1. Our business is change.

2. We're on offense. All the time.

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

4. This is as much about battle as about business.

5. Assume nothing.
   Make sure people keep their promises.
   Push yourselves push others.
   Stretch the possible.

6. Live off the land.

7. Your job isn't done until the job is done.

8. Dangers
   Bureaucracy
   Personal ambition
   Energy takers vs. energy givers
   Knowing our weaknesses
   Don't get too many things on the platter

9. It won't be pretty.

10. If we do the right things we'll make money damn near automatic.
CREDITS - 1984 MONTAGE, ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE OVER MUSIC

“Dirty Water” by Don Henley. Images of Politics, culture, sports, setting us in the period.

END IN:

1

INSERT - TV COMMERCIAL

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

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

ISIAH THOMAS.

ISIAH THOMAS
That may be so, but that’s not all... they let Isiah play like he’s ten feet tall!

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

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

“Converse - the official shoe of the NBA!”

BLACK

2

EXT. NIKE HQ, NIKE 1 - DAY

“Nobody Told Me” John Lennon.

BEAVERTON, OREGON

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

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

Now... imagine the exact opposite of that.

TITLE CARD READS: 1984, NIKE WORLDWIDE HEADQUARTERS
Two buildings. Nike 1 and Nike 2. They look more like IRS offices in Iowa than the headquarters of a sneaker company.

**INT. NIKE HQ, BASKETBALL DIVISION, HALLWAY - DAY**

Two men walk the unimpressive mess of cubicles and offices that make up the small division at Nike devoted to basketball.

JOHN PAUL VINCENT VACCARO. We’ll call him what everyone else does: **SONNY.** 45. A determinism in his eyes, the bags under which tell us how much sleep he gets (none). Sonny is talking to HOWARD WHITE (30s-40s) AFRICAN AMERICAN, EX-ATHLETE.

**SONNY**
When you signed Moses, what got him there?

**WHITE**
Aight, when we signed Moses. Mary Malone, she thought a lot of me, and the big fella, that’s who I called Moe, he loved his Mama. Now if the Mama thinks the world of you, then they won’t be too far behind. You see, I go through the mamas because the mamas run everything. And sometimes, I gotta call the mama to keep them in line. See cause I’m a Mama’s boy, and I know Mama’s run everything. I told them we would do a rebound campaign with him.

**SONNY**
So how did you know they would go for that?

**WHITE**
I didn’t, but nobody was telling Moses that. We did the first basketball TV commercial for Nike. If you listen, you’ll hear my voice at the end of the commercial.

(imitation)
Good work. Good work.
SONNY
You were a player. You tell me why a kid would want a German soccer shoe to play basketball in?

WHITE
Because they wanna look good when they play basketball. All the break dancers and rappers are wearing them all over the country. They’re cool man. I got two Adidas tracksuits myself, I’m not wearing them here though. Nike ain’t hip like that. Them Germans are killing it. You seen that new Mercedes 380 SL? Don’t nobody know what Nike means. Did you know, Run-DMC is doing a song for Adidas.

SONNY
Who?

WHITE
Run-DMC. They’re doing a whole Adidas song for free. On their next album.

SONNY
No, I mean who’s doing the song?

WHITE
That tells me something right there.

SONNY
Hold on. I haven’t heard you play anything but Motown since I met you.

WHITE
But I know who Run-DMC is.
SONNY
We’re talking about business. I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t believe it was a good company.

WHITE
You believing is one thing. You got to get other people to believe.

SONNY
What’s wrong with Nike?

WHITE
Nike is a jogging company. Black people don’t jog. Jogging is something you can do if you can waste energy.

SONNY
You really think that’s true?
WHITE
Sonny, we’re old friends. But I ain’t from Pittsburgh, where I’m from when you get to the white part of town, there was a sign for black people that said, “if you’re here when the sun goes down, you won’t be when it comes up.”

This lands on Sonny.

WHITE (CONT’D)
And I went to high school in the white part of town. I couldn’t make the basketball team at the black school. At the white school I was All-American. But when my mama said to make sure your home by dark, it wasn’t about losing my TV time. You need to be real. No black people. Messing around, running 26 miles for no reason. How many brothers do you see running a marathon?

SONNY
There are the Kenyans.

WHITE
You want to sell shoes in Kenya or Newark? Cause these kids are talking about Isaiah and Magic, not worrying about Bruce Jenner throwing a frisbee with some shorts hugging up on his nuts.

SONNY
We got Moses.

WHITE
I know that. I was up at 3 in the morning trying to get Moses out of the club, because he had early practice. I keep telling Moses that you can’t hoot with the owls at night and fly with the eagles in the morning.

Sonny checks his watch. Gets up.

SONNY
I couldn’t do what you do.
WHITE
I know, you can hardly do what you’re supposed to do. Since Moses, we ain’t had one player besides Sid the Squid. And we’re doing nothing with him. These guys need the company to sell them. Not the shoes.

SONNY
I like the new slogan they’re talking about for the whole company.

WHITE
I don’t know?

SONNY
Why?
WHITE
You know where that came from? They asked a convict on death row if he had any last words. And that’s what he said before they fried him.

SONNY
“Just do it?”

WHITE
Yup?

SONNY
That’s where that comes from?

WHITE
Yup.

SONNY
Bullshit.

WHITE
Dan Wieden told me.

SONNY
It’s actually a good metaphor for the way basketball is viewed at this company.

WHITE
“Nike. Let’s get it over with.”

SONNY
What does it say about me that I like it?
WHITE
It says you’re the target demographic. Middle aged white guy who needs to exercise.

SONNY
You have a point.

WHITE
Well, as long as you’re signing mediocre players, maybe you get me a Mormon so I can get some sleep.

White starts to peel off.

WHITE (CONT’D)
Maybe Danny Ainge got a little brother.

INT. NIKE HQ – BUNKER CONFERENCE ROOM – DAY

STRASSER (V.O.)
Orwell was right. 1984’s been a tough year.

ROB STRASSER, VP of Marketing. Not an athlete, Strasser’s a lifer. A native Oregonian. The type of guy who knows that what he’s doing can be bullshit, but does it anyway. He’s giving a presentation to... SONNY, STAN, BILL, and TIM.

STRASSER
Sales down. Growth down. But this company is about showing who you really are, when you’re down for the count. Am I right? When you’re on the canvas...

...the board group that makes up Nike’s Basketball Division. Pencil pushers. Collared shirts. Note pads. Coffee mugs. Yawns.

STRASSER (CONT’D) (CONT’D)
Bang! You get up. Like Balboa. We’re the eye of tiger. We’re not going down to Mr. T.

He turns on a SLIDE PROJECTOR that starts showing images of the picks in the recent NBA draft.

Michael Cage 15, Terrence Stansbury 16. John Stockton 17. Jeff Turner 18, Vern Fleming... and so on.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
Alright. Olajuwon is off the table. #1 pick isn’t coming here. Sam Bowie drafted by our local pro franchise at 2 is converse for sure. Jordan is going to Adidas. Let’s zone in on three players between picks five and twenty.

Nothing from the room.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
Great. So... Let me say...
Lancaster Gordon... Anyone?

BILL
Louisville.

STRASSER
Yes. He went to Louisville. How about Barkley. Round mound of rebound. Fifth pick might be a stretch but...

BILL
Clubhouse issues.

SONNY
What does that mean?

BILL
Too much trash talk. No one wants to see that on tv. (no one wants that in their living room)

Sonny is accustomed to stupidity but sometimes it’s a lot to bear.

STRASSER
Otis Thorpe I think is a possibility. Who else do we like?

Pencils TAP. TAP. TAP.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
Does anyone hear me if I’m down in the valley singing the song of a man they call Terrence T Bone Stansbury?
STAN
I don’t think they call him that.

STRASSER
But they could. If he had on Nikes...

Strasser, half joking but trying to fire up the room.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
Does the name ‘Vern Fleming’ call out to any of you?

BILL
I like Melvin Turpin.

STRASSER
Great. Let’s get him on the board.

Strasser writes TURPIN across the board.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
(off dead air)
Anyone else?

TIM
What about John Stockton?

STRASSER
From Gonzaga?

TIM
Yeah.

Silence.

STRASSER
That’s a vocational school?

STAN
Community college.

SONNY (O.S.)
Why do you like Melvin Turpin?

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

SONNY (CONT’D)
Melvin Turpin. What do you like about him?

BILL
He made the Final Four last year.
SONNY
So did forty other players.

BILL
I mean, he was the fifth pick...

SONNY
Have you watched him?

BILL
Of course, I...

SONNY
So what do you like about his game?

BILL
He’s got a good feel for the court.

SONNY
He only had 33 assists all season.

BILL
Well, I like his play. He has flash. It’s... He has good vision.

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

(wait for it)

In Europe, when he’s out of the league in four years. You like Mel Turpin because he was the sixth pick in the draft. You like him because no one is going to give you shit for saying you like the sixth pick in the draft.

STRASER
Alright, alright. Any other ideas?

Silence.

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

Kool and the Gang, “Joanna.”

INT. NIKE HQ – MEN’S ROOM – DAY

STRASER (O.S.)
Honestly, what the fuck is wrong with you?
Strasser is in the stall. Sonny stands before a urinal.

SONNY
Who are we gonna get?

STRASSER
You’re supposed to be the grassroots high school basketball wizard. You didn’t get hired to lecture people. Do you have an idea or not?

SONNY
I like Barkley some. Fucking clubhouse issues is the dumbest thing I’ve heard in there. Which is saying something.

STRASSER
Barkley, I mentioned him. You didn’t think chiming in to support my idea was relevant to the two hours of sitting in there we did?

SONNY
I didn’t want to discuss it in the meeting, what happens in there is bullshit. I’m telling you now.

STRASSER
That’s because people are scared to speak.

SONNY
Why?

STRASSER
Because you berate them for a half hour no matter what they say.

SONNY
No. I just have no tolerance for people who do no work, have no insight and then act like they have a place at the table. Mel Turpin? We’d be better off signing my mom.

STRASSER
Well, unfortunately your mother isn’t available.

SONNY
It’s not that she’s dead. If she were alive we couldn’t afford her.
A silent beat. The toilet flushes.

STRASSER
We could afford my mom.

SONNY
Clubhouse issues.

Strasser comes out and washes his hands. Sonny joins him.

STRASSER
We have 250k for three players.
This is where you come up with the brilliant idea no one else can see.

SONNY
We need more money.

STRASSER
Not brilliant. That happens when you’re successful. What’s happening now is called failure. If that continues, Nike is out of the basketball business and we’re out of a job.

SONNY
We just need good players.

STRASSER

SONNY
Do you even know where Gonzaga is?

STRASSER
I’m not saying it’s ideal...

SONNY
What about Jordan?

STRASSER
(frustrated)
We can’t get fucking Jordan.
That’s it. I listened to Falk for three hours. He’s too expensive.

They are interrupted at the men’s room door by RICHARD, who screams middle management. Beige green button up with khakis.

RICHARD
Mr. Strasser...
RICHARD (CONT’D)
Richard.

Strasser has no idea who this is.

STRASSER
Right. Richard.

RICHARD
I’d love to get some time on your calendar.

STRASSER
Great, let Doreen know.

RICHARD
Roger that. Will do.

STRASSER
Okay.

Awkward exchange of smiles. Strasser and Sonny emerge into the hallway and cross through a courtyard that passed for “people friendly break space” in 1984--populated now by overweight employees smoking cigarettes.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
You know there was a time I could name everyone who worked here?

SONNY
Things change. Places grow.

STRASSER
I guess so.

They come into a hallway with a small eatery on one side and a stairway on the other. Strasser indicates the mini-cafeteria.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
You want dessert? Sundae bar today.

SONNY
Have a meeting.

Sonny heads toward the stairs.

STRASSER
With who?

SONNY
The shoe dog.
Off Strasser’s raised eyebrows. Shit.

George Clinton, “Atomic Dog”.

**INT. PHIL KNIGHT’S OFFICE – DAY**

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

   PHIL KNIGHT
   Sonny.

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

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

   SONNY
   I’m missing the sundae bar, Phil.

   PHIL KNIGHT
   Why is this guy skateboarding to work? We’re a public company. He doesn’t have a car?

