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Concussion

By Peter Landesman

1.
OPEN ON EXTENDED TITLES, A CUT ASSEMBLY OF HOME MOVIE AND TV

FOOTAGE:

- 1
1) Rhinelander High, Wisconsin. 1970. Rockwellian Americana: football cheerleaders, full stands in tribal green & white, convoys of yellow buses. Then-
- 2
2) A teenage MIKE WEBSTER playing for the Hodags. Biggest thing on the field, an unstoppable machine. Now-
- 3
3) Mike has broken his arm, holds up his cast, big smile, proud warrior. Then-
- 4
4) Mike is 22, wearing Pittsburgh Steelers practice uni, first day in camp. Alone against the mountainous men, a hazing. Infamous "nutcracker" drill - percussive hits like car head-ons, gun-shots. Coaches screaming: "Who's a man?! Who's tough?! Who's gonna hit somebody!?"
- 5
5) Webster - now 27, thicker, less joyful - wins ABC Wide World of Sports' "Strongest Man in Football" contest. Then-
- 6
6) Footage of the interior game. Steelers vs. Somebody. Webster vs. The World. Men as big as walls, and when Webster hits his, shovel-sized hands clap his ear-holes. Lightning bolts through his body, face in paralytic shock, and now-
- 7
7) Webster showers in post-game confetti winning his fourth Super Bowl ring. Shoulder-presses the Vince Lombardi championship trophy. His countenance primal. Now-
- 8
8) Back to that hit: Webster's helmet knocked off, left arm briefly hangs numb. Somebody's screaming, "That's it! Now that's how you gotta hit him!" And now-
- 9
9) A suddenly old-looking Webster roughing it through the "nutcracker". This time steamrolled by a new young Steelers' bad-ass, bearded, mountain-sized. Then-
- 10
10) The hit again. Webster getting up slow. Through his haze,

hears:

HEAD THE BODY WILL DIE! Now run it again!" Now we find-

11

11) Webster after a game, older, wandering off the field. Now-

WEBSTER (OVER)

(intoning)

This Hall of Fame class of players

is a tremendous group. Tremendous

people. Not perfect people-

12) Webster is 45 but looks 60. Delivering his Hall of Fame

speech in Canton, OH--

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 2.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

Not people who are pretentious or

whatever. Real people. And that's

what the game of football is about.

And more manic, rambling scree. The game he loved. The owners

and coaches. CUTS to crowd - family, players - embarrassed,

wanting this to end.

Then it does. Titles end. Music ends. We cut to black, and-

MAN SINGING (PRE-LAP)

(Debarge's 'I like it')

I've been thinkin'/'bout you for

quite a while/You're on my mind

everyday and every night/My every

thought is you, the things you

do/Seems so satisfying to me/I must

confess it, girl-

(voice big, melodic if not

great, continuing as we

come up to--)

13 EXT. PITTSBURGH - ESTABLISHING - DAYBREAK

The rust-belt wakes. Iron bridges like spokes of a wheel.

Wrecked fallow mills, reclaimed by nature. The massive brand-

new grounded UFO that is Heinz Field, where the Steelers

play. The converging three rivers aflame all the way to the

picket fence of Allegheny Mountains beyond.

TITLE:

MAN SINGING (OVER)

Ooh...and I like it/You send chills

up my spine every time/I take a

look at you/Ooh...and I like it-

(now we go into--)

14 INT./EXT. BENNET'S CAR (MOVING)/PITTSBURGH

A blue Mercedes E320 sedan and find BENNET OMALU, 35, shamelessly and sweetly singing.

BENNET:

I like the way you comb your
hair/And I like those stylish
clothes you wear/It's just the
little things you do/That show how
much you really care-
(singing his way through-)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 3.

The Hill (ramshackle ghetto). Then Shadyside (leafy wealth).
Then the Strip (industrial hipsterville)--

BENNET (CONT'D)

Like when I'm all alone with you
You know exactly what to do-
Over a span of iron into a downtown of metal and glass-

BENNET (CONT'D)

Ooh... and I like it/You send
chills up my spine every time/I
take a look at you/Ooh... and I
like it/Ooh... and I like it-
(and--)

15 EXT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - PITTSBURGH

Bennet pulls up beside his car's silver twin. Same make and
model. In the shadow of a Victorian stone monolith chalked by
steel-mill soot. Itself in the shadow of a cloverleaf of
humming freeway. And Bennet gets out. And we see-
He's incongruously - exquisitely - dressed. Tailored suit.
Crisp shirt. Expensive tie (Presidential knot). Down a ramp
into a gaping basement, receding down a dark tunnel, we-
HEAR - IN PRE-LAP - PEOPLE SINGING (badly) "HAPPY BIRTHDAY,
Happy birthday to you--"

16 INT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - PITTSBURGH - MORNING

Four TECHNICIANS celebrating a heavysset man's 50th. Cupcake
scrawled, "Happy Birthday Joe!" Balloon bouquet, a candle.
The break room. With a window letting out on the slabs. Where
a shitbox TV plays Wheel of Fortune.
We're in the POV of someone watching. The figure coming into
focus in f.g., quarantined, isolated-
It's Bennet. Standing - in scrubs now. Watching the others'
lips moving, laughing. Now grabbing portable CD player, and
back to-

BENNET :

(pausing at the party)

Gracie, may we begin, please?

(and turns into--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 4.

INT. AUTOPSY CHAMBER - MORNING

Soaring tiled chapel-like chamber, floors sloped toward drains. Three steel slabs with fresh corpses in various states of disrepair, four more in bags against the walls. While in the b.g., DR. CYRIL WECHT, 60's, in scrubs, steps back from a slab to let a TECH finish up. Bennet and Wecht meet in the middle of the room--

BENNET :

Good morning, Cyril-

As Wecht pats Bennet on the shoulder, moves to table to fill out forms. Bennet checks the clipboard-

BENNET (CONT'D)

(checking the clipboard)

Rachel Green first, please.

GRACIE - early 20's, blue ribbon (matching her uniform) twisted through her hair - goes to what was a pretty WOMAN, like her, early 20's. Still dressed for last night's party.

GRACIE :

Full or partial, Dr. Omalu?

Bennet reviewing the girl's file. Police report. Holding up her driver's license. Roots around in her purse.

In b.g., prepping his own table, is DANIEL SULLIVAN, 50. Chief Pathology Supervisor. Bald, dark pouches under his eyes. Steelers stuff under lab gear. Countenance of an ill-humored butcher.

SULLIVAN:

Open-shut O.D.-suicide. Full room today. We need to cycle them through.

Bennet, moving slow, ignoring him, over the girl's face, as if listening.

BENNET:

I need your help, Rachel. We're in this together. Tell me what happened to you.

And a hand on the body's forehead, another over the heart. He opens her eyes. Stares into them. Connection.

SULLIVAN :

Oh here we go.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 4A.

WECHT :

Danny, c'mon. Let him do this thing. I hired him for a reason.

(to Bennet)

I need to talk to you. Come see me in my office when you're done-

BENNET :

Full autopsy. We'll need the tissue dissection station.

Sullivan stops. Glares from his table. As a TRAINEE TECH, 25, rolls a trolley over.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 5.

BENNET (CONT'D)

That's not mine-

Gracie fetches a different trolley. Brand new knives still in plastic. Scalpels. The instruments longer, more delicate.

GRACIE:

(sidebars the trainee)

Dr. Omalu uses different stuff. He makes less of a mess-

As Bennet sets the volume on his CD player-

BENNET :

Let's undress her, please.

And feels the fabric of her shirt. The quality. The pattern.

TECH #1

(measuring head to heel)

Sixty-six-and-a-three-eighths.

BENNET :

Let's please wash the body.

And as the Trainee reaches for a Brillo pad, Gracie hands Bennet a sponge. And he starts carefully swabbing the body himself. Pats it dry. Lovingly. As if dabbing a baby.

GRACIE :

(to the trainee)

He likes to do it himself.

(as--)

Bennet puts on head phones. Through his ears, and ours, come the opening strains to Teddy Pendergrass' "Love TKO".

TEDDY PENDERGRASS (OVER)BENNET

Lookin' back over my years/I Bone saw, please-guessed,
I've shedded some
tears/ Told myself time and
time again/ This time I'm
gonna win-

JUMP TO:

him, shoulders, elbows. We know but don't need to see-

TEDDY PENDERGRASS (OVER)GRACIE *

Think I'd better let it Liver nine-hundred fifty-two
go/Looks like another love grams.

T.K.O.-

JUMP TO:

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 6.

TEDDY PENDERGRASS (OVER)BENNET

Takin' the bumps and the Small tissue container.
bruises/Of all the things of Freeze me a liver sample,
a two-time loser--please, Gracie. *
And lifts for the bone saw.

JUMP TO:

to Gracie as if a fresh loaf of bread.

BENNET (CONT'D)

(Gracie takes dictation--)

Possible causal relationship
between early head trauma and self-
medication leading to narcotics
abuse and overdose-

SULLIVAN :

(from across room)

You're not her shrink, Bennet-

BENNET:

If I know how she lived, I'll know
why she died.

ANGLE on a window letting out on the chamber. Wecht standing there watching, shirt and tie, cinching the knot, turning for the stairs, as-

TEDDY PENDERGRASS (OVER)

Just tryin' to hold on, faith is gone/It's just another sad song-

JUMP TO:

is everyone else's). Bennet's pristine. Until some small fleck spray lands, and--

He immediately slips off his plastic smock. Gracie - knows him - slips a fresh one on.

TEDDY PENDERGRASS (OVER) (CONT'D)

Takin' the bumps and the bruises/Of all the things of a two-time loser/See I try to hold on, my faith-

Now silence. Body reassembled. Bennet's fingers resting on the girl's hand. Feeling for spiritual pulse. On Bennet's face, peace. As Gracie zips up the body bag. And Sullivan glares-

BENNET:

Careful, Daniel. One day I might be rushing through your autopsy.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 7.

(and throwing the usedknife into 'hazardous waste'--)

BENNET (CONT'D)

18 OMIT

19 INT. WECHT'S OFFICE - ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - DAY

Sits across from CYRIL WECHT, Chief Medical Examiner. 60's, celebrity pathologist: array of pictures with Elvis' body; JonBenet Ramsey's files; at the JFK assassination hearings.

Both in suit and tie. Wecht's eating a bagel. Pulls a bottle of Johnny Walker from his drawer and pours a couple.

WECHT :

You know the reason you're not back in Nigeria?

BENNET :

I remind you of you.

WECHT (CONT'D)

Only less handsome.

Wecht motions to Bennet's collar. Something there. Bennet brushes it off.

And we realize: they are in identical suits.

Except - Wecht points - to Bennet's chest pocket-WECHT

(CONT'D)

I don't have any. What the hell are they for, anyway? Just fill up
with schmutz-(

nods at autopsy chamber)

What the hell's going on in there?

BENNET :

I'm doing my work. I'm fine.

WECHT :

You're not fine. Danny hates your guts. I've never seen anything like it.

(pause)

You take too much time, Bennet.

BENNET :

The dead are my patients. I treat them with respect.

WECHT :

Treat them however you want, but do you have to talk to them? Maybe just talk
to them in your head while you're - you know - working-(

MORE)

*

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 8.

WECHT (CONT'D)

(Bennet's giving nothing)

And we talked about the knives.

You're still throwing them away.

They're expensive. This is

Pittsburgh. We're a public agency.

BENNET :

Would you want me to cut open your
mother with the knife I used on a
serial killer?

WECHT :

Don't tempt me. I'd probably
request it.

Wecht sighs. Bennet's not wrong. But still--

WECHT (CONT'D)

Danny may look like a butcher,
smokes three packs a day, but he's
one of life's unpleasant
necessities. You'll probably do his
goddamn autopsy soon-

BENNET :

That's what I told him.

WECHT :

I know you did. He told me. Why are
you antagonizing him?

(and looks at him)

You need a girlfriend. You have to
touch someone alive once in a
while. Living women are a pain in
the ass. But occasionally they're
amazing.

(--)

So maybe just a little less of an
artist? Be yourself, just play the
game a little, okay?

(as he slides across a
thick file--)

BENNET :

(can't do it--)

I have exams next week.

WECHT :

Death row case. The guy's being
railroaded. A thousand dollars for
you.

Bennet looks at him.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 9.

BENNET:

How do you become a professional
expert witness?

WECHT:

It's not a profession, it's a
hobby. You and I have jobs, right?
So instead of watching baseball -

or playing bridge with my wife - I do this. Besides, by the time your balls are hanging as low as mine, you better be expert in something.

BENNET :

You're the best, Cyril.

WECHT:

Well, if you don't piss everyone off, you're going to be better.

And Bennet leans into crime scene photos, police and forensics reports. Young woman ripped and bloodied.

20 INT. BENNET'S OFFICE - COUNTY CORONER - NIGHT

Bennet in his shitbox storage closet re-fitted as an office. (We clock the high-school quality microscope he's been given. The crappy ancient computer. All his framed degrees stacked on the floor; no room to hang even one)

He roots in his pocket for a small rusty crucifix, sets it on his desk, and settles in amidst boxes of files. Crime scene photos. Bearing down into the paper with his machine-like focus.

Then stops. Closes the file. Gets up, reaching for his coat- Now, OVER this, in PRE-LAP, we start to HEAR the infinity thud of contempo-dance, and we cut to-

21 INT. STATIC (DANCE CLUB) - PITTSBURGH, PA - NIGHT

8,000 sq. ft. of throbbing university jocks, yuppies, model wannabes. Celo lights strobing to Kylie Minogue.

CAMERA FINDS BENNET flush to a speaker, gripping a Heineken. Fastidiously dressed even here, pressed jeans, buttoned polo. Good with rhythm, willing the bass and music to wash through. CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 10.

But a man apart in every way: he's black, but no one else here is. Doesn't notice, doesn't care. Just grooves solo to the mathematics of the music. His eyes close, and- We MUTE and go in there. His head. Where there's nothing but limbic throb. And disconnect. And so peace. His face placid. Happy. HOLD a long beat, then-

22 IT'S 3AM

And we've gone ravey electronica. Bennet's moves liquid. More of that peace. HOLD on him in his solo bliss, then cut to--

23 INT. BENNET'S CONDO - NIGHT/PRE-DAWN

EYES FOCUSED like cameras on the crime scene photos from the death row case. Spread across a kitchen table.

BACK TO REVEAL Bennet, there, still in club clothes. The notes he takes calligraphy-neat. Bachelor pad sparse. Microscope on the table. Forest of text books. Squared and aligned, like his-Closet. Shirts and suits precision-hangered by color. A row of ties pre-knotted. Shoes lined up like soldiers. Now-Back to Bennet. At his computer. Which we see has a Pope John Paul II screen-saver. Pope's watching him. Watching over-Bennet's searing focus. And then-And Bennet is finally asleep atop his bed. Then-

24 INT. RECEPTION - LAW FIRM - DAY

Pale marble. White leather appointments. A sprawling view of Pittsburgh. The antiseptis of influence and success.

WE FIND BENNET alone amidst the furniture. Briefcase on his lap.

JUMP TO SAME AN HOUR LATER. Bennet hasn't moved. One of the PARTNERS - MR. CROCKETT - sticks his head in.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 11.

CROCKETT :

(ignores Bennet)

You sure Dr. Bennet hasn't come through? He was supposed to be here an hour ago.

BENNET :

I am Dr. Bennet Omalu.

CROCKETT :

Doctor Bennet? Omalu?

(Bennet stands, and--)

RECEPTIONIST :

I'm so sorry, Mr. Crockett. I thought he was here for the clerk job.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LAW FIRM - DAY

Partner leads Bennet to a conference room. Huge table covered in files and laptops. A half-dozen ATTORNEYS huddle waiting.

SCARBOROUGH :

(looking up, confused)

Where's Cyril?

CROCKETT :

This is Dr. Bennet Omalu.

BENNET :

I work for Dr. Wecht.

(after a pause, you gotta
be kidding me--)

SCARBOROUGH :

Our guy's gonna be put to death in
thirty days, and we were supposed
to get the Hail Mary expert
witness, and Cyril sends us this?
No offense.

BENNET :

(a smile, none taken)

Your client didn't do it.

SCARBOROUGH :

We know that.

BENNET :

You may know. But I can prove it.

(and we cut, and--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 12.

26 EXT. INDUSTRIAL RIVER BANK - DAY

WIDE of a weed-strewn empty lot. A king-cab Chevy pick-up in
the lee of abandoned construction. Side windows blown,
replaced with garbage bags.

As a Harley bike ENTERS FRAME crossing to the pick-up, cut to
27 A REAR-VIEW MIRROR.

In them, eyes, slightly mad, trying to recognize their own
reflection. They fill the screen, then we WIDEN TO-

28 INT. CHEVY PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

MIKE WEBSTER, 50 but looks 70. Unwashed. Hair stringy.

Granular thickness everywhere, forehead barnacled with scars.

Fingers mangled in a permanent curl, as if gripping a ball.

Surrounded by soiled clothes and Ding-Dong wrappers. Crucifix
dangles from the mirror.

Piles of lined yellow paper. Covered edge to edge in scrawl.

An equally massive MAN dismounts the bike: 6'8", 320 lbs:

JUSTIN STRZELCZYK (Strel-zik), 36. Heavy-bearded, plaid
shirt, overalls. A giant hippie.

STRZELCZYK :

Webby, hey man, love your digs!

(no response)

Webby, it's Jugger!

(then)

Mike. It's Justin.

(Webster turning his big
head, no recognition)

I'll just sit with you a minute?

And slips behind the wheel. Smells like ass. On the passenger

seat:

WEBSTER :

(awakening to where he is)

Where is this?

STRZELCZYK :

This is Ohio. Off some freeway.

WEBSTER :

Ohio's got the best truck stops.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 13.

STRZELCZYK :

But this ain't even that. This is --

I don't know what this is.

Strzelczyk picks at the yellow paper. Starts to read. Then.

Reaches for Webster's knee.

STRZELCZYK (CONT'D)

My brother. Been looking for you.

Pam said I might find you here.

(which taps Webster into
momentary focus)

WEBSTER :

Juggers.

STRZELCZYK :

We're all worried about you.

And takes a wad of toilet tissue dipped in ammonia, puts it
to his face. Eyes flare -- "Don't do that" -- "Keeps me
awake! Don't want to fall asleep!" -- Strzelczyk grabs for

the wad -- "What the -- Mike!" -- two tree-trunk arms shovel-
hands slap at it-

WEBSTER :

Don't wanna fall asleep don't wanna
fall asleep can't fall asleep-
A glimpse of the mess of Webster's mouth: teeth glued back
in, gums bloody.

STRZELCZYK :

You gotta let me take you back.
(Webster can't remember)
You called an audible, Mike. You
took off.
(pause; then)
I heard you sold your Super Bowl
rings. Your rings, man.
Webster non-responsive. Then gets out of the truck. Agitated.
Can't get the words out. Strzelczyk gets out his side, comes
around. Right up into Webster-
STRZELCZYK (CONT'D)
Pam is your wife. Garrett, your boy-

WEBSTER:

(announcer voice)
--was so ugly when he was born his
momma carried him around upside
down for a week, thought he only
had one eye!
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 14.
Laugh line. But no one laughs.

STRZELCZYK:

(squeezes Webster's hands)
Mike. My knees are shot. I retired.
I'm done. I just wanted you to
know.
(then; afraid)
What happens when Mike Webster
falls asleep?

WEBSTER :

He remembers.

STRZELCZYK:

I'm starting to forget things,
Webby. I'm hearing myself say this
stupid crap to my kids. I almost
pushed Keana into a wall, man. I
never touched a girl like that.
Webster looks at him. Then getting back into the truck-

WEBSTER :

Don't give up, son!
(Strzelczyk leaves a roll
of hundreds, walks)
Finish the game and we'll all be
winners!
(Strzelczyk gets on his
bike and--)

A28 EXT. STRZELCZYK HOME - PITTSBURGH SUBURBS - DUSK
Big rangy house of a pro athlete. Strzelczyk playing guitar
on his porch, some mournful melody. Soft voice incongruous
with his giantness. Flanked by his SON, 9, DAUGHTER, 6.
Car pulls up. Wife, KEANA -- 30, thin, angular face, the
opposite of Strzelczyk -- crosses to him with groceries.
KEANA STRZELCZYK
He really sell his rings?
(he stops playing--)

STRZELCZYK:

That wasn't Webby. Webby's gone. I
don't know who that was.
(and back to--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 15.

