and you
get your ass out.

*

Tony nods and a silence follows.

BOBBY

You know I'm sellin' rocks now?

TONY

Yeah, somebody...I think I heard
that.

BOBBY

I sold my mom a gram tonight.
 Didn't give her no discount or
 nothin.' We cooked it up one time,
 blast off together. That's the
 first thing we done together since
 we went Trick or Treatin' in third
 grade so...there it is again...shit
 changes.

*

Tony hangs his head; overwhelmed by Bobby's reality.

BOBBY

Good luck at Sectionals tomorrow.
 Take it all the way to State baby.

*

TONY

Bobby...

BOBBY

You remember what I said to
 you...the day I got cut from
 Varsity? I said you my boy and
 that ain't never gonna change. And
 it ain't 'cause we grew up together
 yo. We survived Brooklyn together
 and that means something. That's
 something ain't nobody gonna take,
 ain't nobody gonna break down,
 that's ours.

TONY

Bobby, just stay here tonight...

BOBBY

We were boys together. But now you
 a man...and you gotta be a man on
 your own.

TONY

Just come inside...

*

BOBBY

Nah, you gotta be your own man.
 And something tells me you'll be a
 good one.

He flashes Tony a smile filled with gratitude, love,
 nostalgia, sadness and above all...finality. Then he turns
 and walks away, staggering into the dimly lit slums.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Bobby stumbles down the street and a car pulls to a halt in front of him, its HEADLIGHTS glaring in Bobby's eyes. He stands, unafraid, accepting his fate. Diabro and another MAN get out and approach Bobby, who calmly smokes his cigarette.

DIABRO

I always liked you Bobby.

BOBBY

Yeah, I always kinda liked you.
Funny how this shit always plays
out, isn't it.

*

DIABRO

Five-O picked up my brutha. Said
you served him up like a platter at
Red Lobster.

BOBBY

Yeah. And there's a reason for
that.

DIABRO

What's that?

BOBBY

I want what's comin' to me.

Diabro looks at him for a beat and shakes his head.

BOBBY

You know what they say... 'Bed-Sty
Do or Die.' Shit man, I choose to
d...

GUN SHOT. Bobby's body falls to the ground, a BULLET HOLE in his forehead. Diabro fires four more shots before getting in the car and DRIVING OFF, leaving Bobby's corpse behind.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony is out on the field before anyone else. He is in his game uniform practicing stealing second base. Grant walks out and joins him.

GRANT

What'd you cut ninth period?

TONY

Yeah. Just wanted to get in a few
jumps.

GRANT

You need alot more than a few kid.

Tony doesn't laugh. He just sets, jumps and sprints towards second. His normal intensity is magnified and Grant notices.

GRANT

You alright?

TONY

Bobby came to see me last night.

GRANT

Yeah? What he say?

TONY

He's smokin' crack, he's sellin' crack, he's sellin' crack to his mom and smokin' it with her. He got arrested, he rolled over on someone and he thinks he's dead. And I wouldn't be surprised if he is dead and here I am practicing my jump when...

GRANT

Alright, alright, alright, chill out Chico. Chill.

*
*

Tony finally stops moving around and exhales.

GRANT

What can we do?

TONY

I don't know.

GRANT

We can't do shit. We can't control what he does with his life. But you know what we can control? Today. This game we got here today. You want scouts to come see you play for the State Championship? Well, guess what homeboy, we gotta win this one first.

*

*
*
*

Tony sits down; emotionalized and breathing heavily. Grant sits beside him.

GRANT

You want out of here as bad as I do. And you know what you gotta do to make that happen.

Tony nods and Grant puts his arm around him.

GRANT

Chico, Chico, Chico. In my ten years of playin' with you, I have learned that there are only two facts in this world. One...you will never have my gift for this game. And two...I will never have your passion for this game. 'Cuz you love that diamond don't you?

*
*

*
*
*

Tony looks out at the diamond and nods.

GRANT

Yeah. So today...you own that diamond. You hear me? And then...when we get to State...you own that one too. This game you played all your life...you play it for two more games the way you always played it...all heart, all balls...you do that and you might get what you want.

*
*

*

TONY

And what's that?

GRANT

To get outta Bed-Sty kid. And maybe play this game for four more years...longer if your lucky.

*

Tony stares into the distance in silence.