   SONNY
   Probably just a kid.

   PHIL KNIGHT
   He looks fifty years old.

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

   SONNY
   Is that Pete?

   PHIL KNIGHT
   What is Pete doing skateboarding in the parking lot.

   SONNY
   Maybe he’s having a mid-life crisis.

The SKATEBOARDER jumps OVER the back of a car.

The skateboarder narrowly avoids a purple Porsche with a “NIKEMN” vanity plate.
Stare alt

PHIL KNIGHT
I hope his mid life crisis doesn’t scratch my Porsche. It takes seventeen coats of paint to achieve that precise color of purple?
   (beat)
They call it grape.
   (beat)
Looks eggplant to me.
   (back to business)
How was the strategy meeting?

SONNY
Disaster.

PHIL KNIGHT
Wonderful. What’s the plan?

SONNY
Piss away our tiny allocation on three mediocre players.

PHIL KNIGHT
Hey, Sonny. We had an annual loss. I just had to lay off a quarter of the fucking company.

SONNY
I know Phil.

PHIL KNIGHT
Basketball narrowly avoided the chopping block in its entirety and without some improvement, I can’t promise that won’t be the case at the next meeting.

SONNY
We need to increase spending.

PHIL KNIGHT
I brought you in to grow our basketball business. It’s smaller now.

SONNY
Is Strasser’s number right? 250k?

PHIL KNIGHT
Yes.
SONNY
What about five?

PHIL KNIGHT
No. You’re lucky to have 250
because your balance sheet is a
debacle.

SONNY
Half the running shoes sold in this
country are Nikes. 900 million in
revenue and you only want to spend
250k on basketball?

PHIL KNIGHT
The board is telling me about one
million people at most buy
basketball shoes to wear,
exclusively when they play
basketball. In fact, they’re
wondering if any investment is
worth the upside...

SONNY
Well, if a board member said it...
(look)
Basketball is the future.

PHIL KNIGHT
The NBA finals are on tape delay.
It’s literally the past.

SONNY
People watch basketball.

PHIL KNIGHT
We took four golds at the Olympics.

SONNY
Nobody gives a fuck.

PHIL KNIGHT
We dominate the running shoe
market. Thats what people do, they
run.
(beat)
People are asking me what you do
here.

SONNY
You know what I do here.
PHIL KNIGHT
I know you expense a lot of travel
to high school basketball games. I
know almost always there happens to
be a layover in Vegas.

SONNY
I understand the game. I make bets.

PHIL KNIGHT
You’re losing.

SONNY
Just because you lose doesn’t mean
it wasn’t a good bet. This perfect
results bullshit--

PHIL KNIGHT
It’s not bullshit. It’s the guiding
principle that made this a billion
dollar business.

SONNY
But I can’t win if you don’t give
me the bankroll--

PHIL KNIGHT
All of us have to be accountable.
I’m accountable to the board--

SONNY
I told you not to go public. I told
you it would change you and you
would get tight. Happens to every
company...

PHIL KNIGHT
Is that what happens?

SONNY
Every company that only cares about
the P and L statement and the board
being happy.

PHIL KNIGHT
Do you run?

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

PHIL KNIGHT
Do you run?
SONNY
Run or jog?
(an absurd notion)
No Phil. I don’t.

PHIL KNIGHT
The illusion is that the finish
line is the destination. But the
act itself is the destination.

SONNY
I need five hundred thousand
dollars.

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

SECRETARY
Mr. Knight? Your 1pm...

PHIL KNIGHT
Should you find a wise critic to
point out your faults, follow him
as you would a guide to hidden
 treasure.

As Sonny exits...

SONNY
And...there it is.

EXT. NIKE HQ – NIGHT

One light on in the office.

INT. SONNY’S OFFICE – NIGHT

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

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

He’s chewing through tape. Watching STOCKTON. Watching BOWIE.
Watching BARKLEY.

Old standard definition highlights. Sonny replays Stockton
going to the hoop. Forward and backward. Examines his jump
shot. Forward and backward.
Yawns. Leans back in his chair. Looks up at his wall, where Nike’s MISSION STATEMENT is neatly framed. Ten rules. The commandments.

#1. Our business is change.


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

EXT. BEAVERTON STREETS, DRIVING, SONNY’S POV - NIGHT

Sonny in the car, watching the streets go by.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Sonny approaches the counter.

He sees a magazine rack. On the cover of SI is - LARRY BIRD.  

The kid behind the counter is reading STREET AND SMITH MAGAZINE from 1984. Magic is on the cover.

     CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK
     Welcome to 7-Eleven. Can I help you?

     SONNY
     (re: magazine)
     You like basketball?

     CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK
     You want to buy it?

     SONNY
     No I read that one already.

Sonny puts down his cereal and milk and sundry items.

     SONNY (CONT’D)
     What do you think about the Blazer’s pick?

     CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK
     Bowie? He’s not Hakeem but I like him.

     SONNY
     What about Jordan?
CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK
A guard? He’s six three. Seventeen points a game in college. That’s maybe ten or eleven in the league. Even the Bulls GM said he wouldn’t change the team.

Sonny nods, he knows the quote.

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK (CONT’D)
He’d contribute but--

SONNY
--not be a dominate offensive player. Yeah, I heard that.

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK
If he hadn’t hit that shot he might not have gone that high in the draft. Too small to do in the NBA what he did in college.

Sonny nods. The clerk rings up his items.

SONNY
You know where Gonzaga is?

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK

Sonny smiles.

SONNY
Thanks.

He heads out the door.
EXT. LAS VEGAS, AERIAL - NIGHT

An AIR VEGAS Jet descends into a much humbler version of the lights of Las Vegas.

C10   INT./EXT. - TOWNCAR - VEGAS - NIGHT

Sonny rides in the backseat.
INT. HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL GAME, GYM - DAY
Sonny moves among players, coaches, and fans. He is in his element.

INT. THE SANDS, SPORTSBOOK DESK - NIGHT
It’s the shifty, run down, eighties version of Vegas.
Sonny is laying out cash and talking rapidly about a series of complex parlays. The CLERK has to write fast to keep up.

SONNY
Bird over 8 assists, over 10 rebounds, Johnson under 11 assists, first quarter under 30.

Tickets crank out of a crude MACHINE.

INT. SANDS PALACE, CRAPS TABLE, LATER - NIGHT
Sonny is rolling the dice. The place isn’t very sexy by modern standards, but there is a seedy charm to the old Vegas.
Sonny is up a bunch. He lays it all out, the pass line, a bunch of odds bets, hard way.

CROUPIER
Keep it up?

SONNY
Let it ride. One time.

He rolls...
CRAPS.

Croupier has the look he’s worn on his face most of his career, a mix of sympathy and “what did you expect.” He’s seen it end this way so many times...

Sonny is impassive. Watches the hook clear all his chips.
Sonny looks at the Croupier, whose name tag reads “Hunter.” Sonny thinks.

EXT. ESTABLISHING, SONNY’S HOUSE - NIGHT
We move down the quiet street to a lonely, unexceptional home on the block.
INT. VACCARO HOUSEHOLD - SONNY’S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

Something on the other TV catches his attention...

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

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

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

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

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

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

JORDAN

CUT TO:

LATER

INT. VACCARO HOUSE - NIGHT

Sonny is watching the National Championship game where Jordan hits the winning shot.

Push on the game.

Push on Sonny.
ECU Jordan’s face.
Sonny’s face.

14

INT. STRASSER’S OFFICE - DAY

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

Strasser sits across from RICHARD, the guy from the men’s room.

    STRASSER
    You could look at it as shrinkage, in the budgetary sense. But I think Phil would say it’s an opportunity to expand---

The door opens. Sonny pokes his head through.

    STRASSER (CONT’D)
    I’ll be done in five.

    SONNY
    I need you done now.

    STRASSER
    Sonny.

    RICHARD
    (getting up)
    No worries at all. I understand. It’s the busiest time of year.

    STRASSER
    Sorry about this. Thanks for coming, Richard. We’ll follow up.

    SONNY
    (almost shooing him out)
    Yeah, we’ll follow up.

    STRASSER
    Sonny, no.

    SONNY
    I found him.

    STRASSER
    In business there’s a way we conduct ourselves, maybe even just as human beings...
He clicks on the TV. Delivers the following while setting up a VHS tape to play.

**SONNY**
Curtis Hunter. You hear of him?

No.

**SONNY (CONT’D)**
Hunter was a great guard out of high school, one of the best I’d seen. Everyone chased him. UNC got him. The next year Dean recruited Michael as his backup, but over the summer during practice Jordan took his spot. Hunter was never the same.

The video comes on. Michael Jordan’s game winning shot against Georgetown.

**SONNY (CONT’D)**
Watch.

**STRASSER**
Jordan hits the shot. I’ve seen it. We’ve all seen it.

**SONNY**
No. Stop. Don’t watch the shot. Don’t watch Jordan.

**STRASSER**
You don’t want me to watch Jordan?

**SONNY**
Correct. In fact, watch everything except Jordan.  
(as he lets the tape continue)

**STRASSER**
Did you sleep last night?

**SONNY**
Look at Dean in the huddle. Look at -- how he draws up the play.  
(he lets a little more play before pausing the tape again)  
That’s James Worthy. First overall pick. Another player we had no chance at signing.
STRASSER
Correct.

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

STRASSER
They drew the play for Worthy, Jordan was the option if he wasn’t open.

SONNY
The play was drawn up for Jordan. No one else was taking that shot. It’s because they know the same thing I know.

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

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

SONNY (CONT’D)
The same thing that Curtis Hunter knew when Michael Jordan showed up and took his spot-- He saw greatness. I don’t want to sign three players. I want to sign one.

STRASSER
As in only one?

SONNY
We can build a shoe line around Just him. We can tap into something deeper... the player’s identity.

STRASSER
What does that mean.

SONNY
He is the shoe. He doesn’t wear the shoe. The shoe is him.

STRASSER
(dumbfounded)
You want to anthropomorphize... A shoe?
SONNY
Have you seen that Arthur Ashe commercial?
        (switching to Arthur Ashe voice)
“This is the racket I won Wimbledon with. And you could’ve bought it.”
We do that with a shoe.

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

SONNY
Not if we bet it all on one guy.

STRASSER
The whole budget?

SONNY
Why not?

STRASSER
No. We’re going to distribute it to three or four players.

SONNY
We have 250k. We can get him for 250k.

STRASSER
Adidas has 250k, too. Even if we did offer him that, Adidas could
match, all our other prospects would be signed and since Michael
made it clear he doesn’t want to come here, you would have to have an
extremely compelling pitch. Do you have that?

SONNY
Yes. By telling him the one thing the other companies can’t compete
with.

STRASSER
Which is?

SONNY
Our basketball division is fucking terrible.

STRASSER
I don’t love it.
SONNY
Yes, Converse has Magic, Bird, Dr. J. But they can’t put one at the top. We can.-- And at Converse every player wears the same shoe... there’s only one Jordan.

STRASSER
Phil will never go for that.

SONNY
Let me handle that.

STRASSER
Please don’t do this. This is too important...
(off Sonny)
Have you even talked to--

He’s cut off by a RINGING PHONE.

SONNY
Jordan’s agent?

STRASSER
Yes.

Stan pokes his head in the door.

STAN
Sonny, David Falk’s on your phone.

Strasser shakes his head.

SONNY
Coming.

Stan is pissed. To Sonny:

STAN
Get a fucking secretary.

Sonny smiles at Strasser on the way out.

INT. SONNY’S OFFICE – DAY

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

Waiting on the other line, as promised, is...
DAVID FALK, Jordan’s agent. Shiny bald head, five figure pressed suit. The prototype power agent. He came out of the womb negotiating commission structures.

FALK
Sonny, Sonny, Sonny. Here comes the Sonny.

SONNY
Good morning, Falk.

FALK
It’s afternoon for those of us in the real world. What’s new in the wilds of Oregon? I hear Nike is getting out of the basketball business.

SONNY
Who told you that?

FALK
You know I have clients in other sports. I just signed Boomer Esiason. Great looking kid. Really going places.

SONNY
David. I don’t give a fuck. I’m calling about Michael Jordan.

