

WORLD CLASS

"PILOT: Rough Draft Picks"

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT: DARKENED ROOM

A television almost fills the screen, MUTED SOUND from the broadcast, which is in Arabic without subtitles.

ONSCREEN an Announcer in suit and tie speaks from an anchor desk. Behind him a screen shows a sequence of shots illustrating the story.

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS -- INSET IN NEWSCAST SCREEN

--Sideline shot of NFL play with SUPERBOWL logo and score.

--Dubai's huge rugby stadium and Sports City complex

--Press party podium, microphones and camera flashes. Two Arabs in elegant robes flank a much larger black man in a suit. His name appears in Arabic script and English letters: ALIJAH SHAKIR. He holds up a red/black/gold football jersey displaying large number "1" and the name, "SCIMITARS".

--A large black player in a Vikings uniform demolishes a blocker and smears a Chicago Bears quarterback. Shakir's name continues inset.

--Shakir, in Vikings uniform, brandishes a SuperBowl trophy overhead amid post-game craziness.

--A group of Arabs in resplendent robes pose formally in front of a palace. The Scimitars logo appears, inset.

--Arab Woman in a very short robe with veil holds up two red and gold pom-poms and shakes them listlessly.

--Arab "man in the street" yells into camera, spits dramatically.

--A group of soccer fans shake fists at camera and point to their team jerseys.

END SEQUENCE OF NEWSCAST SHOTS

The Announcer continues as the screen behind him shows a posed still shot of a cricket team.

During the course of the Dubai/football item the view widened, drawing back to reveal two SHADOW FIGURES in swivel chairs flanking the TV screen. One taps a cigar, blows a nimbus of smoke in front of the screen.

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE
(Smooth, subservient)
Maybe if I knew what they were saying?

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE
(Brusque, dominant)
How much do you have to hear to know they're talking about having a raghead football team?

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE
(Beat)
Okay. So what about it?

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE
That's what we're going to talk about.

EXT. - COLOSSAL STADIUM - DAY

Alijah Shakir admires a huge, beautiful stadium, where workers are still installing a new set of football goals. A small group of Arabs flanks him: older men in robes, younger ones in western suits like his own. His main guide, FAISAL IBN IDRIS, points happily at the field, beaming.

FAISAL
And the "uprights" can be removed, to be quickly replaced for games.

ALIJAH
And practice?

FAISAL
We have a special, smaller field for that at the other end of the sporting complex.

ALIJAH
Damn, you people don't fool around, come to building major impressions.

FAISAL

I will be candid, Alijah. The stadium was in need of another tenant, and especially during our season, when it is little used.

ALIJAH

We love owners that can pay rent.

FAISAL

You will find the corporation very ready to afford you whatever you require to bring victory.

ALIJAH

Victory can run into some money. But I'm completely confident we can pull it off. Whole thing blows my mind, I gotta say. I'm still getting used to the idea.

FAISAL

An idea whose time has come. This is more than just a sport franchise; it's a global cultural shift. It's bridge-building and hybrid vigor. It's a marriage between two poles of world influence. It's...

INT. - MADRASAH SCHOOL - DAY

The appointments of this prestigious Muslim school attempt to look humble, but they're sitting on a very expensive rug and wearing pretty posh *hajibs*, even the obvious bodyguards. IMAM MUHAMMAD ZAID, wizened but sharp and erect, cradles a scroll in his lap, looks over his spectacles at the incensed MALIK FAKHOURI, a thin, hawkish business type who makes no pretense of modesty if his robes, grooming, or manner.

MALIK

It's an abomination!

The Imam shakes his head with a mild smile and Malik immediately lowers his head respectfully. You get the impression he respects few other men.

MALIK

Forgive me, Uztaz Muhammad. But is it not so?

ZAID

Tell me, Issayyid Fakhouri, how did you arrive at my school today?

Malik pauses, smelling a trap, but proceeds.

MALIK

My driver awaits outside, Uztaz.
Do you wish a ride? To any place?

ZAID

He waits beside your camel? Your
donkey, perhaps? Your stallion?

Malik lowers his eyes, abashed.

MALIK

He is inside my Mercedes Benz,
Uztaz. Abusing the radio and air
conditioner.

ZAID

Ah. And could you please tell me
the time?

Malik just stares, nailed.

ZAID

You hesitate to display the
timepiece you wear on your wrist?
A fine one by Patek Phillipe, do I
recall correctly from your bragging
on other occasions?

Malik squirms but waits for it.

ZAID

So your new German automobile and
French watch are not abominations
before Allah? Nor the London suit
you wear when selling your American
construction equipment? Nor the
Scotch whiskey you drink at your
club, contrary to the adjurations
of the Prophet himself?

Malik doesn't like it, but bows his head in assent.

MALIK

Then you do not judge this
organization to be against the True
Faith, Uztaz?

ZAID

It's not, my young brother, and you
know this to be true. When you
speak with the royal family, they
might tell you that it is a tool of
the faith. And of their interests.

MALIK

But you'll admit it's an
abomination against soccer and our
young athletes?

ZAID

(Smiling ruefully)
Oh, absolutely.

MALIK

Well, then...

ZAID

Then we should keep our eye on this
team and their intentions. But
first...

Malik looks at him expectantly and he continues blandly.

ZAID

It is time for our prayers.

INT. - RUSH'S CONDO - DAY

One of several luxurious pads we'll come to associate with
Scimitars' coaches and players. Posh, sterile, killer views
of the dysfunctional splendor of Dubai. Alijah sits at ease
on a leather couch, facing his assistant coach, RUSH
CLAYTON--mid-thirties, trim, intense--both nursing drinks.

ALIJAH

Sorry, I wasn't watching TV much at
the time. Why'd you get sacked by
the Raiders?

RUSH

Possession of my own brain with
intent to use.

ALIJAH

That would do it. Sad what Mr.
Davis has come to. Man was a
giant. Fact is, I was wondering how
much brains you had for taking the
job in the first place.

RUSH

How does he get anybody? You think
you can be the one who can work it.
And you're the *head*, you know?
Résumé stuff. Go somewhere else
after, like Chucky going to Tampa.

ALIJAH

And here you are.

RUSH

The more I'm around you, Al, the better I feel about this whole thing.

ALIJAH

So far, I'd say the same.

RUSH

But listen, doesn't the whole setup feel damned weird?

ALIJAH

Oh, hell yes. And you ain't even heard the truly weird juju yet.

RUSH

Can't wait.

Alijah peers around the flat, obviously changing subject.

ALIJAH

How you liking beautiful downtown Dubai?

RUSH

I feel like the "Beverly Jetsons".

ALIJAH

(Laughing)
So, when your wife coming over?

RUSH

Hard to say. Her last words on the subject were, "Damned if I'll live in some sexist Arab country".

ALIJAH

(Nods understandingly)
But she'll come visit and such?

RUSH

Oh, yeah. Once we get the roster nailed down. We miss each other, are running up quite a phone bill.

ALIJAH

Good thing that's covered, huh? She eyeballs the layout here, she'll be moving in, decorating.

RUSH

She's actually more of a cottage and garden type girl.

ALIJAH

Wait'll she checks out the shopping.

INT. - HUMBLE SHACK, DEEP SOUTH - DAY

Poor Southern sharecropper shack with shabby furnishings. LUCIUS, an extremely large Black teenager, sits on the edge of his groaning chair, staring at MAMA, a weathered but feisty Black matriarch who leans toward him from her seat. SIS, mid-twenties and way hot but tackily dressed, lounges on a battered sofa watching BET videos on a rolling TV screen. DADDY, also aged and weathered, shrinks absently in a rocking chair, sipping from a Mason jar.

MAMA

You're a growed-up man now. Don't need be playing games. I thought you was going off to school, learn how to make something out yourself.

LUCIUS

I can't take that scholarship, Mama. Can't qualify for admission.

MAMA

What you mean, "can't qualify"?

