

MAN IN THE LION MASK

Written by

Billy Nunes

(Based on a true story)

INT. WEDDING RECEPTION- DAY

Inside the Hyatt sits a Jewish wedding reception. The bride and groom sit at the head of a table. The wedding decorations are in a purple, black and white motif. The maid of honor (34) is giving a speech.

MAID OF HONOR

Well this is one thing Barbara
can't return...

The crowd remains silent.

MAID OF HONOR (CONT'D)

I love you guys congratulations on
a lifetime of happiness!

The crowd gives a light clap. The DJ introduces the best man,
Greg (31).

GREG

Jesus, thanks for all the inside
stories Darlene. But the good thing
is it lasted longer than your first
marriage...

The crowd laughs.

GREG (CONT'D)

Any who...I want to make this short
because we already moved up the
wedding so that we would be able to
watch game 7 tonight.

The crowd claps.

GREG (CONT'D)

I love you guys. So without further
ado, I am really happy to introduce
someone who was there on your first
date. Someone who you two have
always admired for his spirit and
tenacity. The King of the jungle
and our hearts. Ladies and
gentleman Slamson the lion!

A lion mascot dressed in a tuxedo busts through the double
doors. Jock Jams blasts out of the speakers. The bride and
groom both jump up in excitement.

GROOM

Fuck yeah!!!

The whole congregation erupts with energy. Slamson runs and jumps onto a chair, he starts to clap along with the beat. People in the crowd follow along and begin to make come comments.

DAVE

Gorgeous.

KRISTIN

Make love to me Slamson!!!

Slamson moves over to the dance floor, he starts the party. The whole wedding party joins him. He dances around and with the crowd. He gets hyphy. Eventually he ends up being held up in a chair bouncing around when he receives a call on his cell phone.

VOICE

You are late.

Slamson gets let down and quickly makes his way out.

EXT. WEDDING RECEPTION- DAY

"Super bossa nova" starts to play.

Slamson busts out through the front doors where the valet has pulled around his car. He tips the guy and gets into the car. The valet guy looks enamored with Slamson. Slamson gives him a pound, puts on his sunglasses and then drives off.

VALET GUY #1

He's just living the dream.

VALET GUY #2

With a tail like that, how could he not be?

INT. CAR- DUSK

A little girl sitting in Sacramento Kings gear sits looking out the window as she passes downtown Sacramento.

DAD

I don't care who they voted for,
they are a bunch of assholes.

MOM

Richard you can't say that.

DAD

The hell if I can't, they are
socialists dammit.

All of a sudden she notices Slamson driving in the car next to her. Slamson see's her and salutes her.

LITTLE GIRL

Mom!? It's Slamson!!!

Everyone in the car looks over to where she is pointing but he is gone. She looks up ahead and sees his lion head speeding down the highway.

EXT. ARCO ARENA- DUSK

THE CAMERA CRANES DOWN AS SLAMSON'S RIDE DRIFTS TO A STOP AT THE ARENA ENTRANCE. FANS CHANT HIS NAME. HE JUMPS THE CURB AS IF HE HAS HIS OWN BAT CAVE TO THE PARKING LOT.

Slamson pulls up in the employee parking lot with a spot marked "Slamson". Immediately starts sprinting into the arena.

INT. ARCO ARENA- NIGHT

"Soul Bossa Nova" hits full volume. The lights flicker. The beat drops. Slamson kicks open the entrance and dances down the corridor like a 1960s international man of mascot mystery.

A security guard named Cletus (62), an old Black man with deep-set eyes, a silver beard like Spanish moss, and skin weathered like desert leather. His smile is slow, crooked, and wise-like he knows something you don't, and maybe never will.

Slamson rubs his head and continues running down the hallway. He high fives Beverly (47), a woman with bright eyes, rosy cheeks, and a bounce in her step that feels like sunshine.

INT. ARCO ARENA LOUNGE - NIGHT

BEVERLY

You know you are going to give
Steve a heart attack one of these
days.

Slamson shrugs and continues his way down the hall. Passing employees who all seem excited to see him.

Steve (47) is short and stocky with a pudgy build and the posture of a man who's always apologizing for something. His thinning hair is carefully combed, though a stubborn cowlick gives it away. He wears a slightly oversized Mervyn's suit—wrinkled at the elbows, pants a little too long, jacket one button too tight. His tie is always crooked, like it was done in a hurry in the rearview mirror. He looks like a middle manager at a funeral—but with a heart of gold and the awkward charm of someone who still calls his mom every Sunday.

STEVE

One of these days he is going to give me a heart attack...

He looks down at his watch.

STEVE (CONT'D)

He is late. He is never late. Good. Great. GRAND!

Right as he says that Slamson comes running around the corner.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Why must you do this to me? You know I worry. This is why I don't like scheduling two things this close together. Especially a wedding. I knew you were going to be cutting it too close and this is the biggest game in the history of this franchise...we need...

Slamson sticks out his finger and puts it against Steve's lips to shush him. He then grabs a giant flag out of one of the assistants hands named JUAN PABLO (19) is a round-faced Hispanic tween with warm brown skin and thick black hair neatly parted to the side. Another assistant Morgan (19) is a slim, athletic woman of average height with long brunette hair, light-colored eyes, and she typically carries herself with confident posture and a professional style, holds a video camera.

JUAN PABLO

There you go Mr. S

Slamson holds the pole above his head while Juan Pablo punches him in the stomach. Slamson then jumps up a couple times, smacks himself in the face.

P.A.

Your starting mascot, straight out
of the Jungle, standing 6 foot 2, 6
foot 10 if you count the tail.
Ladies and Gentlemen please get on
your feet, for the King of Kings
Slamson the Lion.

Slamson runs out of the tunnel into the main arena.

INT. ARCO ARENA COURT- NIGHT

Slamson is out on the court waving a giant Sacramento Kings flag. The crowd goes crazy. The royal court dancers dance around him at center court. The crowd is in a frenzy, cowbells echoing off the walls, fans screaming their lungs out. It is game seven of the 2002 Western conference finals against the hated Los Angeles Lakers.

During the Lakers introductions Slamson sits on a Lazy-boy chair and reads the newspaper with the headline "Game s(f)ix" as boos rain down on the opposing players.

The arena goes black with the exception of 18,000 people screaming, purple glow sticks and towels enchant the eyes. Purple flames shoot out of both baskets. The sight is captivating as the camera pans around, Slamson as he soaks in the moment.

P.A.

AND NOW FOR YOUR SACRAMENTO KINGS!!