FALK
(laughs)
I told Strasser months ago, it’s never gonna happen

SONNY
Well, you never talked to me.

FALK
I’m doing you a favor. Michael’s not even taking a meeting with you.

SONNY
What do you mean?

FALK
A meeting? A group of two, maybe four to five, executives in a room? They hear a pitch from a company? It’s common business practice.

(MORE)
FALK (CONT'D)
Michael’s not going to be doing that at Nike.

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

FALK
It’s not about the money.

SONNY
When someone tells me it’s not about the money, the one thing I know for sure is it’s about money.

FALK
We’ve decided to stretch the envelope. We want to hear what each company can do to promote Michael.

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

FALK
Sonny. World class players don’t wear third rate shoes.

SONNY
Just get us in the room.

FALK
I have one directive from Michael: do whatever it takes to get me with Adidas.
   (beat)
And get me a Mercedes.

SONNY
That’s two.

FALK
Sonny, as a friend, this is a waste of time. Off the record - even though UNC’s a Converse school, Michael wore Adidas during practice. He would put on Converse just before the game started. The second the final buzzer sounded? Adidas’ back on.
SONNY
Bullshit.

FALK
Ask Dean.

SONNY
I thought that was off the record.

FALK
I didn’t say you had to tell him where you heard it. And trust me, Converse knows it, too. I’ve already seen a mockup of their presentation. Three words. State of the art.

SONNY
That’s four.

FALK
Even if you make an offer, I’ll only use it to drive up what Adidas pays. You’re a stalking horse. At best. And a slow, fat stalking horse. So you’re not even credible.

SONNY
What are they offering?

FALK
I don’t see a world where it’s south of 250.

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

SONNY
I understand.

FALK
Annually...

SONNY
He’ll be miserable at Adidas. It’s a shit show since Adolf died.

FALK
Adi, Sonny. He went by Adi.

SONNY
His name was Adolf. The guy’s name was literally Adolf.
FALK
He was a good man.

SONNY
He kept the name.

FALK
It’s Adi. Adi Dassler, Adi-Das.

SONNY
The man was in the Hitler youth.

FALK
No he wasn’t, don’t say that.

SONNY
I’ve seen pictures of him wearing a swastika. Personally. He even had the haircut.

FALK
We all have our pasts.

SONNY
Some of us have our pasts and some of us were Nazis, there’s a line...

FALK
(point taken)
Well, he’s dead. We’re meeting with the whole family.

SONNY
She’s rich, and isn’t long for this earth. Do you think her kids are thinking about shoe endorsements?
(off silence)
When’s his Adidas meeting?

FALK
The Jordan’s goes to Boston Thursday. That’s Converse. Then Nuremberg for Adidas on Saturday and then we’re gonna close.

SONNY
Nuremberg?

FALK
Sonny, no, close to... near there. They want to close, is the point.

SONNY
OK. Let me get back to you.
Sonny hangs up. Bites his lip. Paces back to...

INT. NIKE HQ - WHITE'S OFFICE - DAY

Sonny slips in. WHITE is watching Jordan tape.

WHITE
Phil won’t do it.

SONNY
But you like the idea, right?

WHITE
The idea? Of Michael Jordan? I’d like to sign Jordan, I’d like to sign Jesus too, but I don’t know what his agent will ask for.

SONNY
Falk was open.

WHITE
What are you gonna offer?

SONNY
The whole budget.

WHITE
As in no money for anybody else? I’ve known Phil longer than you and I can tell you he won’t go for that.

SONNY
I can bring Phil around.

WHITE
Even if you do, how will you bring Mike around? Mike an Adidas guy. He’s wearing everything Adidas got.

(MORE)
WHITE (CONT’D)
Bad warm ups, shell toes, he don’t want to come to Nike bad as the guy sitting in that damn briar patch.

SONNY
I’ll deal with that after I deal with Phil. Like climbing Everest. One step at a time.

WHITE
Talking about Mount Everest. You would get tired on the plane over there. And Phil don’t want to do that. He still has the first dollar he ever made up in his office.

SONNY
The secret to Phil is to make him afraid.

WHITE
Phil has a hundred million dollars and free jogging shoes. What’s he afraid of?

SONNY
Of being the guy I’m about to have lunch with.

WHITE
Who?

SONNY
The man who passed on Michael Jordan.

The Clash, “Rock the Casbah”.

INT. RESTAURANT – DAY

Some upscale bullshit restaurant that was the hardest reservation in Portland for two years before going out of business. Sonny sits across from...
STU INMAN, General Manager of the Portland Trailblazers. Sleight, the frame of a former power-forward, which he was. A pressed collar lapping over a well-fitting sweater.

SONNY
Thanks for meeting last minute.

STU INMAN
No problem. I hear Nike is getting out of the basketball business.

SONNY
Why is everyo...
(catches himself)

STU INMAN
It makes sense. You can’t compete with the big boys. Not enough capital.

SONNY
We have capital.

STU INMAN
Yes. Just not enough. You should go for Stockton.

SONNY
Why’s that?

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

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

STU INMAN
But...?

SONNY
Why’d you pass on Jordan?

STU INMAN
You’re not signing Jordan.

SONNY
But what do you think of him?

STU INMAN
I think he’s a good player.
SONNY
But you didn’t draft him.

STU INMAN
No.

SONNY
Why?

STU INMAN
That’s confidential.

SONNY
Come on, Stu.

STU INMAN
We had other needs.

SONNY
What needs? A less talented guy?

STU INMAN
There’s a lot you don’t see from the bench.

SONNY
The Bulls are a pro franchise. Apparently they saw something.

STU INMAN
The Bulls are a mess. He’s not going to be in the playoffs for years. He’s one guy.

SONNY
All the great teams have been changed by one guy. Chamberlain. Russell. Magic. Larry.

STU INMAN
The Bulls aren’t a team. They’re a fucking disaster. And the playoffs are where the money is. You want to pay top dollar for a player that’s going to be on national television once a year?

SONNY
You watched the tape?

STU INMAN
Of course we did. What do you think I do for a living? We knew he’d be there at #2.

(MORE)
STU INMAN (CONT’D)
We have Drexler and Paxson. We
didn’t need another guard - we
needed a center.

SONNY
I don’t think you can draft based
on need that high... no offense,
you have to draft on talent.

Stu loses his patience, insulted.

STU INMAN
Well, that’s what you think.
That’s why I’m a GM and you’re a
fucking shoe salesman, Sonny. No
offense.

SONNY
You made a mistake. You’re afraid
that’s what you’ll be remembered
for.

STU INMAN
You have that little thing you
stand on, with the slider, that
measures your shoe size? You keep
that handy just in case or is it in
the trunk?

SONNY
I don’t need it. I can see your
shoes are a small from here.

Stu nods. There is a jousting energy, half-joking, but only
half.

STU INMAN
I’m very good at my job Sonny.
There’s a skill to what I do.
That’s why we finished second in
the league. And you’ll be
remembered as a guy who was decent
with Shinola and a brush.

SONNY
Congratulations on second place.

STU INMAN
I like you, Sonny but you’re
embarrassing yourself. You think
I’m going to be remembered as the
man who passed on Michael Jordan?
INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY

Sonny sits across the desk from Phil.

PHIL KNIGHT
Let me just say this: no.

SONNY
Let me explain.

PHIL KNIGHT
No.

SONNY
Michael Jordan is the guy we’ve been waiting for.

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

SONNY
If perfection is the goal than we were doomed from the start. No one hits every shot.

PHIL KNIGHT
How about some of the shots. A shot. One shot?

SONNY
That’s part of gambling, Phil. You don’t win every hand.

PHIL KNIGHT
This is not a craps table and we don’t have unlimited checks to write.

SONNY
I’m not asking for unlimited, I’m asking for what you already have budgeted.

PHIL KNIGHT
All of it? Don’t confuse recklessness with vision.

SONNY
I actually think we might need more.
PHIL KNIGHT
For a rookie who hasn’t set foot on an NBA court?

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

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

SONNY
Exactly.

PHIL KNIGHT
(thinking it over)
No. Even if I wanted to I couldn’t justify it to the board. So it’s out of the question...

SONNY
Let me put it like this: I’m willing to bet my career on Michael Jordan.

PHIL KNIGHT
Why?

SONNY
Because you asked me what I do here... and this is what I do here. I find players. And I feel it right now. When you were selling sneakers out of the trunk of your Plymouth you had balls and ambition and you took risks-- that’s why it worked. Don’t play it safe now. Don’t change what got you here. Not now. If you really look at Jordan you’ll see the same thing I do.

PHIL KNIGHT
Which is?

SONNY
The most competitive person I’ve ever seen. He’s a fucking killer.
PHIL KNIGHT
(begrudgingly)
What’s the competition?

CUT TO:

20

EXT. ADIDAS HQ – DAY

RUN DMC, “MY ADIDAS.”

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

But you don’t need to. Because in 1984, this place already looks like it will in 2022.

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

21

INT. ADIDAS MUSEUM – DAY

Paraphernalia befitting a storied German athletic company rest in trophy cases in the hall including the pair of soccer cleats that would become known as the Copa Mundial. It’s a shrine to the 1936 Olympics, Germany, excellence, and physical perfection. There still lingers a whiff of Leni Riefenstahl.

The Adidas braintrust walk through the grand room, some holding folders and leafing through them.

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

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

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

JOHN FISHER – Adidas’ Head of Operations in the States, leads the pack.

    JOHN FISHER
    I know the last thing we want to be discussing is business.
They all turn to a giant portrait of ADOLF “ADI” DASSLER. Founder of the company, recently deceased, his presence still looming from the grave.

JOHN FISHER (CONT’D)
I can only imagine the grief.

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

JOHN FISHER
He did say that. And we have an incredible opportunity for Adidas America.

Fisher opens the first page of his file to reveal:

JORDAN.

HORST DASSLER
Very good.

EXT. CONVERSE HQ - DAY

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

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

INT. CONVERSE HQ - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

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

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

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

They look at each other. A YES MAN nods...

YES MAN
Scoreboard.

INT. PHIL KNIGHT’S OFFICE - DAY

PHIL KNIGHT
Can we get a meeting?
STRASSER
You’re signing off on this?

PHIL KNIGHT
No. It’s a stupid fucking idea. I said can we get a meeting?

CUT TO:

FALK
No.

INT. SONNY’S OFFICE – NIGHT

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

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

SONNY
That’s not responsible to your client.

FALK
Submit an offer and then we can talk meeting.

SONNY
I can’t do that.

FALK
Then I have no responsibility to inform my client.

SONNY
250 thousand. Is what you can expect...

FALK
I can expect? Why not a million? Right? If we’re talking expectations. I can’t account for opinions. I need it in writing.

SONNY
When the offer comes it will be in writing.

FALK
I look forward to seeing it. I can’t wait to waste six hours flying out there.

(MORE)
FALK (CONT’D)

Why can’t you get a base on the east coast like a normal company?

SONNY
They love it here.

FALK
Well, great, I’m glad they’re happy.

SONNY
How’re the parents?

FALK
Smart as hell. Don’t pull any bullshit on them. They don’t want to be sold to.

SONNY
Are they home now? In Carolina?

FALK
Why?

SONNY
I’m just asking.

FALK
Don’t call them. I’m not kidding. That would be inappropriate and unprofessional.

SONNY
So is outright refusing a meeting.

FALK
That’s just business.

SONNY
Why does Michael want Adidas?

FALK
Because he likes their tracksuits.

SONNY
We will give him every tracksuit he’s ever wanted.

FALK
He’s a kid. You know what he really wants? A car. Red Mercedes 380SL. But fortunately he has an extremely savvy adviser who thinks long term.
SONNY
It’s your humility that is really impressive.

FALK
That’s the thing Sonny, I’m not even talking about myself.
(beat)
Unless I see an offer in writing,
I’m not going to bother my client.

INT. TONY ROMA’S, LOS ANGELES – DAY

Sonny is having lunch with George Raveling, 40s, coach of the Olympic team that year. They are old friends.

GEORGE RAVELING
Michael won’t come to Nike. I tried putting in the word for you all during the Olympics.

SONNY
I know, man. I appreciate that. Is there another play?