LUCIUS

I ain't smart enough.

MAMA

Don't run yourself down, boy!

LUCIUS

My grades are bad, I did bad on those tests. I don't understand that school stuff, anyway. I'm too stupid to go to college.

MAMA

Don't let me hear you saying that! You maybe slow with figures, but you ain't stupid.

SIS

Oh, he's pretty stupid, all right.

MAMA

Don't you sass me, Miss Britches, or I'm gonna go cut me a switch, you hear? Nothing nohow wrong with your brother Lucius!

(To Lucius)
 We'll just find you a good job,
 honey. You plenty big and strong.

LUCIUS
 What am I gonna do? Chop cotton?

SIS
 Or work at the mill like Daddy?
 Oh, 'scuse me, like Daddy did
 before they closed it down?

She stands and flounces toward the door, giving Lucius an affectionate pat and grin as she leaves.

MAMA
 Where you think you going, Missy?

SIS
 Out cut you a switch.
 (Turns defiantly)
 This is a job, don't you get it?
 He got a chance at something and
 you standing in his way like you
 did everybody else in this family!

She stomps out, slamming the rickety screen door.

MAMA
 So who's this man, done called your
 school about you?

LUCIUS
 Alijah Shakir? He's a legend,
 Mama! End on the Gang of Four
 Defense, eight seasons All Pro, MVP
 in two playoff games!

MAMA
 What kind of name is that, anyway?

Lucius looks at her timidly, turns pleading look at Daddy.
 Who bestirs himself, gives Mama a wary look, takes a sip.

DADDY
 His real name is Earl Thomas. He
 played under the name Alijah. You
 know, Elijah, like in the bible?

Mama smells a rat, but bores in on Lucius again.

MAMA
 You say he gone look after you?

LUCIUS

I'll be livin' in his house, Mama.
Like his own family.

MAMA

They good Christian folks?

Tense pause, fidgeting. Then Daddy leans towards her.

DADDY

Course, they are, sugar. Good
Southern black folks like us.

Lucius almost melts in relief, nods like a bobblehead doll.

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

This "war room" is a master set which will be returned to from various flashbacks, departures, and exposition clips as Alijah and Rush put the roster together.

Files, print-outs, folders, phones and laptops litter a huge table or desk. On the wall a large pinboard displays a football depth chart ruled with tape into eleven slots on each side of a horizontal line, each slot filling up with 3x5 cards and PostIt notes as the team coalesces. Another area holds cards for special teams. Alijah sits at the desk, Rush across from him.

ALIJAH

Man, I am a Moslem!

RUSH

Well, sure. Black Muslims.
Changed your name before the draft.
I understand. Worked good for
getting this job. I get it.

ALIJAH

You're not listening to me, dammit!
I didn't change my name for a fad.
I was expressing my deep-held
beliefs. I am a servant of Allah.
That's my religion. I want you to
respect that, hear?

RUSH

Okay, sure. Sorry, Al.

ALIJAH

(Sly smile)
But yeah, it definitely got me over
for this gig.

Both laugh. Rush strokes his own jaw.

RUSH

So that explains the beard?

ALIJAH

Absolutely. Beard of the Prophet. Why else would I grow out some stupid white fuzz like this? My people hardly fans of white fuzz.

RUSH

I figured it was intimidation, convince the offense you were outa your mind and didn't give a damn.

ALIJAH

Well, I got in the position where I have to give a damn, you know. So here I am. This is my new battle flag for the duration.

He pulls the "Number 1" Scimitars jersey off a nearby chair and holds it up in a socialist poster pose.

RUSH

You got it, Alijah One. Show 'em who's *numero uno*.

He tosses the shirt back and pulls another from a drawer. Blazoned with number 97.

ALIJAH

Nah, here's the number gonna do that.

RUSH

I guess. Wreck of the old 97. The Vikes retire your jersey?

ALIJAH

Figured it was cheaper to retire my ass. And it ain't gone be me gets wrecked out there.

RUSH

Out where? Wait a minute, now. Are you talking about playing?

ALIJAH

Player coach. Two years. Starting line-up. Don't look so shocked, young blood. They want my All Stars out there shining on the marquee.

RUSH

Man, that is such a way bad idea.

ALIJAH

Look, I had a special helmet made.
And I write the plays, you know.
Two years and I can just coach, or
go back and knock on the big door
and how they gonna deny me?

RUSH

I thought you should have gotten a
slot anyway, man. Defensive co-
ordinator, something.

ALIJAH

Actually, I know more about
offense. But dig, how many Negro
coaches in the NFL?

RUSH

There's been some. Shell, Edwards.
Dungy, hey.

ALIJAH

How many of 'em Muslims? How many
uppity, intransigent player union
troublemakers? See, now?

RUSH

Well, you probably already got more
publicity from this job than a year
in the League. Can't hurt.

ALIJAH

Should be a lock on something.
College at least.

RUSH

If you get through it in one piece.
You aren't fresh outa the box.
Don't wanna end up doing Mohammed
Ali impressions. Due respect to
your religious persuasion.

ALIJAH

I know how to keep my head. Stay
outa trouble. But I appreciate your
concern.

RUSH

How the hell do you keep a
defensive end outa trouble?

ALIJAH

Youth. So let's see the color of
the youth you're bringing me.

EXT. - PALATIAL COURTYARD - DAY

A gorgeous plaza relieving an impressive official building. Groups of robed Arabs are moving out the doors, talking among themselves, a conference breaking up. Inter-emirate minister EMIR AL-HASADI--sixties, rotund, officious--hastens after to two young men who are hurrying away.

He catches up with the two young princes, RASHAD AL-MAHDI--early twenties, athletic, handsome--and MAKIM AL-NASSAN--same age, tall, and saturnine--and calls to them.

EMIR AL-HASADI

Boys. A word with you, if you will.

Rashad and Makim turn at once, displaying respect. The Emir approaches, avuncular manner hiding a stern-eyed message.

EMIR AL-HASADI

Prince Al-Mahdi, Prince Al-Nassan.
I could tell that you didn't agree
with my points in the meeting.

The Princes start to object, stop at his gesture.

EMIR AL-HASADI

No need. I well understand the
attitudes of the young. Or at
least still remember them. But I
would urge you to take my words to
your hearts, especially with this
athletic project you championed.

RASHAD

We appreciate your thoughts, Emir.

MAKIM

And your instruction, Uncle.

EMIR AL-HASADI

And my message was mostly to you,
our young blood. I know you went to
American schools, have grown up on
American culture. But that
influence can now only decline.

RASHAD

And we need to accommodate the
forces that will shape the future.

EMIR AL-HASADI

(Smiles, patronizing)

But parroting my words is not the same as accepting what I said. As the United States falls away, we need to take our place in the futures of India, of China. Power moves West, young men.

RASHAD

Thank you for taking extra time to express these excellent thoughts to us, Emir Al-Hasadi.

MAKIM

We were already discussing the import of your remarks. Thank you, Uncle.

Both stand in respectful postures as the Emir and his entourage pass by. Then they shoot side glances at each other and roll their eyes upward.

RASHAD

Screw that China crap!

MAKIM

Word, dawg!

They both laugh, but quietly into their fists, and turn to walk away.

RASHAD

They send us to school in the States, then tell us we should buddy up with Chinese and Hindus?

MAKIM

(Imitating the Emir)

Well do I remember the impulses of youth.

RASHAD

Yeah, right. Four wives, six mistresses...

MAKIM

More like a dozen.

RASHAD

...and he hasn't had a hard-on since Moshe Dayan died.

MAKIM

Interesting we know about his mistresses.

RASHAD
(Shrugging)
Common knowledge.

MAKIM
Wonder if we'd know if he had some
really scandalous mistress tucked
away somewhere. An infidel piece.

RASHAD
I think he'd keep that pretty
secret.

MAKIM
Or, you know, a redhead.

RASHAD
No idea.