GRANT

We got fourteen innings to do this. Can you do this?

Tony nods.

GRANT

Can you do this?

TONY

Yeah.

*

GRANT

Good. So let's go do it.

*

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

INSERT: World Series - June 8th 2012

*

Bed-Sty plays Flushing; the winner will advance to the State Championship game. Grant belts a three run home run and Bed-Sty gets out to an early lead. Flushing battles back though and ties the game.

In the seventh inning, Flushing has a RUNNER on third and the BATTER attempts a squeeze bunt. Tony sniffs it out and charges the ball, barehanding it and hurling it to home while falling to the ground. THE UMPIRE CALLS THE RUNNER OUT.

In the bottom of the inning, Coach Hansen stops Tony before he walks up to the plate.

HANSEN

Baez, we need a baserunner here so be patient.

TONY

I'm already on first Coach.

Tony takes off towards the batters box. Coach shrugs.

HANSEN

He's already on first.

Tony crowds the plate. On the first pitch, he steps into it and gets hit.

UMPIRE

Take your base.

Tony jogs to first and flashes Hansen a grin. Grant steps into the batters box and on the first pitch, rips a double to the right field gap. The ball does not reach the wall and the RIGHT FIELDER throws to home before Tony can score.

Tony rounds third as if he's going to break for home but he stops. The catcher looks Tony back and he pretends to walk towards third.

Failing to call 'time out,' the catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher who turns towards the mound. The pitcher does not notice Tony break towards home and by the time he throws to the plate, Tony slides safely under the tag.

UMPIRE

Safe!

Tony leaps to his feet and HIS TEAM SWARMS HIM.

EXT. TONY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Tony, carrying his backpack and baseball mitt, jogs up to the apartment building. He pauses briefly when he sees a POLICE CAR and another CAR parked in front of his building.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Tony enters his apartment to find two POLICE OFFICERS and a plain clothes DETECTIVE in his living room with Carmen.

DETECTIVE

Hello Tony.

TONY

What's goin' on?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)

These police officers want to talk to you...about Bobby.

TONY

What about him?

DETECTIVE

When's the last time you saw him?

TONY

Last night, why? Something happen?

DETECTIVE

Tony, it's very important that you help us try and figure out...

Suddenly enraged, Tony shoves the Detective and the other Officers restrain him.

TONY

What happened to him? What happened? Tell me!

*

The Cops throw him to the ground and restrain him.

TONY

Tell me!

DETECTIVE

We're afraid he's dead Tony.

TONY

No!

DETECTIVE

He was shot on Fulton Street last night.

TONY

Nooo!

DETECTIVE

We need to know who did this Tony so if you can you help us in any...

TONY

Nnnnnnoooooooooooooooooo!!!!

He struggles but the Officers restrain him. FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Tony walks down the hallway, lost in a daze. He wades through the swarms of students, drained of emotion.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony sits in class, gazing into space as the teacher lectures. There is a KNOCK ON THE DOOR and the teacher opens it to reveal Miss Feldman standing there. They converse briefly.

TEACHER

Tony. Would you step in the hallway for a moment please.

Tony makes his way out into the hallway and sees Miss Feldman and then Coach Mueller.

TONY

Hey.

MUELLER

How ya doin' Baez?

TONY

Fine.

There is an awkward silence and Miss Feldman breaks it.

FELDMAN

Well, I'll leave you two to talk.

MUELLER

Thank you Laura.

*

She grins before walking off.

MUELLER

I heard about Bobby and I don't
know, I just wanted to check in.

*

Tony nods but says nothing.

MUELLER

You okay?

Tony nods again.

MUELLER

I hear tonight's the wake. Are you
going?

*

Tony shrugs. Mueller eyes him closely.

MUELLER

Well, for what it's worth, I think
it's important for you to say
goodbye to your friend. You might
regret it if you don't.

*

*

Tony takes it in but says nothing. Mueller puts his hand on
his shoulder for a moment and then takes off down the hall

*

*

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

*

Grant, Flacca and other MOURNERS sit interspersed throughout
a small funeral parlor. Bobby's casket sits at the front of
the room. It is closed, with a smiling PICTURE of a fifteen-
year-old Bobby on top of it.