The home team Kings are introduced, Slamson meets each player with a different hand shake. The crowd is deafening. After the last player is introduced they all huddle around Slamson, they do a dance around him as he acts like a wild lion.

The game starts and Slamson makes his way into the stands to entertain the patrons. (Several different skits: tries to slip money into the refs pocket, kiss cam, dancing babies, rollerblading down the steps giving high five's to fans).

P.A. (CONT'D)

In 29 other cities it's just a
game...but this is Sacramento...and
this is the 4th quarter...come on
Kings fans....

Slamson walks out on stilts carrying a "Noise Sign".
Everybody is standing.

The game ends with Kings losing on a wide open heart breaking three point miss. People are crying as the Lakers celebrate. A fan starts throwing up.

Slamson tries to attack the refs but is being held back by Steve, he punches a hole in the wall.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - NIGHT

Inside a shitty trailer on the outskirts of nowhere, the walls are yellowed from years of cigarette smoke, and the air smells like dust, old vinyl, and fried bologna. A stained recliner leans permanently to the left, its armrest duct-taped where a dog once chewed through the stuffing. On a flickering tube TV, Slamson punches a hole through a concrete wall, sending debris flying.

The picture's grainy, the volume's too loud, but it doesn't matter. In the dim light, a hooded figure sits back, feet up on a milk crate, one boot still caked with dried mud. You can't see their face, just the silhouette and the quiet, satisfied laughter—a raspy, wheezing chuckle that cuts through the hum of a cheap fan.

In their hand, they hold a lukewarm Rainier, foam dripping onto the frayed carpet below. They take a long sip, still chuckling, still watching. It's as if they've been waiting years for this moment—and now that it's here, they're savoring every second.

INT. ARENA SHOWER- NIGHT

Slamson is naked in the shower with one arm against the wall and another one holding Coors Light. Players also showering around him. A few come up over to console him.

INT. ARENA HALLWAY- NIGHT

Slamson now dressed in sweats and a sweatshirt is hugging a crying Beverly while holding his gym bag. He lets her go and continues down the hallway with Steve.

STEVE

I can't believe we lost. This was supposed to be our year.

They come up to Cletus.

CLETUS

Well that was one hell of a series.
Nothing to be ashamed of kid,
that's life. We will be back next
year. Hold your head up, you were
beautiful out there.

Slamson gives him a hug then exits.

EXT. ARCO ARENA PARKING LOT- NIGHT

As Slamson and Steve exit the players only entrance they watch as the owners of the Kings GEORGE, GAVIN and JOE MCGOOF in Ed Hardy shirts, stumble out drunk into their limo with a bunch of bimbo's.

STEVE

Looks like they are already over
it.

Steve looks at Slamson who is clearly depressed.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You were great out there tonight.
You gave it everything you had. Do
you think I can get a ride home?

They hug. Slamson motions of course.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Hey, at least it can't get much
worse than this.

Slamson starts his car.

EXT. SLAMSON'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Slamson pulls into the driveway of a nice suburban home. He slowly gets out of the car and walks inside with his gym bag.

INT. SLAMSON'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Slamson enters the house and takes a deep breath. Slamson's wife HELEN (30), has a graceful, natural beauty—high cheekbones, soft hazel eyes, and a warm, effortless smile that disarms even the angriest mascot. Her auburn hair falls just past her shoulders, often pulled back in a loose ponytail that frames her face with a few gentle curls. She's athletic but elegant, with a quiet strength in her posture and a voice that calms storms. There's something both grounded and ethereal about her.

She is in her bathrobe holding a baby girl while their other son REGGIE (5) a scruffy 5-year-old with messy blond hair, think Macaulay Culkin in Uncle Buck, but with a Kings jersey and dirty sneakers. Reggie is decked out in Kings gear crying. Helen walks up to Slamson.

HELEN

You were great out there honey. I am so proud of you.

Slamson nods as she gives him a kiss. Reggie comes up and hugs his dad.

REGGIE

Those fucking refs.

Slamson motions for him to stop. Sensing Reggie is hurt. Slamson picks him up. Then he sets him down on his lap, pulls a basketball out of his bag that was autographed by the whole team.

Reggie goes crazy.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

AHHHH!!! Are you serious? Is this real?

Slamson nods. Reggie wipes his tears of sadness for tears of joy. Reggie goes to show his mom.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Mom. Mom. Mom. Look what Dad got me!!! There is C-Webb and Bobby Jackson, Mike Bibby..and they are all on here!!!

She looks over at her husband pleased.

HELEN

I see that. Now you can't be too loud the baby is sleeping. Why don't you find a good place for it up in your room. Daddy needs to get some rest.

REGGIE

Okay! Love you Dad, you're the best!

Reggie runs up the stairs. Slamson kisses his baby girl.

HELEN

You always know just how to cheer someone up.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

Let me put the baby down to sleep
and I'll fix you a drink.

Helen goes upstairs and passes by her son's room that is all Kings everything, laying in bed with his basketball. She then makes her way to her daughters rooms and puts the baby in her crib. Everything is WNBA Monarchs decor.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I hope you know your dad is a hero.

She comes back down to find Slamson passed out on his Lazy-boy with ice bags on his knees. He is watching his performance from that night. She puts a blanket on him and goes to bed.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

A kid is in mascot gear, practicing his routine. HERMAN (38) is a tall, imposing man with a strong, muscular build. His military background is evident in his posture, which is always straight and rigid.

HERMAN

What the hell are you doing?

YOUNG SLAMSON

Practicing my routine.

HERMAN

Routine for what? Are you a homosexual?

YOUNG SLAMSON

No. I don't think so.

HERMAN

Well you keep this up, you are going to turn into one.

YOUNG SLAMSON

I just want to be apart of the team.

HERMAN

I thought we talked about this.

YOUNG SLAMSON

You said I could go to mascot camp.

HERMAN
I thought you were joking.

YOUNG SLAMSON
Please dad.

Herman looks disappointed, opens a beer.

HERMAN
If it gets you out of my hair for a month, I guess its a good thing.

YOUNG SLAMSON
It will.

Herman shakes his head and starts to walk away. Delilah (39) Slamson's mom catches him.

DELILAH
He is just a kid Herman. He didn't make the team. Him being sick really affected him.

HERMAN
It affected his head more than anything else.

DELILAH
Just let him be different.

Young Slamson starts to practice the Britney Spears, "Oops I did it again dance routine."

CUT TO:

SEVERAL SHITTY YEARS LATER...

INT. ARCO ARENA- NIGHT

Slamson is performing a choreographed dance with the Royal court dancers to "Oops I did it again". They do an inspired performance, they nail the dance number and it appears special until we zoom out. After the dance is performed you see how few people are in the crowd. The Kings are getting blown out by 32 points. Very different since the last time we saw the arena.