GEORGE RAVELING
He doesn’t even want to meet. Believe me, I made it clear to him.
I believed Nike was the best opportunity. I told him multiple times. And we got along. He just doesn’t like the shoes.

SONNY
He’s never worn them.

GEORGE RAVELING
He doesn’t want to.

SONNY
Why?

GEORGE RAVELING
When you’re a twenty one year old man you can count on two things. Thinking you know better than everybody and finding out later you didn’t know a damn thing.

SONNY
Was he open to it at all?
GEORGE RAVELING
He told me if he got a red Mercedes 380SL he would sign a shoe contract for life with anybody.

SONNY
Really?

GEORGE RAVELING
Anybody except Nike.

SONNY
Christ.

(beat)
You know the parents?

GEORGE RAVELING
Good people.

SONNY
How’s the dad?

GEORGE RAVELING
Great guy. Good personality.

SONNY
How’s the mom?

GEORGE RAVELING
Incredible. She runs shit.

SONNY
Really? Should I call her?

GEORGE RAVELING
Why? You want to find out first hand how she really does run shit?

SONNY
She’s that good?

GEORGE RAVELING
Smarter than you.

Off Sonny’s look.

GEORGE RAVELING (CONT’D)
Don’t take it personally. She’s smarter than me too.

SONNY
Might be my only shot.
GEORGE RAVELING
Go around the agent to the family
and you might lose your job, too.

SONNY
I don’t know. Maybe I’m losing it... but I’ve been doing this
twenty years. I’ve never had a
feeling like this.

GEORGE RAVELING
That right?

SONNY
I know I’m right.

GEORGE RAVELING
How strong?

SONNY
Strong. This little fucking voice I
keep trying to ignore but, you know
when you get a feeling?

GEORGE RAVELING
Yeah.

(beat)
Don’t let it go.

SONNY
You just told me it’s a bad idea.

GEORGE RAVELING
It is a bad idea.

SONNY
So?

GEORGE RAVELING
Sometimes you have to answer that
call.

SONNY
Even if it gets me fired?

GEORGE RAVELING
Summer of 1963, I was a kid in
Maryland. Friend of my father’s
asked me and his son to come to a
march in town. But I had a
scholarship to Villanova, and I
didn’t want to risk my future.
SONNY

Okay.

GEORGE RAVELING
But I had this feeling I should go.
Don’t know why. So I went. We got there and one of the organizers saw two 6’4” kids and asked us to help with security. We get down there and they put us up on the podium. Now I’m in harm’s way, might be on TV, but that voice was telling me stay. So I stayed. I was up on stage for five hours thinking why am I up here? Then the last speaker comes on. And then I knew.

Sonny nods. He’s never heard his friend tell this story.

GEORGE RAVELING (CONT’D)
We walk off stage, I said to him “that was the best speech I ever heard” and he looks at me, says “thank you, young man,” folds up the speech, puts it in my pocket, and walked away.

SONNY
When was this?

GEORGE RAVELING
I went to read it after, but my favorite line wasn’t in there. Then, I noticed the whole second half of the speech was different. The first half the crowd hadn’t responded as much, and he changed the whole thing, halfway through. He felt the crowd wasn’t with him, got a feeling made the whole speech up on the spot.

SONNY
What was the line you were looking for?

GEORGE RAVELING
Where he said he had a dream.

Sonny is stunned.

SONNY
The I have a dream speech? That was the-- you have that??
GEORGE RAVELING
I have a copy of the speech he was going to give.

SONNY
Are you breaking my balls? Bullshit.

George just looks at him. This is a true story.

SONNY (CONT’D)
Jesus, where is it?

GEORGE RAVELING
What?

SONNY
The speech.

GEORGE RAVELING
In my desk, at home.

Sonny shakes his head, marvels.

SONNY
That should be in a fucking museum, George.

GEORGE RAVELING
It will be. When I check out. But none of that would have happened if I hadn’t listened to that voice.

SONNY
So you think I should go see the parents and let it all ride on Jordan?

GEORGE RAVELING
Fuck no. I think that’s crazy. That’s your voice. My voice doesn’t say to do stupid shit. My voice made me a part of history.

SONNY
Say the voice in my head tells me to talk to Michael’s mother anyway. Any advice?

He considers this.

GEORGE RAVELING
She’s used to people like you underestimating her.
SONNY
So...

GEORGE RAVELING
Don’t underestimate her.

A26
INT. HOWARD’S OFFICE – NIGHT
Sonny sticks his head in looking for Howard. Howard isn’t there.

27
INT. NIKE HQ -- NIGHT
White is getting Coffee. Sonny approaches.

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

WHITE
That’s not some shit to take lightly. You go around Falk, you better close them, and you need a plan for that. You need to make them believe. You created the Dapper Dan Tournament! I was a little kid from Hampton, VA that someone told me that you could play in this game that the gym’s roof opened up and you played under the stars! I got a letter that I was invited to play in the Dapper Dan. A dream come true. Then I tear my knee up and can’t go. But, I learned something far bigger then my dream of playing under the stars! I learned that if you believe something enough, it only takes one spark to burn down an entire forest! My belief made all of these people believe! The question is not what Phil will do, but how much do you believe? Because it only takes that one spark of belief to burn down an entire forest! You’ve made me a believer!
INT. STRASSER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sonny talking to Strasser.

SONNY
You run at all?

STRASSER
What?

SONNY
Do you run?

STRASSER
Run? God no. Why?

SONNY
Phil asked me if I did.

STRASSER
Everything between you and him is a fucking game of code.

SONNY
So, I’m asking you the same thing.

STRASSER
Do I run?
    (beat)
No, I don’t run.

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

STRASSER
Doctors are most likely to smoke. Therapists have the highest rates of divorce. No, I think it’s obvious. We’re not here because we’re athletes. We work here because we worship athletes.
SONNY
Fuck it, maybe I’ll just go for a run. The answer will come to me.

STRASSER
Just don’t call the parents.

Sonny exits as the door clicks shut.

INT. SONNY’S CAR – NIGHT
Sonny drives home from Nike HQ.

OMITTED

EXT. NIKE HQ – NIGHT
The moon shines bright over the only car in the parking lot. His.

TIME LAPSE
Sun rises over Beaverton.

INT. NIKE HQ – SONNY’S OFFICE – MORNING
We’re angled on the door to Sonny’s office. It OPENS. STRASSER pokes his head in. Raises his eyebrow. We see why...

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

STRASSER
Where is he?

SECRETARY
He didn’t come in.

STRASSER
Is he sick?

SECRETARY
I’m not actually his secretary. He doesn’t have a secretary. But personally I think that’s a rhetorical question.

STRASSER
(looking out the window)
Where is he?
SECRETARY
When I’m speaking, do you hear the words that come out of my mouth?
Strasser is frazzled from stress.

    STRASSER
    I’m... I’m not a strong listener.

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

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

INT. NIKE HQ - STRASSER’S OFFICE - MORNING

RING. RIN---

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

    STRASSER
    Hello?

    SONNY
    Strass.

    STRASSER
    Where the hell are you?

Great question. We’re tight on Sonny, so we know as little as Strasser.

    SONNY
    North Carolina.

REVEAL Sonny in a rental car, talking on a 1985 giant CAR PHONE.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, NORTH CAROLINA - SAME

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

    SONNY
    I’m calling you now. I’m in the car. The rental has one of those phones in it.

    STRASSER
    The fucking parents, Sonny.
SONNY
You were right. Calling out of the blue would have been unprofessional.

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

SONNY
If anyone asks I’m sick.

STRASSER
You are sick. Sick in the head.

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

The line clicks dead. Strasser looks like he’s seen a ghost. “Little Pink Houses” plays on the radio.

INT./EXT. - SONNY’S RENTAL CAR - DAY

Mellencamp, “Pink Houses.”


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

EXT. EMSLEY A. LANEY HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Sonny drives by. A big blue sign hangs: CONGRATS SENIORS 84 - GO BUCS spelled out crookedly.

INT./EXT. - SONNY’S RENTAL CAR - DAY

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

And gazes upon...
EXT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - DAY

4647 Gordon Road.

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

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

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

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

He finally hears Sonny’s footsteps on the gravel. Looks up and sees the CAR.

JAMES JORDAN
Can I help you?

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

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

SONNY
You must be Mister Jordan?

JAMES JORDAN
James.

SONNY
(reaching out his hand)
Sonny Vaccaro. I’m with Nike.

JAMES JORDAN
Oh, here we go.

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

They both turn to see...

DELORIS JORDAN, 43, bobbed hair, thin frame, small intelligent eyes.
SONNY
Mrs. Jordan. My name’s Sonny
Vaccaro. I’m here with Nike.

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

SONNY
Well, yes, I was told not to call
you.

DELORIS JORDAN
Do you typically make a habit of
showing up at people’s front doors
unannounced?

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

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

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

Yes. He smiles.

SONNY
Please... call me Sonny.

EXT. JORDAN RESIDENCE – BACKYARD – DAY

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

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

DELORIS JORDAN
Five generations of Jordans have
lived and died in this forest by
the highway. Been here since the
Civil War. Some of these trees are
800-years-old.
SONNY
This place, it seems... personal.

DELORIS JORDAN
Well, every history is deeply personal, Mr. Vaccaro.
(takes a breath and looks at him)
It’s quite presumptuous of you to show up at our door.
(but....)
But I believe that saying you want something is fine and well, a good start, but doing something about it is what really counts.

SONNY
Is he... here?

DELORIS JORDAN
He is. But you don’t need to see him. It’s not the time for that.

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

DELORIS JORDAN (CONT’D)
How’d you get that name? Sonny.

SONNY
My mother had trouble bearing children. Went through two miscarriages. Bad ones. And when it finally happened... I wasn’t easy either. Delivery took almost a day. She said all she saw looking up into that hot bright light in the hospital room was the sun. She said it was the first thing that came to mind when she saw my face. The sun. Sonny.

DELORIS JORDAN
And is she still with us?

SONNY
She’s not.

DELORIS JORDAN
I’m sorry to hear that.

SONNY
It’s OK. It was... a long time ago.
DELORES JORDAN
And your father?

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

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

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

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

SONNY
I do. And, respectfully, I think
that would be a mistake. I’d like
to make you a bet. I’ll tell you
exactly what Converse and Adidas
meetings are going to do. I’ll tell
you exactly what they’re going to
say to you. What they’re going to
sell you. And if I’m wrong... then
don’t take the Nike meeting. But,
if I’m right... you and Michael
come.

Deloris smiles. Not explicitly agreeing.

SONNY (CONT’D)
(businessman voice)
Mrs. Jordan, it’s a pleasure to
meet you.
(back to Sonny voice)
This is Converse by the way. He’ll
have his hair gelled up like an
asshole, excuse my French. I’m
guessing a red tie, for the Bulls.
Rolex for sure.
(MORE)
SONNY (CONT’D)
(back to mock voice)
You look beautiful today, Mrs. Jordan. I’ve seen a lot of basketball, and the feeling I get when I see Michael play... there are only a few other players that gave me that feeling. And those players are here at Converse... they’re the best of the best. It’s that simple. Magic Johnson. Larry Bird. Michael Jordan. Those names all belong in the same sentence. And they belong at Converse.

(back to Sonny voice)
Now, here’s the important part. I want you to ask them a question. Will you do that for me?

DELORES JORDAN
It depends on what the question is, Mr. Vaccaro.

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

DELORES JORDAN
And what will they say?

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

DELORES JORDAN
And is it?

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

DELORES JORDAN
And what about the Adidas meeting? Michael’s top choice is Adidas.

Sonny thinks about it for a moment.

SONNY
(bad German accent)
Mrs. Jordan, welcome to...

DELORES JORDAN
You can just tell me.
SONNY
Sorry, yeah, I can’t do a German accent. We have the best shoes. Plain and simple. You’re not going to see another style like this. All leather. Converse isn’t cool. Michael, you’re the next generation.
(takes a breath)
Just to clarify – this is now me talking not Adidas. They’re not wrong. I get why Michael is interested in them.

DELORIS JORDAN
And what should I ask them?

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

DELORIS JORDAN
And what will they say?

SONNY
Well, I think four different people in that room will give you four different answers. And that’s a big problem for Michael.