Coach Mueller looks up to see Tony enter the parlor. He nods
at Mueller as he passes him and walks up to KEISHA, Bobby's
mother. She is a mess; somewhere between grief and the
zenith of a crack high. Tony hugs her and she is barely able
to acknowledge him. Tony makes his way up the casket and
kneels. Grant walks up and kneels beside him.

GRANT

Why's it closed?

TONY

They shot him five times...twice in
the face.

A long silence as they both look at the picture of Bobby.
Tony struggles to hold himself together.

TONY

I didn't tell you everything he said to me the night I saw him. He said...he said he didn't hate you. He said he loved you like a brutha and he wanted me to make sure you knew that. Do you?

*
*

GRANT

Yeah. Yeah, I know.

EXT. FUNERAL PARLOR - NIGHT

Tony exits the funeral parlor. Flacca walks out a few beats later and chases after him.

FLACCA

Hey! You gonna wait for me? Hey!

She catches up to him and spins him around.

TONY

He's gone. He's gone and I asked him to stay with me. I asked him but I should've made him. I should've...

*
*
*
*

FLACCA

Stop it. Stop. It ain't even close to your fault.

TONY

I should've made him...I should've...

*

He cannot continue and breaks down sobbing. Flacca embraces him and caresses his head softly. She pulls him in closely and their faces are inches from each other.

FLACCA

Ssshhh. It's okay. It's okay.

They are in very close, vulnerable proximity to each other and after a lengthy gaze, they finally kiss.

INT. FLACCA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tony lies on top of Flacca, nervously removing her shirt and pants. They are both breathing heavily as they unclothe.

TONY

Where's your dad?

FLACCA

Out with his AA coach...whattaya
call him?

TONY

Sponsor. What time's he comin'
home...

She places him inside her before he can finish the sentence and he MOANS. The sex is awkward but gentle and with a deep affection between them. They pant, they thrust clumsily and they MOAN. In ten seconds it is all over.

Tony lies on top of her, bleary-eyed and out of breath. They gaze at each other, the emotions of the night weighing heavily on both of them.

FLACCA

You okay?

He nods, kisses her and looks at her; lost in thought.

TONY

So...what happens tomorrow?

FLACCA

What happens tomorrow? Well, if
you don't know, then you're screwed
'cuz I can't help you.

*
*

Tony looks at her; confused. She shakes her head.

FLACCA

Tomorrow you play your ass off and
you win State. And then you go to
college and leave this hole in the
earth in your rearview.

*
*
*

TONY

And leave you in the rearview.

A long silence. Neither are happy about this element.

FLACCA

Yeah, well...shit changes.

Tony rolls off of her and stares at the ceiling.

TONY

Yeah.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tony sits at the kitchen table gazing at the old picture of him and his father standing outside Yankee Stadium. The DOOR * OPENS and Carmen enters, begrudgingly noticing the picture.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Why you always looking at that?

TONY
I don't know.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Does it make you happy or something?

TONY
No.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
So...?

Tony huffs and stands. He grabs a sponge out of the sink and starts wiping down the counter top.

TONY
What do you want me to say? It's half my life that's just not there any more and...I don't always know how to make sense of it.

Carmen looks at him and a flash of sympathy washes over her.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
So...what...you want to understand your father?

TONY
I don't know. Maybe.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Understand what?

TONY
Who he was. Why he left. That... for starters.

After a moment of intense contemplation, Carmen walks into the bedroom. We hear her RUMMAGING around and she re-enters with a BOX. She places it on the table and opens it.

TONY
What's this?

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
This is your father.

Tony reaches into the box and sifts through a pile of PHOTOS and NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS all featuring CUCO BAEZ and his statistics as a minor league baseball player. He also finds an old tattered JERSEY and picks it up.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
The Staten Island Yankees. He was
a hell of a Center fielder.
Career three hundred hitter...good
for Single A but never had enough
power for the Majors...least that's
what they always told him. He made
it to Tripple-A once but only for a
week...didn't even get into a game.

*

*
*
*

TONY
He never liked to talk about it.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
He was embarrassed...ashamed that
he never went all the way.

She places her hand on top of Tony's.

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
Don't you see? He failed Tony. He
fought for ten years...he had your
heart, your thick skin and your
thick skull and he tried...but he
failed. He hated himself for it
and he took it out on us. He
wanted an impossible life, he
didn't get it and when he got us
instead, it wasn't enough so he
left. That's why I never come to
your games. You're chasing the
same impossible dream that he never
caught and you wonder why I can't
support you? You're love for that
stupid game is the only part of him
that still lives in this house.
And I want it to die Tony.