STEVE
At least you looked good out there. Don't forget you got to really hit that kick ball change.

Slamson nods. They continue walking.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I can't believe the league hasn't stepped in yet. What do you expect when you pick up a guy in a coma to get above the league salary floor? I mean how fucking broke are these guys.

EXT. SEATTLE HOTEL- DAY

A limo pulls up in front of the Grand buddapest hotel. Three grease balls dressed in ED Hardy exit the limo and enter the hotel. JOE, GAVIN AND GEORGE MCGOOF. Reporters and camera's go crazy.

REPORTER #1

Is it true what they are saying?

REPORTER #2

Do you have an official comment?

REPORTER #3

Are you on weight watchers?

INT. SEATTLE HOTEL- DAY

The grease balls go up to the penthouse penthouse where Chris Pallmer (64) a bald, red-faced man in his mid-60s with wild, darting eyes and the energy of a malfunctioning firework. His jaw is always clenched like he's mid-debate, and his voice hits the room before he does. He dresses in wrinkled business casual-button-downs that ride up when he yells, and khakis that never quite sit right. He stands up to greet them with an evil smile.

CHRIS

Boys, boys, come in and have a seat. I'm glad you finally came to your senses.

INT. SEATTLE HOTEL- NIGHT

The McGoofs stuff their faces with KFC, Burger King and drinks, like they haven't ate in years. Chris and his lawyer sit across from them.

CHRIS

Are you sure you guys want to do this?

George and Joe look at each other, Gavin looks out the window.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'm just fucking with you.
 Congratulations boys, you're rich
 again.

Everybody maniacally laughs as they sign the papers. Except Gavin who looks forlorn. Sasquatch, a towering, shaggy beast of a mascot with wild brown fur, piercing blue eyes, and a menacing grin stretched across a wide, foam jaw. His movements are heavy, deliberate, and just a little too human-like a monster who remembers being a man walks to the corner of the room.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL- DAY

Slamson sits playing video games with a sick boy named Billy (7) a young kings fan.

BILLY

I don't know Slamson the offense is stagnant and there is no ball movement. Bad shots means bad defense and a lack of effort. That Isiah Thomas is good though, way better than Jimmer.

Slamson agrees. Billy beats Slamson.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You aren't very good at this are you?

Slamson agrees.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I wish I could play real basketball...

Slamson grabs the basketball, lays down and shoots it up in the air and then catches it. He continues to do that, until he gives the ball to Billy and has him mimic the act.

BILLY (CONT'D)

How's my form?

Slamson tucks in Billy's elbow and slows down his motion.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Thanks Slamson. We going to win tomorrow?

Slamson shrugs not knowing the answer.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Well when I am better, will you
take me to a game? I have been
wanting to go forever but my
parents said I can't.

Slamson holds out his pinky to promise him. He grabs the ball and throws a behind the back pass to Billy as he leaves the room. He snaps a selfie with a little girl. Makes a few more kids smile on his way out.

INT. SLAMSON'S HOUSE - DAY

This is a different house then we saw before. They reside in Citrus Heights now.

Slamson enters the house. Reggie (17) now a lanky and loose-limbed, with messy blond hair that still refuses to be tamed. His mischievous blue eyes haven't lost their spark, but now they come with a hint of teenage sarcasm. He's all elbows, hoodie strings, and scuffed-up sneakers exits.

REGGIE

Hi dad. Bye dad.

Slamson shakes his head. Walks over to the table where his daughter, Ruthie (11), a tiny girl with big blue eyes, wispy blond hair pulled into uneven pigtails, and a mischievous grin that takes up half her face. She's always in overalls or mismatched outfits, like a walking tornado of cuteness—think Mary-Kate Olsen in Full House, equal parts sass, sweetness, and trouble.

She sits at a dining room table doing her homework with her mother. Slamson kisses his daughter's head and then his wife's.

RUTHIE

Hi daddy.

HELEN

Ruthie, go upstairs and finish the
rest of your homework, mommy needs
to talk to daddy.

Slamson is over in the fridge when he hears that, he puts his head down and then pulls his head out of the fridge. He walks over to the table, pulls out a chair and motions if he should sit.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I think you should.

Slamson sits. He cracks a beer.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I know these last few years have
been rough for the both of us.
Having to down size and you taking
a pay cut to stay here, me working
again, it hasn't been easy.

Slamson agrees.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I don't know the best way to tell
you this. So I am just going to
come out and say it, I am pregnant.

Slamson doesn't move. Helen waits for him to respond.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Well...what do you think?

Slamson realizes that his response wasn't what she hoped for
so he acts really excited.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Oh I am so glad you are happy about
this I was worried. The uncertainty
of the team staying these last
couple years and whether you have
or job or not, I know it hasn't
been easy. But thank you! You know
how much I wanted one more kid.

Slamson shakes his head, "of course". Then he kisses her.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Thanks babe. I am going to go tell
Ruthie she is going to be a big
sister.

Slamson walks over opens back up the fridge and then slams
his head in the door.

INT. SPORTS NEWS ROOM - NIGHT

A montage of different news outlets reporting the Sacramento
Kings have been sold by the McGoofs to a group out of
Seattle.

SHOW THE JIM ROME SHOW, COLIN COWHERD, PTI, SKIP AND STEPEN A debating. CUTS GO QUICKER AND CRAZIER, CULMINATING IN THE SILENCE WE NEED IN THE NEXT SCENE.

INT. ARCO ARENA COURT - NIGHT

Slamson stands at half court with a fan, in a gold Brad Miller jersey, preparing to take the half court shot. The shot could not have been worse. A fan heckles him.

FAN (SHINGLE SPRINGS HICK)
He's fat as he is retarded!

The ball bounces back to Slamson who turns around, back to the basket, shoots a one handed under-hand half court shot that goes in. For that brief moment there is life back in the hallowed Arco Arena.

FAN (CONT'D)
For god's sake put Slamson in the god damn game!!

A security guard comes down to confront the guy who is getting more drunk and obscene.

FAN (CONT'D)
What? I thought this was America!
You sell my team to Seattle - Fuck
your face!!!

The security guards move in. Some fans agree with the young man's protest. A violent altercation between security guards and fans ensue. Slamson POV takes place and you are seeing through the mask. Slamson runs towards the tunnel and finds Steve. He grabs Steve and starts to shake him.

STEVE
It's true. They sold the team to a group out of Seattle. They say it's first and goal at the one yard line.

Cletus sits close by, lights a cigarette.