INT. CHEVY PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

The plastic bags taped to the windows breathing in and out
like a bellows.

Webster failing at sleep. Stretches across the trash. Then
fetal. Now sits up. Everything hurts. The mosquitoes rage.
Can't find stillness. He grips his head. Searing hot pain.
He reaches for a Taser. Charges it. The prongs jack up. A
loud crack, like a gunshot. Primed and ready.

He's sweaty. Desperate for sleep now. Pushes down his pants.
Thigh flesh already burnt. Charred in places.

Brings the Taser to his own meat -- doesn't even flinch --
triggers -- CRACK! -- blue flash. And Webster's bulk is rag-
dolloed onto the floor of the truck, and we cut to black-

OVER BLACK, in PRE-LAP -- RAP RAP RAP -- the crack of metal on window glass, then-

30 INT./EXT. CHEVY PICK-UP/PARKING LOT - HOSPITAL - MORNING
Webster - hideously unclean, mouth a cesspool - wakes in an entirely different location. Forehead-down into the steering wheel. Security Guard, 60, knocking at his window. He opens-

SECURITY GUARD :

Mike Webster, right? Iron Mike?

Webster isn't entirely sure. Of that, or how he got here. Looks up to see he's parked in front of medical offices. The guard thrusts his electric bill at him.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

Can you sign this? My wife's gonna.

Freak. Out.

Some part of Webster remembers what to do. He scribbles something. Then-

31 INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

TIGHT ON A SURGEON peering through magnifiers into the sheeted window into an open skull. Fingers probe, snip, suture with the precision of a watch repair. The brain a living breathing seeping organism. Now surgeon's done. And slips down his mask, and we've met DR. JULIAN BAILES, 46. A NURSE - "Dr. Bailes" - whispers in his ear, and-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 16.

INT. OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN, DEPT OF NEUROSURGERY - CONTINUOUS

Bailes - still in scrubs - following his ASSISTANT to his door. Louisiana Methodist. Wrapped tight. Big gold watch. Steelers Superbowl ring on his hand. Office draped in family, God and football: bible; framed photos of southern-belle WIFE, five KIDS; Bailes as college linebacker; shelf full of helmets: Steelers, Cardinals. Everything else is Steelers: framed photo of LYNN SWANN midair. Others of Bailes on game-time sidelines. With the Lombardi Trophy. Under the same post-game confetti as Webster.

To find Webster pacing in his manic shambles-

WEBSTER :

What do I do I am freakin
overwhelmed-

BAILES :

We're going to get you some

help. What are you taking?

BAILES :

What about Dexedrine? The Prozac? Klonopin? Still taking all that?

BAILES:

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

Ritalin.

*

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

Superglue.

Call Pam. Tell her we found him.

Tell her he's worse.

WEBSTER BAILES (CONT'D)

You -- you were my doctor--Team doctor, Mike. I was everybody's doctor.

Webster punching the side of his head. Bangs his fists against his prodigious chest.

WEBSTER :

Fix it! In here! In here! I'm dying in here!

Bailes' Assistant is in with a loaded syringe -- "Haldol 50 cc's" -- Webster sweaty -- waving his arms. Bailes injects. As the giant body pours into a chair--

BAILES ASSISTANT *

**

What am I missing? Tumor? *

**

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 17.

BAILES :

His scans are normal-(
and as he stares at
Webster, stumped--)

INT. COURT ROOM - PITTSBURGH - DAY

The gallery standing room only. The accused, THOMAS KIMBLE 40, hulkish in his orange jumpsuit.

CROCKETT:

(to the court)

The state has asked, after a

lengthy trial, a death sentence,
and two appeals, why would we learn
something new about this case from
you?

(then)

Dr. Omalu. Do you have a medical
degree?

BENNET:

Yes. From the University of
Nigeria, in Enugu, Nigeria.

(and then)

I did my residency at the Columbia
University Medical School in New
York. I have masters degrees in
Public Health and Epidemiology. In
addition, I am a certified
physician executive, and a
specialist in Emergency medicine.
And I am of course board certified
in Forensic Pathology, Clinical
Pathology and Anatomic Pathology.
My specialty is Neuro-pathology,
the examination of the brain-

Crockett about to move in-

BENNET (CONT'D)

So sorry-

(not done)

And I am completing my MBA at
Carnegie Mellon University.

CROCKETT:

While working as a Medical Examiner
at the Allegheny County Coroner?

BENNET :

Yes.

(and)

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 18.

BENNET (CONT'D)

And, oh yes, before I arrived in
America, a masters in Theory of
Music from the Royal School of

Music in London.

(big easy smile incongruous
to where he sits, then)

To answer your question, my
specialty is the science of death.
I think more about why people die
than I do about the way people
live.

(room quiet, awestruck)

I very carefully re-studied the
interviews with the defendant, Mr.
Kimble. And of course the autopsy
reports on the victim, who was
killed quite brutally with bare
hands.

Reaches for a stack of blown-up photos. Top photo: hands
shredded, bone-crushed. Grey with death.

BENNET (CONT'D)

Hands of the deceased. Broken
nails. Blood under the nails. Bite
marks. Contusions. The hands of a
woman who fought wildly for her
life - and lost.

Now a set of male hands. Splashed in blood.

CROCKETT :

Are these hands not Mr. Kimble's?

BENNET :

They are indeed Mr. Kimble's.

CROCKETT :

Doesn't that suggest that the state
has the right man?

BENNET :

I thought so. Until I heard hour
two-hundred seventeen of Mr.
Kimble's police interview. He was
speaking quietly, and off-mic, but
I clearly heard him say
(reads from notes)

"I don't like blood. When I was a
kid I had a tooth pulled and I

wouldn't stop bleeding. My parents
wouldn't let me play outside
sometimes--"

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 19.

And we REVERSE on the Prosecutor. On the cusp of realization-
BENNET (CONT'D)

I saw no reference to this in any
trial transcript. I got curious.

CROCKETT :

What about?

BENNET :

Hands.

Bennet holds up the victim's hands alongside Kimble's hands.

BENNET (CONT'D)

Mr. Kimble's hands had the victim's
blood on them. But no bruising, or
bites, or scratches.

(--)

I started to wonder if these two
pairs of hands could have been in
the same fight.

(--)

So my mind went somewhere new.

(--)

If Mr. Kimble's family had a
history of hemophilia. His father
said no, and medical records
support that. But there is a strain
of hemophilia -- hemophilia A --
that is not hereditary, and almost
unheard of, so never tested for. I
couldn't think of any other
explanation. I ordered the test.

(and)

Mr. Kimble tested positive for
hemophilia A.

Prosecutor again. The humiliation upon him.

BENNET (CONT'D)

If his hands were the murder
weapon, he would have bled
profusely for a long period of
time. He might have even bled to

death.

(and now)

Mr. Kimble's hands may have touched the victim, to aid her, as he claims, but there is no scenario in which they killed her.

(--)

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 20.

BENNET (CONT'D)

There is no question in my mind that if the state of Pennsylvania executes Thomas Kimble, it will kill an innocent man.

INT. BENNET'S CONDO - NIGHT

Bennet on the phone. After a long pause-

BENNET :

Did you hear what I told you?

(a silence, then-)

BENNET'S FATHER/PHONE (OVER)

(simply)

Have you finished your schooling?

Heavy Nigerian. Weary, perhaps with the time difference.

BENNET :

I will have the MBA completed soon.

BENNET'S FATHER/PHONE (OVER)

And what are you going to do with all your degrees?

BENNET :

Collect knowledge. I need knowledge. To run my clinic.

BENNET'S FATHER/PHONE (OVER)

Your clinic again (?)

(tired of this already)

A clinic requires a physician.

BENNET :

I am a physician, papa.

BENNET'S FATHER/PHONE

You bury the dead.

BENNET :

I help families understand why
people die. I help the living and
the dead.

(a long silence)

I am very good at what I do, Papa.
There is an art to what I do.

(even to himself he sounds
plaintive, and hates it)

And now a long pause. Bennet can hear his father's breathing.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 21.

BENNET'S FATHER/PHONE (OVER)

It is time to leave the classroom,
leave the books. Join the world of
the living. With a wife, children.

Bennet Onyemalukwube Omalu: it is
time to grow up and do something-

(and the SOUND of a phone
being banged down--)

And our eyes follow Bennet's to the wall. Where portraits of
his parents hang. His father imposing; a chieftain's kaftan.
His mother wrapped in loud blazing colors.

Bennet carefully folds a clipping from the Pittsburgh Post-

Gazette:

Slips it into an envelope: "Chief John Donatus Omalu, 90
Secondary School Road, Enugwu-Ukwu, Nigeria". Seals it.

MR. SCOTT (PRE-LAP)

--and you have dominion over all.

In your hand are power and might--

35 EXT. ST. BENEDICT'S - PITTSBURGH - DAY - ESTABLISHING

Sturdy brick cathedral. Massive crucified black saint
broadcasting from the belltower.

MR. SCOTT (PRE-LAP)

--it is yours to give greatness and
strength to all-

36 INT. ST. BENEDICT'S - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Saturday Mass. Black and immigrant congregation of 200. One
by one standing in pews, offering prayers of gratitude.

MR. SCOTT

--Our God, we give you thanks and
we praise the majesty of your name.

FEMALE CONGREGANT

I thank you, Lord, with all my

heart; in the presence of the
angels to you I sing. I praise your
name for your mercy and
faithfulness--

Bennet STOPS. Turns toward that clarion female voice. African
lilt. Beautiful girl. Delicate profile. Bennet stares, then-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 22.

His turn. He doesn't speak his prayer, he sings it in that
big melodic heartbreaking voice-

BENNET:

On the day I cried out, you
answered; you strengthened my
spirit. All the kings of earth will
praise you, Lord, when they hear
the words of your mouth. Though I
walk in the midst of dangers, you
guard my life when my enemies rage.

(as the congregation claps,
feeding off his energy--)

EXT. ST. BENEDICT'S - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Services letting out. CONGREGANTS approach Bennet, shake his
hand, want to be near. PASTOR and CHURCH SECRETARY hunting
for-

FATHER D'AMICO

Bennet! A moment?

We notice - but Bennet wouldn't - two Steelers lapel pins on

his frock:

MRS. SCOTT

We have a new member, a young lady
from Kenya. She came to us a few
weeks ago. She needs our help.

BENNET :

Of course. How much do you need?

FATHER D'AMICO

She needs shelter, Bennet, until we
find her something permanent.

BENNET:

Father. I'm studying, I work long
hours. My books are everywhere--

MRS. SCOTT

What about that studio you sub-let?

Isn't that open now--?

Points out the girl with the clarion voice. PREMA MUTISO, 24.

BENNET :

Who is she?

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 23.

FATHER D'AMICO

She's a nice girl, from Nairobi,
went to a British school. And she
wants to work. We're letting her
tidy up around the church.

(Bennet silent, so--)

We're asking you, because we know
she'll be safe and cared for. I
feel God in you, Bennet--

MRS. SCOTT

You know how this congregation
looks up to you.

(as Bennet takes her in--)

Lovely, isn't she?

(yes she is, and we find
them--)

A37 EXT. ST. BENEDICT'S/EXT. BENNET'S CONDO

Walking from the church to Bennet's - separated by a parking
lot. A strip of generic faux-Americana row-houses. Bennet,
striding fast, slightly in front-

INT. BENNET'S CONDO - DAY

Bennet shows Prema in. All she has in that small bag. They
stand together in his little kitchen.

Her nearness like an electrical pulse. He is awkward. She is
less so. Her first act is to unpack her bible. We take her

in:

BENNET :

What kind of music do you like?

PREMA :

I don't know.

BENNET :

How are you for money?

(no reply)

Need is not weak. Need is need. I
know where you are--
(and hands her some money -
which she at first
refuses)

For anything you might need.
Clothes.

(she gives him a look)
You are here now. You have to be a
better version of yourself.

(MORE)
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 23A.

BENNET (CONT'D)
If you don't know what that is,
pick something and fake it.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 24.
She takes the money. He shows her to an autonomous efficiency
within, "Usually sublet this out--". Shows her a door. Hands
her a key-

BENNET (CONT'D)
There's a lock on your door. No one
can get in. You have your own
bathroom-
(and hands her a key)

She's not moving. She's looking at his crisp suit, shoes.
With a look of bemusement.

PREMA :
What did you pick - to fake?

BENNET :
An older bald white man.

PREMA :
(bemused--)
Why an older bald white man?

BENNET :
(and gets the joke. But
still-)
He is the best at what he does. He
is brilliant at what he does. That
is why.
(she's turns, starts to go,

stops, then--)

PREMA :

I was a registered nurse. At the
Aga Khan Hospital, in Nairobi.

(now Prema takes the keys
and leaves, and--)

INT. FURNACE/INDUSTRIAL RUINS - DAY

Webster barefoot, shirtless, awash in sweat.

Manic pull-ups off the piping of a fallowed iron blaster.
Aircraft-carrier size mountain of steel. His biceps and
shoulders jacked.

Now cradling a cracked pipe. Lifting and snatching it
overhead, ropy muscles taught, palms it chest level. Cleanand-
jerk.

Then crashes the log down. And stares. Paralytic. And now-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 25.

40 INT. CHEVY PICK-UP TRUCK - LATER

Webster sweating in a haze of pain. Piles of notes to self
have grown. Enough of whatever this is and reaches for the
Taser. Pants already off. Eyeing the crucifix dangling-
The heads charge -- CRACK! -- he cooks his thigh. Blasted
against the window. Rag-dolls to the floor. Spasming.
Then all slows. All of him. Every molecule of him exhales.
And we cut to black. And hear a light switch click on, and
we're

41 OMIT

42 INT. BENNET'S CONDO - SAME

Bennet finds Prema in his kitchen, "Oh, you're in here", and
a decluttered home. Chaos of books systemized by subject.
He moves around her awkwardly. She more comfortable than he.
Breakfast awaits. Local fare from "back there". Chapati.
Ugali. He stops. Because-

The microscope has been moved. From table to counter.
And the TV on.

Unclear to him how much he likes any of this.

He eats reading a business school text. Stealing glances at
Prema as she moves around the table, tidying. He is about to
stop her, or suggest, stops himself, as-

We PUSH PAST him to TV NEWS FOOTAGE: Webster's truck.

TV BROADCAST (OVER)

In recent years the dauntless
Webster had abandoned his family,
slipped into financial chaos and

homelessness,-

Then the TV cuts to a HIGHLIGHT REEL of Webster in his football prime, guarding the quarterback like a Secret Service agent. And Bennet grabs the remote, shuts it off-

BENNET :

Look, I don't really watch TV.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 26.

PREMA :

Then why do you have one?

BENNET :

One has a TV in this country.

(then)

I don't usually eat breakfast.

PREMA :

One eats breakfast in this country.

(and clasps her hands in prayer)

Dear God thank you for the gifts you have so graciously bestowed upon me--

Bennet, stunned, watching this, then closes his hands in prayer, as-

PREMA (CONT'D)

Please help us to continue to be deservant of our blessings.

EXT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - PITTSBURGH - MORNING

The lot jammed with trucks and vans, satellite dishes. Dozen REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN.

Bennet's Mercedes finds a spot on the edges of the media circus. Clueless, he heads down the ramp to the basement offloading area.

Where he finds Sullivan and Annie arriving. Sullivan wearing his "Webster/52" Steelers jersey. Gracie's wearing Steelers gold&black strung ribbon through her hair today. In Webster's honor. As they converge-

BENNET :

Who's Mike Webster?

(Sullivan pauses, disbelief, then--)

SULLIVAN:

Greatest center to ever play the game. A true warrior.

BENNET :

What's a center?

GRACIE :

The big guy in the middle.
They tumble inside-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 27.

SULLIVAN :

My kid plays because of that guy.
He wears Webster's number.
Bennet's eyes go to Sullivan's jersey. To the red-white-bluestars-stripes logo of the NFL. Sullivan follows his gaze.

BENNET :

I'm very sorry. I just don't know who he was.

SULLIVAN :

(realizing)
You don't know football. At all.

BENNET :

I don't need to know football.
Now clocks Gracie's ribbons.

SULLIVAN :

I freakin can't believe it's you.
Now Wecht arrives, joins them.

BENNET :

I was put on the schedule for today. I'm on the schedule every weekend.

WECHT :

(dad breaking up the kids)
C'mon, c'mon-
and then they're--)

INT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER

Bennet, Wecht, Sullivan, Gracie and the others huddled, grim, around the slab.

WECHT :

I'm going to have to give a statement.

SULLIVAN :

Let's just do the external.

We're TIGHT ON BENNET. He's in his bubble, reading through the EMT report, medical records. Quick probe. General appearance. Fingernails. Scorched thighs-

BENNET :

He was Tasering himself.
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 28.

SULLIVAN :

The whole town was out of work. He gave us hope when there was no hope, ya know?

Bennet can see inside the mess of his mouth from here.

BENNET :

Full autopsy, please.

SULLIVAN :

Hey c'mon there's no need. To cut this man's body.

BENNET :

I can't figure out what went wrong.

SULLIVAN :

He died. Is what went wrong.

BENNET :

Look at his teeth. He was pulling them out AND SUPERGLUING THEM BACK IN. Why does an apparently wealthy favorite son of this city become self-mutilating and homeless at 50? Cardiac arrest may be how he died,

but not why.

A beat. They're all thinking. Wecht pulls Bennet aside.

WECHT :

What he's saying is there are times when life asks you to leave things alone, and times when you can't.

BENNET :

Do you think he'd want me to leave things alone?

(meaning Webster)

For a moment maybe even Wecht isn't sure.

WECHT :

No, I don't. I never leave anything alone. That's why people hate me.

(--)

Just don't screw it up.

(and leaves, and as Bennet turns to the room--)

BENNET :

Let's prepare the body, please.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 28A.

INT. AUTOPSY CHAMBER - DAY

Bennet - Teddy in his/our ears - at the dissection table.

JUMP CUTS - the unpeeling. The washing. The crevasses, the face. Ritual beyond respectful. Almost tender. Then-

TEDDY PENDERGRASS (OVER)

("If You Don't Know Me By Now")

All the things that we've been through/You should understand me like I understand you-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 29.

Now STOP. Music stops. Bennet staring down at Webster.

BENNET:

(quiet, intimate)

Mike, you need to help me. I know there's something wrong. Help me tell the world what happened to you. I can't do it alone.

SULLIVAN :

(from his desk, over
paperwork)

Heart. Attack.

Bennet performs the Y-incision.

BENNET :

Bone saw please.

BENNET (CONT'D)TEDDY PENDERGRASS (OVER)

Heart weight 327g. Mitral I ain't gonna do nothing to
valve 10.4 cm; Aortic Valve break up our happy home/Don't
7.1 cm; Pulmonary-get so excited-Handing
organs to Gracie one by one-

TECH #1 TEDDY PENDERGRASS (CONT'D)*

Right kidney 143g ... left If you don't know me by
kidney 158g--now/You will never never
never know me-

JUMP TO:

confused. Turning what he's holding upside down and on its
side then over again. Holds it to the light. Dictating-

BENNET:

Regular folds of gray matter. No
mush. No obvious contusions. No
shrinkage or erosion from
Alzheimer's-

GRACIE :

What's wrong?

BENNET:

Hold up the CT again for me,
please.

He's comparing what's in his hands with the pictures. Gracie
holds up the MRI beside the CT.

BENNET (CONT'D)

How old are these?

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 29A.

GRACIE :

Six months.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 30.

Bennet sets the brain down. Stares at it.

BENNET :

This should be a mess. It looks completely normal.

GRACIE:

(paging into the records)

Records say severe head aches, double vision. Voices.

(Bennet looks at her)

In his head.

(--)

Not seeing any documented concussions.

(--)

He did complain of dizziness.

BENNET :

How often?

GRACIE :

Once.