*

*
*
*

A silence follows. Tony kneels before her and addresses her calmly; his tone comforting and bordering on paternal.

TONY (SUBTITLE)
Well, it ain't gonna die. I won't
let it.

(MORE)

TONY (SUBTITLE) (cont'd)
 It's gonna survive and so are we
 and we're gonna do what we always
 do. What do we always do momma?

*

*

CARMEN (SUBTITLE)
 We get by.

TONY (SUBTITLE)
 We get by. And that's what we're
 gonna do...for now. But somehow,
 I'm gonna go to college and after
 that, whether it's baseball or
 something else...we're gonna do
 more than just 'get by'. I'm gonna
 get you a better life momma. Maybe
 not the one you always wanted...but
 a better one. You believe me?

She wants to respond but can't.

*

TONY (SUBTITLE)
 Well, that's okay. Because I
 believe it. I believe it. Your
 dinner's in the fridge.

She nods vacantly as he stands and walks out.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Grant walks his sister Kiah down a shoddy street.

KIAH
 So where are you playing today?

GRANT
 Today, we are playing in Yankee
 Stadium!

*

*

KIAH
 Wow! Are you playing the Yankees?

*

GRANT
 No, we're playing Lincoln High
 School. If we played the Yankees,
 we'd get our butts whooped.

*

*

KIAH
 And I'm coming to watch you?

GRANT
 You sure are. Momma's gonna get
 you from school and you gonna watch
 your brother win State.

*

KIAH

And what happens if you don't win?

He stops and bends down to look at her.

GRANT

It don't matter. 'Cause I already
told you we was gonna fly, right?
Flyin' all the way to Arizona.

*

KIAH

And you're gonna take me with you?

He looks at her and smiles. He is about to respond when GUN SHOTS ring out. A car SCREECHES AROUND THE CORNER SPRAYING BULLETS towards Grant and Kiah.

Grant hits the deck, covering Kiah with his body. There is chaos; SCREECHING TIRES, GUN SHOTS, SCREAMING. After the car pulls away, there is quiet. Grant inspects Kiah's body for injuries. She is shaking and sobbing hysterically but unharmed.

TWO YOUNG MEN lie on the asphalt, peppered with bullet wounds. One is motionless, the other COUGHS and HEMORRHAGES as he takes his last breath. Grant holds Kiah, rocking her in his arms.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Grant makes his way down the hallway, slaloming through the sea of STUDENTS. He is unhinged and on the verge of collapse. Tony spots him.

TONY

Hey.

*

GRANT

She cool, she cool.

TONY

What are you...who's cool?

GRANT

She cool, the bullets never touched
her.

Tony grabs him and Grant resists.

TONY

What are you talkin' about? Look
at me. What's goin' on?

*

*

Grant comes unglued, flailing and hyperventilating. He is out of control for the first time in the film.

GRANT

They never touched her. They both
dead but they never touched her. I
was her shield. I was her shield
Chico. I wouldn't let 'em touch
her! I wouldn't let 'em touch her!

*

The other STUDENTS notice Grant's unraveling and Tony, cognizant of this, ushers him into the bathroom.

INT. SCHOOL - BATHROOM - DAY

Tony shoves Grant into the men's room where two STUDENTS are loitering.

TONY

Get out.

STUDENT 1

What?

TONY

GET OUT!

*

Tony rushes towards them and they scurry out. Grant sinks to the ground, breathing heavily. Tony crouches before him.

TONY

What happened?

GRANT

They got shot.

TONY

Who? Who got shot?

GRANT

Two guys.

TONY

You were there?

GRANT

Me and Kiah.

TONY

And she's cool?

GRANT

She's cool.

TONY
And you're cool?

GRANT
I'm cool.

TONY
That's good. That's good. Where's
she now?

GRANT
Mom mom got her at home. She's
cool now.

TONY
Good. That's real good baby.
You're okay. Kiah's okay.
Everything's okay.

Grant nods, trying to guide himself back to stability.

TONY
Look at me. Look at me.

Grant looks at him and struggles to focus. He finally does.

TONY
You guys are okay...and you're
gonna get your sister outta here.

GRANT
I am.