CLETUS
We ain't going nowhere without a fight. Believe that.

All three look out in the stands where the fight is still taking place. Tear gas is thrown. Alarms are going off.

INT. KHTK RADIO TALK SHOW - MORNING

Carmichael Dave (42) is a broad-shouldered, solid-built guy with a trimmed beard, and the kind of face that looks like it's been laughing and arguing about sports since birth. The radio announcer slams the McGoofs.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

I have stood by and done everything I can to understand where the owners are coming from...but this...this is betrayal. They are technically my bosses but I would be doing my community and my country a disservice to not speak about the situation going on. It is absolutely ridiculous that these guys are able to get away with this and I truly believe that karma will come for them. But we get our chance first Sacramento.

Dave's producer waving for him to stop.

CARMICHAEL DAVE (CONT'D)

I have the mayor on line one, and she would like to say something to the people of Sacramento.

The mayor comes on and is calm, cool and collected.

MAYOR

While I know most of you are very emotional right now, as well as you should be, take a deep breath, now push it out, good. This is far from over. We will have a chance to prove our case to the world on why this team deserves to remain where it belongs, and that is Sacramento.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

So you believe that this isn't over?

MAYOR

Not at all. Far from it. This is Sacramento. When have we ever gone quietly into the night.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

I hope the McGoofs are listening...

INT. MCGOOF OFFICE - MORNING

Joe, Gavin and George all sit at a desk across from Steve and Slamson. A real mafia vibe. Slamson is dressed in a suit with his hair parted on the side. Joe plays with his pinky ring. George hair looks like pubes gone wild. Gavin doesn't look up.

JOE

As I am sure you have heard the news.

STEVE

We have.

JOE

This was purely a business decision, nothing personal.

Slamson and Steve remain silent.

GEORGE

Anyways we are calling in all of the employees to let you know how the next few months are going to play out.

JOE

If you play ball, things could be good for you. Seattle will need a mascot and an assistant.

Slamson and Steve remain silent.

GEORGE

If you don't, things may get tougher with another child on the way.

Slamson looks sharply at George.

STEVE

Are you threatening us?

JOE

No, no of course not.

GEORGE

We are simply reminding you that you are employees of McGoof Entertainment and it would be in your interest to play ball.

JOE

We've been good to you for a number of years and simply request that we maintain a professional relationship.

STEVE

Is there anything else?

GEORGE

Nope. Thank you for your time gentleman. Hopefully we will see you in Seattle.

Slamson and Steve stand up. Joe and George reach out to shake their hands, they do so reluctantly. Gavin and Slamson make eye contact. Gavin can't stand to look at Slamson and turns away.

INT. HALLWAY OF MCGOOF'S OFFICE - MORNING

Steve and Slamson walk towards the elevator.

STEVE

Can you believe that shit? They said it wasn't personal. They had every opportunity to sell it to a Sacramento buyer but chose not to because Seattle offers those broke ass bitches more money. For all this city has done for those fucking twats. And then to threaten us! What are we going to do?

Elevator door closes. Slamson looks determined, angry.

INT. MCGOOF OFFICE - MORNING

George stares out of the window watching Slamson and Steve walk to their car. Joe is making a drink over at the bar. Gavin still sits in the same position. Sasquatch emerges from the shadows.

GAVIN

(tentatively)

So there is a chance we could take Slamson to Seattle?

GEORGE

No.

GAVIN

Why did you tell him that then?
Remember he did save your life when
you and that hooker were at that
Carls Jr.

JOE

We need him to understand exactly
where we're coming from—and that
this isn't something he can stop.
If he ever wants to work in this
industry again, he knows what he
needs to do.

GEORGE

That lion possesses more power than
he even knows.

GAVIN

I want a western bacon
cheeseburger...and criss cut fries.

EXT. LAKE FOREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

Slamson is dropping his kids off at school.

RUTHIE

Are the kings really leaving dad?

Slamson shakes his head.

REGGIE

Yes they are.

Slamson shoots a look over at Reggie.

RUTHIE

What if we killed the McGoofs?

REGGIE

Smart, then you would go to jail.

RUTHIE

We hire someone else to do it
idiot.

Slamson slams on the brakes.

REGGIE

This is far enough for me. Bye.

Reggie gets out of the car, embarrassed to be seen with his father. As he approaches the school a group of kids makes some comments.

DEREK
Is that your dad?

REGGIE
Ya...

SOPHIE
Is he a furry?

They laugh. Reggie continues to walk away.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Slamson stares at his son.

RUTHIE
He's an emotional one.

Slamson continues to drop his daughter off at her elementary school. He gets out of the car to give her hug.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Thanks dad. I'll see you after you
get back from your trip. Love you.

Some kids getting dropped off at school give Slamson high fives and are excited to see him. Cars honk and wave. He stands and watches her run into school.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Slamson sits on an airplane next to Steve. They make them fly Southwest. He overhears a conversation happening in front of him.

GREG
Thank god the NBA is finally
getting a team back in Seattle. The
Kings have sucked for way too long
its good the NBA finally did
something about it.

T.J.
What about the owners? They are
completely incompetent. I think the
team is on this flight.

GREG

It's not their fault Sacramento is a cow town and nobody wants to play there. Why would anyone want to live there?

Slamson finishes his drink and then asks the flight attendant for another one.

GREG (CONT'D)

How are you supposed to make money, any money? No wonder they went broke. Shit they should just bring back the monarchs, nobody would know the difference.

T.J.

Yeah I just saw on twitter that the Mcgoofs and Palmer filed relocation papers to make it official.

GREG

Good fucking riddance. I am excited to get the Sonics back.

Slamson is shaking with anger.

INT. TOYOTA CENTER - NIGHT

It is the Houston Rockets mascot's birthday (Clutch the Bear) so Slamson, Jazz Bear, Coyote, Benny the Bull, STUFF the Magic Dragon and Rocky - all performing during the game. The announcer introduces them all for Clutch's birthday celebration.

P.A.

And now from the Seattle Kings...Slamson the Lion...

Slamson stops in his tracks. Turns and looks over. Jazz Bear takes off his jersey to reveal he is wearing a Seattle Supersonics jersey. People start laughing, shouting out obscenities about Sacramento. Sasquatch watches from the tunnel.

Slamson goes crazy. He runs straight at Jazz Bear and double kicks him in the head, knocking him out. Slamson starts wailing away at the mascot while the other ones try and pull him off.

INT. THE GOLDEN HOLE BAR- NIGHT

Slamson sits on a barstool at a seedy bar in Sacramento. With several empty drinks in front of him. He hears his name being mentioned on the tv at the bar.