(--)

In eighteen years of professional football.

Bennet takes the file himself. Scans to the signature, team

doctor:

SULLIVAN :

Sign the certificate. Sew him up.

BENNET :

Let's fix the brain.

SULLIVAN :

You know we don't have the budget for that.

Gracie glances at Sullivan. He's standing up. 10 staff have accumulated. Wecht reappears, but stays in b.g..

BENNET :

People do not go mad for no reason.

I'm going to keep looking.

SULLIVAN :

NO!

(and Bennet looks at him a moment, and--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 30A.

BENNET SULLIVAN (CONT'D) *

Danny, you are out of line--You don't speak to me like * that.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15

31.

BENNET :

And I am the pathologist on duty! The pathologist of record!

BENNET :

My hands on this body. If I am wrong I am wrong.

BENNET :

Not you. Me-

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

*

This is not your laboratory!

*

*

*

SULLIVAN (CONT'D) *

**

And you're wrong. *

(loud; big; no one's heard his voice raised before)

Fix! that! brain!

SULLIVAN :

I'll make sure they're not going to pay for it.

BENNET :

I will write my orders for the tests I want.

A long tense beat. Bennet looks for Wecht. Wecht is gone.
He's alone with Sullivan. Then--

SULLIVAN :

You're going to pay for them
yourself.

BENNET :

Please proceed, Gracie, thank you.

(and as he exits, slipping
off his smock)

And proceeds up the stairs-

BENNET (CONT'D)

(to himself; prayerful; he
does that)

He is a child of God, like you. You
are here because other people
fought your battles for you. And
you are still here.

(and enters--)

INT. WECHT'S OFFICE - ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER

Bennet stands in front of Wecht's desk. Wecht, in a suit now,
doing up a tie, reading Bennet's test orders. (We get a
glimpse at the list: Tau -- Beta-Amyloid -- TDP-43 protein --
Ubiquitin -- Alpha-synuclein -- silver staining -)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 31A.

WECHT :

In forty years, I've never
requested a panel of tests like
this. What are you looking for?

BENNET :

There isn't a case, in a book or in
life, where a man that healthy,
went that crazy that young, with no
visible abnormalities of the brain.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 32.

BENNET (CONT'D)

(then)

I don't know. What I'm looking for.

WECHT:

I can tell. It's going to cost you
a fortune.

(then, relenting)

If you have to play hero, just make
sure we both come out okay.

And there it is. Bennet's on his own. And-

47 INT. BENNET'S CONDO - DAY

Prema at the TV. She has new clothes. Jeans, t-shirt.
American. She's watching a special on Webster's career.
Narration of hand-to-hand combats UNDER an elegiac score.
Studying all this. Webster. Football. America.
(Domestic touches have appeared. Pillows on the couch.
Flowers for the table.)

Prema crosses to the refrigerator. Actual food in there now.
Reaches for a Tupperware. Peels the lid, and--

Inside, a bisected half brain. Gray, sinewy. Floating in a
pool of formalin. Label says "Michael Lewis Webster".
She glances to the TV, to A TIGHT of Webster's face. Black
helmet. "52". Fierce eyes behind the cage.

DAUGHTER (PRE-LAP)

Mom, dad's sitting outside again.

48 INT./EXT. STRZELCZYK HOME - PITTSBURGH SUBURBS - DAY

Keana tidying her daughter's bathroom. Pauses by a window.
Sees Strzelczyk sitting in the rain, in the yard.

KEANA STRZELCZYK

Justin you weirdo. You keep doing
that-

She heads down. Stops by the front door. Post-its on the

wall:

to get to higher ground--"

SON :

(coming up behind her)

Daddy made these pictures for me-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 33.

And hands Keana a stack of crayon drawings. Dark forest.
Chaotic sky. Inspired, but apocalyptic. What the fuck? And-
She heads out there. We STAY LONG, from the doorway, as Keana
heads toward her husband. RECEDING IN FRAME until she gets to
him. Their daughter steps into view, watching, as--
She reaches him, and we don't hear what she says, it can't
have been much. Then his massive arm lifts toward her. Stops.
He turns his head toward her. The look on his face. What he

screams.

She stumbles back, what she's seen, slipping drops like she's been shot, and as she scrambles away from him, we cut to-
49 INT. AUTOPSY CHAMBER - ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - NIGHT
Bennet at a dissection table, meticulous, measuring. Alone with a half dozen bodies waiting to be dissembled and solved. Clock says 1 AM. In his ear phones-
DONNIE MCCLURKIN/CD (OVER)

("We Fall Down")

For a saint is just a sinner who
fell down/But we couldn't stay
there/And got up-

Suddenly, Bennet shuts off the music. Turns to listen, as if to someone speaking--

The bodies are dermal shells. Open eyes vacant.

BENNET :

I apologize.

And slips the cover over the microscope. Graveyard shift Tech waves him down.

GRAVEYARD TECH:

You got something today. Left it on your desk.

50 OMIT

A51 INT. CITY BUS (MOVING) - NIGHT

Prema sits bundled in hat and scarf. One of three passengers left (one of them asleep). Near the end of the line.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 34.

51 EXT. STREETS AROUND BENNET'S CONDO - NIGHT

Bennet's car turns a corner as his POV sees Prema step off the bus across the street.

He pulls over, opens the passenger side door. (A lab/slide tray in the seat; he picks it up, makes room.)

BENNET :

(calls out to her)

Hi. It's very late-PREMA

I have a shift now. At a home.

Changing old people. Feeding them.

(and as she shrugs, it's her work-)

BENNET :

Let me take you home.

(and she spots the tray of slides on his lap--)

PREMA :

What's that?

BENNET :

Mike Webster.

(and now we find--)

52 INT. BENNET'S CONDO - 30 MIN LATER

Bennet standing over the kitchen table. Over the microscope. The Webster tray before him. Amidst his medical journals and books. He's still in his coat. Tapping the books back into place. Looks back to-- Prema. Sitting on the floor, who has turned on the TV and is watching football clips on ESPN. Bennet, moderately annoyed, still not used to another live body in his space.

BENNET :

Do you need me to get you a TV for your room?

PREMA :

No, this one will be fine.

The books and journals-- BENNET

You were reading these?

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CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 34A.

She nods, Uh huh. Nonplussed. She has one of them on her lap. *
Occasionally glancing at football. This confuses him. *

BENNET (CONT'D) *

Prema. What are you doing? *

PREMA *

I am studying. *

But what she's really doing is waiting. And giving him space. *

She feels his anxiety. (She feels everything about him.) His *
anxiety is her anxiety. *

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 35.

Now Bennet opens the sleeve o slides. Stares at the them. *

Focused.

PREMA (CONT'D)

(nervous herself) *

What does Iron Mike say?

BENNET :

I don't know.

PREMA *

I can't tell what you are more
afraid of. What you will find, or
what you won't.

Bennet looks at her. Understands. *

He turns to the microscope. Wipes a slide on his sleeve. *

Loads it. Peers. Goes still--*

His fingers calibrating the foci like pianist's fingers, like
delicate multi-jointed spider legs.

But he's not seeing much. Wipes another. Loads it. Not
getting anything he gets up. Stands, thinking. Sits, wipes,
loads another. This one particular slide.

We find Prema studying Bennet now. She's turned off the TV. *

She's waiting, as--*

We're TIGHT ON BENNET'S HANDS. They are now gripping the *
dissection table. He has seen something.*

Another slide. Another. Back to the first. He stands. Sits. *

BENNET :

Oh my god.

(half standing now)

Oh my god what is this? What the
hell is this?

(then)

This is the brain of an 85-year
old.

PREMA :

Iron Mike was 50. Please, can I
see?

BENNET :

(loads a different slide
and steps aside--)

This is what your brain looks like-(
she puts her face to the
microscope and sees--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 35A.

A white snowy field. PUSH IN CLOSER: shapes appear. Cells,
neurons. Faint, clean, pristine. Like snowflakes.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 36.

BENNET (CONT'D)

This is Mike Webster.

(loads the other, and--)

We see ugly reddish-brown splotches bleeding across thepristine snow-field,
drowning the snowflakes alive.

BENNET (CONT'D)

That brown stuff is tau. It's a
protein that moves in clumps calledneurofibrillary tangles. Thetangles
strangle the neurons frominside out.

(how to explain)

Think of it like pouring wetconcrete down kitchen pipes. That'swhat it does
in the brain. Chokes
it.

PREMA :

What does that do?

BENNET :

It turns you into someone else.

Someone you don't know.

(--)

I've never seen a brain like this
in a man this young. I've neverheard of a brain this damaged in
any man.

Bennet goes to the fridge. Pulls the container of brain. A half loaf left.
As he cuts a thin slice-*

PREMA :

What are you doing?

*

*

BENNET :

Testing it again. I have to besure. I have to be completely sure-*

*

*

AND NOW START AN EXTENDED FAST-MOVING SEQUENCE OF CUTS AND DISSOLVES, starting in--

*

53 BENNET'S CONDO - ACCELERATED TIME

With Bennet bent over books and journals which grow and change. Bennet doesn't move, as "Bennet" returns with another box. Then two more. Books and journals multiplying.

"Multiple traumatic cerebral hemorrhages, 1924" --

"Observations on the pathology of insidious dementia following head injury, 1959"--

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 36A.

The sun sinks. The moon moves across the sky. The sun rises.

Bennet still doesn't move, staring at pages.

Now looks up to-

CHRIS BERMAN'S VOICE (OVER)

(play-by-play growl)

Okay, your turn, Tom Jackson!

(MORE)

Who's gonna get JACKED UP tonight?!

(and now WE'RE WATCHING--)

CHRIS BERMAN'S VOICE (OVER) (CONT'D)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 37. CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 37.

54 ESPN MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL PRE-GAME

Bennet before his TV: HOST CHRIS BERMAN and his chorus of three retired PLAYERS. Berman points to former Bronco linebacker TOM JACKSON.

TOM JACKSON :

Well, somebody's going to get jacked up tonight!

(and now we PUSH THROUGH TV and we're 4-walling--)

The animated intro to the segment: "ESPN'S JACKED UP! ...

brought to you by Texas Instruments". Now we're-INSIDE

QUALCOMM STADIUM, SAN DIEGO

TOM JACKSON (OVER)

Rams - Chargers. Quarterback Mark Bulger is going to deliver the ball to Tony Fisher-Rams'

RECEIVER looks back for the ball, is totally decimated by a forearm shiver to the head. The crowd goes nuts-TOM

JACKSON (OVER) (CONT'D)

Donnie Edwards just LEVELS him--!

And the head in SLO-MO seems to break off at the neck.

TOM JACKSON (OVER) (CONT'D) ALL THE ANNOUNCERS (OVER)

(call--)(--response)

Tony Fisher got--JACKED! UP!

(and--) (now BACK TO--) *

55 BENNET'S CONDO. PREMA'S POV OF BENNET AT THE MICROSCOPE
Slides stacked in groupings: Beta-A4 amyloid peptide; CD-68;
GFAP; Luxol-Fast Blue; Tau. Bennet loads slide after slide--
COACH'S VOICE (PRE-LAP)

(screaming!)

Only way to get that player's handsoff you is grab him by the throatand
squeeze -choke him til shit
runs down his leg!

(and now cut to a--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 38.

56 COLLEGE-LEVEL PRACTICE FOOTBALL FIELD

TIGHT on a pair of players. The bigger of the two stabbing
jabbing RAMMING his palm into the throat of the other,
gripping, release, grip, release, over and over until the
other goes down and lies broken. Now we--

Bennet slips into our extreme f.g., taking this in, then
turning, and the field morphs and we-

57 FIND BENNET ON THE PERIPHERY OF A LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL FIELD

Watching fifty 14-year olds doing wind-sprints. Joyful.
They're ribbing each other. Boys. Then. Whistle blows. And
every player unleashes on someone anyone to hit/spear with
the crowns of their helmets. CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! Like
gunshots echoing from all corners. Now-

58 BACK IN BENNET'S LIVING ROOM - TIGHTER ON THE TV

Bennet watching tape of a pro training camp. Lumbering
lineman running laterally to stretch a play. Linebacker
spears helmet into face, to crack jaw and neck. And back to-

59 BENNET AT THE LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL FIELD

It's been 60 seconds. The kids still randomly head-ramming. A
few of them here and there staggering off. Now back to-

60 THE LIBRARY THAT IS NOW BENNET'S CONDO

Every surface stacked with books, journals. "Traumatic
cerebral hemorrhage. Neurology and Psychiatry, 1929."

Bennet's midnight-to-dawn sessions INTERCUT with Prema
watching NFL games. Steelers, Raiders, Dolphins. CRACK!
Bennet glancing only at the SOUND of helmets crashing.

Prema studying the game, the strategy. The quarterbacks
scrambling for their lives, slipping from the clutches of
pursuers, launching passes that float impossibly into the
hands of full-sprint receivers 50 yards away.

PREMA :

(to Bennet somewhere else
in the condo)

Oh wow-(
new fan; as she's clearing
the table)

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 39.

PREMA (CONT'D)

You should watch this, Bennet.

(as he lifts his head to-)

BIG POWER RUNNING BACK (ND college) spins sliding to daylight
outrunning an entire defense as if they are standing still.

PREMA (CONT'D)

It's actually really beautiful!

Bennet!

Of crisp sunny days and long shadows and end-zone glory.

Victory dances. Cheerleaders. Spectacle.

Of big men wrestling in the mud, reaching down to pull up
comrades. Of stands boiling with ecstasy.

There's all that too. And we're back in love with the game-

PREMA (CONT'D)

Tommy Maddox is the most underrated
quarterback in the League!

(because she's watching)

The TV, where the Steelers are winning a Wild Card Playoff
game against the Browns 36 - 33. "No time outs, they have no
time outs left!" And Prema is hooked. While Bennet, inside
his head, goes-

BENNET'S POV/WHAT HE'S SEEING

An ANIMATION OF the deceleration of a football head. Helmet
colliding with a knee. Head halted abruptly. But the brain,
floating in fluid, keeps going, smashing into the inner
skull, as a rubber ball might when smashed by a racquet.

And our animated head - 4-walled - morphs in Bennet's POV
into the armored and caged head of Mike Webster. He's bent
over. The other 20 players vanish, and it's just him and
Bradshaw. Endless repetitions. Hut-snap. Hut-snap. It's a
kind of clinic. This is how it's done. The two of them a
single organism, and BAM! And now-

It's game time, and the field is full, the stands are full,
and Webster is nut-cracked between two defensive linemen. And
there's Webster's rubber-ball brain boing-boinging off the
skull, skull off helmet, helmet off other helmet. And we

REVERSE and we're looking at--

Bennet. Studying the TV. Where there's now-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 40.

62 TV FOOTAGE OF VETERANS STADIUM, PHILADELPHIA

Eagles punter alone in backfield, about to kick. Two Jaguars

special team backs full-sprint from pincher angles-

TOM JACKSON (OVER)

Now I really love this one. Jorge

Cordova and Brian-

The backs arrive same time. Helmets into chest and throat.

Punter, crushed, stiffens, as if Tasered, drops-

TOM JACKSON (OVER) (CONT'D)ALL THE ANNOUNCERS (OVER)

And Dirk Johnson--GOT! JACKED! UP!

(then back to--)

63 BENNET AT THE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD

It's been 90 seconds. Bennet is simply walking away as the

turf is like a battlefield of the exhausted.

THIS WHOLE SEQUENCE STOPS NOW. We slow. We're-

64 INT. AUTOPSY CHAMBER - NIGHT

Clock says 4AM. We're DOLLYING SLOW THROUGH the autopsy

chamber. Silhouettes of fresh bodies on the slabs.

Light spills out of the lab. We follow it to Bennet at a

significantly bigger microscope than he has. Rubbing the back
of his neck.

Prema has put a couple chairs together and is asleep under a
blanket, between Bennet and the corpses. Keeping guard.

Against everything. Her really astounding beauty.

Now TILT UP to Bennet standing over her. Really seeing her

for the first time. Prema stirs. Eyes open huge dark almonds

right up into Bennet's face. He is clear-headed, suddenly.

As if she's heard something. Her eyes shift to a cadaver. Its
perfect stillness.

BENNET :

That is not who they are.

(then; his expression)

I think I found a disease no one

has ever seen. Not once. Not ever.

PREMA :

Isn't that good?

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 41.

BENNET :

It's a terrible disease.

PREMA :

So what do you do? (So what does one do in this country when one discovers a terrible disease.)

BENNET :

I have to be sure.

(but then--)

O.S., the SOUND of a door opening. Footsteps approach. The fluorescent lights bounce on in the autopsy chamber.

REVEALING the row of dead faces, and-

SULLIVAN :

Who's back there?

(Bennet comes out)

What are you doing?

BENNET :

Working.

SULLIVAN :

You're not on the schedule.

BENNET :

I'm using personal time. I needed the microscope.

SULLIVAN :

In here is county time.

Prema appears. Sullivan leers. Her clothes. Her unkempt hair.

He spots the blanket on the chair.

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

You banging prostitutes in here,

Omalu?

Bennet takes three big steps toward Sullivan. Fists clenched.

Prema - "Don't" - slides between them, shoves Bennet back. As

Sullivan walks away-

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

They deport you weirdos for sick shit like that.

And now we rise up to-

65 OMIT

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15

42.

66

OMIT:

67

SOARING GIANT BLACK ST. BENEDICT

Atop St. Benedict's. Arms spread out over Pittsburgh. Now
across the river to-

68

EXT. PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL - UNIV OF PITTSBURGH -
DAY - ESTABLISHING - AERIAL

BIRD'S-EYE POV of the sprawling 10-story complex. Abutting
Pitt's Coliseum-like football stadium. The dual-chambered
heart of the sprawling city of higher learning.

69

INT. ELEVATOR - PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL - DAY

Bennet cradles the box.

70

INT. HALLWAY - PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Bennet walks an endless hallway with a hundred doors, where-
DR. RON HAMILTON - 49, academic, cropped beard - is watching
him approach from his office doorway - "Chairman,
Neuropathology Program, Univ. of Pittsburgh Medical School" -

HAMILTON :

What did you bring me?

BENNET :

I need you to look at this cold.

(as they go into--)

71

INT. NEUROPATHOLOGY LAB - PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

And leads Bennet into his office, digging out the slides.
Bennet steps to the window, looks down on massive Heinz
Field.

HAMILTON:

Bennet.

Relax. I can hear you
breathing.

(another look, then--)

Hamilton slowly lifts his head. Pause.

HAMILTON (CONT'D)

This is a really really terrible
brain.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15

43.

And we SLAM to-

72

INT. HALLWAY - PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Office of "Dr. Steven DeKosky, Chairman, Dept of Neurology".

Out strides DEKOSKY, a fit 55. Pissed-off to be interrupted.

And back to-

73

INT. HAMILTON'S OFFICE - PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL -
PITTSBURGH - DAY

HAMILTON :

Ever met the great man before?

(Bennet shakes, No)

Tough. One of the top brain guys in
the world. Expect two minutes tops.

DeKosky blows in. Gives Hamilton a "this better be good"
look.

DEKOSKY :

That him?

(Hamilton nods)

So you're our prize graduate.

And crosses straight to the microscope. Great focus, long
moment of this. Then-

It's very obvious. And he faces them. In the presence of
something monumental and knows it.

HAMILTON :

Tell him.

BENNET :

That is Mike Webster. The
Pittsburgh Steeler-

DEKOSKY :

(get to the point)

I know who Mike Webster is.

HAMILTON :

Steve. He was fifty.

(and that's the point and-)

DeKosky looks to the window, mentally shuffling through his decades of study, toil, research. The tens of thousands of hours. Then reaches for the phone-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 44.

DEKOSKY :

(into phone)

Cancel the rest of my morning-(

hangs up; then)

You have my attention.

Hamilton nods, Go.

BENNET:

Diving birds hit the sea at 200 MPH, generating 1,000 g-force at impact. Each peck of a woodpeckers produces a g-force of a thousand.

12,000 pecks a day, 85-million times over their lifetimes. Big-horned sheep-

(DeKosky gives Hamilton an impatient look)

HAMILTON :

Bennet-

BENNET:

All these animals have shock absorbers built into their bodies. The woodpecker's tongue comes out the back of the mouth through the nostril and goes around the top of its head. Basically, it's one big safety belt for the brain.

