

172 CONTINUED: (3)

1

Willie says nothing.

TONY

(relaxes a little)

... I guess that's what I wanted to say. You're part of something here! A tradition. Lombardi, Uinitas, Tittle, Sammy Baugh, hundreds of great players! Those men on the wall, you're part of that now. And along the way I want you to cherish that... 'cause when it's gone, it's gone forever, and...

WILLIE

You know, I look at all these pictures and trophies and stuff and it just makes me... sad. Like the room is full of ghosts. When I'm done with the game, or the game is done with me, I don't wanna be no ghost up on a wall. I want more'n that.

Tony takes a long moment.

TONY

... Looks like Cap's gonna make it back in time for the playoffs... I'm gonna start him.

WILLIE

(long icy pause)

Yeah, I figgered. That's why I'm here, right? I knew you was gonna sell me out.

TONY

Cap's a leader... a team player. You need a team to win in the playoffs.

WILLIE

Bullshit! He's not half the athlete I am! Look me in the eye, Coach, and tell me Cap's the better player...

TONY

Cap's the better player.

~~SPAT~~

WILLIE

(derisively)

Sure! I guess that was another guy winning the last two games. I put points on the board! He lost four in a row. I lead by doing!

TONY

You kicked ass, kid, but Cap Rooney has been 'doing' it for years and he goddamn deserves his day in the sun, so don't start...

WILLIE

And I deserve the bench, right?!

TONY

... He's been the quarterback of this team as long as...

WILLIE

And his time is over! And yours is too... 'less you start taking some risks! Start playing the game the way it is now. It ain't all those pictures on the wall anymore --

TONY

(seething)

I've lived this game for three decades, kid, I know football. Those men --

WILLIE

Wanted to win -- just like you do! You can feed the press and the fans all that 'sacrifice and glory, grand ol' man of the game' crap! You sell it good, everyone bought it. But I been there, Coach, I seen a long line of guys like you from college on with that bullshit halftime speech!

TONY

(furious)

It's bullshit, huh! You think you...

(CONTINUED)

WILLIE

Yeah, it is! And you know it is!
'Cause it's really about money.
Rakin' in the TV contracts, fat-
cat boosters sittin' in their
skyboxes and coaches upp'in' their
salaries, all of 'em looking for
the next black stud to get 'em in
the Top Ten, put 'em in the bowl
games -- It's just like the pros,
'cept in the pros, the field hands
get paid...

TONY

Don't play the race card with me,
kid. Twenty-five years I've worked
with men of your color. You're
good because you're different, not
because...

WILLIE

Maybe it's not racism, maybe it's
placism, but the black man still
gotta know his place, right, Coach?

TONY

What are you saying? You don't
trust anybody 'cause of what
happened to you in college? You
knew the rules, Willie, you broke
'em.

WILLIE

Broke 'em?! How'd I break 'em?

TONY

You broke 'em. That's how you
broke, 'em.

WILLIE

Man, I lost a million-dollar
signing bonus 'cause a booster
gave me a three-hundred-dollar
suit to go to his kid's wedding.
I didn't even know the guy.
Hell, everybody was getting
something! How's a black man
supposed to get through college
when he don't got the money to get
clothes, go on a date? They all
had their hands out but it was me
they suspended.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

I dropped six rounds in the draft 'cause of that. And the coaches rapping me 'troublemaker,' 'arrogant,' 'won't play ball,' all that corporate shit they hit the brothers with when they won't kiss the money. Shit, I coulda made millions of dollars if I'd kissed that big ass Julian's kissing all the time. You talk about 'sacrifice'? I sacrificed about ten million dollars is what I sacrificed, 'cause of those dumb rednecks like your coach friend at San Diego who makes me corner back 'cause I got fast feet! It was him separated my shoulder, fucked up my throwin' arm tackling some 250-pound bullmother. I was a great football player but nobody gave me the time of day or the season I needed to heal that shoulder. They traded me right outta there!

TONY

Blame anybody but yourself, Willie! Y'see, that's what a leader is about, the times he's gotta sacrifice because he has to lead by example, not by fear or...

WILLIE

(challenged)

Fear?! Who you talking to?! I hung in there when nobody gave a shit about me. I rode the bench for five fucking years! And now I get my one lousy shot, I'm 26 years old -- half my football life is over -- and now you tell me 'You go on back to the bench, son. 'Cause you gotta sacrifice for the greater glory of Cap Rooney.' Well, fuck you, Coach! I'm not buying that brand, 'cause you're some scared old man who won't let me play my way 'cause I might just win! And then what the fuck was your life all about?!

Tony fights to control himself. Outside, the evening

172 CONTINUED: (7)

TONY

(quietly)

You're not some flash-in-the-pan receiver or corner back or even Julian Washington, kid, you're a goddamn quarterback! You know what that means? It's the top spot, kid, the guy that takes the fall, the guy who everybody's looking at first, the leader of a team, who will break their ribs and noses and necks for you 'cause they believe! 'Cause you make 'em believe! That's a quarterback.

WILLIE

(caustic,
overlapping)

Yeah, I'm the leader of your team till Cap's back up! Then I'm back on the bench. Shit, you ain't said two words to me all season 'til Cherubini went down -- then it was...

(imitating D'Amato)

'Son, just pretend you're throwing a pass on the street in the 'hood and your mama's ringing the dinner bell' -- all you done is talked at me, man, never listened to a goddamned thing I said! So don't have no coronary 'cause I'm gonna stay who I am -- 'Steamin' Willie Beamen!' 'Cause with the time I got left I'm gonna play my way and I'm gonna get my dollars up there so's when you motherfuckers trade me, waive me, injure reserve me, or whatever the fuck you do to me, I'm gonna be worth ten times what I was worth before!

A long pause. Tony's eyes, moving past ego, scrambling to understand.

TONY

I don't know... you are a very, very young man. And you are very, very stupid.

WILLIE

Tell me I'm wrong.

172 CONTINUED: (8)

TONY

You're wrong. I know better than you think, Willie...

WILLIE

You don't know one thing about me... You couldn't even begin to imagine me.

He leaves Tony -- drained.

173 EXT. SHARK'S HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

Valet parkers attend to the numerous expensive cars and limos that pull into a circular driveway, unloading beautiful laughing women and exuberant football players...

Willie drives his Suburban right up onto the front lawn, enraging the valets.

174 INT. SHARK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT

Willie is met with a ferocious explosion of MUSIC and mayhem; players dance and drink and pursue the opposite sex through the house... Shark bounces up to him:

SHARK

Make yourself at home in 'The Pit,' Dawg! Blowjobs upstairs. But if you want to hit the skins, trawl the beach. Whatever you do, don't mess up my sheets, cause my old lady's comin' back Tuesday and she gonna kick my butt she see any semen or blood round here!!

In a lively mood, Shark stumbles off. Willie makes his way through a packed living room... women immediately perk when they see him, whispering, some predatory...

A174 INT. SHARK'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BALCONY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Willie gravitates to Washington, Sanderson, a few others: The dialogue is fast, overlapping.

SANDERSON

What up, Willie B?! Coach give you the Vince Lombardi speech?

END