MAKIM
Don't BS me, Rashi. I went to
Harvard.

RASHAD
And I went to Oklahoma. Sugar Bowl
winners. Wasn't Harvard in the Tidy
Bowl that year?

MAKIM
You were a walk-on.

RASHAD
Hey, I scored. Rushing, too.

MAKIM
The infamous Tulsa game. Without
your score you Okies would only
have won by sixty-two points.

RASHAD
Six more than you.

MAKIM
Cornerbacks don't score points,
dork. We prevent them.

RASHAD
Kind of like condoms.

MAKIM
To return to my topic. I hope
you're being really, really
careful, buddy. And her, too.

INT. - RANDY AND KARLI'S DENVER FLAT - DAY

KARLI JORGENSEN walks along an apartment complex pool apron in a wet bikini. Not as young as her meticulously trained, gorgeous, blonde body looks, but she's holding up just fine, thank you. Reaching her apartment door, she drapes a towel over her shoulders and enters.

As she moves through the entry hall, she hears a phone conversation in the living room. Standing at the door, toweling off her hair, she listens without being noticed by RANDY HOFFMAN, her boyfriend. Randy has "defensive line" written all over him, a big good-looking guy also past his prime years, but in great shape. He's crouching over the phone in his hand, radiating enthusiasm. Karli smiles.

RANDY

I can't believe it. How many times did we slow-mo Alijah's moves? You had ninety-seven on your locker, dude. Just meeting him, you know?

Karli's golden girl smile widens as she fondly takes in Randy's boyish good spirits.

RANDY

Well it's... Okay, I don't know where. Who cares, man? It's real football and they'll pay me!

That wipes Karli's smile off. She lowers the towel, moves quietly closer, intent on the conversation.

RANDY

Of course I've lost a half step, but it's not the NFL, is it? And I still got my buff and my 'tude.

Karli is definitely unhappy at this point. Randy looks around and sees her, beams like a big puppy, pumping his fist in jubilation as he talks into the phone.

RANDY

So look, I'll be over in two hours and we'll spot each other for some serious supersets, right?

(Beat)

Comin' at you, Stevo. Ciao.

He tosses the phone towards a sofa and leaps over it to embrace Karli in a rowdy bear hug.

RANDY

You hear that, babe? You hear that? I'm back in it. Playing for Alijah Shakir!

He senses her lack of excitement and holds her at arm's length, searching her face.

RANDY

Hey, I would have told you first,
but I had to call the gym to..

KARLI

It's not that, honey. It's just...
you know, I thought it was over.
You just made manager, we can...

RANDY

Ah, that'll wait. I can play ball
again! A new team, new league,
over in like Europe or Africa or
somewhere. Shakir called me
himself. Alijah freakin' Shakir!

KARLI

And you're heading back to the gym?
Maybe back to the hospital? Maybe
wandering around for a week
wondering who I am a couple of
times a season? Do you have to do
this, Randy?

Randy can't understand her failure to enthuse, cajoles.

RANDY

Have to? I get to, don't you see
that? I don't have to, you know...
drink beer or have sex, either,
but...

KARLI

Yeah, I seem to recall.

RANDY

(Wounded)

Are you gonna start that again?

KARLI

That's my line, isn't it? You're
going right back on steroids,
aren't you? Which means I'll be
right back to being a nun taking
care of a beat up little kid.

RANDY

It wasn't that bad.

KARLI

It wasn't anything. I've read up
about juicing. It's cumulative. It
makes roosters' nuts fall off.

RANDY
Roosters have nuts?

Karli shakes her head. We've already figured out she's the brains in the outfit.

KARLI
They're not just for squirrels any more, Boomer. They chip away at your libido. And you know it.

RANDY
Listen, babe. This isn't the same. It's a small league...

KARLI
Pays less than you're making at the dealership, am I right?

RANDY
Yeah, but, see... it could be a chance, another shot at the League.

KARLI
That's what I'm afraid of. You don't have to go get broken up, Randy. You've got a real life.

RANDY
Selling Hyundais.

KARLI
You have me.

RANDY
Only thing I got that I care about. But ball is the only thing I can do better than anybody else. You understand? I put on my pads, walk out there... I'm the best of the best. Out here I'm just some dumbass ex-jock, can't get out of my own way. Would I even have this job if I hadn't been a Bronco?

KARLI
You're doing fine, studmuffin. I'm not out there landing doubles and jumping splits and modeling for car shows any more either. I've got my health, what's left of my looks... and you. And I want to keep that. Maybe add on a little.

He places his hands on her shoulders, tips her face up with his thumbs, looks at her noble and strong as a Rottweiler.

RANDY

Listen, Karli. If it's football or you, there's nothing to choose. You just tell me I gotta pass this up to make you happy and I'm on that phone right now, bailing out.

She gives him a long look, then steps in to rest her head on his hard pecs, hugs him tight. Takes a deep breath and looks back in his face.

KARLI

I wish you could be happy without it, I won't try to pretend. But if you need this, then, you know... go kick their butts, Chopper.

Randy crushes her to him and twirls her around in a ponderous victory/love dance. Sets her down and just stares at her, like a boy at a new bicycle.

RANDY

Thanks, baby. You're the real deal. Look, go shower and we'll go out, to the Tropics. Okay?

KARLI

You bet. Who's your number one fan? Just take care of yourself. I need you all here and accounted for.

RANDY

You got it, girl. I don't need 'roids for this league and they aren't going to get anybody who can shake up the likes of me.

Karli gives him a kiss and heads down the hall. As she exits she speaks under her breath:

KARLI

Won't they? Didn't they get you?

Randy beams as her statuesque rear end disappears down the hall, then quickly grabs the phone and muffles it to his head as he speed-dials.

RANDY

Steve? Yeah, me again. Look, you can still score juice, can't you?

(Beat)

My man. Great. Look, I'm taking The Babe out to dinner. But I'll be by tomorrow.

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

ALIJAH

Okay, okay, you're got it.
Anything you want, really.

RUSH

Thanks. Just for the old résumé.
Looking ahead.

ALIJAH

Understood. So you're Assistant
Coach, Offensive Coordinator, very
recently named Quarterback Coach.
Meanwhile, got us any quarterbacks
to coach? Seein's our fair-haired
boy gonna un-retire again? Or was
that last week?

RUSH

Found a blue light special. Check
this out, his agent called me. Two
years with Seattle, hot to trot.

ALIJAH

What's his malfunction?

INT. TRASHED MOTEL ROOM - DAY

SONNY CHARTER, Caucasian quarterback, sprawls across a sofa,
his head thrown back so only his manly jaw is visible. Drink
in one hand, four bottles on the coffee table, three empty.
He converses with a speaker phone.

LAWYER (ON PHONE)

Kid, it's more like your pants are
already down and she just has to
seek you out and stick it in. Her
attorneys will gladly break it off.

SONNY

(Slurred despair)
Goddam stinking lawyers.

LAWYER (ON PHONE)

I'd resent that if you could afford
it. If you appear, you'll be lucky
to keep your jockstrap. And if you
fail to appear again the next stop
has bars in the room and I don't
mean the singles kind.

SONNY

Screw that bitch to death.

LAWYER (ON PHONE)

Other way around, Sonny. And we haven't gotten to the rape charge.

SONNY

Statutory rape.

LAWYER (ON PHONE)

Wish you would stick to statues. But it's called "rape of a child" these days and she's legally a child even if she has world class knockers and bribed her way into your suite with a handjob. Look, come by the office and we can...

BEEPS interrupt, Sonny punches phone with his bare toes.

SONNY

Got another call. Wait, this is the other call. Sonny Charter here, you wanna sue, screw or play through? Take a number.

AGENT (ON PHONE)

Sonny, where the hell are you?

SONNY

I'm a fugitive, Matt. From the law of diminishing returns. From Murphy's Law. The law of gravity. Entropy. Averages.