(then)

Humans? Not one piece of our anatomy protects us from those kinds of collisions. A human being will get concussed at 80 g's. The average head-to-head contact on a football field? 120 g's. God did not intend for us to play football.

HAMILTON :

Let's keep God out of this.

And Bennet goes to a white board and draws the S's/O's coach's diagram of football squads. Offense. Defense. The backs. The quarterback. And circles the center--

HAMILTON (CONT'D) BENNET *

**

What's the 'S'? The Steelers. *

**

HAMILTON DEKOSKY *

**

The 'O's--? The 'others'. Obviously. *

**

BENNET :

The others, yes.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 45.

DEKOSKY :

Do you even watch football?

BENNET :

Not at all-

(back to the board)

But I studied Mike Webster's position. The one in the middle.

The most violent on the field. The slaps and the choking, the head as a weapon on every play of every game, of every practice. From the time he was a boy, then a college man, through a professional career. The thousands and thousands of hits that weren't concussions.

Now circles the wide-outs, running backs and safeties-

BENNET (CONT'D)

But these? They are the fastest.

BENNET (CONT'D)

Their speed multiplied by the speed of the men who hit them, and the trajectories at which they hit them, the g-force created - the same as getting hit on the head with a sledgehammer -

HAMILTON:

Slow down. The brain. Get to the
brain part-

BENNET:

(distinctly not slowing)

Mike Webster played eighteen years
of professional football. 90
thousand blows to the head during
just his professional career, by my
calculation.

(and now--)

All this triggered a cascading
series of neurological events that
unleashed killer protein upon Mike
Webster's brain. The tangles
invading and then strangling his
mind from the inside out. Leaving
him unrecognizable, even to
himself.

(--)

And before you ask me why it's not
the same as boxers-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15

DEKOSKY :

Dementia pugilistica-
46.

BENNET (CONT'D) *

**

Why it is not the same is *

**

that when a boxer receives *
this kind of blow, it is once *
in a very long while. Because *
he goes down and he often *
does not get up, and the *
fight is over. It is not over *
and over and over every day *
of every week, week in week *
out, practice or game. *

BENNET (CONT'D)

I don't know the game. I have never

played the game. But I am convinced playing football killed him.

(and)

And there have to be others.

DEKOSKY :

How can you know that?

BENNET :

Common sense. But they're dead. Or lost. Like Mike Webster was lost.

DEKOSKY :

I'm not interested in common sense. The only thing that interests me is science, and science is knowing.

BENNET :

I know from these men's records their doctors think they have early Alzheimer's. Which is statistically impossible. Because it isn't Alzheimer's. It's this. Dekosky sits.

DEKOSKY :

Holy Christ.

HAMILTON :

Steve. It's a billion-dollar finding.

DEKOSKY :

I don't like it. Actually, I hate it. But as a scientist I can't deny it.

BENNET :

We need to tell them. Now.
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 47.

HAMILTON :

The NFL? What, like call them?

BENNET :

Yes.

DEKOSKY :

This is one case.

BENNET :

Men are dying. Right now. Someone is getting divorced. Right now. Someone is arguing. Right now.

DEKOSKY :

Bennet. The only way people are taking you seriously is if you publish. Peer review. Respected medical journal.

HAMILTON :

We'll coauthor, our names with yours.

BENNET :

With all due respect, under normal circumstances, I understand there is a correct way, but-

DEKOSKY :

Slow. Down. Bennet.

(then)

I will back you up, but we do this the right way.

Okay, a breath, gets it-

HAMILTON :

And name this. You're going to have to give this a name.

74 OMIT

75 INT. BENNET'S CONDO - THAT NIGHT

As Bennet slips past Prema's little efficiency, the door opens. Prema steps out. New dress. Flower in her hair.

BENNET :

(awkward)

I thought you were asleep.

PREMA :

How could I sleep? Did they agree?

What it is?

He's overwhelmed. Can only nod, Yes, they understood.

BENNET PREMA (CONT'D)

They are going to publish They? With you?
with me.

*

**

BENNET PREMA (CONT'D)

A medical journal--With you?

And touches his arm. So happy for him she can cry. (And maybeshe does, a little.)

PREMA (CONT'D)

That's so great. Congratulations-BENNET
You are going somewhere?

PREMA :

Yes, with you. To celebrate.

And under a PRE-LAP throb of dance music, taking in the fullbreadth of this woman, perhaps for the first time, then-*

*

**

76 INT. STATIC (DANCE CLUB) - NIGHT

Crowded, loud, sexy. Bennet and Prema awkward by the speakerin the strobing light. Bennet can't connect to the music.

Doesn't really know what to do with her there.

PREMA :

You don't dance, do you?

(he shakes, No, then--)

She's dragging him onto the floor. Circles him, gorgeousfluid dancer and is all about bringing him to life. She is socontagious Bennet slowly forgets all the things that keep himfrom doing more than listen. Until it's the other way around,

and he's putting it out, and moving. Then they're back in77

INT. HALLWAY - BENNET'S CONDO - NIGHT

They're passing her door on the way to his. They stop. He'sunsure. She's not. He says, "Goodnight". She reaches, getshis hand, pulls him in. And on her toes, kisses his cheek.

And that lingers. And then he's taking her face in his handsand bringing it to his. And she's pushing him into his room.

Then it's-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 49.

A77 EXT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - MORNING

Bennet parks his Mercedes. A second one slides next to his.

Identical except in color. This one silver. Wecht gets out.

Like the suits, the cars are the same.

Wecht carrying two coffees, two brown bags.

WECHT:

(hands Bennet a coffee, a

bag, and as they walk

around to the front--)

It's weird to bring women into a

morgue at night.

BENNET :

She's a friend.

WECHT :

You don't have friends.

BENNET :

I have a friend now.

Then-

WECHT :

Sullivan made a formal complaint

against you with the county.

BENNET :

I was working on Webster.

WECHT :

I know. I took care of it.

(--)

What's Webster cost you, anyway?

BENNET :

Twenty-thousand dollars.

(then)

I save. Everything.

WECHT :

How unAmerican.

(then, after a beat) Apparently
it's been worth it. Ron Hamilton
called. Chronic Traumatic
Encephalopathy. Has a nice ring to
it. Why didn't you tell me?

BENNET :

I wasn't going around you. I need
someone with fresh eyes.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 49A.

BENNET (CONT'D) Someone
who didn't want it to be true or
not true.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 50.

WECHT :

I don't like it. But it was the
right thing to do.

(--)

This may come as a surprise, but
I'll never be the one you have to
worry about.

(--)

So what's next?

BENNET :

Publish. DeKosky wants to coauthor.

WECHT :

DeKosky, and--?

BENNET :

Cyril Wecht.

WECHT :

I'm proud of you, kid.

(compares the two cars)

Should've gotten the silver. Blue
shows the dirt.

(and heads in)

INT. SPORTS BAR - PITTSBURGH - DAY

The faces are looking AT CAMERA. Watching the TV behind us.
Nowhere to move. Nothing else to see or hear.

WE FIND BENNET & PREMA in that crowd. Hot wings and nachos.
(Prema has brought along two or three FRIENDS from church.)
And we're watching them watching, and boarding the ride. And
it's loud and really fucking joyful. The game is a drug, a
good healthy one, and we're rollercoasting triumph and defeat
and individual acts of heroism. What is absolutely and
undeniably GREAT about this game. And--

Bennet - this moment - is just one of them. Riding the ride.
But ONE OF THEM. An AMERICAN. He's touching and being
touched. High-fiving and being high-fived.

And then CAMERA TWEAKS past them-

To a face deep in the crowd: Mike Webster, leaning against
the bar, watching his old team. And Bennet is reminded. Of
everything. Now cut to another screen showing the Steelers
game-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 50A.

INT. STRZELCZYK HOME - PITTSBURGH SUBURBS - DAY

Where, in a SINGLE TRACKING SHOT, we pass Keana and the kids
watching in Their Man's "#73" Steelers jersey. CAMERA PULLING
out of the living room, game and kids receding, as we PUSH--
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 51.

Into the bedroom. Where we FIND Strzelczyk. Heavier,
disheveled. Lips moving in mute dialog. Eyes clock his
guitar. Grabs it, wields it like a baseball bat. CAMERA
FOLLOWS BEHIND him downstairs, back into the living room--
KEANA STRZELCZYK

Justin, what the hell are you
doing? Are you serious? Justin
STOP! what is wrong with you WHAT
THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU! -- DO --
NOT -- TOUCH -- THEM!

STRZELCZYK :

I'm getting messages. Evil Ones.
Talking talking talking!

KEANA STRZELCZYK

Are you FREAKIN SERIOUS RIGHT NOW?!

Now explosion of wood and glass as he smashes the guitar into
the wall.

KEANA STRZELCZYK (CONT'D)

(weeping now; terrified)

Oh my god baby what are they
saying, baby, please tell me what
the voices are saying-

STRZELCZYK :

Kill you!

(and now--)

KEANA STRZELCZYK

GET OUT GET OUT GET THE HELL OUT!!!

STRZELCZYK :

I don't know what I'm doing! I

don't know what's happening to me!?

Strzelczyk's looking straight into his little boy's stricken face. Terrified by the terror in his kid. The part of him that knows drags the other part of him out.

KEANA STRZELCZYK

(cuddling the kids)

Baby shh I need you to call 911

right now for me baby and tell them

that daddy is in pain and to come

here right away baby, shh, it's

going to be okay-

And bolting out the door after Strzelczyk-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 52.

SON (O.S.)

(into phone)

My daddy's Justin Strzelczyk the

football player, WHAT IS HAPPENING

PLEASE HURRY UP!

And now PRE-LAPPING sirens -- engines gunning -- police scanners toning, urgent ... now we're--

80 INT. STRZELCZYK'S TRUCK

Eyes in the rear-view. In conversation with someone inside his face. "Webby, what did we do?"

Hanging from the mirror: two pairs of baby shoes. His eyes see those, calm. Now. A moment of repose. Searches the

mirror. There you are. He's crying. He knows what he needs to do. Hands gripping the wheel sure as ever. CUT TO BLACK.

Horns wailing-

BROADCAST/TV (PRE-LAP)

-this is live footage of the

aftermath of a horrific head-on

collision on the New York Thruway -

(and up to--)

81 PIXILATED TV FOOTAGE OF THE NY STATE THRUWAY SPRAYED WITH A VAST SMOLDERING DEBRIS FIELD

The two trucks mere piles of powder. Body bag in the grass.

BROADCAST/TV (OVER)

-KDKA has learned that one of the drivers was retired Pittsburgh Steeler offensive star Justin Strzelczyk, who led police on a forty-mile high-speed pursuit (fades out as--)

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Julian Bailes watching this on his kitchen TV, and we cut to and find-

A81 EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD (UNIV OF LOUISVILLE) - DAY

Bennet standing in the rain/snow, watching the university team finish up practice. A mud bowl. Burpies. Windsprints. Everyone's filthy. Pigs in shit. Looks fun. End whistle, one player breaks away. Stampeding at us. Bennet starts to laugh. This is AMOBI OKOYE, 19 and enormous: 6'2"/300.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15

53.

OKOYE :

Bennet!?! Nwokem kedu?

BENNET:

(big laughter)

You giant American baby! You look like a giant American dirty baby!

Kedu ka mma-mma gi meah?

BENNET (CONT'D)

OKOYE:

O noh na nke Ifeoma?

Eeah. Maalu na oge obuna icho ibia, anom mia, oge obuna.

And big laughter. In his native tongue, and with his cousin, he is more the man of where he comes from. Bigger.

BENNET:

(me and the giant--)

They sent us both to America. To see which one survives. The David and the Goliath!

(and his hands say who is who, and then--)

OKOYE :

You are just a professional student! Do you have time for any other thing?

BENNET :

Superman!

Now Amobi realizes how far Bennet's come. Confused.

OKOYE :

What are you doing here, my cousin?

Did somebody die?

B81 INT. DINER - LOUISVILLE - NIGHT

Bennet and Amobi. Coffee. Untouched. The glee has gone.

Bennet has told him.

OKOYE :

What are the chances?

BENNET :

For your position? They're good.

OKOYE :

You're not even sure of this thing.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 54.

BENNET:

You'll forget your own name. Amobi

Okoye. Can you imagine not knowing

that?

OKOYE :

Who imagines that?

BENNET:

You are part of me. I watched you

be born. I am asking you. Stop.

OKOYE:

I step on the field I always know I

can be hurt. More than hurt-

(and snaps his fingers.

Like that.)

Maybe I play two years then I'm

out. You know what's next? Most of them get fat, bankrupt. They sell cars, insurance (sneakers), I don't know what they do.

(--)

This is my time before that time.

(then the crux of it, the arrogance returns)

They are saying I will be drafted first. The youngest player ever drafted into the NFL. I will cash a check for millions of dollars. Millions just for saying yes.

BENNET:

God didn't put anyone on earth to cash a check.

OKOYE:

Look where I am, Cousin. Look what I am. I'm not going to let anyone take this from me now. Daalu nwanem, agam akpo gi mgbe nmaah abia.

And as we HOLD on Bennet, we cut to-

INT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - PITTSBURGH -MORNING

Bennet WALKING STRAIGHT INTO CAMERA, up the hallway. Peeling gloves, lab coat. (In b.g., the slabs, a pair of upturned feet.)

The Techs - Sullivan - no one's saying a thing. And into-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 55.

His shitbox office. Where a warm bottle of cheap champagne sits on his desk, with a copy of Neurosurgery Journal. A post-it stuck to the neck says: "Enjoy with your new friend. Best, Cyril."

83 INT. BENNET'S CONDO - AFTERNOON

Bennet enters with the bottle, to find Prema studying Bennet's article. With a dictionary. He watches her until she feels him and looks up. Tears in his eyes.

PREMA:

This is very amazing. Now what happens?

BENNET :

(nervous to say it)

I called them.

PREMA :

Who did you call?

BENNET :

The National Football League.

PREMA :

What did you say?

BENNET:

I said I'd be happy to come in and discuss it.

PREMA :

(on alert)

What did they say?

BENNET :

They said they'd get back to me.

(and a hard cut to--)

(SC.84 MOVED TO AFTER SC.87)

85 EXT. 280 PARK AVE - MANHATTAN - MORNING

A MAN carrying a stack of magazines enters a 60-story glass office tower, in the heart of midtown, between two logos: Credit Suisse, and the NFL's shield. And into-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 56.

86 INT. NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE MAIN OFFICE - MANHATTAN

Tracking the man - CHRISTOPHER JONES, 43, African American - through a massive office, through the quiet confidence of a major multinational corporation. To his executive suite. (There are Harvard undergraduate and law diplomas.)

Jones picks Neurosurgery off the top, opens it to the CTE article, and, into the intercom-

JONES :

Get me Elliot Pellman.

87 INT. DOCTOR'S PRIVATE OFFICE - LONG ISLAND - DAY

DR. ELLIOT PELLMAN is absorbed in Neurosurgery. He's 48, shlubby, a bad comb-over. Surrounded by memorabilia for the NFL's New York Jets and the NY Islanders hockey team.

PELLMAN :

(picks up the phone)

I'm just looking at it.

JONES/PHONE (OVER)

Anything to be concerned about?

PELLMAN:

This Omalu looks like a nobody. But
let me get into it.

(and a hard cut to--)

84 INT. KITCHEN - BAILES' HOME - MORNING/SIMULTANEOUS

Bailes at the kitchen table in sweatpants. Breakfast.

Bailes's wife, COLLEEN, 40, slips her arms around him.

Bailes reading a copy of Neurosurgery Journal (open to

"Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) in a National
Football League player" ... Omalu, DeKosky, Hamilton, Wecht.)

COLLEEN BAILES :

What are you reading?

BAILES :

It's about Mike.

COLLEEN BAILES :

I miss Mike.

(brain scans)

Oh god I can't look at that.

(Bailes rubbing his face;

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 57.

COLLEEN BAILES (CONT'D)

looking into the middle
distance, doing the math)

Julian, what is it?

BAILES :

How could I have missed this?

COLLEEN BAILES :

What are you talking about?

BAILES :

If this is really true, it's the

end of football.

(and cut to--)

INT. AUTOPSY CHAMBER - ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - DAY
Bennet, Sullivan, Gracie stand over 300-lbs. of heavily
muscled death. Black. No wounds, no blood.

SULLIVAN :

(looking at the face; grief-
stricken)

Well now, Terry. Ya wonder where
are they now. Now we know.

(for Bennet)

Terry Long. Pittsburgh Steelers.

GRACIE:

(reading hospital report)

Who drank a gallon of antifreeze.

That's not how I'd do it.

SULLIVAN :

I guess these guys only die when
you're working-

BENNET :

What other problems did he have?

SULLIVAN :

Who cares?

GRACIE :

Arrested a few times.

(looking at the report)

Fraud. Federal theft. And wow.

Arrested a lot.

SULLIVAN :

I know what you're doing.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 58.

BENNET :

Drinking antifreeze is the work of
a lunatic mind.

(then)

What position? What position did he

play?

SULLIVAN :

Offensive line.

BENNET SULLIVAN (CONT'D) *

Same as Mike Webster. Webby was a center. Terry played right guard.

BENNET:

(the records)

No recorded concussions. Nine years of professional football. As an offensive guard.

(then)

I need a full autopsy. Same tests as Webster.

SULLIVAN :

You're paying for that, too.

BENNET :

Yes, Daniel. I'm paying for that, too.

(Bennet doesn't even hear it, his eyes already focused on--)

Joseph Maroon-

The signature on Long's records: Joseph Maroon. And now cut to-

JOE MAROON'S COMPUTER IMAGE SMILING AT US, TRIM, TAN, MUSCULAR, HIS TOOTHY GRIN FILLING OUR SCREEN

Pull back to REVEAL we're in Bennet's little shitbox office at the Coroner's. He's at his computer. Before him, the website [www .josephmaroon.com](http://www.josephmaroon.com), the personal site for the Steelers' team doctor. Chief neuro-surgeon of the NFL. The country's premiere specialist in neurosurgery and sports medicine." Bright pastel design, mentorships on longevity and healthy living. The whole thing like an ad for toothpaste & Viagra. All white, now-

PULL BACK again. And our view has become a cottony field. The faint outline of snowflake-like brain cells. Then, from the corner, the seepage of angry rust-brown blood.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 59.

Tau protein tangles. Seeping and strangling everything in

their path. PULL BACK FULL TO REVEAL-

90 INT. BASEMENT LAB - ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - NIGHT

Bennet. It's late. The only other living thing in the building is Prema. In a chair now, by the door, reading with a flashlight.

Bennet's seen enough. Clicks off the table lamp. Just sits slumped in the glow of the instruments and exit signs.

Then, in PRE-LAP, a phone rings, and we cut to--

91 OMIT

92 INT. BENNET'S CONDO - MORNING

Prema picks up the phone, "Hello?". Hands to Bennet. And we-
MAN/PHONE (OVER)

Bennet Omalu?

BENNET :

This is Dr. Bennet Omalu.

MAN/PHONE (OVER)

Listen to me. Football has the best doctors money can buy, and they're saying pro football players do not get brain damage. At all. And people who care about this stuff are supposed to take your word for it? Mike Webster was a pill-popping drunk. And you're an under-educated hack. And you're done, game over.

And looks up at Prema. The line is already dead. He hangs up.

BENNET :

(sarcastic)

I think they called back.

WECHT (PRE-LAP)

Did he really say you're under educated? Have they seen your resume?

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 60.

INT. WECHT'S OFFICE - ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - DAY

Bennet, Wecht, Hamilton.

WECHT :

Well, I got calls, too. The National Football League owns neuroscience. Who knew?

HAMILTON:

(reading from a letter)

"Serious misinterpretation".

"Failure to find". "Absence of
clinical information".

(looks to Wecht, 'help?')

Bennet's at the window. In his hand, an envelope. Wecht and
Hamilton have one too.

BENNET :

What do they want?

WECHT :

Your head on a spike.

HAMILTON :

They want you to retract your
findings.