TONY
That's right, you are. No matter
what you do tonight, you're gettin'
her out of here. So tonight don't
matter. Your family matters. And
you're gonna get 'em out.

GRANT
I'm gettin' em out.

TONY
You're gettin' 'em out bro. You're
gettin' 'em out.

*
*

Grant nods and Tony puts his hand on his shoulder.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A large SCHOOL BUS travels down the B.Q.E.

INT. BUS - DAY

Tony, Grant and the rest of the team sit on the bus, entrenched in an intense quiet; the tension building as Yankee Stadium approaches in the distance. Tony's eyes widen. *

GRANT (O.S.)
So I was thinkin.'

Tony turns to see Grant, who is in the seat behind him.

GRANT
That shit you said to me in the bathroom...it helped calm my ass down and I appreciate it. But I was thinkin' that...that I kinda wanna win tonight. And I know you wanna win. So you know, that stuff you said about tonight not mattering... *

TONY
Total bullshit.

Grant manages a chuckle.

GRANT
It better be. 'Cause we're gonna take this shit. You and me Chico. *

TONY
You and me. *

They bang fists and Grant sits back in his seat.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carmen sits at the kitchen table sifting through Cuco's box of baseball memorabilia. She stares at the PHOTO of Cuco and Tony in front of Yankee Stadium. She then looks up and glances around at the spotless apartment. She smiles, her face taugth with reflection. *

She TEARS THE PHOTO IN HALF and slips the half with Tony on it into her pocket. She stands with conviction, throws the other half of the photo in the garbage and exits the apartment.

INT. CAR - DAY

Coach Mueller and a MAN in the passenger seat drive down the street leading up to Yankee Stadium. *

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Uncle Armando and a FRIEND ride the 6 Train. They watch the STADIUM approach through the subway windows. *

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - DAY *

Kiah and Grant's mother JENELLE walk into the stadium amidst the swarms of PEOPLE. Their affect is glum; hindered by the morning's trauma.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM - EVENING *

Tony walks down a dark hallway that eventually leads to the dugout. He walks to the top of the steps and takes it all in; the lights, the grass, the pristine dirt, the gleaming white bases. Grant walks up from behind him. *

TONY *

You know what I think about some times? What I would do if I could never play this game again. *

GRANT *

You ever come up with an answer? *

TONY *

Nope. Never even wanted to try. *

Grant looks at him with admiration. *

GRANT *

So don't. Just leave everything you got on that field tonight. And then maybe come this time next year, you'll be playin' this game in college somewhere. And...maybe you keep workin' like you do...and you keep dreamin'...you can play this game for the rest of your life. *

TONY *

Sounds like a good life.

GRANT

Yeah.

They share an intense silence filled with hope. *

GRANT

So let's go grab it.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT *

The Lincoln pitcher delivers and Tony rips a base hit to left field. He claps his hands as he rounds first base. The Bed-Sty portion of the stands erupts. Among them, Mueller stands and cheers. The Man next to him nods in approval.

As Taylor, the team's catcher, steps to the plate, Tony takes a long lead off first. When the pitcher deals, Tony takes off and steals second base. Mueller cheers again and speaks the Man next to him.

MUELLER

He's not that fast but he's got a good feel for the base paths... knows his limits and plays within himself better than any player I've ever had.

MAN

You're a helluva salesman Paul.

MUELLER

Yeah, well, I believe in my product.

Grant steps to the plate and on the third pitch, drills a ball into left field. The LEFT FIELDER fields the ball and fires it towards the infield as Tony reaches third.

The relay throw beats him to home but Tony barrels into the CATCHER. They both tumble to the ground and in the process, the ball drops loose.

UMPIRE

Safe!

Tony leaps to his feet and is limping slightly as he heads back to the dugout where his TEAMMATES mob him. The Man with Coach Mueller nods in approval again.

MAN

He's got heart, I'll give him that.

MUELLER

And a work ethic like you've never
seen. A coach's wet dream.

The Man looks at him with a raised eyebrow.

MUELLER

A little too far there?

MAN

Just a bit.

They share a brief laugh.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT

*

The scoreboard reads: **Bed-Sty 2 Lincoln 2 4th Inning**

A Lincoln PLAYER is on first base when the HITTER slaps a grounder up the middle. Tony DIVES and snags it. From the ground, he shovels the ball with his glove hand to Grant at second, who leaps over the sliding player and throws to first for the double play. The crowd ERUPTS.