DELORIS JORDAN
Very well.
(she takes a sip of her drink)
And, finally... the most important question.
(off Sonny, who’s unsure)
What should I ask you?

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

SONNY
Ask me why I’m in Wilmington, North Carolina.

DELORIS JORDAN
Why are you in Wilmington, North Carolina?

SONNY
Because I believe in greatness. I’d travel anywhere for it. New York, Beaverton, the moon... or Wilmington, North Carolina.
Deloris doesn't tip her hand. Her poker face could take her far in Vegas. Close on Sonny. Did he get her?

DELORES JORDAN
Well, Mr. Vaccaro, thank you for coming.

SONNY
Of course.

They get up from the table.

Sonny SWATS away a WASP.

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

SONNY
But they healed.

DELORES JORDAN
That’s the truth. I believe that, you know... life is all about what we do with our pain. Goodbye, Mr. Vaccaro. And good luck.

EXT. CAROLINA HIGHWAY – DAY

Pointer Sisters, “Jump For My Love.”

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

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

FALK (O.S.)
You go to his mother’s house? You have a lot of balls you piece of shit.
INT. SONNY’S OFFICE - MORNING

Sonny at his desk on the phone.

FALK
You fat, fuck. Who do you think you are? Is everyone from Pennsylvania this stupid? Are you trying to ruin your fucking career? You show up at the house?

SONNY
You said it would be unprofessional to call.

FALK
My job is to protect Michael and his family from people like you. When you go around me, you make me look ineffectual, and if you end up signing him, it makes me look irrelevant. That’s the worst thing you can do to an agent.

SONNY
If you’re irrelevance is becoming self-evident to your client, I don’t see how that’s my fault. That’s something you should address with your therapist.

FALK
You don’t want to talk to my therapist. You don’t want to have a life half as fucking miserable as my therapist. But you’re giving me no choice.

(MORE)
FALK (CONT'D)
Because now, after what you did, unless you make some fucking miracle dream deal with the Jordans, unless you give him your entire company and start exclusively making a fucking shoe called whatever your fucking... Air... Jordan... unless you bestow the riches of Croesus on my client and close him, I will bury you alive and light you on fire and dance and piss on your grave and fuck the eyehole of your skull with a delicate slow humping motion--

SONNY
You’re right. I don’t want to be your therapist.

FALK
You want to fuck with me? You herpetic simplex 2 eruption on the sphincter of humanity--

SONNY
The fact that you know there is a second simplex of herpes makes me think you have it, David.

FALK
Of course I do. Everyone has herpes. You know why you don’t? Because no one will fuck you, Sonny.

SONNY
I never thought of it that way.

FALK
I am a fucking monster. You fuck with a beast like me and I will break you in half.

SONNY
Why do agents make these negotiations into fantasy metaphors about physical strength? Is it because you feel weak, physically? I’m baffled. We’re two out of shape middle aged men having a conversation on the phone three thousand miles apart.
FALK
Okay. I will personally ensure that no client of this agency ever signs a contract with Nike, and Nike will be out of the Basketball business permanently. And so will you.

SONNY
What if we do make the deal.

FALK
You and I will be best friends.

Falk makes some internal calculations. Switching gears, suddenly totally calm.

FALK (CONT’D)
It’s Tuesday.

SONNY
I’m still lost.

FALK
They’re coming to Beaverton, Colombo. Don’t make me say it twice.

Sonny covers the receiver. PUMPS HIS FIST.

FALK (CONT’D)
And don’t get ahead of yourself. Michael’s not going to be excited to be there. His mother is making him go.

INT. SONNY’S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS
Sonny hangs up on Falk and smiles. In walks PHIL’S SECRETARY, it’s unusual to see her down here. She spots Sonny.

PHIL’S SECRETARY
Phil wants you in his office.

SONNY
I’ll be right up, give me five minutes.

PHIL’S SECRETARY
He said now.

Off Sonny’s look, he rises...
INT. NIKE HQ - HALLWAY - DAY

Cyndi Lauper, “Time After Time.”

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

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

INT. NIKE HQ - STRASSER’S OFFICE - DAY

Sonny sitting at his desk.
STRASSER
Is there anything else you’d like
to risk on this hand, sir? The deed
to your house?

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

STRASSER
Tomorrow’s Saturday.

SONNY
Michael Jordan’s coming to
Beaverton.

STRASSER
Holy shit.

SONNY
Time to see Pete

Strasser shakes his head. Can’t help but to smile. Good luck.
Run DMC, “It’s Like That.”

INT. NIKE HQ - ELEVATOR - DAY

Sonny is in the elevator. Sonny presses the “B” below “1” and
“G”. The elevator churns to life and heads...

Down.

Down.

Further down.

DING. The doors open to...

INT. NIKE SHOE LAB - DAY

Sonny enters THE LAB. A shoe head’s dream. Computers

PETER MOORE, CREATIVE DIRECTOR. Peter, 49, is a wizard. A mad
scientist. His laboratory just happens to be in a basement in
Beaverton.

He’s balding, a thin ring of hair all that’s left above his
sharp jaunt cheeks. He turns in his swivel chair.
Skateboarder from the parking lot. Same designer jacket.
Different designer hat.
PETER MOORE
To what do I owe the honor?

SONNY
I need a shoe, Pete.

PETER MOORE
I would assume as much.

SONNY
Ideally the most beautiful shoes you’ve ever seen.

PETER MOORE
How long do we have?

SONNY
Tuesday.

PETER MOORE
Anything else?

SONNY
We’re going up against Converse and Adidas.

PETER MOORE
Step into my office.

They turn toward the lab, on their backs:

SONNY
Was that you in the parking lot, on a skateboard?

PETER MOORE
Yes.

SONNY
What’s that all about?

PETER MOORE
I’m having a mid life crisis.

INT. NIKE HQ - SHOE LAB - DESIGN ROOM - DAY

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

SONNY
It has to be individual. Think of it like this – Converse are ordinary, plain shoes.

(MORE)
SONNY (CONT’D)
Every player wears the same shoe. The difference with this one is that instead of having the athlete wear one of our shoes, we’re going to create the shoe around the athlete.

PETER MOORE
So the shoe is a physical manifestation of the individual rather than the individual as emblem of the corporate entity.

SONNY
Something like that.

PETER MOORE
The requirements are, speak as an individual, market to a mass audience and be the most beautiful shoe known to mankind. And be ready in three days.

SONNY
Monday would be nice, to be honest.

PETER MOORE
Form or function?

SONNY
Uh...

PETER MOORE
Something can be beautiful or it can be pragmatic. Rarely both.

SONNY
Come up with something new.

PETER MOORE
Humans have been wearing shoes for thousands of years. And the design has substantively changed once – when they differentiated between right and left shoes.

(beat)
That was six hundred years ago.

SONNY
Let’s go for form.
PETER MOORE
Beauty. Not function? You know what they say - poetry only makes the world bearable, it’s engineering that got us to the moon.

Sonny’s BEEPER starts to sound.

SONNY
Fuck, I’m late.
(looking to Pete)
Take the day to start.

PETER MOORE
Tomorrow’s Saturday...

SONNY
If you don’t come in Saturday, don’t bother coming in on Sunday.

PETER MOORE
We’re of like minds. Who’s the player? For the shoe?

SONNY
Michael Jordan.

EXT. NIKE HQ - DAY

Phil’s purple Porsche is sitting out front, tilt up to the office.

INT. PHIL KNIGHT’S OFFICE - DAY

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

PHIL KNIGHT
I’m told you circumvented virtually everyone who warned you against doing so, and set a meeting here Tuesday with the Jordan family.

SONNY
We need a firm offer.

PHIL KNIGHT
Without having authorization to make a firm offer.
SONNY
Yes. And I have been given the impression from the representation that we need to commit our entire budget. 250 a year.
(MORE)
SONNY (CONT’D)

(beat)
For five years.
(beat)
Guaranteed.

PHIL KNIGHT
Sonny, that’s just irresponsible.

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

PHIL KNIGHT
If you try to buy someone, you need to be sure they can be bought.

SONNY
If we want to be a company that means something in the basketball world, we have to spend. There’s nothing free in this life, Phil.

PHIL KNIGHT
Tell that to the college kids you give our shoes away to.

SONNY
That’s working! That was a good idea.

PHIL KNIGHT
It’s theoretical value that can’t actually be measured.

SONNY
What was my first idea? A high school all-star game. Pretty soon, every shoe company in the world is holding their own branded all-star game. I’m giving away my ideas for free. This place used to value ideas.

PHIL KNIGHT
Stop seeking attention for yourself. Self is a mirage. There is only the non-self.

SONNY
Does the Dalia Lama have a grape Porsche, Phil? You worked hard. And you got lucky. Half these kids, probably more, don’t pan out.

(MORE)
SONNY (CONT’D)
There are a thousand reasons why.
Some people succeed, others fail.
All I can fucking do is give you my recommendation. And this is the strongest one I’ve ever had.

PHIL KNIGHT
We’re breaking too many rules.

SONNY
How the fuck do you think you got here? Rules are just made up to keep people in their lane. Just like the difference between you and the guys who didn’t do what you did. They’re still at home now thinking about what might have been and you’re standing here with a billion dollar business because they followed the rules and you didn’t.

PHIL KNIGHT
Give me the weekend to think about it. You don’t need a firm offer to prep the rest of the meeting.

SONNY
I don’t know how much more emphatically I can say this. If we don’t make this deal, I don’t know what my place is at this company.

Sonny walks out.

PHIL KNIGHT
Neither do I.

Close on Phil. Thinking.

Chaka Khan, “Ain’t Nobody.”

EXT. CONVERSE HQ – DAY

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

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

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

Waiting for them is... JOHN O’NEIL. He has his hair gelled up like an asshole. Red tie (for the Bulls). Rolex heavy on his wrist. Next to him is JOE DEAN.

JOHN O’NEIL
( extending his hand)
Mrs. Jordan, it’s a pleasure to
meet you. We sure do appreciate you
making the long trip out here.

INT. CONVERSE HQ - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

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

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

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

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

“Converse - the official shoe of the NBA!”

The lights go up...

JOHN O’NEIL
I get when I see Michael play...
there are only a few other players
that gave me that feeling. And
those players are here at
Converse... It’s that simple. Magic
Johnson. Larry Bird. Michael
Jordan. Those names all belong in
the same sentence. And they belong
at Converse.

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

FALK
We’re looking for a shoe that holds
appeal beyond the basketball court.
JOHN O’NEIL
What could hold more appeal than the shoe worn by the best players in the game?

Head nods. Fair point.

JAMES JORDAN
What’s coming down the pipeline? What’s the new shoe for Michael going to be?

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

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

Looks around the room. Above them?

JOHN O’NEIL
Well... frankly, ma’am... we’re talking about Magic Johnson and Larry Bird here.

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

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

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

Thomas Dolby, “She Blinded Me With Science.”
INT. NIKE HQ - SHOE LAB - DESIGN ROOM - DAY

Sonny flips through designs. Nods of approval. Setting certain ones aside. Strasser looks on.

Pete watches them carefully. Waiting for any indication on his work. Does he get it?

Sonny finally sets the papers down. Looks up.

SONNY
They’re too bland. There’s too much white - not enough color. The Bulls are Red and Black. Can we get more red in there?

PETER MOORE
They literally are not permitted to be one additional percentage point of red.

SONNY
Is that true? What’s the actual rule?

PETER MOORE
51 percent of the shoe has to be white. NBA is extremely strict about it. They’ll fine him.

SONNY
The NBA will fine him...

PETER MOORE
Five thousand dollars a day.

SONNY
(we’re fucked)
God damn it.

Strasser speaks from across the room.

STRASSER
What about more red?

PETER MOORE
That would incur the fine.

STRASSER
Exactly.

PETER MOORE
Do we want to be fined?
STRASSER
What if we just pay the fines? We
can make a commercial out of it. It
will make headlines. They’re going
to fine us for being too colorful.

PETER MOORE
(the moment between
bewilderment and clarity)
Yes. More red. That’s right.
Subversive. Individualistic. That’s
it.

Sonny regards, Strasser with respect.

SONNY
That’s brilliant, Rob.