BENNET :

I don't know what that means.

WECHT :

It means saying you made it all up.

BENNET :

(confused)

Made it up??

WECHT :

They're accusing you of fraud-

BENNET :

(and now totally fucking
confused)

Fraud?? What are they talking
about?? I'm so careful. I slaved
over this-

HAMILTON :

Your reputation will be destroyed.

You won't be able to work.

Anywhere.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 61.

WECHT BENNET *
Good. Good!? *
**

WECHT :

They're terrified of you.

BENNET :

I have to work! My visa depends on it.

WECHT :

Well, what the hell did you think they were going to say, 'Thankyou'?

BENNET :

Yes! I thought they'd be grateful!

WECHT :

What the hell for?

BENNET :

For being told. For knowing.

Bennet paces to the window, confused.

WECHT :

I get it. You think you're being a good American.

(and looks at him; pride and sadness)

Listen to me. The city of Pittsburgh shelled out 233-million dollars to help build its beloved Steelers a glorious new stadium while it was closing schools and raising taxes.

(and snatches the envelope out of Bennet's hand and waves it in his face)

These are not people who want to change the world.

(now waves Bennet's article)

And this isn't some quaint academic discovery stuck in the back of an obscure medical journal. Bennet's article is going to war with the manufacturer of a product that twenty-million Americans crave every Sunday the way they crave water! The NFL owns a day of the week! They're very big!

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 62.

Pause. A long pause.

Bennet turns back to the window, staring out over the carpet of lights. And the bridges. And the river.

And Heinz Field.

HAMILTON :

A pathologist determines cause of death, not discover disease. They'll say Bennet's in over his head, and they'll be right.

WECHT :

Yeah well the world only gets changed by people who are over their heads ignoring people who say they're in over their heads.
(but then--)

Bennet turns back from the window. Face set.

BENNET :

Terry Long.

(beat; what?)

The tests came back today. Terry Long is positive. Football gave him CTE. CTE told his brain to drink a gallon of antifreeze. And then he died.

(then)

I told you. There were going to be more.

(after a pause--)

HAMILTON :

You've done great work. No one's going to blame you if you stopped here. But I'd be lying to you if I didn't tell you how important your next move is.

Pause. Wecht is taking in Bennet, waiting. Bennet and Wecht HOLD a look, then Wecht sees it in Bennet's face-

WECHT :

No one's stopping anything.

INT./EXT. BENNET'S CONDO - DAY

Prema grabs her coat and purse to go out. Pauses by the window. Where she sees Bennet sitting in his car in the parking lot, deep in thought. And we cut to-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 63.

Her outside, bundling up, crossing to him. She gets in-
A94 INT. BENNET'S CAR - DAY

Prema waits for Bennet to say something. He doesn't. She lays a hand on his arm, Do you want to talk. He doesn't move. She pulls away-

PREMA :

Then do you mind just taking me to Western Union? I need to wire money to my mother.

BENNET :

(still in his reverie)
Do you send her everything?

PREMA :

Not everything.

BENNET :

What you make is also for you.

PREMA :

So is this.

And that gets his attention. He turns to look at her. Takes her in, this selfless woman. And now they're-
EXT. PITTSBURGH/MONONGAHELA RIVER BANK - DAY
Bennet and Prema stand by the river, looking north and south past the bridge.

BENNET :

When I was a boy, in Nigeria,
heaven was here.
(and holds his hand over
his head)
And America was here-
(just below)
It was the place where God sent all
his favorite people.
(--)
I came to America because I thought
here you could do anything, be
anything. Americans were the
manifestation of what God wanted
all of us to be.
(then)
But Mike Webster goes mad and

nobody asks why.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 64.

BENNET (CONT'D)

They make fun of him. And now they want to pretend this disease doesn't exist? They want to bury me? It's offensive. I'm offended. I'm the wrong person to have discovered this.

A quiet. Then. A clarity and confidence bigger than she is-

PREMA :

There is no coincidence in this world. Tell me. What is the statistical probability that you, not just a doctor, but Bennet Omalu, came to America, end up here, this rusty place, for you alone to be the one to see this?

(long pause)

When I arrived, in New York, I was attacked-

(and stops)

BENNET :

What happened?

PREMA :

Something that is better left unsaid. But that man almost broke me. I wanted to give up, and go back. But I knew God, I decided to trust his wisdom.

(and--)

And now I am looking at this man, an Omalu Onyemalukube. Your name. It means, If you know, you must come forth and speak.

Pause. Bennet metabolizing what she'd just told him. Then-

BENNET :

How did you know that?

PREMA :

I called your father.

(Bennet surprised)

He was pleased to hear from me.

BENNET :

Cyril said if I speak it could be dangerous.

PREMA :

If you don't speak for the dead,
who will?

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 65.

PREMA (CONT'D)

You are of the Igbo tribe, Bennet.

Igbo man is bold and cannot be silenced. When you have the truth, the thing you are told you cannot do is the thing you must do.

Embrace that, and nothing created by God can bring you down.

(long beat; then)

I would do anything to support that kind of man.

On Bennet's face now: not love but conviction. And he surprises himself, by spontaneously embracing her. Holds onto her. As if to keep her from floating away from him now. (And maybe clinging to keep himself from sinking.)

And now off his face, we cut to-

96 OMIT

97 ENTRY SIGN "WELCOME TO MOON TOWNSHIP"

PULL BACK TO REVEAL a Rockwellian Americana. Partially-birthed spread of faux McMansions. Foundations waiting for homes.

Light mottled through the trees reflects off the windows of Bennet's car. As his Mercedes pulls past the sign. Their faces in and out of light and shadow. Winding to-

98 EXT. EMPTY LOT - MOON TOWNSHIP - CONTINUOUS

Bennet pulls over at a virgin half-acre. Houses around it up to the studs. Some are done. A handful occupied. O.S. WHINE of aircraft - jet-wash - floating in. Slow parade of planes. We're near the airport, under the flight path.

Bennet walks Prema onto the ground. She spins, wondering

where she's supposed to look.

PREMA :

What is this?

BENNET:

This is my dream. The schools are good.

(then)

And you are good, Prema. You are the only thing in my life that is not my work that I can understand.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 66.

BENNET (CONT'D)

(then)

I am sure you see good in me.

PREMA:

I see good in you, Bennet. I see all that you are.

BENNET :

I want to marry you.

(then)

We can fall in love.

PREMA:

If you want to marry me, I will marry you.

BENNET:

That's good. Because I already put down the payment. I've saved all my money. And now bought this for you.

What happens next is not quite a hug. And not quite a handshake. An awkward transactional embrace. Now cut to-

99 NEWS CAMERA MONITOR: BENNET AT A LECTERN, SPEAKING INTO MICS
BENNET/CAMERA MONITOR

By the time he committed suicide, Terry Long's brain was ruined.

People with CTE suffer from depression, which can lead to suicide attempts. Terry Long

committed suicide due to CTE, which was a result of his long-term play. The NFL is in denial- (now we go to the live version--)

100 EXT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - PITTSBURGH - DAY
Bennet giving a news conference. Wecht and Hamilton flank him. The cameras are mostly local news. We see Prema in the b.g. under an awning, because-It's raining. But the crowd is still healthy.

BENNET :

It is probable that a big percentage of professional football players have or will develop CTE, and will die of it. Maybe even most of them.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 67.

And on these words, we're FINDING faces in the crowd. Most are distracted by the rain to take it all in. But one - a YOUNG REPORTER in his 30's, leaning practically falling forward to hear everything-

BENNET (CONT'D)

I suspect we will also start finding it in and out of sports, in all activities where head impact happens-

YOUNG REPORTER :

(stunned)
Holy shit.
Rain picking up. Cameramen are packing.

BENNET :

This might explain all kinds of dysfunctional behavior. Why good people go bad-

WECHT :

Any questions?
(not one, because--)
The news guys can't get back to their trucks fast enough. All kind of anti-climactic, as Bennet & Wecht make their way back to Prema--

WECHT (CONT'D)

No ignoring that. You're going to be an American hero.

BENNET :

But I am not an American.

WECHT :

Even better. That's so fucking American.

As Wecht keeps moving Bennet stops before Prema. On his face a light, a look of mission.

And now, in PRE-LAP, we HEAR-
PREMA (PRE-LAP)

(above the others)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed--!

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 68.

101 OMIT

102 OMIT

103 INT. ST. BENEDICT'S - PITTSBURGH - DAY

The Congregation flooding the aisles. Heading out. Prema holds Bennet's hand as they exit. Prema brings Bennet's hand to her forehead, like a sacrament. We clock an engagement ring.

Bennet's big easy smile around them. But he can't get traction - no one suddenly seems to be acknowledging them.

As the congregation pours out, Father D'Amico with a word for everyone. Different Steelers lapel pins: "36-Bettis" & "51Farrior".

As Bennet and Prema head past-

FATHER D'AMICO

Football and Dr. Bennet Omalu. Who knew?

(his smile - what is its quality?)

We saw you on the news. Quite a splash.

BENNET :

It isn't about football, Father.

Mrs. Scott has discreetly come up alongside, with her HUSBAND, 50.)

MR. SCOTT

Well, then it's a question, on the one hand, of the reputation of certain men, and something that brings our community - your community - together. That gives this city, and other cities, a thing to face us all in the same direction. And, on the other hand, I suppose, if it's really true, this so-called disease.

(a quiet falls, then--)

FATHER D'AMICO

Well, bless you both.

And they stand there alone and untouched. And as they turn to leave-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 69.

AUTHORITATIVE VOICE/TV (PRE-LAP)

There is no so-called concussion

"problem" in the NFL--

(and cut to)

104 INT. BREAK ROOM - ALLEGHENY COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER - DAY
Third-hand furniture. Three Techs lounging around the TV.

Chyron says:

Pellman, Director of the NFL Medical Committee". On his face, mild amusement. Across from them, SPORTS WRITER/PERSONALITY.

PELLMAN/TV

NFL football players are less vulnerable to concussions and post-concussion syndrome any more than the general population.

(--)

In fact, professional football players knocked unconscious can be returned to play on the same day of their injury without significant risk.

(--)

Look, there's no magic number for how many concussions is too many concussions. Concussions are just

an occupational risk.

TAGLIABUE/TV

Concussions, I think, is one of these pack journalism issues, frankly. The problem is it's a journalist issue.

A104 INT. CHINATOWN INN - DAY

And we find Bennet eating alone in a crappy little Chinese joint. Next to under-oxygenated fish drifting in a foggy tank. The TV behind the bar is on, sounds low, midday news. As Bennet looks up and sees a clip of a 60-Minutes-style interview on TV-

SPORTS PERSONALITY/TV

So where's the science coming from?

(and now INTERCUTTING from yet another interview-)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 70.

PELLMAN/TV

From nowhere. Let's be honest.

Whatever this Omalu wants his science to say, NFL players are the biggest, strongest, toughest men in the world. They have evolved to a state where their brains are actually less susceptible to injury. I actually send veterans back in more quickly than rookies. They know how to unscramble their brains a little faster. A rookie won't know what's happened to him and will be a little panicky. The veterans expect the hits. They want the hits.

Bennet can't believe what he just heard, maybe smiles a little, notes LUNCHERS paying attention to all that. On their

faces:

away his untouched meal. Then-

As we start to HEAR a phone RINGING in PRE-LAP, we're-

105 INT. BENNET'S CONDO - THAT DAY

And Bennet - just home - coat still on, leaning against the kitchen table. The home phone ringing as-

PREMA :

(reading from the
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)
"--Dr. Maroon, who is also vice
chairman of the neurosurgery
department at the University of
Pittsburgh Medical Center, said, of
Omalu's CTE diagnoses, that it was
"fallacious reasoning."

(and looks to the phone,
keeps going)

"To go back and say Long was
depressed from playing in the NFL
and that led to his death 14 years
later I think is purely
speculative."

(and looks up from the
paper, at her man--)

It's not easy to get what you want.

Bennet finally picks up the phone-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 70A.

VOICE/PHONE (OVER)

(local, messy, possibly
drunk)

This Omalu?

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 71.

BENNET :

This is Dr. Bennet Omalu-

VOICE/PHONE (OVER)

I just want to tell you that this
is none of your goddamn business.

You want to pussify this country?

You want to vaginize football? Get

the hell out, or they'll be doing
your autopsy.

And Bennet, shaken, holding now a silent phone, and we cut to-

BLACK SCREEN:

Two rings, three. SNAP. Light comes on. We're--

106 INT. BEDROOM - BENNET'S CONDO - NIGHT

Bennet's alone. Alarm clock reads 4AM.

BENNET :

(picks up)

Hello? Hello?

Now a pattern of clicks and hisses. Then silence. Now-
Tap Tap. Bennet whirls, jumpy. Branch scraping the window.
Bennet stops. Feels - what? Who? Goes to the window to look
outside. Car parked where cars park. One street lamp is out.
One car starts up, lights come on. And as it simply drives
away-

Something makes him turn. Fast. Prema. She's right there.
She's always been right there.

She holds the blanket open for him. REVEALING her full self.
Let me protect you.

He slips in beside her. She wraps him in her arms.

107 INT. BENNET'S CONDO - 7AM

New rhythm to their morning. They're shaken. She fixes
breakfast. He dresses. A humming fear. He's tight.

Prema keeps the shade drawn. A bunker in here.

Bennet on his way out. She hands him his lunch. Then-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 72.

Phone rings. Again. They both look at it as at a ticking
bomb. Bennet picks up but says nothing. A voice we know-
BAILES/PHONE (OVER)

Dr. Omalu?

(yes--)

I took you to be an early riser. I
didn't want to call you at work.

(and we INTERCUT--)

108 INT. KITCHEN - BAILES' HOME - SIMULTANEOUS

Bailes in running shorts, shoes. Run-sweat. Pittsburgh and
New York papers on the table in front of him.

BAILES:

(into phone)

My name is Julian Bailes. Do you
know who I am? I was team doctor
for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

BENNET :

I know who you are.

BAILES :

Mike Webster was a personal friend.

BENNET :

Was he.

BAILES :

You're in trouble, Dr. Omalu. But
you're not wrong.

(then)

I'd like to talk to you.

109 OMIT

110 OMIT

111 EXT. BAILES' HOME - DAY

Traditional plantation home. Veranda and gables. Oak-lined
drive bisects a fairway-sized lawn. Yukon SUV and Porsche at
the end of it.

As Bennet comes up the long drive toward the massive home, he
takes it all in. So this is how they live.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 73.

Bailes comes out on the porch, waiting for him. Coming from a
distance, we sense in him a hostility held in reserve.

As Bennet stops, reaches for the sleeve of medical slides--

BENNET :

Is this a good idea?

BAILES :

You tell me.

112 INT. HOME OFFICE - BAILES' HOME - DAY

Bennet with Bailes sitting around a work table. Coffee and
sandwiches. Bailes at his microscope. The sleeve of slides
open. Then backs away.

Then goes to his desk. Pulls out a folder of lab reports.

Photos. Illustrations. Graphs.

BAILES:

The NFL has known about the
concussion issue for years--
CLOSE ON THE REPORTS.

BAILES (CONT'D)

What you're looking at is the
research that formed the basis for
the League's concussion guidelines.
In this study, some academics put
helmets on monkeys and shook them
real hard. Threw dogs and pigs and
human cadavers down elevator
shafts.

(picks up another one)
Helmets on crash test dummies and
bashed them together. Conclusion?
(reading--)
"No striking player experienced
neck injury or concussion."
Concussions are as dangerous as a
hang-nail.
Bennet waits for more, then, disbelief-

BENNET :

And that was it?

BAILES :

No. Then the NFL did what every big
organization does.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 74.

BAILES (CONT'D)

They put together a commission to
study the studies. Dr. Elliot
Pellman's Mild Traumatic Brain
Injury committee.

BENNET :

Mild - before they knew. Conclusion
first.

(then)

It's the opposite of science.

(and Bailes looks at him,

Exactly)

BAILES :

Know who else is on that committee?

BENNET :

Dr. Maroon?

BAILES :

Joe, yeah, he's on there. Plus
other team doctors. An equipment
manager.

(and)

And two trainers - guys who tape

knees for a living.

(then)

I was more interested in studying actual human football players, who could talk about their pain.

After a moment.

BENNET :

Why did you really want to see me, Dr. Bailes?

BAILES :

Do you have any idea how many Pittsburgh Steelers - just Steelers -died in the last few years? I'm not talking about older guys. I'm talking about players I knew. And just the ones I know about.

(then)

Twelve.

(--)

I don't want to see any more of these guys vanishing in the backs of pick-up trucks.

(and we JUMP TO--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 75.

A112 EXT. BACKYARD - BAILES' HOME - CONTINUOUS

Overlooking a wide expanse of yard, lawn, pool, designer garden. Bailes taking it all in.

Bennet studies Bailes. This is a man in pain. Bennet relaxes-

BAILES :

I know them. I was them. You're doing this wrong.

BENNET :

As long as the NFL denies the truth, nothing changes.

BAILES:

(that's right--)

If they say it's not true, it's not true. They have to say it out loud.

BENNET :

I need to look the Commissioner in the eyes. Get me a meeting. Face-toface, man-to-man. I cannot lose.
Pause. Bailes looks to Bennet. At his innocence. Then-

BAILES :

He doesn't want to talk to you.
Football doesn't want to talk to you.
(because--)
Like my daddy - a Louisiana judge - always said-
(holds up two fingers; and, in an exaggerated aristocratic southern drawl)
'Son, God is number one'(now just one finger)
'And football is number two'.
(then)
You're not even American. You're not even African-American. You're-

BENNET :

A doctor.
Bailes smiles, a little embarrassed at himself. Then-

BAILES :

The NFL has kept everyone in the dark.
(MORE)
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 76.
BAILES (CONT'D)
You have turned on the lights and given its biggest bogeyman a name.
(leaning in)
And if they don't get this reined-in, everything they have, everything they are, is vulnerable.
(then)
What's happening now, what you think they're doing to you? Is nothing. You have no idea how bad

this could get for you.

A long pause.

BENNET :

I did my own research on the NFL's brain injury committee. You know what Dr. Elliot Pellman is? He's a rheumatologist. He's a specialist in arthritis and joint pain. Can you tell me what a rheumatologist knows about the brain and brain disease?

(and)

Corporate men like this, in this country, come from Harvard and Yale. But Pellman went to medical school in Guadalajara.

BAILES :

Mexico? I didn't know that. That's beautiful.

And looks at him - "I like you" -

BAILES (CONT'D)

It's unlikely I could get you in front of them. But two cases aren't going to be enough. You have to keep going.

BENNET :

Just so you understand. This doesn't show up on a CT scan. There is no diagnosis before death. For me to keep going more have to die.

BAILES :

Unfortunately, I no longer see a scenario in which that isn't already happening.

(and we cut to--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 77.

113 EXT. GATED COMMUNITY - MOON TOWNSHIP - LATER THAT DAY

A plane lands behind Bennet and Prema stand before the Dream House. Framing begun. Basement poured, waiting like an empty pool.

Bennet checks the fence. Good strong fence. Good fences make good neighbors.

PREMA :

He's one of them.

BENNET :

He's in pain.

PREMA :

Can we trust him?

BENNET :

I don't think we have a choice.

114 OMIT

115 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE - MANHATTAN

Big bright glass room. Working committee of five bunkered around a table covered in paperwork. Gathering up-

One breaks away:

ex-defensive back, all-star warrior.

Hurries past us in the hall. Jones coming the other way-

JONES:

(on the run)

Did I hear right? We're losing you?

Tapping you for Mayor of Chicago?!

DUERSON :

Still a long long road, my friend(
as Jones turns a corner-)

JONES:

All-World killer athlete to
civilian to King, all in one
lifetime! Ladies and gentlemen, I
give you Mayor Dave Duerson! Who
has. Figured. It. Out!

And as Jones disappears we follow Duerson into the elevator

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 78.

EXT. 280 PARK AVE - MANHATTAN - AFTERNOON RUSH

Duerson spins out of the NFL building.

A VOICE (O.S.)

Dave! It's me, man. Andre Waters.