AGENT (ON PHONE)

Look, no matter how deep the feces, you need to keep in touch with your agent.

SONNY

You can't help me now. I'm too situationally dryhumped to get by. I'm booked for that great dumper in the sky.

AGENT (ON PHONE)

Then I suppose you're not interested in a starter slot?

SONNY

Anything I make will just go straight to my once and future ex. That's if I'm not in jail. Which might be my best bet at this point.

AGENT (ON PHONE)
 Sounds like leaving the country
 might be a just what the spin
 doctor ordered.

Sonny cranks his head erect to stare at the phone, faint
 hope on his handsome, besotted features.

SONNY
 Where the dog dookie diddly dump do
 they have quarterback jobs out of
 the country?

AGENT (ON PHONE)
 You won't believe it, baby. Got a
 pen handy?

INT. - ALIJAH'S CONDO - DAY

Lucius stands beside Alijah's main squeeze, MONISHA--Black,
 fine, and in wonderful shape for early thirties--in the
 living room of a luxurious condo with wall-to-floor windows
 giving onto the spectacle of downtown Dubai City. She's
 amused by his speechless gawp. He tears himself away from
 rubbernecking the view and pad.

LUCIUS
 It's amazing, Missus Shakir!

MONISHA
 I'm not exactly Mrs. Shakir, okay?

LUCIUS
 (Abashed)
 Oh. Um, sorry. So are you...

MONISHA
 Work in progress. Call me Monisha.
 But listen, what's important is,
you are family here. This is your
 home. Ali loves his players and
 we're going to treat you like our
 own. You believe me?

LUCIUS
 Yes'm.

MONISHA
 Good. Here's your room right over
 here.

She motions him into a dream bedroom with huge bed, huge
 view, thick carpeting. Lucius stares, stunned.

MONISHA

I tried to fix it up when I heard you were coming, but if you need anything, we'll get it. Boy stuff and all.

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS: QUICK-CUT, ZOOM-IN DETAILS

--Small stainless steel refrigerator.

--CD player on night stand.

--Computer and PlayStation on desk

--Walk in closet

--Private indoor bath!

END SEQUENCE OF SHOTS

INT. - ALIJAH'S CONDO - DAY

MONISHA

Listen, hon. Put your stuff away, freshen up, make yourself at home. There's food and stuff in the fridge

(Points)

Way over thataway. TV remote's on the coffee table. Just settle in. I feel awful running off when you just got here but I got

(Smiles "sheepishly")

cheerleader practice.

Lucius gapes incredulously. She laughs, does a little cheer move, waves good-bye and exits. Lucius stands frozen, hears the door close, looks around cautiously, blinks. Spreads his arms wide, throws his head back and falls over backward onto the bed.

LUCIUS

Thank you, Jesus!

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

Alijah and Rush, sitting up to their elbows in the data, accept more paper from Team Manager BASHIR, a slight, middle-aged Arab with wire spectacles, "public school" Brit accent, and diffident manner. Bashir starts to sit.

ALIJAH

Lookin' good, Bashir. We're gonna be running through this stuff awhile. Maybe you get hold of those vendor guys? Sort 'em out?

BASHIR

But I am the team manager, no? Should I not know about this player selection?

ALIJAH

Oh, you will, once we get it together. But look here, Bashir, this is all football stuff.

BASHIR

You don't value my opinion on personnel?

ALIJAH

It's not a matter of value, Bashir. But since you bring it up, I know you're basically a spy the owners planted on us. And I know the owners aren't this corporation jive. It's all the Emirs, ain't it? Plus other sorted presidents, kings, treasuries and what all?

Bashir's mouth drops open, but nothing falls out.

ALIJAH

So how would I know all that? Simple jock that I am? From the CI of A, that's how. Been talking to the League and there's owners over there owe me a few from when I was a rep. So they put me hip, see?

Now Rush is also gaping wide-eyed.

ALIJAH

And they're thinking this league might also be of interest to your, you know, *jihadi* set. Folks don't much cotton to infections of Western folkways. Think they might be right about that?

BASHIR

I hadn't thought of it.

ALIJAH

Yeah, well now that I thought of it for you, what you figure?

BASHIR

I think they would probably be correct in that.

ALIJAH

So I got them spookin' on our ass, also under the eye of some psycho Talibanies or two, you can see how you're not the freakiest deaky on my list of stuff to sweat. Hell, we're on the same team. Right?

BASHIR

Quite so. With goals to accomplish.

ALIJAH

You got it. Winning ten football games. Know much about how to win football games, Bashir?

BASHIR

Not precisely. In fact, not at all.
(Nervous smile)
I was a cricketer, actually. Quite the bowler, if I do say so.

ALIJAH

So what do you know much about?

BASHIR

Cost accounting. Personnel management. Resource control.

ALIJAH

Which we know like, dick. So that's where we value your opinion.

BASHIR

And quite rightly so. If you will excuse me?

He turns and exits with dignity. Alijah catches him at the door.

ALIJAH

Hey, Bashir, man. Don't get me wrong. I like you. Rush likes you. We got no problem with this. We're gonna have fun this year.

Bashir nods grave thanks and closes the door.

RUSH

Jesus Christ, Al! Little deeper doo-doo than I signed on for.

ALIJAH

Oh, please. Deeper than The League Of Intrigue?

RUSH

Yeah, I think you'd say so. The CI frickin' A? Sheiks and spies and Al Quedas? Yeah, I'd say deep end.

ALIJAH

You're right, man. It is. So what we gonna do about it?

RUSH

I only see one thing we can do.

ALIJAH

Which is?

RUSH

Win us some football games.

ALIJAH

That's the one.

RUSH

Bet your Black, muslin ass. We're taking this league down. Hey, they got a SuperBowl, right?

ALIJAH

You doubtless refer to the storied first annual World Bowl. Munich. Three weeks before the World Series playoffs start and totally *nada* on the ESPN calendar. These boys ain't any kind of stupid.

RUSH

Bet they have an amazing trophy.

ALIJAH

Heard it's crown jewels and a private island fulla virgins.

RUSH

Just so I can hold it over my head with one hand.

FADE OUT:

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

RUSH

I like this Randy Hoffman.

ALIJAH

Glad to hear it, 'cause he's
already here, moved in and all.

RUSH

Way ahead of me, huh? So why's he
not still playing for Denver? And
why'd you jump the gun on him?

ALIJAH

Randy's a rare case. He's just too
damn dumb to play football. Also
getting on, you know. Not as much
as some among us, but you know
obsessing on quick-up these days.

RUSH

Maybe we can dumb down our defense
for him. It's pretty dumb already.

ALIJAH

He also shacks up with one fine
babe who's smart enough for both of
'em. She's who I wanted in early.

RUSH

Uh-oh.

ALIJAH

Nothing of the kind, my man. I
gotta enough problems as is. I got
a little job for her.

(Beat)

That might get Monisha outa the
house and off my butt.

INT. - RANDY AND KARLI'S CONDO - DAY

Same building, same look. Karli leads Monisha from the door
towards view seats.

KARLI

Nice to meet you Mrs. Shakir. I
can sure use some help getting a
cheer squad together.

MONISHA

Looks like we're gonna be around each other awhile, honey, so I oughta straighten it out up front. I ain't Missus Shakir.

KARLI

Okay. My mistake.

MONISHA

Missus Shakir back in Houston. Just call me Monisha.

KARLI

Well, okay, sure. I mean, he's a Moslem, he can have as many wives as he wants, right?

MONISHA

Limit of four, I understand. But that's the general idea.

KARLI

And that's why you're here?

MONISHA

You got it. And round here I'm same thing as Miz Alijah. You're man's an NFL guy, too, right? So you know. A cut above.

KARLI

I'll drink to that. So have you done any cheerleading?

MONISHA

What do I look like to you?

KARLI

A fixer upper, but you'll do for this squad. Grind those nails down a little.