CUT TO:

Grant steps up to the plate and on the first pitch, he hits a solo home run to center field. Tony sprints out of the dugout and is the first to greet Grant when he completes his victory lap around the bases.

CUT TO:

In the top of the **7th Inning**, Lincoln puts a rally together. A hit is followed by another and then another. With two men on, a Lincoln PLAYER rips a double into the right field gap and both runners score. The Player is thrown out at third for the third out but Lincoln has taken a two run lead.

CUT TO:

In the bottom of the seventh inning, the first two Bed-Sty players make outs on consecutive ground balls. Tony, standing in the on-deck circle, knocks the doughnut off his bat before striding towards the batters box.

In the stands, Mueller fidgets nervously. We see Flacca for the first time. She covers her mouth and her FATHER, who is standing beside her, puts his hand on her shoulder.

Tony fights through a lengthy at bat. The count goes full and taking defensive swings, Tony fouls off four consecutive pitches. On the tenth pitch of the at bat, Tony drills an opposite field line drive over the first baseman's head.

He rounds first at full speed and barely beats the throw to second, sliding in safely for a double. The crowd CHEERS, bursting with newfound life.

The next hitter, the catcher Taylor, hits a dribbler towards third and the THIRD BASEMAN watches it trickling down the line, straddling the chalk. It rolls to a stop directly on top of the line. Fair ball. Tony is now on third with Taylor safely on first.

Grant steps up to the plate, his eyes burning with intensity and focus. His Mother and Kiah watch from the stands. Kiah cheers with aplomb but his mother is petrified.

Grant steps to the plate and after taking the first pitch, swings at the second and rips a long fly ball towards the left field wall. It is back...back...back...but not gone. It hits the top of the wall, ricocheting back onto the field.

With two outs, both runners were off at the crack of the bat and Tony scores easily. Taylor rounds third as the CUT-OFF MAN makes the relay throw to home.

Taylor slides into home plate as the CATCHER makes the tag. It is a close play and there is a moment that seems to go on forever before the umpire throws a right jab at the air.

UMPIRE

He's out!

Tony crumbles to his knees and as half the stadium erupts, the other half dies. We see a tear streak down Flacca's cheek. Her father embraces her. Uncle Armando's face is awash with disappointment.

Grant's mother and sister watch helplessly as Grant, now between second and third base, sits down in the dirt; shocked and incapacitated as the Lincoln players celebrate around him.

Mueller and the Man silently watch the celebration. Coach Hansen offers reassuring pats on the back to his heartbroken PLAYERS in the dugout.

Tony eventually musters the strength to stand and he walks out onto the field to where Grant is sitting. He crouches down and he grabs Grant's face, looking him in the eyes. They share a few words as the chaos swirls around them.

FANS from the stands mob the field and join the Lincoln players in celebrating. Tony and Grant watch for a moment before standing and making their way off the field.

Tony stops when through the mob of frenzied fans, he sees a short FIGURE slowly approaching him. The figure grows closer and he is stunned when he finally sees his mother. Carmen embraces him and Grant walks off, giving them some semblance of privacy amidst the flocks of people.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT

*

Mueller and the Man sit as the devastated fans file out.

MUELLER

So? Think this is the type of kid you might want on your team?

MAN

That's not the issue.

MUELLER

What is the issue?

MAN

We get two full rides for baseball each year, that's it. And there's alot of pressure to win. So they expect us to give those scholarships to exceptional players.

MUELLER

Look, I know you got a Major League program there...but it's still a college ain't it? So maybe you should give one of those rides you got to a really good player...who happens to be an exceptional kid.

The Man looks out onto the field but says nothing.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

*

Tony finishes getting dressed. The locker room is dead quiet; a cloud of defeat hanging over it. Coach Hansen enters and after spotting Tony, walks over to him.

HANSEN

Baez. Coach Mueller's outside, wants a word with you.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

*

Tony walks out into the hallway and finds Mueller standing with the other Man. Tony hangs his head and walks over.

MUELLER

What are you hangin' your head for?

TONY

We lost.

MUELLER

Someone's always gotta lose. You left it all on the field though, didn't you?

TONY

Always do.

MUELLER

And that's all you can do. Tony, this is Pete Kendall, Coach of the Hurricanes.

Tony looks up with surprise.