PETER MOORE
Do you men think about basketball
shoes often?

Strasser and Sonny share a look.

SONNY
I mostly think about
basketball.

STRASSER
More marketing, really.

PETER MOORE
Basketball shoes are the central
preoccupation of my life. I’ve had
one persistent obsession that I
harbored, and nurtured, in the hope
of creating the perfect basketball
shoe. I’ve been trying to apply
that to the ‘Sole’ line. I thought
it should be called Air Sole. But
that isn’t it. This is it.

SONNY
What is it?

PETER MOORE
Air Jordan.

He says it aloud. Looks around. There it was. His moment of
immortality. Not with a bang but a whimper. Sees Sonny not
thrilled.

PETER MOORE (CONT’D)
Don’t you see it?

STRASSER
It’s perfect.
SONNY
Yeah...

PETER MOORE
(to Sonny)
What’s wrong?

SONNY
I think David Falk said the same name.

Peter is crushed. Strasser and Sonny simultaneously.

STRASSER
Sonny (cont’d)
Fuck that guy. I’ll tell everybody you came up with it.

EXT. PHIL’S GATED DRIVEWAY AND ROAD - SUNSET
Phil Knight walks out from his gate. Dressed in running clothes - Nike shirt, shorts, and shoes. 80’s fashion.


Breathe in. Breathe out.

Go.

A54
EXT. NIKE HQ - MORNING
Drone onto headquarters. Three cars in the lot.

INT. NIKE HQ - BULLPEN - DAY
Sonny and Strasser wander the empty office. It’s the weekend. The entire building seemingly empty.

SONNY
I like this place better when it’s empty. What does that say about me?

They come to the cubicles encircled by the modest ring of offices that make up the Basketball Division. It seems even bigger when empty.

STRASSER
If this doesn’t work... Our jobs are gone. Our checks are gone.
SONNY
You can get another job. What I do
can’t be put on a resume.

STRASSER
You’re very convincing Sonny.

SONNY
That’s my job.

STRASSER
But it’s dangerous because I listen
to you and it makes me feel like,
“yeah that really sounds right.”
But I also know sometimes people
are just completely and totally
wrong. I mean, someone really sold
the emperor on “let’s attack Pearl
Harbor.”

SONNY
Are you likening yourself to
Hirohito?

STRASSER
In a way.

Rob heads toward the working conference bunker.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
Have you heard the new Springsteen
song, Born In the USA?

SONNY
Everyone’s heard that song, Rob.

They wander in to the conference room.

INT. NIKE HQ - BUNKER CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sonny sits down. Strasser paces to the window. There are
bushes out the window. Someone’s dog on a leash takes a LEAK
against the window.

STRASSER
Yeah. I play it on the tape deck in
the car every morning to get
psyched up. I sing it. Really loud.
And I feel so good about America
and all the... freedom.

SONNY
I can imagine.
STRASSE
But this morning I listened to the words. It turns out it’s not about being proud at all. Like not in any way. It’s about how a guy comes back from Vietnam and can’t get a job. But I was really singing it, enthusiastically. With completely the wrong idea.

SONNY
It happens.

STRASSE
We now make eighty percent of our shoes in South Korea and Taiwan. I think I should be ambivalent about that.

SONNY
Maybe.

STRASSE
To be honest, I’m really not. In the divorce the judge only gave me Sunday afternoons. Just, you’ll be a father at the park for four hours every Sunday. That’s the only time I see Avery now, Sonny.

SONNY
I know.

STRASSE
She’s getting so she’s not used to me. She’s only seven so... I started bringing her a free pair of Nikes on Sunday. And, uh, that’s kind of what she looks forward to about seeing me, to be honest. So I bring her shoes so she will love me. She probably has sixty pairs by now-- but those shoes make me mean something to my daughter. If Phil shuts this division down, I am ashamed to say I would still pay for her Nikes, even if Phil made money and they were made in Korea. I don’t want to do that. I want my daughter to love me. I want this job. And you’ve been a little cavalier about this risk. And taking us all with you.
Sonny sees this.

SONNY
This is the best chance we have. If we want to be successful we have to take risks.

STRASSER
Spoken like a man without a seven year old on Sunday afternoon.

SONNY
Yeah. I... I’m sorry.

STRASSER
It’s okay. That’s why I brought up Avery. I think I see what you’re doing with this.

SONNY
It’s just a shoe, Rob.

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

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

A CUPCAKE. A single candle in the top.

SONNY
Happy birthday, Strass.

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

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

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

Peter leans against the door.

PETER MOORE (CONT’D)
We’re ready.

Springsteen, “Glory Days.”

INT. NIKE HQ - SHOE LAB - CONTINUOUS

Sonny and Strasser follow Moore into the lab, Strasser still carrying his cupcake.
PETER MOORE
It’s your birthday?

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

PETER MOORE
Well... Here it is, this is the mock up but the shoe will look like this.

The guy’s see the shoes and react. They’re really impressed. We don’t see the shoes.

SONNY
Wow.

STRASSER
I have to say. It is actually beautiful.

PETER MOORE
Life is short, art is long. It has the logic of water. It’s natural. Like the shoe was always here. Before any of us. Like it always existed.

SONNY
Right, let’s get prototypes processed immediately.

58 OMITTED

A58 EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT, VFX, ADIDAS HQ - DAY

A giant monolith temple dedicated to purity and sporting excellence.

Scorpions, “Rock You Like A Hurricane.”

59 INT. ADIDAS HQ - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

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

And there’s a lot of them. John Fisher and his team along with the entire Dassler family. A small army.
We still don’t see Michael’s face.

HORST DASSLER
Michael, you’re the next generation. You don’t want to be grouped in with Magic and Bird. You belong in our stable of athletes.

They show Michael SHOE PROTOTYPES.

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

DEOLORIS JORDAN
What color could the shoes be?

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

DEOLORIS JORDAN
The Bulls colors are black and red.

JOHN FISHER
Well, Mrs. Jordan, we’re a family company. Black shoes or colored shoes... could send the wrong idea. Not to mention... black is banned in the NBA. You’d get fined every game.

DEOLORIS JORDAN
Who makes the final decision?

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

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

KATHE DASSLER
Yes, that’s right.

HORST DASSLER
It is collaborative though.

DEOLORIS JORDAN
Collaborative?
JOHN FISHER
Well, hang on there... collaborative may not be the right description.

HORST DASSLER
No, that’s what it is. A group decision.

EXT. NIKE HQ - NIGHT

Phil’s car pulls into a close up of the license plate that reads “NIKEMN”.

EXT. NIKE HQ - OFFICE WINDOW - SUNDAY NIGHT

We see Mount Hood hovering in the distance and lower down, rotating and panning to reveal the window into PHIL’S OFFICE. The light is on. Drapes closed.

INT. C SUITE HALLWAY - COUCHES - SUNDAY NIGHT

Phil walks into the C suite hallway. Finds Sonny sitting on the couch.

PHIL KNIGHT
Like it up here?

SONNY
These are the only comfortable couches in the building.

PHIL KNIGHT
Where’s Rob?

SONNY
Getting something to eat. It’s not stealing if the cashier is gone.

PHIL KNIGHT
You’ve been here all weekend?

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

PHIL KNIGHT
Well, it’s a big company, Sonny. We’re far past the days of needing everyone to work through the weekend.
SONNY
It was like the old Nike days.

PHIL KNIGHT
What would you name it?
SONNY
Name what?

PHIL KNIGHT
Our Michael Jordan Line.

Sonny looks at him, “does this mean we’re doing it?”

PHIL KNIGHT (CONT’D)
If we’re going to make him the offer we’re planning to make him then we damn well better have a Michael Jordan Line.

SONNY
Well, there’s an idea that--Pete thinks it should be called Air Jordan.

Phil doesn’t look thrilled.

PHIL KNIGHT
Eh. I don’t know. Maybe it will grow on me.

SONNY
Seriously?

PHIL KNIGHT
Yeah.

SONNY
Full budget?

PHIL KNIGHT
Full budget.

SONNY
How’d you come to that solution?

PHIL KNIGHT
I went for a run.

INT. NIKE HQ – BREAK ROOM AREA – NIGHT

Sonny sits with Strasser, Howard, Phil and Peter. Meeting prep. The night before. Eating popcorn and chips and junk food raided from the company store.

SONNY
So I’ll meet the Jordans out front.
I’ll bring them up.

(MORE)
SONNY (CONT’D)
Howard then you want me to pass
them off to you to talk about--

WHITE
Yeah probably best to let me talk
about my role down the road and
then we’ll go to Rob with his
ting.

SONNY
Phil, you’re going to come in seven
minutes after the meeting starts.

PHIL KNIGHT
Shouldn’t I be there from the
beginning...?

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

STRASSER
Might seem like he’s not a priority
for the CEO of the company...

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

PHIL KNIGHT
He’s right.

STRASSER
Sure, no. I mean it’s not that I
don’t see his point...

SONNY
Let’s print and bind the shoe
designs.

PETER MOORE
How many?

SONNY
One.

PETER MOORE
Really?
SONNY
Yup. Just one. You diminish the value the second you have multiples.

Strasser nods. He’s right. Again.

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

PHIL KNIGHT
(looking around)
I like it. I hear we have a video?

SONNY
Do we have to show it?

STRASSER
Marketing put good time into it.

Phil looks at his team.

PHIL KNIGHT
You ready?

SONNY
I think so.

HOWARD
Hell yeah.

PHIL KNIGHT
I’ll see you in seven hours and twenty five minutes.

INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

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

SONNY
What’s up?

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

SONNY
How are you feeling?
STRASSER
Same way I did seventy-two hours
ago. I think you’re fucking crazy.
And I’m now 45 instead of 44.

SONNY
Other than that?

STRASSER
Other than that, I think we’re
good.

Hold on Strasser. Waiting to say something. Searching.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
Sometimes the most you can do is
all you can do.
(beat)
You’re not in this alone, you know.
Howard is key. And... I’m a
marketing guy. I have a few moves.

Sonny looks at him.

SONNY
Oh you have a few moves?

STRASSER
You’ll see. Little hook shot off
the glass.

SONNY
Now I’m looking forward to that.

A61  INT. SONNY’S CAR - NIGHT  A61  *
Sonny drives home from Nike HQ.

62  TIME LAPSE
The Weather Girls, “It’s Raining Men.”
The sun rises over Nike.

63  EXT. NIKE HQ - DAY
Sonny waits outside in the parking lot.
He stares up into the sky. The bright sun shining. He watches
a plane high in the sky. Just a dot from where he’s standing.
It floats through the air in a straight line, as if it was being pulled by a string.

He breathes in. Breaths out.
A WHITE LIMO PULLS UP.

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

Deloris and James next.

SONNY
You made it.

JAMES JORDAN
Long time no see. You still got that phone in the car?

SONNY
Had to return that whole operation.

JAMES JORDAN
Damn shame.

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

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

We see Sonny, Deloris, and James looking at MICHAEL JORDAN (but from OTS so Jordan is in soft focus foreground only. High speed angle on Sonny, looking at Michael. He’s here.

A63

INT. NIKE HQ - LOBBY - DAY

Sonny escorts the Jordans through the lobby.

64

INT. NIKE HQ - BOARDROOM - DAY


SONNY
(to Strasser, sotto voce)
Where the fuck is H?

Strasser has no idea. No one panic.
SONNY (CONT’D)
Hi. Welcome. This is a big day. The beginning of something big. I hope.

The family looks at him expectantly. He seems unsure.

SONNY (CONT’D)
So, Michael, Mr. and Mrs. Jordan, how was your flight?

JAMES JORDAN
Fine. We had Arby’s at the airport.

STRASSER
You didn’t fly them here yourself, Mike?

Horrible lame joke. Strasser knows it. He points to the sign.

STRASSER (CONT’D)
Not gonna ask if your wings are tired... We made a sign....

Sonny looks at him. He’s kind of blowing it already. WHITE enters in a hurry.

WHITE
Sorry I’m late. I had these guys from legal that told me the best hamburgers were close by. But a Portland close by is longer than you think...

The Jordans smile.

SONNY
Ma’am this is Howard White.

He isn’t who she expected.

DELORIS JORDAN
Mr. White.