MONISHA

I shook a pom-pom or two in my time. And honey, these claws do just fine like they are.

KARLI

So let's do have that drink. I think we'll get along.

MONISHA

Might as well. Over here we're damn near sistahs.

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

ALIJAH

How we doing on local yokels? We gotta have minimum five, right?

RUSH

Working on it. Got a running back you're going to love. Big Twelve.

ALIJAH

You saying he played college ball?

RUSH

Two of them did. This Rashad played for Oklahoma.

ALIJAH

Some Ahab kid played Oklahoma?

RUSH

Good place to learn the oil "bidness". His old man's probably some Abu Dhabi exec.

ALIJAH

Got any numbers?

RUSH

Three carries, seventy-six yards, one TD. Not the stuff of which high draft picks are made.

ALIJAH

I don't know, Twenty five yards and two points every touch? How many pro bowl studs do that?

Both laugh.

RUSH

On the small side.

ALIJAH

Yeah, well I think we're lining up some decent protection for him.

INT.- LUXURY LIMOSINE - DAY

SHEIK FAKHIR AL-MAHDI, one of the Scimitars' complex octopus of owners, lounges in the pampering back seat of his regal car. He wears the splendid robes and trappings of his royal office. Beside him Rashad, Crown Prince and starting tailback, also in robes, leans forward urgently.

RASHAD

No, father, I must have no protection. None at all.

SHEIK FAKHIR

And again I ask explanation for a Crown Prince to appear naked and unprotected in this city. In such times as these.

RASHAD

I have to play with these men as an equal. The coaches must make decisions without pressure if we are to win. No one need know that It's I inside that helmet.

SHEIK FAKHIR

I understand, but these are, you must admit, minor matters to me.

RASHAD

Have you seen this game played? I will be running from large, aggressive men who try to stop me and hurt me. Will you have guards to prevent them? Will I be less safe in the shower room than out there as a moving target?

SHEIK FAKHIR

There is a difference between trying to break your legs and trying to cut your throat.

He raises a jeweled hand to stop any protest.

SHEIK FAKHIR

I understand. But you will be taken to the stadium in a proper car, with proper security.

RASHAD

But if they see that...

SHEIK FAKHIR

It means only that your are rich, not that you are royal. This seems only reasonable.

RASHAD

As always. Thank you, Father.

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

ALIJAH

Know what'd be good to have? Some linebackers. You know, a couple.

RUSH

Yeah, slim pickings. Heard from that Patriots guy's agent...

ALIJAH

Is "dregs" too strong a word? But still, we gotta have bodies there.

RUSH

There's this Maafu.

ALIJAH

Topanoli? No agent, no pro downs?

RUSH

Tatouipatulo. Humongous Samoan. Very quick, though. Sixteen Sacks, junior year at Cal Hayward. Five picks, ran two back.

ALIJAH

But...

RUSH

But he's got temper "issues".

EXT. - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Tight in on players. MAAFU, a huge Samoan, chucks a Pulling Guard, trying to get to the Running Back. The Guard slaps his helmet, laughs. Maafu, enraged, grabs Guard and presses him overhead, slams him to the ground, then kicks his helmet savagely. A Referee runs in screaming at Maafu, who coldcocks him.

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

RUSH

Penalized twenty yards from the infraction and two years road gang. Got a bonus year for poor attitude.

ALIJAH

Sounds like Raiders material.

RUSH

Yeah, back in the day.

ALIJAH

Gotta love a guy who's too violent
for football.

RUSH

We could tell the Emirs he's
Muslim. Change his name.

ALIJAH

Anything'd be better. Some poor
mofo's gotta announce the games.

INT. - DARKENED ROOM

As before, two foreground silhouettes, with television
screen between and beyond them. The screen shows Arab news
broadcasts, an item on the Scimitars passing into the usual
reports of violence and demonstrations.

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE

They're making the mistake of
seeing these teams as national. In
fact, they're regional. Even
ideological. This isn't Dubai's
team, or even the Emirates' team.
Not even the Arabic team. They
play for Islam, just that simple.

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE

You said, "these teams"?

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE

Take a look at this league. Golden
Sun out of Mexico City.

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE

A Mexican football team. That just
seems so... contrary.

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE

The largest city in the world.
Aztec Stadium, largest in the
world. Owned by Televisa, which
means Carlos Slim, richest man in
the world. What part of that
doesn't say, "Let's have a football
team," to you? And guess what
other money's in the mix?

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE

Venezuelan oil money.

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE

Very good. Company in the pocket of an anti-American yahoo who was a jock himself. Guy changed his national time zones so he wouldn't be on the same time as Washington. He's dying to put one in our face.

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE

So, Latin America's Team

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE

Red Star Over China. Nominally Peking's entry. But doesn't their logo kind of look like a sun, as well? And their licenses products are selling as quick in Japan as in China. Not to mention in Korea, Singapore...even Taiwan. One more eco-politics bloc awaiting kickoff.

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE

The Southern Cross seems fairly innocuous.

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE

Sidney. Not much in the Southern Hemisphere, but what there is, and what there will be, if you catch my drift, that's their logo. Did you notice Darren Bennett is the league commissioner? They have a tradition already in place.

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE

Bombay, Geneva, Moscow... it makes sense.

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE

And in summer, when it's the only football on TV, how many will be watching it right here in the U.S. would you say? It's so much more than a game. It's just a sliver of the Grand Game.

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE

Is Las Vegas giving odds yet?

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE

A little early for that. I'm trying to decide who to root for.

YOUNGER SHADOW FIGURE

You have to like the Scimitars. I mean, Alijah Shakir? I just hope I can get an autograph out of this.

OLDER SHADOW FIGURE
 He's a man with a lot of friends.
 And now, he's got some new ones.

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

RUSH
 The wides are total dogs.

ALIJAH
 Well I prefer a tight end, anyway.

RUSH
 You wish, you old fossil.

ALIJAH
 Bite your tongue, bitch. Better
 yet, dig up some receivers that
 ain't retrievers.

RUSH
 Weeeell, this Cale, wide-out from
 Edmonton has damned good 100 times.

ALIJAH
 CFL? But suspiciously available?

RUSH
 It would seem Mr. Cale is a bit of
 an adventurer.

ESCAPE SEQUENCE - MUSIC OVER: SPY/M.I. SIZZLE

INT. - BARE CELL-LIKE ROOM - NIGHT

JIMMY CALE--tall, lithe, somewhat crazed--rolls from his bed
 and sneaks to the window. Looks out, then carefully removes
 a few bars and pulls himself up to slither through.

EXT. - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Cale crosses the courtyard, avoiding floodlights, freezes at
 footsteps, breaks for the wall with startling speed.

EXT. - CITY STREET - NIGHT

Cale slides over the top of a wall, glances down street,
 where headlights flash on/off from the shadows. He does an
 amazing kip over the wall and drops to the street as a black
 sedan pulls up beside him. Looking over his shoulder, he
 enters the car as it accelerates away.

EXT. - URBAN ALLEY - NIGHT

Tires screeching as it leans, the dark sedan turns into the alley, dashes forward into shadows, halts and shuts off lights.

The dome light comes on and we see Cale in the passenger seat, a sinister Driver beside him. Agitated, Cale snatches something from Driver and places it on the dash in front of him. Driver hands him a plastic bag and he hurriedly pours out lines of white powder on the mirror. Driver hands him a straw and he hoovers up the dust, shivering. He wipes his nose, nods and the car patches out in reverse, rounds the corner backwards.

EXT. - COURTYARD - NIGHT

The car creeps up to the same wall and Cale erupts from the side door, looks around, then jumps on the hood, then the roof. He launches an impressive leap that takes him to the top of the wall, where he pulls himself over and disappears.

The car speeds away, revealing a sign on the wall: "SAFE HOUSE: DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT FACILITY"

END OF ESCAPE SEQUENCE

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

ALIJAH

Man never peed in a bottle that didn't rat him out?