TV ANNOUNCER

Just when you thought it couldn't
get much worse in Sacramento...

Show Slamson kicking the Jazz Bear in the head. The mayor is giving a press conference.

MAYOR

Sacramento is proud of an ordinary
citizen standing up for what is
right. It amazes me that when
people do things that are
disrespectful, then they act
surprised when they get drop kicked
in the face.

REPORTER #1

Well does this really help the
fight? Isn't it going to take an
elected official such as yourself
not a mascot to keep the Kings in
Sacramento?

The Mayor (50) walks in the bar. She is tall, athletic, with a commanding presence and a polished, clean-cut style. Her sharp jawline, braids, and confident smile reflect both her WNBA roots and political savvy. She wears tailored suits like game-day uniforms—crisp, purposeful, and ready for the spotlight. Her eyes are focused, intense, always scanning the room like a point guard reading the court.

MAYOR

There he is, the lion of the hour.
Your assistant told me I could find
you here.

Slamson picks his head up from the bar. Gene (57) the bartender is a grizzled old biker with a gut like a keg and arms covered in faded tattoos that tell better stories than most people. One eye is always half-shut, like he's sizing you up or just tired of your bullshit.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Hey Gene, you mind turning that tv
off.

GENE

No problem Boss.

MAYOR

And let me get my friend over here
another one...what are you
drinking?

GENE

A shot of tequila and Modelo, we
call it a Slammy.

MAYOR

Sounds good. I'll take one as well.

While the bartender prepares the drinks, the Mayor looks around the room gazing at all the Sacramento Kings memorabilia.

At 'The Golden Hole', the walls are a time capsule of Kings heartbreak and heroism, layered in dust, beer stains, and pure purple nostalgia.

Above the bar, there's a Chris Webber signed jersey, still sweat-stained from the days of battling Shaq. Next to it, John Barry's signed in sharpie and framed crookedly, hangs beside a polaroid of him diving into the scorer's table.

One corner is dubbed "The L-Train Station", featuring a Lionel Simmons poster curling at the edges, surrounded by laminated articles from The Sacramento Bee, yellowed and curling, celebrating his rookie year like it just happened last week.

A cracked plastic case holds Scott Pollard's game-worn headband next to a photo of him with a mohawk and eyeliner-captioned in Sharpie:"Pollard 4 President."

Near the jukebox, there's a Tyreke Evans Rookie of the Year plaque, slightly burned from a bar fire in 2010, but still shining proudly. Beneath it, a half-deflated Peja Stojakovic bobblehead nods eternally under the dim hum of a neon "COORS LIGHT" sign.

There's also a small shrine to Corliss Williamson-his sweat-soaked wristbands, a printout of his "Big Nasty" nickname origin. Next to a Bobby Jackson sixth man award poster.

A Michael Stewart autographed towel, complete with smudged signature, is pinned up next to a photo of Lawrence Funderburke blocking a shot with pure church deacon energy. On the far wall, next to the restroom, a handwritten stat sheet from Francisco García's 2008 buzzer beater is tacked up with a rusted thumbtack.

And right in the center of it all, in the place of highest honor:

A Jason Williams #55 and Mike Bibby #10 jersey, signed, framed, and lit by its own flickering spotlight. This bar doesn't worship trophies—it worships moments, memories, and the men who made Sacramento believe, even when belief was the only thing they had.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

I remember when this was the place
to be...

Slamson looks sad.

GENE

There you go.

The Mayor holds up her shot, as Slamson grabs his.

MAYOR

To the next step...

They both take the shots. Slamson shakes a little bit.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Damn thats smooth.

Slamson starts to sip on his beer.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

You know I grew up in Sacramento,
played high school basketball here.
Met my husband, raised my kids
here. I love this city. Love is a
crazy thing though, it makes you
believe you can do anything. Be
anything. The impossible. I can't
tell you the details but there are
things in motion. What I need from
you is to lead the people. I need
you to be the beacon of hope that
people can look to. That something
they can look to, that says we
believe.

Slamson looks at him.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

You have been at the forefront of
this fight for too long. Nobody has
more to lose than you. The people
love you, they will rally around
you if you let them.

(MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)
 May 15, 2013 you will either die a
 hero or live long enough to see
 yourself become the villain.

They both drink their beers in silence. Someone starts
 singing Fat lip - Sum 41.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
 Sure they will come after you with
 everything they got but don't worry
 I already had my people take care
 of that incident in Houston. The
 McGoofs will be tied up in
 paperwork for way too long to fire
 you. Plus the sons a bitches can't
 afford a good lawyer. They're too
 cheap to pay the severance package.

The Mayor chugs the rest of her beer.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
 I believe in you Slamson. Now you
 just need to believe in yourself.

She shakes Slamson's hand and exits the bar. Slamson looks at
 Gene.

GENE
 Say yes....yes.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Slamson busts through the door, goes up to the desk and
 writes down "Here we Buy". Steve looks down.

STEVE
 I like it.

INT. MORGAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Morgan sits at her desk reading over a paper while Slamson
 and Steve stand, waiting anxiously.

MORGAN
 It's so crazy it just might work.

She smiles.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
 But its got to be on the
 low..low...

Slamson and Steve both agree, nodding yes.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Juan Pablo walks through the locker room picking up jerseys and cleaning the room.

JUAN PABLO

What you guys are asking from me,
it's a lot.

STEVE

We know.

JUAN PABLO

If they ever found out about this,
they'll black ball me from ever
getting a job.

STEVE

They won't.

Juan Pablo looks at Slamson.

JUAN PABLO

Who am I kidding, I can't so no to
that face.

Slamson hands him a paper. Juan Pablo reads it as Steve and Slamson exit.

EXT. OLD SPAGHETTI FACTORY - NIGHT

Juan Pablo looks down at a white business card that has just an address written down on it. He then looks up at the sign that reads 'Old Spaghetti Factory'.

INT. OLD SPAGHETTI FACTORY - NIGHT

Juan Pablo walks towards the hostess.

JUAN PABLO

I am here for a birthday party for
Mr. Popadopoulos.

HOSTESS

Right this way.

Juan Pablo follows the hostess through the restaurants, past the kitchen, into a secret back room.

INT. SECRET ROOM

The room is dimly lit. The mayor sits with Steve, Slamson, Morgan, Carmichael Dave, Sign man (43) is in his early 40s but looks older—worn down by beer, heartbreak, and 20 seasons of Kings basketball. He wears a faded black Kings jersey that reads "SIGN MAN #6," and Sign Lady (42) She wears a bedazzled black Kings jersey that reads "SIGN LADY #6" over a long-sleeve tee, paired with well-worn jeans and comfy sneakers. Her face has a warm, mom-next-door glow—rosy cheeks, a touch of glitter, and eyes that can cheer or scold in a heartbeat. Tucked under one arm is a neatly made sign that reads: "HAPPY BIRTHDAY MR. POPADOPALOUS."