(jaw tightening, because-)

His way blocked by former d-back (like him), ANDRE WATERS. 44but looks 60.
Rough road. Bloated. Sweaty.

DUERSON :

How you doin man?
(knows all too well)

WATERS :

Let me walk with you.
(Duerson grits this out)
I'm not good. It was all in thepaperwork.
(so desperate can't do thesmall talk)
But why's the committee doing this?

DUERSON :

There are five other trustees. You
talk to them?

WATERS :

You're the only one who played. Whoknows. What it is to be us-(
can't deny that either;
tries to keep going)
You and me were the same. Bangers.
Hitmen.

DUERSON :

File the appeal.

WATERS :

You denied the appeal.
(manic, sweaty, handscan't stop moving)
Something's wrong with me,
man.

DUERSON (CONT'D)

You look alright-*

*

*

*

WATERS :

Can't sleep. Eyes get crossed, it'sfreaky, my right eye's pinned leftand my
left's pinned right. Weirdsme out sometimes.
(Duerson's aching fordaylight)

Dave, look at me, man.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 79.

WATERS (CONT'D)

(and gets in front of
Duerson)

DUERSON :

Jesus.

WATERS :

I paid dues twelve years! Made
millions for those assholes. It's
not even your money. I'm just
asking back what I gave-

DUERSON :

(exploding now right there
on Park Ave)
Fat? Stop eating like a pig. Gotta
headache? See a doctor-

WATERS :

Been to twenty doctors! Just need
rent money-

DUERSON :

Get your shit together! You were a
warrior! Get your hands off me!
(Waters is palming him)

WATERS :

'Deny, deny, hope they die.' That's
what we say about you. Your goddamn
motto.

(--)

Dave, I'm sorry. Remember? When we
were kids, playin is what we lived,
for, man!

(talking to Duerson's back
because--)

Duerson performing that move they teach d-backs Day 1 in
camp, swim past the block at line of scrimmage to destroy the
QB. And Duerson swims past Waters down Park--

WATERS (CONT'D)

I don't got another play left!

Dave!

(then)

Somebody help me!

--now leaving Waters to watch Duerson vanish until he's alone, holding his head because the migraine has come, in a sea of strangers who have no fucking clue who he ever was, nor will they ever care. And we cut to-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 80.

117 PIXILATED NEWSPAPER PORTRAIT OF ANDRE WATERS

--in Philadelphia Eagles jersey. Playing days: chiseled; direct gaze of a carnivore. PULL BACK TO REVEAL--

"Eagles Defensive Back Andre Waters, 44, commits suicide"--

The paper in Wecht's hands. Wecht standing outside Bennet's little office, as Bennet walks up in his scrubs--

WECHT :

(reading to Bennet)

--known as 'Dirty Waters', notorious for his aggressive style of play-

(and FLASH TO--)

FOOTAGE OF A HORIZONTAL WATERS LIKE A FLYING SPEAR IMPALING A RECEIVER WITH THE CROWN OF HIS HELMET

Otherwise MUTE, under-

WECHT:

Devastating hits that filled highlight reels ... died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head."

Wecht looks up at Bennet. And as he hands him the paper and leaves him standing there-

118 EXT. CEMETERY - RURAL FLORIDA - DAY

The poor Cracker South. Crabgrass pushing through sandy scrub. Eagles balloons rise from the coffin. A propped photo of Waters from playing days.

CAMERA FINDS BENNET at the edge of the crowd. He's clocked by a league REPRESENTATIVE in a suit. Now an ex-PLAYER or three. First time Bennet's been face-to-face with the live humans involved. And it feels like a mistake. Flop-sweaty, he turns to go. While-

O.S. someone starts coming at him through the tombstones. Big

MAN, AFRICAN-AMERICAN. Big strides. Extreme emotion on his face. Fury? Fear? Bennet spots him, spots that, picks up his pace. Big guy closing in. Running for the car now-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 81.

MAN :

Hey! Get over here--!

(on top of Bennet now,
breathing labored)

Why'd you do that, man?

Bennet terrified, braces to be hit. Or something. But the man doubles over, trying to catch breath.

MAN (CONT'D)

Christ-

(out of breath)

You were leaving. But Andre's mother. You wanted to talk to Andre's mother, right?

(INTERCUTTING with--)

120 INT. BAILES' HOME - EVENING

Bailes at his desk, bathed in computer light, solitary contemplation. Mindlessly stirring his drink with his finger. And we PULL AROUND Bailes' head and over his shoulder on WHAT

HE'S SEEING:

119* INT. WATERS FAMILY HOME - SUNNY ISLE, FL - DAY

Neat. Devout. Family pictures. Legions of grandchildren.

Bennet sitting adjacent to WATERS' MOTHER, 70.

They're watching a DVD of an Eagles game ON THE TV:

Waters getting hit so hard he lays on the ground, unconscious. Then is helped up. Then wanders toward the opposing sideline. Then is led back straight to the huddle, staggering through the next play.

Waters' mother watches Bennet watch. She's seen it a hundred times. She wants to watch Bennet's reaction. Alternatively volcanic with grief, and letting rays of light burn through-
WATERS' MOTHER

He said he was alright. He said he was dazed for a minute then he was alright-

(--)

A121 EXT. COFFEE SHOP - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Bailes pulls up in his Porsche, parks. Crosses the street. Gritty industrial Pittsburgh.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 82.

A woman in the window feels him, turns: a changed Keana Strzelczyk. Thinner. Tired. As Bailes hesitates, then goes in, we go back to-INT.

WATERS FAMILY HOME - SUNNY ISLE, FL

Bennet and Mrs. Waters.

WATERS' MOTHER

Let me tell you about my son. We used to call him Spanky. His daddy gave him that name-And

reaches in her bag

WATERS' MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'm going to read you something.

The last thing he wrote me.

(reading from a letter)

"...There isn't a day that goes by that I don't thank God for blessing me with you as my mom. Happy Mother's Day. Your son, Andre M.

Waters."

(then)

His signing bonus, he bought me this house. He bought all his brothers cars.

He was the sun and

we were planets.

Bennet's eyes closed, nodding, feeling Andre's presence.

WATERS' MOTHER (CONT'D)

After he gave me this card, he said, "Ma, I'm ready to go." He knew people started thinking he was

crazy.

BENNET :

Not crazy. He'd already become someone else-And

she looks at him. Her eyes welling up. Anger.

WATERS' MOTHER

Suicide. He took it out of

God's hands.

BENNET (CONT'D)

He was sick. *

*

WATERS' MOTHER

He definitely had this disease?

Because I want to believe that.

Because you're not supposed to put your own child in the ground.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 83.

WATERS' MOTHER (CONT'D)

Nature's not supposed to work that

way.

(--)

Now. You want what's left of my son? Because Dr. Omalu, I don't want to feel another thing I have to survive. Don't let me feel hope, then not have this come out right.
(and takes his hand)

BENNET :

I understand, yes-

And Bennet slides next to her. Takes a knee. Bows, prays. She prays. She's crying. Now he's crying. Then-
WATERS' MOTHER BENNET (CONT'D)

Heavenly Father, you know And please lead us to the every heart. Please mend our truth. Soothe this family souls. with your grace.

WATERS' MOTHER

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Then she abruptly stands. Drying her eyes.

WATERS' MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'm going to get us some coffee.

(and exits, and back to--)

122 EXT. COFFEE SHOP - PITTSBURGH

We find Bailes & Keana at a table outside, under the awning. It's cool. Neither feel it. Their breath ballooning in front of their faces-

BAILES :

You look good. How are the kids?

KEANA STRZELCZYK

The kids are fine. I am fine. What do you want?

BAILES :

I'm sorry I couldn't make the funeral.

KEANA STRZELCZYK

No one made it to the funeral.

Then.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 84.

BAILES :

You heard about Mike Webster.

And she just looks at him. She heard.

KEANA STRZELCZYK

And Terry Long. And and and. And
who else?

(--)

What do you really want to ask me,
Julian?

(and now a hard cut to--)

A122 OMIT

(123 & 124 ARE NOW A81 & B81)

125 BENNET WALKING IN DARKNESS

Following him through a lightless basement passage. All we
HEAR, his footsteps, the thrum of a boiler, hum of fans.

Then - BANG! - he shoves at a door. Bailes is standing out
there in the night in the rain. Bennet lets Bailes enter, and

126 INT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - NIGHT

Bennet leads Bailes through the underground tunnel, through a
warren of basement labs, to-

127 INT. BASEMENT LAB - ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER

--where Wecht is waiting in the half-dark. Around them, the
silhouettes of fresh bodies for tomorrow.

BENNET :

(introducing)

This is Dr. Wecht.

Bailes shakes his hand. We're TIGHT ON WECHT. He's not so
sure about Bailes - friend of enemy, fish or fowl?

Bennet hands Bailes a short stack of slides.

Hands Bailes a short stack of slides.

BENNET (CONT'D)

Andre Waters.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 85.

Bailes goes to the microscope. Bows, peers in.

Now Bennet hands him-

BENNET (CONT'D)

Justin Strzelczyk.

Long pause as Bailes looks and looks at the one slide.

Bennet stirs. Glances worriedly into the dark. Where the
bodies are waiting. As if he's heard something. He mumbles,
"I'm sorry," moves closer to the others, gives the angry
corpses room. (We see all this. And Wecht does. Bailes
doesn't. Because he doesn't know to.)

BAILES:

(in his own world)
I just kept sending him back out
there.

WECHT :

What were you thinking?

BAILES :

You have to be part of all that.
Down there on the sidelines with
them. Whatever it takes to keep
them in the game. To keep it all
going. Tape, needles, Vicodin,
Torodol, Lidocaine, Percocet.

(and)

Lexapro. Zoloft.

(they're looking at him,
then--)

Tires. Oil. You're a mechanic
keeping the race cars on the track.

Pause there. Then, hearing himself, how that sounded. Bailes
looks at Bennet. But-

WECHT :

That's not medicine. I don't know
what that is.

BENNET :

It's business.

(they look at him)

It's just business.

And there it is. And then what he's been waiting for:

BENNET (CONT'D)

Three cases is the scientific
burden of evidence. We have four.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 86.

BENNET (CONT'D)

(and now)

We are past what the NFL can and
cannot deny. It's bigger than they
are. Now they have to listen to us.
Bailes. Conflicted. Resigned. Defeated.

128 OMIT (129 MOVED TO AFTER 130)

130* INT. ALTIUS RESTAURANT - PITTSBURGH - NIGHT

Atop Mt. Washington, perched high over the wishbone confluence of the Ohio, Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers. The massive stadium where the Steelers play. And the Pittsburgh skyline.

We find Bennet and Bailes at a four-top by the picture window. Each has a drink. It's 11pm. Bennet looking through the reflections of staff cleaning up. Bailes off into space. They've been sitting for a couple hours. Bailes looks to his watch, Goddammit-

BENNET :

He wanted to do this two hours ago.

And now a reflection in the window turns Bennet. Joe Maroon is crossing toward them. Hesitates at the table, takes a chair on Bailes' side.

A beat of them all together, silent. Maroon doesn't apologize.

BENNET (CONT'D)

Would you like a drink?

MAROON :

I said five minutes.

BAILES :

He doesn't want a drink.

(and Maroon goes right into it--)

MAROON :

Your conclusions are a total misinterpretation of facts. To say Webster and Long and Waters were killed by football is-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 87.

BENNET :

Fallacious reasoning. Yes, I know. And maybe you haven't heard, Dr. Maroon. But the world is not flat. Maroon vibrates with rage.

MAROON :

(to Bailes)

Where's he going with this?

BAILES :

Just hear him out-

BENNET :

I want to propose a formal controlled study. Bring together the best minds in America. We should be working together.

MAROON :

Who do you think you're talking to?

BENNET :

Excuse me?

MAROON :

I was President of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons.

BENNET :

Yes. And I was the doctor who performed the autopsies of Mike Webster and Terry Long. Your men. Your men under your care.
(he has Maroon's attention)
Do you know what Mike Webster's wife said? If she knew he was sick, if she knew what he'd become was this disease, she would have been nicer to him.

(--)

But he died. Everything broken. Their lives ruined.

(then)

You took an oath. Tell the truth!

MAROON :

The truth? The truth is the National Football League is a salvation! It employs hundreds of thousands of people. We've sent thousands of kids to school.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 88.

MAROON (CONT'D)

We ship players to war zones to entertain the troops-
(nods down at Heinz Field,
and crescendoing--)

The ownership of this football club has given millions to charity. The NFL runs clinics on child obesity. You want me to go on?

BENNET :

It's not necessary-

MAROON :

It is necessary. Some of our players would be what without the NFL? Where would their kids be? Do you know where most of these guys would be?

BENNET :

Alive.

Maroon looks at him, exasperated.

MAROON :

The NFL is the most popular sport in America because it is goddamn fantastic. You think they make people play? People want to play. (point outside, down there, at Heinz Field, glowing)
Right there is the beating heart of this city. Not the symphony. Not the ballet. Every city the Steelers play in, it's the same.

(--)

What do you want us to do, end it? Fold the National Football League?

BENNET :

(he's not even answering that question--)

Solve the problem. Solve. The
Problem.

MAROON :

Who are you?
(to Bailes)
He performs autopsies. He's a
pathologist-

BENNET :

Yes, a mere pathologist. That is
so.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 89.
Long heavy silence. Then-

BAILES :

And what if he's right? What if
it's true?
Maroon HOLDS Bailes in place with a glare. Then, back to
Bennet-

MAROON :

Do you understand the impact of
what you're doing?

BENNET MAROON (CONT'D)

Yes--(forceful; angry again)*

Do you understand the impact.

Of what you are doing?

(because obviously

Bennet could not *

possibly) *

BENNET :

I said I did-

MAROON :

Let me tell you. Because you
clearly do not.

(now)

If just 10-percent of mothers in
America-

(and stops, gathers

himself)

Did you ever play football?

BENNET :

No.

MAROON :

It taught me everything I know
about loyalty, teamwork, endurance,
sacrifice.

(then, leaning in)

If 10-percent of mothers in America
decide football is too dangerous
for their sons to play, that's it.
It is the end of football. Kids.
Colleges. Eventually, it's just a
matter of time, the professional
game.

Pause, then-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 90.

BAILES :

Joe. He's not in the outcome
business.

MAROON :

He has no business-

BENNET :

And do you know what history does
to people -trained physicians -
who ignore science-- ?

Maroon tries to interject.

BENNET (CONT'D)

SIR, I AM NOT DONE--!

Maroon shocked to silence.

BENNET (CONT'D)

History laughs!

(then)

Deny my work, the world will deny
it. But men will continue to die.
And families will go on being
destroyed.

Maroon looks hard to Bailes, then Bennet. And his proposal-

MAROON :

Are you sure you want to do this?

BENNET :

I could ask you the same question.
(a pause, then--)

MAROON :

I'll get back to you.
(and fast he's out of his
seat and heading out--)
Leaving Bennet and Bailes alone. A long moment of silence.

BAILES :

Well, that went well.
And the two of them are left staring down at Heinz Field
rising massive like the Roman Coliseum out of the city's
beating heart. Now we START TO HEAR IN PRE-LAP--
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 91.

JONES (PRE-LAP)

(reading)
--After examining the remains of
former National Football League
player Andre Waters, a
neuropathologist in Pittsburgh, Dr.
Bennet Omalu, is claiming that Mr.
Waters had sustained brain damage
from playing football and he says
that led to his depression and
ultimate death-

(continuing over--)

129 INT. COMMISSIONER'S SUITE - NFL OFFICES - DAY
Jones stands before Tagliabue, reading the paper aloud.

JONES :

It gets worse.
(then)
Dr. Julian Bailes, medical director
for the Center for the Study of
Retired Athletes and the chairman
of the department of neurosurgery
at West Virginia University, said,
"Unfortunately, I'm not shocked."
(looks up--)
There's more Omalu. More Bailes.

TAGLIABUE :

Bailes. Why do I know that name?

JONES:

Steelers team doctor. Neurologist
for the Players Association.

TAGLIABUE :

Oh wow.

JONES :

Yeah. Wow.

(then)

The Times is calling it a potential
epidemic. Paul. It's not the Sports
section. Not Science. A-1. Front
page. New York Times. Above the
fold.

131 OMIT

132 OMIT

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 92.

133 INT. BOARD ROOM - NFL HEADQUARTERS - DAY

TRACK Tagliabue and Jones crossing from their suite to a set
of heavy oak doors. The doors open, and as they enter, we
GLIMPSE over their shoulder a long luxurious table encircled
by a dozen WHITE MEN waiting in grim silence. You can smell
the privilege, the power. Ownership. And as the doors close
us out-

134 JONES AT A LECTERN

JONES:

--his 17 years as Commissioner of
the National Football League
comprised the most lucrative and
stabilizing reign perhaps in the
history of pro sports-

(and we PULL BACK to reveal

we're--)

135 INT. BREAK ROOM - ALLEGHENY COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER - DAY

Wecht, Sullivan and the Techs, all watching the TV, and a
hastily arranged "press conference".

Bennet enters.

SULLIVAN:

Nice going, Bennet. You killed off
the commish.

Bennet confused, elated. As, to Jones' left we now see
Tagliabue. To his right is incoming Commissioner ROGER
GOODELL, 47 and sandy-haired.

TAGLIABUE/TV

Roger has worked for the NFL since
he was 21.

(--)

He lives football, breathes
football, but he's younger, more
handsome-

(laughter, then, serious--)

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 93.

TAGLIABUE/TV (CONT'D)

And understands how to take
'America's Game' into the future.

There is a new sheriff in town-

Upon which Wecht walks in.

As Goodell takes the lectern. Folksy, telegenic in that
Clintonesque way.

Sullivan & Wecht exchange a look.

GOODELL/TV

The NFL isn't just a sports league.

It's an entertainment product. What

I'm here to do now, my main
responsibility, is to protect the
shield, America's Game.

(the NFL logo)

--I want us to go on enjoying our
great game knowing our kids love
it, respect it, never stop having
fun-

BENNET :

They heard. They're listening.

WECHT :

Sure. Morning in America. A new day
in the NFL.

(TIGHT on Goodell;
sarcastic)

He looks like your drinking buddy.

While, on TV, Pellman appears, glum, beside Goodell.

WECHT (CONT'D)

And there's your buddy, Pellman,
again. The knee man from
Guadalajara.

(and leaves, as)

BROADCAST/TV (OVER)

Roger Goodell's been at the
forefront of every major decision
the NFL has made over the past
dozen years. His biggest challenge
now? Keeping the good times rolling
for a \$6-billion a year business.

SULLIVAN :

You're screwed now.

(and walks out)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15

94.

GRACIE :

Julian Bailes is on the phone-

And Bennet crosses to the phone, picks up-

BAILES/PHONE (OVER)

Turn on the TV.

BENNET :

(into phone)

I'm watching it right now.

BAILES/PHONE (OVER)

He's shaking up Pellman's brain
injury committee. They're asking
for a concussion summit, a full
presentation. In Chicago. Next
week.

On Bennet's face-

BAILES/PHONE (OVER) (CONT'D)

We have our chance, Bennet.

136

OMIT:

137

EXT. WESTIN HOTEL - O'HARE AIRPORT - CHICAGO -

NIGHT/ESTABLISHING

One of the big ones out by the airport. Constant whine of jet-wash. It's snowing. Really starting to come down.

138

INT. LOBBY/BAR - WESTIN HOTEL - O'HARE AIRPORT - LATE NIGHT
Generic franchise room. Muzak, formica tabletops and mid-layover SALESMEN.

We find Bennet and Bailes in a corner booth doing a presentation run-through. Laptop open on Power Point. Bennet on his second drink. Bailes into maybe his third. Looking at it all as if at blueprints for D-Day. Bennet jacked. Bailes knows half his men are going to perish.

BENNET :

(reciting)

"The facts speak for themselves.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 95.

BENNET (CONT'D)

These brains, strangled by protein unleashed by repetitive head trauma related to football, tell an irrefutable story--"

(and looks up, Good?)

BAILES :

Maybe throw in some football stuff.
Not medical terms. Things we say--

BENNET :

Why do I need to say what they say?
I thought that's why we're here.