White smiles.

WHITE
Mrs. Jordan.

DELORIS JORDAN
How do you like it here?

Howard greets Michael and his father.
WHITE
First time I came out here I didn’t know what a Nike was. Couldn’t find Oregon on a map for a million dollars.

DELORES JORDAN
Do you like it here?

WHITE
I’m getting used to it. First day I came out. It’s pouring down rain, I’m searching in the car for an umbrella. I look up, its people going out there running in the rain. And they know its raining. I had my suit on, it was pouring rain, white folks going for a run! For real, man. And they don’t have Arby’s close by. But I found a church I like and some good people. I even took up cycling. I know. Crazy for a black man. You better watch out before we send your son home playing badminton.

She smiles at him.

DELORES JORDAN
I’m sure there are worse things.

WHITE
Well, I help out with that too. Help our young men make wise choices. Tiny says “Howard White is the angel on your shoulder when the devil is telling you all the stuff you shouldn’t be doing.” They may not do what I say, but I guarantee you they gonna listen. Or we gonna find out the hard way.

They share a look. This is not at all lost on her.

DELORES JORDAN
That can’t be easy.

HOWARD
You know men, we foolish without someone to help see things right. I work with big Mo Malone now, so whatever trouble Michael tries to get in won’t be anything that I can’t handle.

(MORE)
HOWARD (CONT’D)
(looks at Jordan)
But we have fun too.

JAMES JORDAN
A young man needs both.

HOWARD
(low)
And you need someone to complain to. That’s me.

He smiles at them. We see why Howard is so important to the company.

DELORIS JORDAN
This is my son, Michael.

We see White over Jordan’s back, he greets him. They hug. They take their seats.

Throughout the scene we never see Michael’s face. Just out of focus raking shots across the front or overs that feature the group pitching him. But here is no mistaking he is the focus of everyone’s attention.

SONNY
Take a look....

The AJ1’s. They look even better in person. High cut leather. Pristine condition. The red and black almost radiating. The color blocking giving the appearance that its made of individual pieces.

The Nike swoosh is displayed prominently, and toward the top sits the Air Jordan logo. The shoes look at once timeless and like they’ve been sent from the future.

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

There is a beat while they all look toward Jordan for his reaction.

MICHAEL JORDAN
Bulls colors.

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

PETER MOORE
I know you like the shoes low to the ground.

(MORE)
PETER MOORE (CONT’D)
We skived the cushioning down so you’ll be as close to the floor as possible. We can tailor them however you like.
(off Jordan, nodding)
The shoe will be designed specifically for you. We’ll build it off a cast of your foot.

STRASSER
What do you think?

JAMES JORDAN
That shoe is red and black.

STRASSER
Yeah.

DELORIS
You have to wear white in the NBA.

STRASSER
Says who? Adidas?

JAMES JORDAN
I thought the NBA had a rule on color?

SONNY
They do. We’re going to pay the fines. They want it all white. And fuck ‘em. Excuse me. We’ll pay the fines. Every game.

PHIL gives a knock at the door and walks in.

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

SONNY
Phil, I was just telling Michael that we’re also willing to pay whatever fines he incurs as a result of our shoe’s design.

Phil looks at Sonny. Not happy but sticks with the plan.

PHIL KNIGHT
Great. We have a video?
STRASSER
We do. I just thought the Jordan’s
might be interested in how we see
the future at Nike, how we would
market Michael as a person, not
just another guy wearing someone’s
shoes.

He hands out MAGAZINES. He has MOCKED UP Time Magazine,
Newsweek Magazine, Sports Illustrated, all with Michael on
the cover and headlines like “MVP” and “Jordan flies on Air”
as well as sports illustrated player of the year.

The family looks them over with interest.

White passes his own magazine, Sports Illustrated swimsuit
issue with Jordan on the cover...

WHITE
(kidding)
There ain’t no limit over here at
Nike. You can do anything..
(more serious)
We believe Michael can represent
more than just a basketball player.
Hell, you can find them anywhere.
They cheap. You looking at a busted
up one right here.. But Rob wants
to really market our players. That
hasn’t been done before.

Deloris smiles. White smiles at her and Mr. Jordan.

PHIL KNIGHT
Okay, let’s roll the tape.

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

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

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

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

Sonny looks around. He looks to White who subtly shakes his
head, “This ain’t it.”

From behind we see Jordan lean back and yawn.

White looks at Sonny. They share a look. It’s not working.
SONNY
I’m sorry...

Sonny gets it. He stands up. Hits the lights.

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

PHIL KNIGHT
Sonny...

SONNY
Let’s stop with the bullshit.

Sonny looks right at Jordan.

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

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

SONNY (CONT’D)
I’m going to look you in the eyes and tell you the future.

INTERCUT FOOTAGE OF MICHAEL PLAYING – HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

SONNY (CONT’D)
You were cut from your high school basketball team. You willed your way to the NBA. You’re going to win championships. It’s an American story. And that’s why American’s will love it.

INTERCUT FLASHES OF THE FUTURE:

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

SONNY (CONT’D)
People are going to build you up, god are they going to. Because when you’re great, and new... We love you.

(MORE)
SONNY (CONT’D)
Man, we build you up into something that doesn’t even exist. The entire nation is going to say they want to be like a black man from rural North Carolina. You’re going to change the fucking world.

SONNY (CONT’D)
They are going to lay you low. (gambling book) And that means you have to try to be that thing, all day, everyday. Some days that burden will be heavier than you can imagine. (different section) The need to be the greatest, when it becomes more than a compulsion, can eat at you from the inside. It becomes a hole some people can never fill. (different) A lot of people can climb that first mountain. It’s the way down that breaks them. The burden is just too much to carry. The question is, when you’re at your lowest. When you’ve been humiliated. When you don’t know who your friends are or who to trust. When you feel like the only person in the world, what will you do then? Can you summon the will to fight on through all the pain and the heartbreak and rise again? Are you, Michael? It will be the defining question of your life. And I think you already know it. That’s why we’re all here. A shoe is just a shoe until somebody steps in it.

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


SONNY (CONT’D)
But you know what? When they’ve built you as high as they possibly can... they’re going to tear you back down. They’re going to say, alright let’s find out what’s wrong with you. (MORE)
SONNY (CONT’D)
It’s the most predictable pattern
with fame, we build you into
something that doesn’t exist and it
makes us feel small so we find your
flaws and try to rip you to shreds.

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

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

SONNY (CONT’D)
This person that we built into a
God isn’t a God, and that makes us
feel better about ourselves,
because we’re not Gods. That’s how
it works. We do it again and again
and again.

Coming out of retirement. The “I’m back” press release.

The second three-peat. The celebrations. The trials. The
champagne.

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

SONNY (CONT’D)
A shoe is just a shoe until
somebody steps into it, then it has
meaning.

(MORE)
SONNY (CONT’D)
We all want to touch greatness and we all need you in these shoes, not so your life has meaning, but so that ours do.

Sonny looks around the room.

SONNY (CONT’D)
That’s all it is. Everyone at this table will be forgotten as soon as our time on this earth is over. Except for you. You are going to be remembered forever. Because some things are eternal. You’re Michael Jordan... and your story is going to make us want to fly.

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

Sonny places the shoe on the table.

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

(he slides stapled paper across the table)
This would be the largest endorsement the company has ever made.

FALK
We’re expecting others to bid in a similar range.
PHIL KNIGHT
Yes, thank you, Mr. Falk. My point stands: Nike has been in search of a basketball star, and we believe you are that star, Michael.

DELORES JORDAN
Well... thank you, Mr. Vaccaro. (she looks around the room)
Mr. Knight. Mr. Strasser. Mr. White. (smiles)
Thank you.

WHITE
Call me any time.

He hands her his card. Sonny does the same.

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

Sonny catches their eyes on the way out. Nods.

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

Sonny is just standing there. Almost in a daze.

STRASSER
Where did that come from?

SONNY
I don’t know.

PHIL KNIGHT
I think we got him.

STRASSER
I do too.

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

INT. SONNY’S CAR – NIGHT

Sonny drives home after the Jordan meeting.
EXT. CONVENIENT STORE - ADJACENT STREET - NIGHT

Sonny walks down the street, away from the store, holding a bag of groceries. His beeper goes off and he grabs it, runs back up to the payphone in front of the store, hurriedly puts in a quarter.

SONNY
Hello. It’s me.
(beat, it’s about something else)
Oh, okay. That’s fine. Any word from the Jordan’s?
(beat)
Call me as soon as you hear anything. You have the home number too?
(they have the home number)
Okay great. Thanks.

He hangs up the phone. Looks out for a beat, walks back down the street towards home.

INT. SONNY’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sonny sits pensively by the phone. No more tapes to watch. Nothing to do but wait.

INT. SONNY’S APARTMENT - LATER, NIGHT

The phone is in the foreground. Sonny is asleep.

INT. SONNY’S CAR - NIGHT

Sonny drives, waiting for a call.

EXT. NIKE - DAY

Sonny enters Nike HQ, gets out of his car and walks in.

INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY

Those same eyes, now startled awake by...

THE RINGING PHONE.
Sonny picks it up.

SONNY
Hello?

It’s Howard calling from a pay phone.

WHITE
Sonny.

SONNY
Howard? What’s going on?

WHITE
Yeah I just heard... Adidas matched the offer.

SONNY
The 250?

WHITE
And a car.

Sonny sags.

SONNY
You’re kidding me.

WHITE
Nah, man. I’m sorry. I was talking to James today and that’s what he said, I don’t know that Michael has accepted it yet.

SONNY
Uh huh.

WHITE
..I wanted to give you the heads up in case you need to make some moves. Move the spend around.

SONNY
No. I mean, this was the move...

Sonny trailing off... disappointment sinking in. It’s over.

WHITE
Look, I’m sure you’ll hear from Falk soon.

SONNY
I’m sure he can’t wait.
WHITE
I’m sorry, man.

SONNY
Right.

They hang up. Sonny's sits back and it sinks in. It’s over.

He stands up and looks around. All the people in the basketball division doing their jobs, oblivious that they are about to lose them. He looks through the glass in his office window and can see into Strasser’s office. His heart sinks for his friend. He fucked this up. Strasser looks over at him and smiles.

The phone rings at his desk. He sits down, readies himself.

SONNY (CONT’D)
Yeah, David. I heard.

DELRIS
Mr. Vaccaro?

Sonny sits up, he knows it’s real, it’s his mother. She’s calling to tell him no herself.

INT. JORDAN HOME, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Intercut with her at home on the wall phone in the kitchen.

SONNY
Mrs. Jordan.

DELRIS
I have some news for you.

SONNY
Just do it.

DELRIS
You didn’t expect me to call?

SONNY
Typically I would hear from Mr. Falk, but it’s a pleasant surprise, I promise.

DELRIS
I told Mr. Falk I would take it from here.
SONNY
I have a lot of respect for that.
Thank you very much.

DELRIS
We’re going to accept your offer.
The 250 in salary guaranteed
(eyes roll, her son got
what he wanted)
and the shoe is going to be named
for Michael and our family.

Sonny stands up. What??!!

SONNY
What?

DELRIS
Yes.

SONNY
Really?

DELRIS
Yes, Mr. Vaccaro... Don’t sound so surprised.

SONNY
This is a very good choice, Mrs.
Jordan, you won’t regret this--and
let me give you my personal
commitment--

DELRIS
I’m not finished,

Sonny’s heart in his throat.

SONNY
Excuse me. Go ahead.

DELRIS
We’re willing to accept your deal
and commit right now with one minor
provision.

SONNY
Name it.

DELRIS
It’s nothing really, I mean, it’s
so obvious I assume it’s omission
from the term sheet was a clerical
error.
SONNY
I’m sure it was.

DELRIS
Michael will also earn a percentage of the revenue from the sale of each shoe that is sold.

SONNY
I’m sorry?

DELRIS
Oh no, not all Nike shoes. Just the ones with his name and likeness on them.

Sonny is stunned, floored. It’s impossible.