Juan Pablo stands awkwardly examining their faces.

MAYOR

Please have a seat Juan Pablo

Juan Pablo sits down next to Slamson. Slamson looks at him reassuringly.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

You all have been invited to this secret meeting because we are at war. We simply don't know who can be trusted and who can't be. You are the knights of the Sacramento Kings. Each of you provide a skill set that will help us in our ultimate goal, proving that this team belongs in Sacramento.

The Mayor looks at Carmichael Dave.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Dave, you have proven yourself loyal time and time again. You have already given your job to the cause.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

They go back on their word and those bastards have the audacity to fire me. I'll get them if its the last thing I do!!!

MAYOR

I know Dave but we need you to be able to broadcast the truth and oppose the McGoofs during this ordeal.

CARMICHAEL DAVE
So like Potterwatch?

MAYOR
More or less. You need to supply them with information to the Sacramento community that is not being reported by ESPN or all of the major syndications. The show should boost the morale of the allies involved in the movement. Also try to discourage the "climate of panic" being promoted by major media, by spreading truths and dispelling rumors.

CARMICHAEL DAVE
I can do that.

The mayor then looks at Sign Man and Sign Lady who are sitting next to each other but looking completely separate ways.

MAYOR
Jill. Jack. I know you two got divorced a few years back but we are going to need you guys to work together.

SIGN LADY
If he can stay sober for 7 minutes. No problem.

SIGN MAN
Oh just because I don't use pills its the worse thing.

SIGN LADY
Being an asshole isn't a disease.

The mayor tries to interrupt.

SIGN LADY (CONT'D)
You are just a bitter old man. Never got your fair shake. When you are really just a loser and we can only hope little Peja doesn't turn out like...

She stops.

SIGN MAN
Go ahead! Finish it.

SIGN LADY

You..

SIGN MAN

Me of course. It's always my fault.
You are just perfect. Always
perfect.

Slamson roars to silence them. Dave, Steve, Juan Pablo and Morgan are all staring awkwardly.

MAYOR

Thank you Slamson. Now you two have been season ticket holders since 1985. You know these people personally. We have to get the people who have fallen off over the years and remind them that it is time to take our team back. That we need to show its not the peoples fault. We need them all back. If not for each other, do it for little Peja.

Sign man and Sign Lady both nod.

SIGN LADY

We can do that.

Mayor looks at Juan Pablo and Morgan.

MAYOR

We have two people on the inside. I know people have been cancelling their season tickets for next year, we need to reverse that trend immediately. We are not sold, yet. We need to put the pressure on the NBA to say no. We need to get people in the seats. Promo codes, deals, anything to make sure that we are selling to people who are going to sit in those seats. Its now or never.

MORGAN

Got it.

MAYOR

Juan Pablo. We need the players on our side. They need to blame the ownership and praise the fans. They need to side with the people.

JUAN PABLO
But how do I do that?

MAYOR
Show them. Show them how it is going to affect this community that supports them. That Sacramento is better than Seattle. There will be a city council meeting that will be the first hurdle on our journey to success.

Juan Pablo nods. The mayor holds up his wine glass, everyone else follows his lead, everyone looks at Slamson.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
Slamson, here we buy!

A MONTAGE OF EVERYONE DOING THEIR PART TO KEEP THE KINGS IN SACRAMENTO AND TO MAKE HERE WE BUY NIGHT A SUCCESS. BILLBOARDS ARE GOING UP. LOCAL BUSINESSES HELPING OUT.

INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - MORNING

Carmichael Dave's garage podcast setup is a cozy, cluttered shrine to Kings fandom and late-night sports talk. The walls are lined with signed jerseys, bobbleheads, and vintage Kings posters, while shelves behind him are stacked with sports memorabilia, old media guides, and half-used coffee mugs. A Kings flag hangs crooked behind the mic, and a mini fridge hums in the corner next to a box of tangled cords and unopened giveaways from past seasons. The lighting is warm, the acoustics are decent, and the vibe is pure "Sacramento basement bunker meets sports radio therapy session."

Dave gives an impassioned speech about the Kings and the here we buy movement.

CARMICHAEL DAVE
Welcome to the first underground podcast. It is true that I was fired from KHTK for my comments regarding the McGoofs. But now we aren't playing defense, we are on offense. We need to show the rest of the world what Sacramento is all about. This city hasn't seen a war like this since the great bear revolt. That is why we need you...

INT. MORGAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Morgan is making phone calls. Selling season tickets left and right.

MORGAN

That is awesome. We are so happy to hear that you feel that way!!! Put you down for two more. Fantastic.

She grabs another phone while writing something down.

MORGAN (CHANGING VOICE TO CHINESE)

(CONT'D)

Hello this Morgan? Can you hold on real quick.

She goes back to her other phone.

MORGAN (IN INDIAN VOICE) (CONT'D)

Yes just type in "McGoofssuckdick" all one word, capitalize the M and the G.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

Juan Pablo is talking to the players about how shitty the owners are. Talking about how great it is to be in California and how they are doing the players dirty just like the fans.

JUAN PABLO

Sacramento is WAY better fam. You're right between San Francisco and Lake Tahoe, close to Napa Valley, Folsom Lake, the weather's amazing, the food's amazing, you get the most bang for your buck, and you get the best fans in the NBA. Do you know how much it rains in Seattle? Brother, I hope you like men that look like women and women that look like men..."

INT. DANCE STUDIO - MORNING

Slamson is working hard on a new dance routine. In a 80's workout outfit. Slamson stands center stage in an empty practice gym, decked out in sweats and sneakers over his mascot suit, tail bouncing with every move.

Surrounding him, the Royal Court Dancers hit sharp hip-hop choreography—pops, locks, and floor drops—as Slamson mimics them with surprising precision and full mascot flair. He spins, slides, and hits a perfect dab, his mane whipping dramatically in sync.

KIDS MAKE A LEMONADE STAND. LOCAL BUSINESS ARE SUPPORTING THE KINGS. THE COMMUNITY STARTS TO RALLY TOGETHER FOR THE FIGHT. BILLY AND THE KIDS AT THE CHILDREN HOSPITAL GET TICKETS TO THE GAME.