BAILES :

You have, what, seven degrees?
Eight? You're one of the smartest people they'll ever meet.

(--)

You know what? You'll be fine.
Bennet takes Bailes in.

BENNET :

How about you? What will you be?
Bailes fumbling with an INSERT picture of MIKE WEBSTER, bent,

half-squatting, eyes tethered to the eyes of the nose-guard in his face, furiously focused. And now a TIGHT on Bailes. As we PUSH IN, his face growing in frame-

BAILES :

It can be a boring, violent, stupid game. And it can be Shakespeare. The game looks like life. I know you can't see how beautiful that all is - I don't blame you.

(then, reverie done)

But this isn't fun for me. Everyone we're going to see tomorrow I know personally. That feeling you get when someone you love and respect screws you over? They will have it. And there's not a damn thing I can do about it.

We're in on his eyes now. Maybe what he's seeing. And out of his reverie-

BENNET :

You already did that yourself.

(Bailes looks up, What?)

When you picked up the phone.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 95A.

BENNET (CONT'D)

And you called me.

(now--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 96.

BAILES :

Christ. They're here.

Bennet confused, follows Bailes' gaze to the bar. Where a cluster of NFL officials have arrived. Pellman, Maroon, Jones, couple others. Pellman the schlubby one.

Goodell crosses and joins them for a word with Jones. Jones whispers in Goodell's ear. Maroon pivots, turns his back, waving for the bartender. Says something to Pellman. Pellman laughs.

BAILES (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

He's such an ass.

But opaque, tight, Bailes shuts the laptop. On his face, the violent collision of choice and consequences.

BENNET :

We better get some sleep.

139 INT. HOTEL ROOM - WESTIN O'HARE - NIGHT

Bennet's sitting on the bed against the wall in his clothes. We're TIGHT on his face. A kind of nervous excitement and dread. He will not sleep tonight.

And we HEAR a firm RAP on the door, and Bennet's head turns, and we cut to-

140 HIS HOTEL ROOM DOOR - MORNING

It opens. Bailes is standing in the hall in a suit. And we SWING AROUND and find Bennet in the same. Cinching his tie. It's the next morning. Bennet's suit is immaculate. Pocket square. There's an ironing board out. He's freshly ironed everything. He's nervous as shit.

BAILES :

We need to talk.

Bailes steps in. His expression like he just bit down on something rancid.

BENNET :

What's wrong?

BAILES:

There's no easy way to say this so I'm just going to say it.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 97.

BAILES (CONT'D)

They aren't going to let you speak.

They don't even want you in the room.

(--)

I told you. They will not accept you as the face of this issue.

(--)

They want me to do it.

Pause. Bennet shocked. Rocked.

BENNET :

One of their own.

BAILES :

Yes.

BENNET BAILES (CONT'D)

They want to pretend--You don't exist.

BENNET :

You said Goodell is good-

BAILES :

They still have to sit there and
listen.

BENNET :

To you.

BAILES :

Yes, me. You blew up their world.

BENNET BAILES (CONT'D)

And yours. Yes. Mine. *

BENNET :

And how can an African know this
subject better than them?

Bennet looks at him a long moment. Fish or fowl? Us/them?

BENNET (CONT'D)

Or better than you?

Bailes stunned. Confused. Now livid, explodes-

BAILES :

(that power/hostility held
in reserve surfacing--)

Wait a second ... You think this is
about Bennet Omalu? I'm not here
for you. I'm here because people
are dying-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 98.

BENNET:

You're here for redemption! You're
here to use me to cleanse your
sins!

BAILES:

You self-righteous bastard! Do you have any idea what I could have, how much I could have, if I went back to my side of the ball? Just kept quiet? Everything in my world is telling me not to agree with you. Except one thing - science. So I'm here. Not down there in that audience. Up here, beside you. What do you want from me? How much more can I do?

And HOLD on them a long beat. And Bailes is right. And Bennet knows it, is ashamed. And is going to take it in the ass because it's the only thing to do-

BENNET :

You're right, I'm sorry. Go. Take it. All of it. And you convince them, Julian-

BAILES :

I'm sorry-

BENNET :

Convince them, Julian-(
and as Bailes turns and
marches down the hall)

Convince them!

(now cut to--)

141 INT. HOTEL FOYER - DAY

The huge, weird hub of three different enormous conference rooms. Empty. A MAINTENANCE PERSON is pushing a vacuum. Bennet stands against one of those removable accordion walls. Trying not to look at his reflection in the wall of mirrors. Trying not to stare at the double doors to the conference room. Where it's all happening.

Pacing now.

As a BEEFY PLAINCLOTHES SECURITY GUARD (NFL? Hotel?) crosses the expanse, approaching-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 99.

SECURITY :

Sir, this is a private function.
You're not supposed to be in this

area.

BENNET :

You're right, I'm supposed to be in there-
(in THERE, past the big dude)

SECURITY :

I'm going to have to ask you step away and return to the lobby with the other guests.
(and he's in Bennet's face now)

BENNET :

Don't put your hands on me! Get your hands off me!
Now the double doors push open at us. Football officialdom is on its feet in there and starts to pours out. Bennet's POV locks on the one black man.
Duerson, vibrating with rage. Right up in Bennet's face--

DUERSON :

My father can't remember a goddamn thing. And he never played a day of football. He was too busy working. In a factory. You quack. You think I'm some boy you can control? Take your bullshit science, go back to Africa, and get away from our game-
(and moves on, and--)

Bennet, stunned, can see Pellman back in the conference room with Goodell and Jones-
And Jones looks up, and they HOLD a look. And we're in SLOMO, and Jones slowly blinks, turns away, and--
The doors swing close, leaving Bennet looking at Bailes. Bailes is sweaty. Stunned. Like he'd been punched in the face.

BAILES :

Roger Goodell just said Justin Strzelczyk may have gotten his concussions swimming. In a swimming

pool.

(then)

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 100.

BAILES (CONT'D)

It was a set-up. They needed to say they heard us. So they can goddamn bury us.

Bennet HEARS nothing but a low-grade hum. Bailes slips out of frame as Bennet floats past Bailes into-

142 OMIT

143 OMIT

144 INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM

And stops. Because Goodell, Pellman, Maroon and Jones are setting up for a summing-up. News conference. National cameras. Background with NFL logo hung dropped behind the lectern. As Goodell takes his place, adjusts his mic-

GOODELL:

This is an important day in the National Football League. We've had some very good dialogue, which will help us improve the care for our players.

REPORTER 1

What do you think when you hear about former NFL players who are suffering from symptoms that have only been seen in boxers or people over 80-years old? What does that say about the effect of concussions on players?

GOODELL:

I'm not a doctor here. But you have to look at their entire medical history. From my standpoint, not being a doctor, that just makes logical sense. You're seeing some great scientists and doctors, who have done terrific work in this area, sharing information. They don't all agree. The NFL has had a committee of expert doctors and

scientists going on this for 14
years. This is an evolving science
and that's okay.

We're pushing in on Bennet, listening to all this, watching
it all evaporate. Pellman jumping in-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 101.

PELLMAN :

While I agree with the Commissioner, as I was discussing with other NFL
medical personal, no empirically determined proof was presented today.
Because there simply isn't any. The truth is -
and we will be delivering this directive to our players - that current
research with professional athletes has not shown that having more than one
or two concussions
leads to permanent problems, if
each injury is managed properly.

Bennet starts to back away, as-REPORTER

2 GOODELL *

**

Are you comfortable with the level of care for former
I don't know about
comfortable. I'm not sure I

*

**

*

**

players? understand what you mean. *

**

Bennet turning now, exiting as the news conference drones on-REPORTER
1 (O.S.)

Do you think the league is currently doing enough for players,
or do you think you can do more--?

And as the pile-on grows and crescendoes, and now FADES,
FADING IN, in PRE-LAP-NFL

FILMS NARRATOR (PRE-LAP)

(operatic baritone)

From whistle to gun, there are enough major collisions in pro football to
stock a junkyard for a
century--

Bennet has left the room, gone, the doors flapping behind him 145

NFL FILMS PROMO REEL (4-WALLED)

Two BALTIMORE RAVENS ready for a play by BUTTING HELMETS repeatedly. This
SLO-MO, under a swelling elegaic score, as if two mythic rams. Now-NFL

FILMS NARRATOR (OVER)

Hitting is what separates player from player. One team from another.
Pretender from contender.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 102.

And chumps from champions-(
cuts to--)

NFL FILMS NARRATOR (OVER) (CONT'D)

A montage, MUTE - cuts of BIG HITS. Only the sound of helmets/pads crashing,
men grunting, gnashing-NFL

FILMS NARRATOR (OVER) (CONT'D)

And it is this, of course, that has
always been part of football's appeal. Cinematic, like a war movie-
Now churning arms and legs. Punctuated by frames of receivers and others
taking devastating hits. The hit frames synched to
the rhythm of the music.

NFL FILMS NARRATOR (OVER) (CONT'D)

A league where the meek do NOT inherit the turf. A game of thunder! and
destruction!

(now cut to--) *

BERNIE GOLDBERG/NARRATING (PRELAP)

According to the NFL's own numbers,
half of all players with concussions, were being sent back into the same
game. Including some who were actually knocked out cold.

We asked the head of the NFL's

*

committee on concussions at the
time, if that was a good idea.

(now to--)

146 OMIT *

147 TV 4-WALLED - HBO'S 'REAL SPORTS' WITH BRYANT GUMBEL (ACTUAL FOOTAGE)

And CORRESPONDENT BERNIE GOLDBERG.

BERNIE GOLDBERG

That could lead to medical
problems, no?

IRA CASSON :

Returning to play when you shouldn't return to play? There's no clear
evidence that has led to
medical problems, if that's what you're asking me.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 103.

And a cut over to his interview: 60ish, tweedy dresser,
shaggy ring of white hair. "Dr. Ira Casson, newly-appointed
NFL Medical Director".

BERNIE GOLDBERG/NARRATING

Back in 2007, Ira Casson, was head of a team of NFL doctors who had looked into the issue, and determined that the concern over head injuries, was over blown.

PREMA (O.S.)

(muttering in Swahili)

Wao wana kichaa! Kuma nina. Fala!

(and REVERSE to find)

148 BENNET AND PREMA IN FRONT OF THE TV WATCHING-

BERNIE GOLDBERG:

(addressing Casson)

Is there any evidence, as far as you're concerned, that links multiple head injuries among pro football players with depression?

CASSON :

No.

BERNIE GOLDBERG

With dementia?

CASSON :

No.

BERNIE GOLDBERG

With early onset of Alzheimer's?

CASSON :

No.

BERNIE GOLDBERG:

(disbelief creeping in)

Is there any evidence as of today that links multiple head injuries with any long-term problem like that?

CASSON :

In NFL players?

BERNIE GOLDBERG

Yeah.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 104.

CASSON :

No.

(and HOLDING Goldberg's
near-smirk, we go to--)

Bennet. Head in hands. And just when we think this cannot get
worse, we start HEARING in PRE-LAP:

GOODELL/TV (PRE-LAP)

The first pick of the Houston
Texans--!

(and cut hard to--)

149 FOOTAGE - NFL COLLEGE DRAFT - RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL, NYC

GOODELL:

Amobi Okoye! Defensive lineman from
the University of Louisville-

As Goodell shakes hands with Bennet's cousin, Amobi, sweet-
smiled mountain of a man. We watch a TIGHT of Amobi, huge
grin, holding up his new jersey, "OKOYE - 91" - as he's being
drafted.

Then PULL BACK TO REVEAL we're-
A149 INT. BENNET'S CONDO

Bennet watching the circus-like spectacle on his TV. Now head
in hands. Now shuts it off.

It's late. Quiet. Bennet stops at the kitchen table. Dream
House material - floor plans, paint color charts, brochures
for brick face - spread before him.

Weary, as he taps it all into a neat pile, and in a single
TRACKING SHOT we follow him to the window. Where we take in
the back of St. Benedict illuminated high atop the church,
above us all. Now into the bedroom, where he stands watching
Prema sleep.

Then gets to his knees, his face by Prema's belly-

BENNET :

Hi. This is your father.

(what to say? so insecure)

I am in deep shit. I haven't done
anything wrong, but I am being
punished. Your mother and I are
being tested. It might be not so
good out here when you arrive. You
are still with God.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 105.

BENNET (CONT'D)

Your face is still the face of God.

Please tell God to help me.

(and closes his eyes, and-)

We slide to Prema's face. Eyes open. Awake. Listening. Then-

B149 INT./EXT. PREMA'S CAR (MOVING)/MOON TOWNSHIP - DAY

Prema driving herself there for first time alone. More pregnant. Humming to a pop song on the radio. Clarion voice.

Her eyes tick up to the rear-view. A sedan. Nondescript.

Windshield opaque with sky. Keeping pace.

And it's still keeping pace. She stops singing. She turns. It turns. She turns again. It keeps going.

She keeps going.

It reappears.

Now she's there. In the neighborhood. Grass. Shrubbery is in.

She looks over at their home. Then the rear-view. Car's gone.

150 OMIT

151 OMIT (152-155 MOVED TO AFTER 161)

156 OMIT

157 INT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - DAY

Sullivan leading Bennet upstairs. Before the top he stops them in the stairwell.

BENNET :

Why does Cyril want to see me?

SULLIVAN :

Hopefully to fire you.

(and they head into--)

158 INT. WECHT'S OFFICE - ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - DAY

Where Wecht is waiting with two FBI AGENTS.

BENNET :

What is this?

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 106.

Bennet now looking from Wecht to the Agents. Goes still, as an animal will at the scent of danger. Then-

WECHT :

I am being relieved of my duties.

BENNET :

I don't understand.

AGENT :

Dr. Wecht is being indicted
on eighty-four Federal
counts, including-

BENNET :

Faxes?

BENNET:

WECHT *

Eighty-four Federal counts. *

Mail fraud, wire fraud, and *

**

related offenses arising from *

his use of government

resources to benefit his

private practice. Sending

personal faxes, mileage

vouchers, misusing office

stationary--

WECHT (CONT'D) *

Faxes. *

They couldn't come up with

something that stupid in Nigeria.

AGENT :

Using public property for private
gain.

BENNET :

You do know the man has been a

public servant for decades-

AGENT 2

Have you ever performed any private

services on county time?

A pause as Bennet does the math. Then realizes-

BENNET :

Do you mean the death row case? I

was on my time! I saved an innocent

man's life.

WECHT :

Apparently we've both hurt the

government's feelings.

(then)

This has nothing to do with him.

(meaning Bennet)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 107.

AGENT :

We don't want you, Dr. Omalu. But
we can have you.

BENNET :

What does that mean?

Everything all at once. Bennet's walls crashing around him.

WECHT :

They are going to want your
testimony.

(and some sort of gesture
tells him--)

BENNET :

Against you?

(the silence says yes;
turning to the agent)

Is this because his name was on my
research?

AGENT 1

(dead-pan)

What research is that, Dr. Omalu?

Bennet HOLDS his look. A stare-down. A long beat, then-

BENNET :

(this is bullshit--)

I'll resign first.

AGENT 2

In which case your immigration
status will be revised. Since your
status requires full-time
employment.

BENNET :

(so absurd he actually
laughs)

I'll get another job in some other

city.

(and very - too - quickly)

AGENT :

That would be fine.

159 INT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - PITTSBURGH - DAY
OVER BENNET'S SHOULDER as he walks slowly through the autopsy chamber. Past Sullivan. Gracie. His hands shake. Knees soft.
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 107A.

Sound and light as if from the bottom of a pool. Muffled.
Slow. Prised. Up the stairs into his-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 108.

160 INT. BENNET'S OFFICE - COUNTY CORONER - DAY
Bennet enters. Wecht trails in after him.

WECHT :

I said make us both come out okay,
not professional ruination.

And takes in, maybe for the first time, Bennet's little
shitbox of an office. The shitty high-school microscope.

WECHT (CONT'D)

This is a terrible goddamn chair.

(looks around; the
computer)

You had to buy that, too?

BENNET :

Everything.

WECHT :

I didn't do good enough by you.

BENNET :

They won't make me say one word
against you.

WECHT :

What's there to say? Cyril Wecht's
a loud-mouth asshole? Yeah, well. I
don't care. I'm tired. My balls are
low-

Then. Why he's really here-

WECHT (CONT'D)

Look. Whoever - whatever - takes my

place - everything is up for grabs
now.

(Bennet isn't reading him)

The CTE material - Webster, Long,
Strzelczyk, Waters--

BENNET :

And?

WECHT :

And maybe the Allegheny County
Medical Examiner suddenly develops
a storage problem. And certain
brain matter is suddenly taking up
too much space. I won't be able to
protect it. Or you.

(then)

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 108A.

WECHT (CONT'D)

So I asked Sullivan where it all
was. He had no idea.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 109.

BENNET :

Because it's in my coat closet.

Wecht stares at him a beat.

WECHT :

You're a goddamn renegade, you know
that?

(then)

What if they get a warrant?

BENNET :

On suspicion of what, science?

Wecht laughs. Then, the bottom line-

WECHT :

We got screwed. You don't deserve
it.

(--)

Know what the worst part is? How
easy it was.

BENNET:

(look at me--)

I can't go back to Nigeria. All I am is here. My child is going to be born American.

WECHT:

(don't worry so much--)

I'll get you a job. You can work in the prison laundry with me.

(starts to leave, then, fuck it)

Call the surgeon. We need a goddamn drink.

161 INT. CHINATOWN INN - PITTSBURGH - A LITTLE LATER

We're following Bennet wobbling slightly through the narrow passage from men's room to the bar.

It's lunch-time. Bailes and Wecht lean waiting for him. Our guys are drunk. Bennet stares at the fish--

BAILES :

I'm telling you there's only one thing they're thinking about now: how many more years of clean profit they can squeeze out of professional football.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 110.

WECHT BENNET:

Before they have to put a (and mimics) warning label on the sport. "The Surgeon General Has Determined that Playing Football is Dangerous to Your Health."

(his glass)

Johnny Walker-

BAILES:

Before people stop buying team jerseys. The NFL's already gaming this out, the merchandise, the cable deals, endorsement deals, advertising, when all that will

start to skid sideways, then slide.

(then)

Did you know Tagliabue was law partner at Covington & Burling, the firm that represented the seven Big Tobacco companies?

WECHT :

Of course he was.

BAILES:

The law firm that now represents the National Football League.

WECHT :

Of course it does.

BAILES:

In my last year with the Steelers, the League moved a game from a Sunday to a Tuesday because of a blizzard. The League said it wasn't worried about TV ratings because the NFL is immune even from acts of God.

Wecht is starting to give Bailes a dark look.

BENNET:

(drinking)

And now here comes this Omalu, mere pathologist and foreigner of questionable background.

WECHT:

Now highly deportable pathologist and foreigner.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 111.

BAILES :

And then there is the National Football League-

BENNET :

Immune from acts of god -

BAILES :

--And its 25 years of expert brain research. Bennet Omalu vs. football. Bennet Omalu vs. America. That's their playbook. Pause. They're actually quite drunk. Wecht up-ends his bourbon. After a beat-

WECHT :

Know how many people cigarettes killed since the warning label went on? 200-million. 5-million a year. But there are more smokers now than ever. People want what they want. Pause.

BENNET :

(dawning even on him)
Maybe this all makes football bigger. Maybe all this somehow means more, more money, more of everything. Pause. Sobering-

WECHT :

Because it's the goddamn Roman Coliseum, right? And the people can't get enough of the car crash of it all. They drink. Contemplating that. Wecht is staring at Bailes, as if at a traitor. Bailes can't hold his look, turns away, as Bennet, under his breath-

BENNET :

Until someone dies people give a damn about.

(then cut to--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 112.

152 EXT. ALLEGHENY COUNTY CORONER - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Bennet at the cross-walk waiting for the light to change, returning from the bar.

A Police cruiser - sirens piercing - smashes by. Bennet turns to stare at it. Suddenly nervous. And instinctively turns. A

pick-up truck has stopped alongside. The DRIVER - no one special - looks at him. Eyes meet. Bennet looks away. As the signal changes. And the car moves off-
Gracie's broken away from the building, running to him, waving, as in a bad fucking dream-

GRACIE :

Bennet!!