RUSH

Multi-flunker. A committed fan.

ALIJAH

Of what? Downers? Opiates?

RUSH

Just ups and sideways, looks like.

ALIJAH

Then it's his lucky year because this league doesn't go for whizzin' in no little bottles.

RUSH

Speed is what wide receivers are all about, right?

ALIJAH

Let's hope so.

INT. - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Alijah and Bashir talk with Rashad by his locker.

ALIJAH
So you must know some women around here, huh?

BASHIR
Attractive young women. With élan.

RASHAD
For what purpose? Wink, nudge.

ALIJAH
Look, we need cheerleaders people gonna watch, girls who can shake their junk and get 'em smokin'.

RASHAD
Ah. I know just the girl.

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

RUSH
Got another homeboy for you here, help fill our host nation quota.

ALIJAH
Outstanding. Just leave us one more to dig up?

RUSH
Hakim Al-Nassan. Good fit since we're short in the secondary.

ALIJAH
Oh, yeah. Went to Harvard? That perennial powerhouse? How'd he do?

RUSH
Walk-on, nothing special. Started two games his senior year. One interception.

ALIJAH
Probably makes him the best cornerback in all Arabia.

RUSH
He'll do for now.

He leans over to stick a yellow "defense card" in the cornerback slot on the wall chart.

EXT. - PALATIAL GARDENS - DAY

EMIR IBRAHIM AL-NASSAN, tall and hawkish in his luxuriant robes, walks through a walled garden straight out of the Alhambra with his son, Prince Makim, while courtiers and entourage follow at discreet distance.

EMIR AL-NASSAN

My son, I don't understand your affection for this confusing, brutal game. You did better at polo: so much more elegant.

MAKIM

The game of kings.

EMIR AL-NASSAN

Kings game with power and money. Which is why you went to Harvard.

MAKIM

Which is where I learned football.

EMIR AL-NASSAN

And to swill beer and smoke *kif* and other American frivolities.

MAKIM

Local folkways. Hearts and minds.

EMIR AL-NASSAN

Indeed? But I agreed with you from the first about this entire project, whatever Emir Al-Hasadi might think of it.

MAKIM

It will be an American world as long as either of us is alive.

EMIR AL-NASSAN

And of course, it's a badge on your name among the people. Since you have such distaste for military service. We like our athletes at least as much as soldiers.

MAKIM

But I don't want this known.

EMIR AL-NASSAN

That makes no sense at all. Besides, they will know.

MAKIM

Eventually.

EMIR AL-NASSAN

As soon as the press sees a game.

MAKIM

Father, they will know nothing. I was at Andover and Harvard almost eight years. They don't know my adult face, my beard.

EMIR AL-NASSAN

Which I notice you trim, quite contrary to the instructions of the Prophet.

MAKIM

I will play under a *nom du guerre*. A secret identity like Zorro.

The Emir shakes his head, mystified. Makim speaks with boyish enthusiasm.

MAKIM

Like Superman!

His father nods, shakes his head at his son's folly, then smiles.

EMIR AL-NASSAN

But you still want to play polo, do you not? As yourself?

INT. - RAYLENE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A penthouse in the lap of luxury, windows blazing with a wrap-around view of Dubai City by night. RAYLENE ARLISS, a very hot young redhead with sexy lingerie and a panhandle accent, stands in front of that view, turning a cold shoulder to Prince Rashad, who's having a tough time coaxing her back into the huge bed.

RASHAD

What's important to me right now isn't getting married. It's making the team, winning the league.

RAYLENE

How could you not make the team? You own it!

RASHAD

Not really, it's my...

RAYLENE

Your family. I know. The royal family.

She says it heatedly, but can't help lapsing into the wonder of the gold-digger's trifecta: royalty.

RASHAD

And nobody must know that. Don't tell anybody I'm a prince. It's extremely important.

RAYLENE

Sorry, but I get a little confused about what's important with you, Rashad. You're a goddamned prince, but nobody's supposed to know it. You love me but that's some state secret. Always something more important than who we really are.

He comes over and reaches for her. She resists, but gives in, looking over his shoulder as he strokes her.

RASHAD

I'm sorry, Raylene. Hey, being a prince has got to count for something, right? You didn't even have to kiss any frogs. This won't last forever. But you and I will. One way or the other.

RAYLENE

That's all I want, Rashi. Just you and me. But we got this saying down around Amarillo.

RASHAD

Is it colorful?

RAYLENE

Yeah, kinda. Don't never mess with a redhead.

RASHAD

We have some interesting oral traditions here, as well. But I'll have to show you.

He manages to herd her to the bed and get her horizontal.

INT. - RAYLENE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Raylene stands amid posh furnishings, staring out at the blazing cityscape, talking softly on the phone.

RAYLENE

Sorry, Ma. It's three in the morning here. But tell Papa I said, "Love you bunches".

She listens, posing her reflection in the windows.

RAYLENE

Oh, yes. No doubt about it. You should see my new car! I'm sending you pictures.

Listens.

RAYLENE

Oh, yeah? Well, that doesn't surprise me one little bit. And anyway, Shaylene might have married Mister Hotshot Quarterback, but I've got me a real, honest to God prince, here!

Listens.

RAYLENE

Well, not actually married yet. As such, you know. But here I am, right? She's out in that old line shack in Lubbock and I'm in the tallest building in the world.

Listens.

RAYLENE

Ring? Did you say ring? You should see the one I'm wearing right this minute. It'd knock your eyes out, Ma. You tell all the folks lil sister's doing just fine, thank you so much.

INT. - SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Clean, spare alcove crammed with electronics. Sign on wall says "DUBAI STATE SECURITY" in Arabic, French and English. A bored Security Officer in headphones monitors a "bug".

RAYLENE (OS)

...some sort of state secret.

INT. - SURVEILLANCE VAN - NIGHT

Ratty van interior with a clutter of gadgets. A bored Extremist in Hamas T-shirt and headphones monitors a phone.

RAYLENE (OS)
 ...but I've got me a real, honest
 to God prince, here!

INT. - CIA LISTENING POST - NIGHT

A large, white computer dump with "government" just stamped all over it. No humans present, but lights flicker and green digital letters crawl across a small display screen:
 "...tell anybody I'm a prince. It's extremely important."

INT. SCIMITARS' LOCKER ROOM

The Players mill around, changing into practice sweats, chatting. Lucius hangs his pants in his locker. He pulls off his enormous briefs and stands naked, the front of his body obscured by the open door. Sonny sits on a bench just past him, pulling off his shoes.

Bashir enters by far door with clipboard, calls out:

BASHIR
 Lucius Evers?

Lucius turns to face him.

LUCIUS
 Present, sir.

Turning places his crotch almost in Sonny's face. Sonny looks up, double-takes, leans back in awe.

SONNY
 Holy crap, kid!

His yell gathers more attention, teammates staring at the younger player's equipment.

CALE
 Gawd daaayam, man! You got a
 license for that thing?

MAAFU
 Careful, it might charge.

MAKIM
 What thanks you owe to Allah.

RASHAD
And all your women, as well.

LUCIUS
(Sullen)
Never you mind 'bout my women.

FARUQ
Ay, how many of these emirate
virgins will send their praise to
heaven?

CALE
That or screaming in terror.

LUCIUS
Never mind 'bout that virgin stuff,
neither!

He brushes by the group of players and walks with injured
dignity to Bashir, who gapes, holds out the clipboard.

RUSH
Can you sign this waiver? Your
age, local laws, all that.

Cale leans over to Sonny and Rashad.

CALE
Got a feelin' homeboy ain't found
out how to put that firehose where
it'll do anybody no good.

SONNY
If he figures it out, they'd better
lock up the women around here.

RASHAD
This season could be a treat for a
lot of people.

INT. RANDY AND KARLI'S CONDO - DAY

Karli and Monisha are on the sofa, Raylene faces them in a
straight chair.