INT. GOLDEN CORRAL - DAY

The McGoofs are sitting and eating in the back. Joe seems nervous. George gets a call. Gavin is enjoying some chocolate pudding.

GEORGE

Hi Mr. Pallmer we were just calling to make sure that you really think it's a good idea that we show up to the game?

CHRIS

Of course its a good idea. Good PR for you guys and it makes it look like a business decision. Nothing personal. The NBA is a business.

Joe to George with a mouthful of food.

JOE

What if they attack us?

George to Chris.

GEORGE

What if they attack us?

CHRIS

Stop being fucking pussies, Jesus christ I am sending in Sasquatch to personally watch over you dip shits, you will be in a box, you've been wearing these people down for years...they are beat..that's when they just lay down and die. FINISH THEM!!!

Chris grabs the guys thighs next to him in excitement.

JOE

God this guy is intense.

EXT. ARCO ARENA- HERE WE BUY NIGHT

The parking lot is as filled as it has been in recent memory, especially this early before the game. A group of very loyal Kings fans are tailgating before the game. Slamson drives with Steve through the crowd gaining confidence at each fan he passes. The crowd gets thicker as he gets closer to the Stadium.

STEVE

What a beautiful sight this is to see.

The camera stays with the fans outside. You get the full spectrum of a tail gate. Example: The family barbecuing, the grumpy old men sitting in their camping chairs, the college kids chugging beers, hotboxing cars, doing keg stands, fans starting chants, debating what has happened to the Kings. There is a lot of news cameras around. Some fans are giving interviews.

A father and son walk past the news camera. The camera follows them.

FATHER

Wow this is what it used to be like son. These were like the good ol days.

SON

Before the god damn refs cheated us out of a championship in 2002.

FATHER

That's right.

They walk up to the entrance where Carmichael Dave has people gathered around a bullhorn.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

We will not go quietly into the night...we fight for the future generation of kings fans

Slamson grabs a baby in a lions outfit, jumps up on the rock out front of the gate and does the 'Simba' move to the crowd. The fans go wild.

INT. LIMO

The McGoofs look out at the packed parking lot with Slamson on the rock holding up the kid. Sasquatch sits with them.

JOE

Fuck...

EXT. ARCO ARENA

Some fans spot the Maloofs limo.

FAN

There they are!!!!

As some fans run to attack the limo the father and son start to walk the other way towards the entrance.

FATHER

Hi Berta.

BERTA

Hey Bill. Feels good to have this place buzzing again.

FATHER

Just happy as a father I can still take my son to a game.

BERTA

Well you two have fun! Who knows we might actually win tonight.

The father and son walk into Arco Arena.

INT. ARCO ARENA

There are attendants handing out light up glow sticks. There is a buzz in the arena. An electricity. All old kings jerseys and signs. The father and son go to the concessions stand to get food and drinks. They walk into the 40% off team store and he decks his son out in Kings gear. They go down to their seats. The son is in awe the whole time. He sits down and looks like the happiest kid in the world. The dad looks around the stadium. It is a beautiful sight to behold.

Gary Gerould (68) the Kings radio announcer precludes the game and the implications surrounding it.

GARY GEROLD

Hello ladies and gentleman welcome to tonights broadcast. In these trying times it is unbelievable how this community and this fan base continues to capture the emotion of the situation.

(MORE)

GARY GEROLD (CONT'D)

Backs against he wall and the whole town has shown up for the fight and I guarantee you that is what we are in for tonight...a street fight.

Billy and the kids from the children's hospital are there. They turn and flip off the McGoofs in the box. Sasquatch appears in the corner. People start throwing everything up into the box. People start chanting/booing them.

CROWD

HERE WE BUY!! HERE WE STAY!!

INT. LIMO

Pallmer looks pissed as he listens to the radio announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

But the damned crowd. 16,000 strong for a 17-win team in a seventh straight losing season with owners that just tried to sell us out after a history over the past two years of trying to sell us out. And those 16,000 people -- you people -- were loud. So loud. It blared through the TV. Constantly. It's like the chants built to a crescendo. It was wild.

Cynics will rightfully ask whether the event matters in the big picture and skeptics will question how important any one display of fan support is when teams are now bought and sold for upwards of \$500 million.

Who, except the totally heartless, could root against this?"

We can hear the chants of "HERE WE STAY!!"

CHRIS

Turn this shit off! Looks like we are going to have to play hardball. Call the suits.

Sasquatch makes a call.

INT. OFFICE ROOM - NIGHT

The Suits—tall, pale, and eerily identical in their slick black coats and dark shades—stand motionless in a sterile, dimly lit room. Suddenly, one of their earpieces crackles. Heads turn in unison. No words are spoken. Just a subtle nod, a synchronized step forward, and the quiet, unmistakable hum of inevitable violence on its way.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

It is pitch black only, only lightning brightens the sky for a brief moment. Slamson darts through the thicket. The rain and the foliage are all around. There is a couple gun shots and then people with torches chasing after him in safari outfits.

JOE

He ran through here..I can smell him.

Dogs start barking.

GEORGE

Quickly.

We go back to Slamson who ducks behind a down tree to catch his breath. He closes his eyes for a second, he takes a deep breath and then begins to run again. Shots are fired just missing him.

He runs until he is caught in a trap. He is hanging upside down. Chris Ballmer in a safari hat comes out from where he was hiding.

CHRIS

Did you really think you could get away? That you would win?

The McGoofs come huffing and puffing.

GAVIN

Good...you..caught him

Sasquatch hands him a gun.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

Wait? What are you doing?

George puts the gun to Slamsons head and fires.

INT. SLAMSON'S HOUSE- MORNING

Slamson wakes up in bed completely drenched in sweat. Slamson goes downstairs in his robe, pours himself a cup of coffee and looks at the stack of bills sitting on the kitchen table. He opens a letter marked urgent. Notices one from McGoof Entertainment that has already been opened.

HELEN

When were you going to tell me?

Slamson jolts completely surprised.

HELEN (CONT'D)

They haven't paid you in over three months?

Slamson tries to explain.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I don't want to hear any excuses. We love this city and team as much as you do but you have a family to worry about.

Slamson tries to console her.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Stop it. I can't believe you didn't tell me this. We are a team and I need to know how deep you plan on getting this family into debt. Sometimes I don't know who you love more...

Helen starts to walk off.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I need to get Ruthie ready for our family camping trip. We will finish this conversation later. Its the four days you can actually spend with your family. Thats the one good thing, they dont ask you to do the All star game anymore.

REGGIE

Do I have to go?

Slamson looks sad, stressed and defeated.