SONNY
Oh, Mrs. Jordan, it doesn’t, uh, these deals don’t work that way. I understand your assumption but the athletes earn a licensing fee, in this case obviously a groundbreaking fee. But they don’t participate in the gross sales of the actual shoe. (Sonny going into rambling and panic)

Nike is a public company. Just the precedent alone they can’t afford to disrupt the entire industry. That wouldn’t—that’s not possible. That’s not how its done. They don’t do it that way. There are a whole other set of economics around how shoes are manufactured and relationships with retailers who set their own pricing... It’s very complicated. It’s not realistic.

DELRIS
Yes, I’m sure it’s quite complicated.

SONNY
This is cleaner for you and your family. This way he knows exactly what he makes every year, and he doesn’t have to worry if Nike never sells a single shoe.

DELRIS
That’s not his concern.
SONNY
Uh, huh...

DELORIS
His concern is that in order for the shoe to be meaningful, in order for young people, many of them not of real means, to want to go out and spend the money they worked all week, or two weeks, at the mall for, Michael is the one who has to create the meaning in that shoe. His name is on that shoe.

SONNY
We think that will actually be a benefit to him, his likeness gets marketed by Nike--

DELORIS
No. It won’t. His likeness. His name, are not meaningful in any way to Nike unless he scores forty points a night. Every night. Unless he beats Hakeem for rookie of the rookie of the year, makes the all-star AND all-NBA team

SONNY
That would be quite exceptional, Mrs. Jordan. But this is the NBA. These are the best of the best.

Sonny’s head shakes. This lady is enamored by her son and blinded to reality. She’s going to blow this.

DELORIS
And he needs to be better. He needs to lead the whole league in scoring...and steals...

SONNY
That’s never happened.

Sonny’s face. That’s never happened...

DELORIS
It will happen. He will win championships. Multiple championships. I know my son. all star selections, all Star MVP, defensive player of the year--
This is getting into fantasyland. Sonny dies inside, she’s too far gone. This won’t work.

SONNY
Ma’am, with respect, the defensive player of the year is Sidney Moncrief. You can’t be Magic and Michael Cooper.

DEloris
But if he does he deserves to be compensated for that. And if he doesn’t you don’t pay a dime. Isn’t that what you people are betting on. One athlete will become so special everyone wears his shoes. You eat, we eat. That’s all he’s asking.

SONNY
It’d a fair point. But it’s not how business works. They invest the capital, they see the reward. That’s how it is.

DEloris
Maybe that needs to change. And if he does what I think he’s going to do, what you think he’s going to do and what he knows he’s going to do. It won’t be the Nike shoe company promoting my son. I promise you. It will be the other way around. And if that’s the case, he deserves a piece.

She makes the kind of sense people make, in Sonny’s mind, that people make who understand life but not the business they’re dealing with.

SONNY
Mrs. Jordan, I understand what you’re saying. I actually agree with it. But that just isn’t how it goes in this life. People like your son...people like you and me...people who work for a living. We don’t ‘participate’ in anything. They don’t let us own anything. We take the best we can get. This is a great deal. The biggest we’ve ever offered anyone by far. He could blow out his knee next week.
DEBORIS
I agree this business is unfair. It’s unfair to my son. It’s unfair to people like you. But sometimes a person comes along who is not only so extraordinary that they might force those reluctant to part with some of that wealth to do so—not out of charity—out of greed, because he is so very special. Even more rarely, that person demands to be treated according to their worth because they understand what they are worth.

SONNY
Or their mother does.

DEBORIS
My son is going to change the way people see your shoes. If they have appeal in the parks and on the streets, then the rest of the country will want to wear them too. Which might make your job easier, too. So you aren’t trying to sell jogging shoes to people for whom the very notion of running out of choice is absurd and offensive. This is North Carolina. This is America. Black people have to save their energy. Because if we need to get somewhere in a hurry, we don’t have the luxury to jog.

INT. NIKE HQ – C SUITE – LATE AFTERNOON

Sonny comes walking down the long hall toward Phil who waits on the couch by his office. He sees Sonny, rises and heads to meet him.

PHIL KNIGHT
What happened?

SONNY
We didn’t get him.

PHIL KNIGHT
Why not? I heard you were closing the mother.
SONNY
Adidas matched. We have to do better.

PHIL KNIGHT
More money?

SONNY
No. I’m sorry, Phil. I thought...

PHIL KNIGHT
He wants a piece of the shoe.

Sonny shakes his head.

SONNY
The gross revenue, everything with his name on it.

PHIL KNIGHT
Correct me if I’m wrong Sonny, but I’ve gotten the sense you really believe in this guy.

SONNY
Of course I do.

PHIL KNIGHT
Well, what’s the point of hiring a basketball guru if you don’t listen to what he has to say?

SONNY
The board would never go for that. It’s never been done. You’d be putting yourself in a bad spot. The board could remove you.

PHIL KNIGHT
If he is who you think he is, he’ll be worth every penny. Let me worry about the board.

Sonny has never heard this from Phil.

SONNY
It’s a big risk for you.
PHIL KNIGHT
You’re remembered for the rules you
break. Go close the deal.

Sonny regards Phil and turns to go.

PHIL KNIGHT (CONT’D)
Hey Sonny.

He turns back.

PHIL KNIGHT (CONT’D)
I’m the guy who built this company.

SONNY
I get it, Phil.

INT. SONNY’S OFFICE – DAY

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

DEBORAH JORDAN
(from the phone)
Hello?

INTECUT

SONNY
Mrs. Jordan. Is Michael there?

INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE – KITCHEN – DAY

DEBORAH JORDAN
Yes.

SONNY
I’ve spoken with our CEO.

DEBORAH JORDAN
And.

SONNY
The Nike corporation is going to
accept your terms and offer Michael
Jordan a direct revenue share from
the sale of every single shoe with
his name or likeness on it.
Anywhere they are sold in the
world.

DEBORAH JORDAN
Congratulations.
SONNY
Thank you.
(beat)
Can I speak to Michael.

DEBORAH JORDAN
Yes. I think it’s time.

INT. SONNY’S OFFICE - DAY

Sonny finishing his call with Deloris.

SONNY
Can I speak with Michael?

Beat. He smiles.

SONNY (CONT’D)
I’ll hold.

He waits a long beat. We hear a voice on the other end. A familiar voice, if younger...

VOICE
Hello?

SONNY
Hello, Michael. Welcome to Nike.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN AREA, SEEING SONNY THROUGH THE GLASS - SAME

Sonny is talking animatedly to Michael. We don’t hear what they say.
INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - DAY

Sonny has his feet up.

FALK
At the buzzer Sonny. At the buzzer.

SONNY
What can I say. I love the suspense.

FALK
Percentage of sales?

SONNY
I wouldn't lie to you, David. I hear your lawyers are on six figure retainers.

FALK
They’re on a cap. And just so you know, Adidas was never gonna match a percentage. No one was. Thought you were the kind of guy who liked to know when he got a move put on him. Growth mindset.

SONNY
I think it might work out well for everyone. What is Adidas doing now?

FALK
Pivoting. Going to Mel Turpin.

SONNY
Quite the pivot.

FALK
He’s not a client.

SONNY
I see.

FALK
How’s Phil doing? It’s a big step.

SONNY
He’s good. Big steps is how he built this company.

(beat)
You better get me on speed dial for the next five years?
FALK
Please, Howard will take over with
Mike and you’ll be gone in a year.
No more rabbits to chase.

SONNY
You never know. That’s the thing
about rabbits. They make more.
(beat)
Well, I would say it’s been a
pleasure doing business with you,
David but it never really is.

FALK
As it should be. I don’t do this to
make friends, Sonny. I don’t have
friends. I have clients.
(alt:)
That’s what makes me a great agent.
I don’t have friends. I have
clients. When I sell this business,
I’ll be a rich man. I’ll eat alone,
but I’ll be rich and so will my
clients-- then I’ll worry about
friends.

SONNY
Call me the next time you have a
once in a generation talent.

FALK
I’m looking at signing Ewing, you
like him?

SONNY
Patrick Aloysius Ewing. Immigrated
from Jamaica at 13, in 1975, moved
to Auburn street in Cambridge
Massachusetts. Never played
basketball until Mike Jarvis
recruited him at Rindge and Latin
and they won three straight D1
titles. That’s the kind of player
who should be wearing Nikes. And
after the deal we just made you can
sign anyone you want. You’re
welcome.

FALK
You’re welcome, Sonny. You should
be thanking me for coming up with
the name for the shoe.
SONNY
Air Jordan?
FALK
Yeah.
SONNY
No. Pete came up with that.
FALK
What??

Sonny hangs up. Smiles.
INT. PHIL KNIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY

Phil lies prone on the couch beneath his framed rules poster. Sonny enters. He looks at Phil.

SONNY
We’re closed.

Sonny places the contract on Phil’s desk.

PHIL KNIGHT
Congratulations.

SONNY
You okay?

PHIL KNIGHT
Yeah. I’m focusing on my breath.

SONNY
Why?

PHIL KNIGHT
I had a panic attack. I’m doing a forgiveness mediation for myself.

SONNY
What did you do?

PHIL KNIGHT
I think we may have set a precedent that will make sports marketing ten times more expensive.

SONNY
It’s also possible it might pan out.
PHIL KNIGHT
Yeah.
(beat)
Fuck it. Too many cows. If we ruin the business, at least we had fun doing it. Felt like the old Nike days.

SONNY
You know I thought it was pronounced “Nicky” the first time I saw the word.

PHIL KNIGHT
I really had a strong feeling we should call the company Dimension Six. Think that would have been successful?

SONNY
Naming it after the God of Victory probably has more appeal to athletes than sci-fi.

PHIL KNIGHT
We only did that because the consultants told us people like four-letter words.

SONNY
I like four letter words.
(beat)
What was the swoosh supposed to be?
PHIL KNIGHT
I have no idea.

(beat)
I paid Carolyn Davidson thirty five dollars for it in 1971.

SONNY
I heard you didn’t like it?

PHIL KNIGHT
I said it would grow on me.

SONNY
Phil, no one else would have hired me. That’s the truth. I appreciate it.

PHIL KNIGHT
You’re a brilliant guy, Sonny. And you have courage. That’s what you do here. We need that. I think.

SONNY
Thank you.

Sonny smiles a little, starts to walk out.

PHIL KNIGHT
It’ll be fine. We’ve never sold more than three million on a shoe. He’s one guy. How much can it be?

Sonny leaves the room. Phil sits alone, reflecting.

TITLE CARD:

THE AIR JORDAN SHOE SOLD $162 MILLION IT’S FIRST YEAR

Phil takes a shot with the nerf basketball. Bricks.
TITLE CARD:

To this day, Air Jordan brings in over $4 billion a year in revenue to Nike.

DISSOLVE

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Sonny back at the convenience store.

A BOX OF WHEATIES....

Michael Jordan is on the cover. Holding Nikes.

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

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - LATE DAY

Sonny is dressed in... sweatpants? And a drab gray Nike sweatshirt?

He’s going for a run.

He takes off. Breathing heavy. Faster. Faster.

Sonny stops running, sweating, huffing and puffing.

EXT. JORDAN HOUSE - LATE DAY

A car carrier shows up with a RED MERCEDES 380SL. Deloris walks out and sees it.

EXT. JORDAN HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

Deloris sits on the front porch.

INT. ADIDAS HEADQUARTERS

Strasser works for ADIDAS.

INT. NIKE SHOE LAB - DAY

Peter Moore is working on the “Jumpman” logo. Phil Knight looks at it like it won’t work.
INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

David Falk eats dinner alone at a table for two.

TITLE CARDS CONTINUE:

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

Rob Strasser left Nike in 1987 to serve as CEO of Adidas America. Phil called it a great betrayal. He died on October 30, 1993 at 46 years old. The funeral was attended by thousands, including his daughter. Phil Knight didn’t show.

Howard White now serves as the Vice President of Sports Marketing for the Jordan Brand, and is one of the most respected and well-liked individuals at Nike.

WE SEE THE AIR JORDAN MUSEUM, IN CONTRAST TO ADIDAS
Sonny was fired from Nike in 1991. He went on to work at Adidas with Strasser, where he helped court another once-in-a-generation talent... Kobe Bryant.

Michael Jordan is believed to have earned more than half a billion dollars annually in passive income from the sale of Air Jordan Nikes.

And he’s worth every penny.

END