KARLI
So how well do you know Rashad?

RAYLENE
(Startled)
What? How'd... Why?

KARLI

Just making small talk, Raylene.
Randy said Rashad was sending an
American girl over to try out. I
assumed you're her.

RAYLENE

Well, yeah. He said... Look, I just
thought it would be fun, okay?

MONISHA

Rah, rah, sis boom bah.

RAYLENE

(Testy now)
I barely know the guy.

Karli and Monisha exchange freighted glances.

KARLI

Not an issue. So you cheered in
school? College?

RAYLENE

Three years, front line at
Oklahoma.

Another glance between Monisha and Karli.

KARLI

Oklahoma?

RAYLENE

(Blurts)
State. Oklahoma State.

KARLI

That's great.

MONISHA

Know what I'm thinking, Red? We
might be members of the same club.

RAYLENE

Club?

MONISHA

Invisible Semi-Wives Club?

RAYLENE

(Panicked)
Listen, I just met him teaching
English! Can we just...

MONISHA

Settle down, girlfriend. It's all good.

KARLI

We're just here about doing yells.

Raylene sits, flips out a brown cigarette and takes a deep pull. She collects herself and eyes the other two women.

RAYLENE

Look, can I trust you guys?

MONISHA

How long you lived in Dubai?

RAYLENE

About six months.

MONISHA

You see anybody else around here you can trust?

INT. - TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Rashad, in sweats and cutoffs, sits on a leg exerciser, talking to Alijah, in his coach's slacks and polo shirt.

ALIJAH

Monisha saying that girl you sent to Karli gonna work out fine. Where'd you run into a redhead around here, anyway?

RASHAD

She's helping me with my English.

ALIJAH

Okay, sure. But look here, my man. We need another cheerleader or two and they gotta be local. Arab girls, see what I mean?

RASHAD

Like you had to have some Arab guys on the team, so that's why I made it.

ALIJAH

Same deal. And hopefully they also got talent, way you do.

RASHAD

As a matter of fact, I know just the girl.

INT. - COACHING OFFICE - DAY

ALIJAH

How we doing on equal opportunity?

RUSH

I might have just filled our
homebody quota last night.

ALIJAH

Lemme guess. Soccer-style kicker?

RUSH

You're uncanny, Swami. Faruq. Not
bad inside the forty. Decent hang
time. Scrappy, likes to tackle.

ALIJAH

Born for the "bomb squad", huh?

INT. - HOVEL - DAY

FARUQ, twentyish and affable, enters a grubby room in a slum shanty. Immediately two Terror Thugs in beards and jeans jump him. Quick and wiry, he evades them and leads a chase through the tenement or alleys or whatever the budget/set offers. They corner him, grab him, and drag him off.

INT. - CAR TRUNK - DAY

Totally black. Trunk lid opens to a blaze of light, silhouetting the armed Thugs flanking MENHIR AKBAR, a gaunt, dangerous-looking terrorist cell leader. And not at all happy with young Faruq, who cowers in the trunk.

MENHIR

(Dripping menace)

You left so suddenly, Faruq. Your
Brothers in the Word have worried.
And of course your mother.

FARUQ

I was gifted with an opportunity I
couldn't let pass. A good job.

MENHIR

And what of your vows? Your
brotherhood? Your God?

FARUQ

All the cell does is train! I need
money, Menhir. For my mother, my
family...

MENHIR

What is this job?

FARUQ

I will be an athlete. A world
class athlete.

The Thugs laugh, but Menhir shushes them with a gesture.
Scared, Faruq still glares stubbornly at the leader.

MENHIR

That seems unlikely. Tell me more.

FARUQ

A team for American football, owned
by the Emirs.

MENHIR

So you will go to America?

FARUQ

I don't think so. But to other
countries, yes. And if I do well,
work and succeed, perhaps I could
play in the American league, make
millions of dollars.

The Thugs scoff at his star-eyed aspirations, but Menhir
regards him with a calculating stare.

MENHIR

Sit up, Faruq. You are among
friends, even though you abandon
us.

Faruq sits up in the trunk, Menhir stoops to his eye level.

MEHIR

Here is what you are going to do.

FADE OUT:

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. RANDY AND KARLI'S CONDO - NIGHT

The three American cheerleaders sit in a row on the couch. YAREMA, a smoky-hot Arab girl in kaftan and sandals, sits facing them, regarding them with aplomb.

KARLI
So, Yarema. Rashad said you have experience.

YAREMA
Rashad should know.

Raylene starts, catches herself, gives Yarema a death-stare.

KARLI
Okaaay. So, where?

YAREMA
In Morocco. Now in Dubai.
Everywhere. Top class only.

KARLI
Can you show us your routine?

YAREMA
Show you? You want to watch me?

KARLI
Well, yeah. I mean, it's a tryout.

YAREMA
Watch, two thousand dirham. Touch,
four thousand dirham.

KARLI
What? Look, You came up here to try
out for the squad right?

YAREMA
Entire team, one thousand five
hundred dirham each one.

She stands and loosens her kaftan in a practiced gesture. It slides to the floor, leaving her naked. She faces the American girls haughtily, gestures at her hourglass bod.

YAREMA
As you see, top class. Clean.

KARLI

I keep thinking somebody will explain all this. Or I click my shoes together and wake up home.

MONISHA

Pretty self-explanatory, blondie. Sis here's a 'ho.

KARLI

Is that true, Yarema? You're a prostitute?

YAREMA

I am a career professional. And it is written that Allah forgave the prostitute her sins.

KARLI

Raylene? What the hell, hon?

RAYLENE

Okay, I didn't realize... Look Rashad said they want the uniforms you designed because the men will like them.

YAREMA

(Nods cheerfully)

Even though they be a blasphemy unto Allah.

RAYLENE

But good Muslim women won't wear them. Not even here. The only reason we get away with it is because we're *ferengi*. And they're our native costume. Like, I don't know, ballerina dresses.

KARLI

But the whores will do anything, so he sent us one?

YAREMA

Anything? What else should I do?

KARLI

Get dressed, for openers. Look, they aren't going to pay you to ball the team. Just do, you know, dances on the sidelines.

YAREMA

They will pay me one thousand dirham an hour to dance?

KARLI

No, they won't. But you get to keep your clothes on.

MONISHA

Well, more or less.

YAREMA

Why would I do this thing, then?

RAYLENE

Good question. Well, see ya later.

KARLI

Wait, wait. Do you know who will watch these games? In the stadium and on TV?

YAREMA

Crazy people?

KARLI

Men, Yarema. Thousands and thousands of men. Men all over Dubai, all over the Emirates, all over the world. They'll see you out there dancing in shorts and pushup bra. What's that worth?

MONISHA

Priceless, I'd say.

KARLI

You couldn't buy that kind of advertising.

RAYLENE

Not even if you peddled your ass around the Zone for twenty years.

YAREMA

Pedal? You are serious? I own a Peugeot. Auto, not bicycle.

Karli shoots Raylene a warning glance.

KARLI

Not to mention, how much more you could charge if you were famous.

RAYLENE

("Announcer" voice)

As seen on TV. How much would you pay? Wait, don't answer yet.

YAREMA

As you say.

(Ponders)

I will do it. Do we wear anything
beneath these costume?

INT.- COACHING OFFICE - DAY

ALIJAH

What we got for nose tackle?

RUSH

There's that Roberson guy, two
years in World League. Scotland
Claymores, no less.

ALIJAH

He'd be getting a little long in
the tooth by now, wouldn't he?

RUSH

Jeez, you're right, Al. The old
geezer's only two years younger
than you.

ALIJAH

Maybe we can get some crutches for
him. How's he look on paper?

Rush does the hand-wagging "so-so" gesture.

ALIJAH

Okay, toss it on the
(Waggles hand)
pile. "D" looks good, especially
the front four.

RUSH

Not too shabby. Course there's a
big question mark with your high
school kid, Luscious.