(now smash to--)

153 INT. EMERGENCY - PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL - DAY
Bennet in a scrum of EMTs and NURSES running Prema in.
DOCTORS converging. Prema pale, weeping, as, on the run--

PARAMEDIC:

30-year old female, G-1, P-zero, 18
weeks EGA pregnancy, heavy
bleeding, suspected miscarriage-

154 INT. O.R. - PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL - DAY
Bennet's hands on Prema's face. DOCTOR searching with the
ultrasound wand. As all eyes on the image. The space where
the heart is - dark. A NURSE places a hand on Prema's arm. A
doctor says, Sorry. We SEE his mouth moving, but we're in
Bennet's POV and he's hearing nothing. He moves to Prema's
face, and holds it. Both of them crying.

BENNET :

(to the room)

Will you please excuse us?

(and when they are alone)

I'm sorry I'm sorry. I made a
mistake. This is my fault I'm sorry-

PREMA :

This isn't your fault-(
and then we--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 113.

155 INT. RECOVERY ROOM - PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL
Bennet enters amidst the bouquets. "Your friends at the
Coroner's office". He bends over Prema. Presses his forehead
to hers. Sits. Takes in where they are. (All the places they
are.)

BENNET :

I wish I never met Mike Webster.

PREMA :

Your work was beautiful. You are beautiful.

BENNET :

But they destroyed us. I don't understand why this is happening this way. What else do I have to do?

PREMA :

Bennet. Look at me-(
and he does)
Do you know what I chose to fake?
(--)
You.
By now he is crying.

BENNET :

We will have this family.

PREMA :

Yes, we will.
(--)
Just not here.
(--)
(It's time to let go. And let God.)

162 OMIT

163 INT. HOME - MOON TOWNSHIP - DAY

Bennet walking through his nearly-finished home. Airy, light. Built-ins. Faux-grand but grand nonetheless. Walks through his kids' rooms. (There are two.) One already painted into a nursery.

His master bath. Dragging his finger along his marble.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 114.

Stops at the window. Transfixed by the McMansion across the street. Fresh shrubbery unwrapped, sod fresh. American Family in. KIDS, 7 & 11, bikes, DAD assembles a bbq, MOM's unpacking the garage.

Now down the stairs into his lab. The space carved for his dissection table. His freezers. His.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hello? Mr. Omalu?

BENNET :

(he's so weary--)

Dr. Omalu

(and climbs to meet--)

The CONTRACTOR. Standing in his new living room.

CONTRACTOR:

I just need the measurements for
the flat screens.

BENNET :

That isn't going to be necessary.

(and now--)

164 BENNET STANDING IN HIS FOYER

And closes the new raw-wood door. Grabs a 2x4. Turns looking
at his walls. We don't know what he will do. And - volcanic -
he swings and-

BURIES it in sheetrock. BAM! Again. And Again. BAM! Dust.

Splinters. And as he swings-

We PULL outside the house, TRACKING IN REVERSE, house
RECEDING IN FRAME, the perfect windows, the perfect yard, the
baby foliage. GLIMPSES of Bennet in the window, swinging at
the guts of the house. Then stopping. Slipping to his knees,
weeping seething with rage-
As we keep going back. Rising, PULLING high and far from the
cul-de-sac, the subdivision. Everything in front of us - the
lots, the streets - so well designed. Such a good story. Now
this.

And as we keep we-

DISSOLVE TO BLACK

And OVER BLACK SCREEN, we HEAR Bennet singing:

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 115.

BENNET (PRE-LAP)

If ever you're in my arms again
This time I'll love you much better
If ever you're in my arms again
This time I'll hold you forever-

AND UP TO-

165 OMIT

166 OMIT

167 OMIT

168 INT./EXT. BENNET'S CAR/CENTRAL VALLEY - CALIFORNIA - DAY
Bennet - in a 2010 Mercedes sedan - crossing an ocean of

Kansas-flat farmland. Dry and desolate. Tract after tract of arid farmland, ranch homes sticking up out of the landscape like tombstones. Mexican DAY-LABORERS and tractors.

And pulls up to-

169 EXT. SUBDIVISION - LODI, CALIFORNIA - DAY

Dropped amid the fields. Treeless. Single-story brick ranches. Sun-bleached.

The sun is high. The air is 105.

Bennet gets out with groceries and into-

A169 INT. BENNET'S NEW HOME - LODI, CALIFORNIA - DAY

Bennet playing with a TODDLER in the gravelly back yard. Blowup pool. Kneeling in the dirt, putting in tomato trellises.

TIME HAS PASSED.

And Bennet looks up. He's happy. Prema - pregnant with #2 - waves behind glass-

Then cut to-

B169 OMIT

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 116.

170 OMIT

A170 INT. MORGUE - LODI, CALIFORNIA - DAY

Humble pre-fab trailer. Blue-light fly zapper spilling dead bugs. The refrigerated room is bumper-cars with dead migrant laborers wrapped loosely in sheets. One poorly-trained ASSISTANT.

A single slab. Bennet rolls out his special instruments.

Every death always is sacred: "Tell me how this happened, Jose."

No one to tell him otherwise.

And begins his work. A fleck on his sleeve, and off comes his smock, and as he reaches for a fresh one-

171 OMIT

172 INT. BEDROOM - BENNET'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

Bennet asleep next to Prema. His arm draped over her pregnant belly protectively. Their kid's bed against the wall. Toddler calmly asleep.

DUERSON (PRE-LAP)

(manic, into phone)

My mind's slipping, man. I can't find the goddamn words-

The SOUNDS of footsteps shuffling on carpet. Heavy breathing.

Pants. Grunts. And now UP TO-

173 OMIT

174 OMIT

175 OMIT

176 INT. CONDO - SUNNY ISLES BEACH, FLORIDA - DAY

We find Dave Duerson pacing. On his cell. Into a mirror. Who is that? Where are you?

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15

117.

DUERSON:

(manic, into phone)

Something seriously wrong with my head-

We SEE laid out on his kitchen table, an issue of Sports Illustrated. The cover piece says "CONCUSSIONS" (the word superimposed over Steelers linebacker JAMES HARRISON mercilessly spearing a receiver).

And photos of an ex-wife. Children. Parents.

A portrait of himself in a Chicago Bears uniform.

DUERSON (CONT'D)

What? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Gotta do it. Give it to them. I'm sorry. I gotta I just can't do this-

And drops the phone.

Now we see the gun in his other hand. .38 Special.

Duerson heads to his bed. Lays on top of it. Slips a clean white sheet over himself to the neck. We're right over him. As he puts the gun muzzle to his chest. Eyes wide. Right to

us:

CUT TO BLACK:

Pause, then-

BANG!

OVER BLACK SCREEN

WE HEAR A PHONE RINGING. Two rings, three.

SNAP. Light comes on. Revealing-

177

INT. BENNET'S NEW HOME - LODI, CALIFORNIA -

SIMULTANEOUS/NIGHT

Clock reads midnight.

BENNET :

(picking up)

Hello?

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 118.

BAILES/PHONE (OVER)

It's Julian.
(and we INTERCUT Bailes in
his robe in his kitchen-)
Dave Duerson killed himself today.
Bennet slips out of bed away from a sleeping Prema. Takes the
phone into the hall.

BAILES :

He shot himself in the chest,
Bennet. In the heart.

BENNET :

Oh my god-

BAILES :

He left a note. He said he was
thinking about all NFL players. He
wanted his brain donated. To be
examined. He said we were right.

BENNET :

He said that?
Bennet has gone to stand at a window looking out on his
humble little street.

BAILES :

Bennet? You there?

BENNET :

For the brain's last act to not
just die, but preserve itself in
the act of killing, to give an
instruction to shoot into the chest
-Julian, human beings don't do
that.
PUSH IN on Bennet. His grief and anger.

BAILES :

Bennet. Dave Duerson killing
himself - the way he killed himself
-they can't explain this one. It's
undeniable now. It's all going to
unravel.
And on Bennet blinking, trying to comprehend what Bailes is

saying to him, we SMASH TO-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 119.

178 INT. BENNET'S NEW HOME - LODI, CALIFORNIA - DAY/EARLIER
Bennet in their modest bedroom. Before his cramped open closet. Flustered
and overthinking the suits. O.S. the kid plays and laughs.
Prema enters. She's pregnant.
Bennet pulls out a conservative gray suit.

PREMA :

That is what they wear.
(and takes it from him and puts it back)

BENNET :

What do I say to them?

PREMA :

Who do you speak for? When you know who you speak for you know what to say
and what to mean.

(pulls out a bold pinstriped
suit)

Go and give them what belongs to them. Tell them what's really happening.
(--)

Wear what you are.
(and we SMASH TO--)

*
*
*
*

179 BENNET'S FACE. HUGE IN FRAME. GAME FACE. SET.

WE PULL BACK TO REVEAL-180

INT./EXT. LIMOUSINE (MOVING)/PALM BEACH - FLORIDA - DAY

Bennet in back. The DRIVER glancing at him in the rear-view.

The phone STILL RINGING as we ADD and INTERCUT-OUTSIDE

THE LIMO, wide tree-lined streets. Expensive lawns.

Golf courses. Who can Bennet be that he's going where he's going?-181

THE LIMO PULLING UP TO THE BREAKERS HOTEL - PALM BEACH

And its turreted Versailles-like grounds. The only other nonwhites
move mowers and bags. If a plantation were a castle.

Sign board at entrance: "Welcome National Football League Players
Association Special Concussion Summit."

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 120.

182 INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - BREAKERS HOTEL

With a terrace letting out on the Atlantic. A Louis XVI bed.

Murals. A fountain. Bennet left alone to dust off. Standing

in the center of the obscene room--

Chooses to iron his suit in his underwear. And shave.

Scraping his face, a tension surfaces. Eyes to hands. PUSH IN CLOSE on his hands. Blade bowing against his cheek. Until slicing himself.

He watches in the mirror the blood zag down his face. Then drop, and as it falls, as it splatters the sink, cut away to--

183 INT. GRAND BALLROOM FOYER

Bennet outside waiting against another mirrored wall. This one leafed in gold. Turns to the glass to cinch his tie.

TIGHT ON HIS COLLAR: smudge of blood. He touches it. Decides to leave it there. And turns to-

184 INT. GRAND BALLROOM - BREAKERS HOTEL

Bennet approaches the podium. And turns to 500 faces. Mostly players, former players, their families. But there is Jones and Pellman. NFL lawyers. Team doctors, player reps.

And the wives. We know who they are. Because they're in their 40's and 50's. And because they are alone, no men beside them. Among them, Keana Strzelczyk. And her kids.

We find Bailes. He nods at Bennet, smallest nod of accomplishment.

Behind all that, toward the back: Mike Webster. Waiting, listening with intent.

Bennet takes out his speech. Glances at the pages. Then up at the audience. At Webster. In the suffocating silence.

He grips and leans into the podium. STARES out there, weighing the costs of what he'd like to say against what he might say. Capable now of anything-

BENNET:

I don't hate football. My wife has started watching it. I see the grace, the drama.

(a long pause)

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 121.

BENNET (CONT'D)

I once said I wished I never met Mike Webster. I was wrong. He was committed, a captain, a warrior, quiet in his pain. He's given us a gift. The gift of knowing.

(--)

In the place I come from, we take

care of our warriors. And give respect to those with the power to heal them.

(his eyes stop on Mike Webster)

These men-

And stops. Looks away. Elsewhere. Finds Keana Strz, her kids. His eyes go back to Webster. And stay there.

BENNET (CONT'D)

--are not machines. Not commodity. Not video game figure. We loved them when they were heroes.

(--)

By dying they speak for the living. And I speak for them. That is all I do.

(--)

Forgive them. Forgive yourselves.

Be at peace-

(and to Webster--)

I thank you.

And now Bennet simply stops and walks off. Every face in the room turned his way. Here and there people have stood up.

Players. Wives. As he exits.

Not Webster. As Bennet turns for the exit, he spots him sitting where he sat. We're SLO-MO. Pulling away but hanging onto Webster. His hands on knees. Head down. Alone.

As Keana Strzelczyk, behind him, is weeping in silence. Her children, teenagers, cocooning her in their arms. They're letting it go. Letting it all go. Bennet leaves all of them.

And now-

185 INT. LIMOUSINE (MOVING)/PALM BEACH - FLORIDA - DAY

In the back, with the Breakers receding IN FRAME behind him.

As we HEAR, in PRE-LAP-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15

122.

SENATOR JOHN CONYERS (PRE-LAP)

But what's the answer? Is there a link between playing professional football and the likelihood of contracting a brain-related injury, dementia, CTE?

(and we cut to--)

186

ROGER GOODELL, PIXILATED, ON TV, HALF-HIDDEN BEHIND A WITNESS

TABLE MIC:

We're in the Rayburn Building, U.S. Capitol. Behind Goodell, a packed gallery. Before him, an angry Congressional panel. And Conyers is visibly frustrated-

GOODELL:

(bumbling)

We're doing everything we possibly can for our players now.

SENATOR JOHN CONYERS

But what's the answer?

GOODELL:

The medical experts would know better than I with respect to that.

But we are reinforcing our commitment-

(now ADDING--)

BENNET, IN LODI, WATCHING THIS ON HIS TV

Sitting like a pupil before the screen. Prema standing behind him like a sentry. The phone starts to RING. HOLD, then-

REP. LINDA SANCHEZ

(livid)

It reminds me of the tobacco companies sitting in this same chamber saying, 'There is no link between smoking and damage to your health.'

A fucking Congressional warhead. Goodell flop-sweaty. And now we INTERCUT-

BAILES, watching this at his office.

WECHT, at the Chinatown Inn.

SULLIVAN and GRACIE, in the break room.

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 123.

JONES, from his office.

AMOBI, on his iPhone in a football locker room.

The phone RINGING over all this, as-REP.

MAXINE WATERS :

We have heard from the NFL time and time again. You are always studying. You are always trying. You are always hopeful-And

as we PUSH IN on Goodell, wearing a look of constipation.

Then-BACK

TO Bennet's home. His kid.

PREMA :

This is all because of you.

(--)

You did this.

*

*

*

And as he turns now and looks out the window, at the sun-bleached street, the empty blue sky. As he looks around them at their humble digs. No dream house, this-*

*

*

A186* INT. RESTAURANT - HAY ADAMS HOTEL - WASHINGTON DC - DAY
Lunch crowd gone. Bennet sitting opposite DEPUTY MAYOR ALLANHIRSCHORN, 50. Washingtonian conservative. A WAITER sets down a tray of coffee.

DEPUTY MAYOR :

First time in Washington?

BENNET :

Never had the time.

DEPUTY MAYOR :

Well, we're thrilled you accepted our invitation-BENNET
Washington D.C. is the capital of this nation. Lodi, California is the capital of lettuce. I was curious.

(he smiles, and he does,

he's infectious--)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 123A.

DEPUTY MAYOR:

(he pours herself coffee)

Chief Medical Examiner of
Washington, D.C.

(MORE)

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 124.

DEPUTY MAYOR (CONT'D)

means you'd also consult with the
CIA and FBI, and any foreign
government requesting the

assistance of the United States
government.

(then)

Essentially, you're America's
forensic pathologist. You wouldn't
have to put on scrubs, or perform
an autopsy. You're beyond all that
now-

(as if that's good news)

Bennet is looking out the window. To the Department of
Justice. The White House. Sidewalks hurrying with people in
suits who strap into the cockpits that fly the nation.

DEPUTY MAYOR (CONT'D)

Would you like to know about the
benefits package?

BENNET :

I'm sure it's fine.

The Deputy Mayor ponders him. Feels his dilemma.

DEPUTY MAYOR:

We know what you did, Dr. Omalu.
You exemplify what it is to be an
American. You belong in the
nation's capital.

And it starts to well in him, the whole road here--

DEPUTY MAYOR (CONT'D)

We'd like to offer you the job.

He is barely containing his emotions. She sees it in him,
looks away, giving him privacy, understanding-

DEPUTY MAYOR (CONT'D)

Why don't you take a couple days
and think about it--?

B186* INT. BENNET'S NEW HOME - LODI, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

Bennet's overnight bag by the front door.

Bennet and Prema in the kitchen. She's washing. He's drying.

Their daughter at work at her doll house. Prema stops. Looks
at him. Bennet deep in thought. Until, finally-

CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 125.

PREMA :

Are you going to tell me what you
said?

*

BENNET :

I didn't say anything. They gave me a week to decide.

*
*
*

He wipes his hands. Takes in this humble house. His kids, her toys. His pregnant wife.

PREMA :

It's everything you wanted.

*
*
*

She's not even sure about that. And neither is he now. And he turns. They HOLD a long look. Then-*

187 INT. MORGUE - LODI, CALIFORNIA - DAY *

Bennet at his work. Pauses by a body on the slab. Left hand lights on the forehead. Right on the cold gray hand.

Deep in thought. Then-Bennet's attention turns. Pulled from the humble autopsy chamber, we FOLLOW HIM into the hall. And REFOCUS on a TV playing on the CLERK's desk. FADING IN-REPORTER/TV (OVER)

--sports fans and, frankly, all Americans across the nation are stunned today by the suicide of 42-year-old football Hall of Famer Junior Seau, one of football's most beloved, revered, and feared, players, who this morning committed suicide. Seau shot himself in the heart-(
now we SEE)

FOOTAGE of bedlam. Handsome, Samoan face. Neck ropey with muscle. Toothy smile. To a crime scene. Yellow tape wrapping a beautiful seaside bungalow. Police. Ambulance. Now-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 126.

Bennet. As his expression moves from shocked. To upset. To calm. Confirmed. Now we follow him into-

188 INT. BENNET'S OFFICE - LODI MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

Bennet passes his medical degrees on the wall. All of them up there now. Framed and pretty. Plenty of room.

And changes into his shirt, and crosses through frame in extreme f.g., and recrosses, dressing, working, busy -- as we BEGIN A SLOW PUSH past him to the wall, where we find--
Brain cases stacked floor to ceiling.

And files, maybe a hundred: Tom McHale, 45, Tampa Bay

Buccaneers...Nathan Stiles, 17, Spring Hill High School...
Christopher Henry, 26, Cincinnati Bengals...Damien Nash, 25,
Denver Broncos...Curtis Whitley, 39, San Diego Chargers...
Greg Page, 50, boxer...Justin Levens, 28, boxer...Norman
Hand, 37, New York Giants...

Bennet returns, changed into a suit, then-

189 INT./EXT. BENNET'S CAR/CENTRAL VALLEY, CA - DAY

His Mercedes cutting fast through the oceans of crops.

Factories, ranches. Schools. A high school. Now - suddenly
slowing-

Pulling alongside a junior varsity football practice. The
kids - mostly Mexican - strapping on helmets. That nutcracker
drill.

As other kids are winding down. Tossing the ball. Tossing
water bottles. The adolescent knucklehead hazing of rangy
leggy puppies. The game as rite of passage.

And we REVERSE ON BENNET. He forgets himself. It's a little
funny. Kids. Then-

Two players line up 15 yards apart, turn to face each other
like bulls. And run. Bennet takes a step toward them as the
kids hurtle forward erasing the space between them. Faster.
INTERCUTTING Bennet and the blur. 5-yards and closing. 2yards.
And now-

FREEZE. A single frame before helmets collide in a
devastating crow-to-crown blow. HOLD there, and over that-
CHERRY PAGES 1.21.15 127.

CRAWL:

* Bennet Omalu turned down the Washington job offer. He
remains in Lodi, California, with Prema and his two children.

* Shortly after Hall of Fame linebacker, Junior Seau, shot
himself in the heart, more than 4,500 retired NFL players
sued the NFL for concealing the dangers of concussions.

* The NFL proposed a settlement in which former NFL *
Commissioner Paul Tagliabue and Dr. Elliot Pellman would *
never be questioned under oath, and the League would never
have to disclose what it knew about concussion-related brain *
problems, or when it knew it. *

* Last September, actuaries hired by the NFL concluded that
33% of all retired professional football players will suffer
"serious cognitive impairment", including CTE, in their
lifetime.

* All Federal charges against Dr. Cyril Wecht were eventually
dropped. *

TO BLACK.