TONY

Miami Hurricanes?

KENDALL

Hell of an effort out there today Tony.

TONY

Thank you. I, um, got into your school but...

KENDALL

I know you did, that's why Coach had me come see you play tonight.

Tony looks at Mueller, who flashes him a grin.

KENDALL

Tony, I'd love to have you on my squad next year but when it comes to scholarships, there's alot of politics involved. Alot of factors come into play and ultimately, it's not my call.

Tony nods, somewhat shell-shocked but taking in it.

KENDALL

To be honest with you, you
shouldn't get your hopes up.
But...for what it's worth, I'm in
your corner.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Tony gazes out the window at the baseball field. He looks at it longingly but is interrupted by a BELL RINGING. The class erupts in CHEERS as they pour out of the classroom.

TEACHER

Congratulations, you made it! Good
bye, good luck and good riddens.

A subtle smile consumes Tony's face as he gets up. Before leaving, the teacher stops him. *

TEACHER

Tony...congratulations on Miami.
That's great.

TONY

Thanks. I don't think I'll be able
to go though...can't really afford
it. *

The Teacher nods sympathetically.

TEACHER

Well, whatever happens, the way you
pulled your grades up, how hard you
worked, it's something to be proud
of.

Tony nods and forces a grin before walking off. *

EXT. SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Tony stands on the baseball field, looking out at it for one last time; the gamut of emotions passing through him.

MUELLER (O.S.)

Why am I not surprised to find you
out here?

Tony turns to see Mueller standing there.

TONY

How'd you know I was...

MUELLER

My office has a very nice view of
these diamonds. Shouldn't you be
at a party or something?

*

*

TONY

Nah, I just wanted to, I don't
know...

*

MUELLER

Say goodbye?

TONY

Pretty much.

*

MUELLER

You say that like you're never
gonna play this game again.

Tony looks down, afraid to answer.

MUELLER

No word from Coach Kendall?

Tony shakes his head 'no.'

MUELLER

You left it all on the field
though, didn't you.

Tony shakes his head and takes a few steps.

MUELLER

What? What?

TONY

What's it matter if it ain't
enough?

*

MUELLER

Ain't enough to what?

TONY

To get what I want. To get what I
busted my ass for. To get what I
feel like I really deserve.

*

Mueller looks at him but has no response.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tony walks down Fulton Street and pauses in the center of it. He gazes around at the pawn shops, bodegas and neighborhood crackheads that mill about.

Eventually, he looks down at the pavement where he stands. This is where Bobby got shot. He looks for a moment and then continues walking.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tony enters with two bags of groceries. He dumps his bookbag on the floor.

TONY

Momma.

There is no answer. He heads into the kitchen, sets the groceries on the table and sits down. He stares at a DRAWER on the kitchen cabinet for a long while; his face tense and conflicted.

He stands and crosses to the cabinet. He opens the drawer, fishes out an ENVELOPE and sits back down with it. He opens it and pulls out the contents. One of the forms reads:

N.Y. Department of Sanitation Application Form

Tony looks at it for a while before grabbing a pen. Cloaked in disappointment, he stares down at the paper. He inhales deeply and puts the pen on the paper when suddenly, the PHONE RINGS. He drops the pen and gets up to answer it.

TONY

Hello? Coach Kendall, hi. I'm,
I'm good...last day of school today
so...(pause) Thanks. So, what's
up? (Pause) What?

Tony clutches the phone against his ear, trying desperately to hear what he is saying. Emotions well up.

TONY

Say that again. (Pause) You did?
(Pause) And they have?

Tears of joy stream down his face.

TONY

Thank you. I'm so...thank you.
(Pause) Yeah, I'm a little...I'm
too happy to even...(Pause) Yeah,
we'd better talk tomorrow when...

(MORE)

*

TONY (cont'd)
when I can actually talk. (Pause)
Thank you. Thank you so much.
Okay.

Tony hangs up the phone and slumps to the ground. He sobs quietly as we pull out to the living room. We hear Tony CRYING and we see the endtable that now has FOUR PICTURE FRAMES on it.

There are the two PHOTOS of Tony and Carmen and there is also a PHOTO of Tony, Bobby and Grant with baseball gear at the age of thirteen. The fourth PHOTO is the half of the one of Tony and his father outside Yankee Stadium. Tony is wearing a huge smile.

*
*