ALIJAH

Lucius. Listen, that kid's pro
goods. Just getting' us instead of
the NCAA. Some day you'll be
bragging you coached him.

RUSH

I'll look forward to that. Damn,
he's not even eighteen.

ALIJAH

But he will be.

RUSH

Oh, yeah. Says right here. Four days before the opener. Unreal.

ALIJAH

See can we do him something nice for his b'day.

INT. - MADRASAH SCHOOL - DAY

Imam Muhammad Zaid again listens to Malik Fakhouri, this time accompanied by several other berobed, incensed Madrasah Faithful.

MALIK

Can you continue to deny that this American affront defies Sharia law, Uztaz Muhammad?

ANGRY WAHHABI

They will parade women wearing indecent clothing...

SECOND WAHHABI

Practically naked.

ANGRY WAHHABI

Doing lascivious dances in front of entire stadiums, on television!

ZAID

You know this to be fact?

MALIK

We have photographs!

ZAID

Might I see them?

Malik reaches, stops, looks at Zaid, trapped.

ZAID

(Very softly)

You have arranged to photograph obscene women, bring these pictures into my school to show them to me?

MALIK

I apologize, Uztaz Muhammad. We only wished to show you how serious this activity is, the depths to which they go to outrage us.

ZAID

Are these Western women? Wearing costumes of their dance form?

ANGRY WAHHADI

One is a common prostitute!

ZAID

You recognized her?

Another pained silence.

ZAID

You have all studied the Quaran with me for years. Yet continue to believe that this is a Madrasa of the sword, rather than a school of the book. There are those who will be inflamed, will take action. But I ask you to seek your faith in holy writings, not in hatred. Nor in lust.

INT. - TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Players sit around on weight equipment, others work out.

RANDY

Can you believe that kid, packing like that and never ran it up to see who'd salute it?

MAAFU

Only seventeen, brah.

SONNY

Hey, when I was seventeen I'd screwed a dozen chicks just counting cheerleaders.

CALE

How many counting your cousins, cracker?

RANDY

We oughta do something special for his birthday. He's dumb as a box of rocks, but he's a way nice kid.

RASHAD

I know just the girl.

RANDY

How many sisters you got, Rashad?

RASHAD

Is it worth a hundred apiece to
blow the kid's mind? Etcetera?

RANDY

Sure. Talking clean, here? Speaking
English?

MAAFU

I'm in.

SONNY

Let's pass a hat at the playbook
meeting.

RANDY

Remember it's gonna be a surprise.

MAKIM

That kid gets surprised every time
the sun comes up. Who's in for a
major revelation is Yarema.

INT. - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A western-style convention room, the long tables piled with rich food and stylish place settings. The Scimitars' TEAM OWNERS lounge in business suits as plates are cleared, smoke and pay close attention to the podium, where Sheikh Fakhir Al-Mahdi addresses them in front of a huge Scimitars banner. Alijah and Bashir sit at the far ends of the head table, bookending a big slice of oil and real estate wealth.

SHEIKH FAKHIR AL-MAHDI

There are many who would see this organization--this "club" as one would say--as merely one diversion among the many in Dubai. I know none of you are among them.

A patter of reaction from the assembled owners.

SHEIKH FAKHIR AL-MAHDI

Those of more advanced perception would see what we have assembled here, what is now staffed and ready to train, as a logo, a flag for Arab peoples. We have done far more than that.

More approval from the tables.

SHEIKH FAKHIR AL-MAHDI

Together, we have on this day
forged a sword of Islam!

The reaction is not voluble and sustained.

SHEIKH FAKHIR AL-MAHDI
 We have not just done this to play
 games. We have done this to gain
victory!

More enthusiastic applause. Fakhir sweeps his hand towards Alijah, who stands and faces the ovation.

SHEIKH FAKHIR AL-MAHDI
 We have been given much among men.
 We will return that gift with
 VICTORY!

When the din subsides, Alijah speaks in a deep, calm tone.

ALIJAH
 Victory!
 (Beat)
 If it be Allah's will.

A somewhat more subdued response greets that sentiment.

GO TEAM SEQUENCE

INT. - CHINESE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A similar, generic conference room, the walls lined with a collection of Chinese politicians and business types. A brocade banner shows a star on a circle, with characters and English words: WORLD ONE, RED STAR OVER CHINA. An OLDER CHINESE BUREAUCRAT stands in front of them, motioning towards an American Coach with that squat, battered Lombardi/Bryant/Paterno look.

OLDER CHINESE BUREAUCRAT
 We ride the tide of progress to an
 inevitable result. This team is
 not a toy of luck or desire. It is
 a vessel of history, not just of
 China, but of all Asians. It is
 not that we want to win, but that
 we have to win!

A round of semi-wild approval in the room.

INT. - MEXICO CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Smililar set-up, same types of wheeler-dealers. Big logo of a gold, Meso-American sun on a black field. The Sun Coach is a beefy American with vaguely Hispanic features and complexion.

MEXICAN BIGSHOT

This is the team for all Mexicans,
for all Hispanics, for all
Americans!

Super wild cheers with scattered Ay, ay's.

INT. - OZ CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Under banner with Australia map in midnight blue, crossed by stars. The Southern Cross Coach is a rangy, battered Aussie. He bounds around in front of cheering bigshots.

SOUTHERN CROSS COACH

And win it all we will, mates! Win
it all! Win it all! WIN IT ALL!

INT. - RUSSIAN CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Banner shows blocky black hammer on a silver field. The Hammers Coach is heavy, Slavic. He stands like a fireplug waving for more applause.

HAMMERS COACH

The People! The People! We will
triumph for the People!

END SEQUENCE

INT. - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Alijah stands rather formally in front of a blackboard, like Patton in the movie. He speaks solemnly, looking around for attention.

ALIJAH

Aw right now, this is it. We're
all here and we know what for. This
is our first official practice, and
it's gonna be nice and easy: no
pads, walk through, meet the folks.

The view widens, pulls back to show Rush and Bashir at his sides, two rows of players in scrimmage trunks and short sweatshirts sitting on benches or standing behind them.

ALIJAH

I think some of the smarter ones
here...not you Randy...

Randy grins boyishly.

LUCIUS

Me neither.

The players laugh, but Alijah brings them back in.

ALIJAH

Might have figured out there's more going on here than your average team. Things around here got their, you know, ramifications.

He pauses and players glance at each other, some mystified, others with telling looks.

ALIJAH

But that ain't my problem. And it sure as hell ain't your problem. We're here for one single, simple reason. Any you meatlockers know what that is?

MAAFU

Kick some ass.

ALIJAH

Give that man the large stuffed bear. What the hell are we doing here ladies?

THE PLAYERS

KICK ASS! KICK ASS! KICK ASS!

The entire team are on their feet, yelling, stamping and punching the air with red Scimitar helmets. Bashir is startled by the sheer volume of the rumpus, Rush has a feral grin, Alijah places his palms together in front of his chin, slowly bows as the hubbub increases.

FADE OUT:

END ACT THREE

TAG

EXT. - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

SILENT WITH MUSIC OVER AND CREDIT ROLL

The four Cheerleaders (in sexy uniforms and make-up) are posing for pictures, running routines in slow motion for Photographers from the team and media.

All four spin away from the cameras and saucily flip their skirts up, smiling over their shoulders. The Photographers gape, then drop to their knees and start firing flashguns.

Karli stops the routine and stalks over to Yarema, who smirks insolently. She remonstrates while Monisha and Raylene giggle, then strides over to the players' bench and snatches a piece of red cloth from one of several garment and make-up cases.

She moves back to Yarema sternly and holds out the red item. Yarema takes it, stretches it between her hands. It's a pair of red panties with the Scimitars logo embroidered across the back. Karli gestures insistently. Yarema shrugs languidly, bends to step into them, and pull them up under her skirt, triggering another blitzkrieg of flashguns.

FADE OUT:

THE END