INT. ALL-STAR WEEKEND

The commissioner fields questions from reporters regarding the situation surrounding the Sacramento Kings. Says that Sacramento will have a chance to defend themselves. But that as of right now Seattle has the higher bid and Sacramento must be able to show that they can at least match.

EXT. CAMP SITE- DAY

A couple of hikers are hiking around the lake.

HIKER

Thats a nice Patagonia you got there.

HIKER 2

I got it on sale at REI, it helps being part owner.

They turn the corner when one of them notices Slamson fishing in the lake.

EXT. CAMP SITE- SUNSET

Slamson comes back to the camp site with fish to cook. Helen and Ruthie are reading a book. Reggie runs to check his phone.

REGGIE (DISTRAUGHT)

Apparently the commissioner said our bid is way under Seattles...it's over

HELEN

Have a little faith dear.

REGGIE

It's just not fair.

HELEN

Yeah well life isn't fair...

Reggie runs to the lake front and sits down.

RUTHIE

Why are boys so emotional?

HELEN

Go talk to your son.

Helen motions to Slamson to follow him. Slamson takes off his bucket hat and walks towards him.

REGGIE

They have all the big corporations,
all the money, what do we have...

Slamson points to his heart.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

That's great dad but what has that
ever gotten anybody.

Slamson grabs his son, looks at his wife and his daughter.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Ya...ya...ya..thats great.

Slamson looks to the heavens.

EXT. CAPITOL

There are people protesting the Arena.

INT. CITY COUNSEL

The city counsel sits there. They take a conditional vote on the arena plan to move forward. The camera goes across each Counsel member as they make their vote. The total is 7 yes votes and 2 no votes.

A few of the other counsel members exit. They get approached by a guy in a trench coat with an envelope. He hands them the envelope and keeps walking. Inside is cash.

INT. OLD SPAGHETTI FACTORY

The team meets back up for another quick meeting. A guy in a suit is taking pictures of them as they arrive.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - NEXT DAY

Slamson walks in to deliver more tickets to the Kings game.

NURSE

Bless you Slamson.

Slamson goes to look for Billy. Can't find him.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Oh nobody told you. Billy had to go in for surgery. We don't know anything yet. We are still waiting on his results.

Slamson nods and a little girl comes out to give him a hug. He manages to put on a smile and cheer her up.

INT. STRIP CLUB

Chris Pallmer sits with his lawyer, Sasquatch and the three McGoofs in the back room of a strip club. A private investigator comes up to him and hands him a file. Inside the files are the Mayor and all of his supporters leaving 'The Old Spaghetti Factory'.

CHRIS

Alright you pig fucks. Here is the deal we have been throwing money on the anti-arena side, the public hates using tax payers dollars to pay for new arena's while wealthy billionaires manage to get off scot free.

Gavin getting a lap dance.

GAVIN

Is that necessary?

Joe who is doing a line off a girls ass.

JOE

We have to make sure that this thing goes through.

CHRIS

While that is all going on we need to see if we can find any dirt on the mayor and everyone of his do-gooders. Time to get in the mud with the piggies.

GEORGE

Piggies?!

Chris starts to squeal like a pig.

Every one starts their maniacal laughs.

INT. ARCO ARENA OFFICE

Morgan comes into her office and see's guy in suits packing up all of her stuff.

MORGAN
Excuse me what do you think you are doing?

SUIT
Cleaning out your things.

MORGAN
Why?

SUIT
It's all in here.

Morgan reads the paper.

MORGAN
Do you really think you will stop us?

SUIT
We already have.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Juan Pablo is setting up the locker room. The suits come up to him.

SUIT
Juan Pablo Liebert?

JUAN PABLO
Yes?

SUIT
Come with us. Quietly.

JUAN PABLO
Why?

The suit hands him a piece of paper. Juan Pablo reads it.

JUAN PABLO (CONT'D)
You scoundrels!

Suits grab him and drag him out as players watch. The players rush to help Juan Pablo.

DEMARCUS
What do y'all think you're doing?

SUIT
This doesn't concern you.

DEMARCUS
Hell if it don't.

They get into a good ol fashion Mexican standoff.

INT. THE GOLDEN HOLE

The same bar we saw Slamson in. Sign man sits at the bar with a whiskey. A guy in a suit comes in and sits next to him.

SUIT
Just closed a big deal. Drinks are on me...what are you drinking friend?

SIGN MAN
Okay but just one more.

Show at least 6 glasses in front of Sign Man.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL

Sign lady is picking up their kids from school, Sign man was supposed to. She is driving like Cruela Devil.

INT. THE GOLDEN HOLE

Sign man is hammered talking to a girl at the bar. You see Sign Lady come in and just hit his head against the bar. The guy in the suit sits in the corner, makes a call.

SUIT
Two more down.

INT. ARCO ARENA

Steve stands in front of Slamson's dressing room door. A guy in a suit walks up and hands him a list.

STEVE
What the fuck is this?

SUIT
Slamson's set list.

STEVE
No it's not.

SUIT
Yes it is. You are lucky you two
are still allowed in the door.

STEVE
I thought working for free would be
sufficient.

Steve looks at the list.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Jerry Christ.

INT. ARCO ARENA COURT

Show Slamson at mid-court. Two German shepherds run after him
attacking him.

POLICE OFFICER
These are two of our best dogs...

The scene is borderline scaring the people in the stands.
Covering their eyes. Slamson plays it off. A consummate
professional. Steve looks worried.

Slamson is at the top of the lower bowl about to skate down
onto the court. As he makes his way down the steps a guy in a
Suit drops his skittles on the stairs. Slamson slips on the
skittles and takes a magnificent spill. He knocks his head
hard against the ground and knocks himself out.

INT. HOSPITAL

The TV in the hospital is playing a clip of Slamson's fall,
the newscast also brings up the fact that Seattle has up'd
their bid another 150 million dollars. Slamson's family is in
the room with him. One of the flower baskets sitting in his
hospital room has been bugged by the group from Seattle.
Steve stands in the corner.

HELEN
How much more of this are you going
to put your family through?

Slamson stays quiet.

RUTHIE
Are you okay daddy?

REGGIE
He's fine. Nothing hurts dad.

HELEN
Alright kids kiss your dad
goodnight, its time to get you to
bed.

Helen leads the kids out of the room after she kisses her
husbands forehead.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Don't get yourself killed while I
am gone. Leave that to me.

They leave. Steve comes over to the bed side.

STEVE
Juan Pablo and Morgan were both
fired today. Sign man and Sign lady
are not talking. Things have gone
from bad to worse. I don't know how
the hell we are going to pull off
"here we stay".

Slamson turns away. Steve becomes much more animated.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You can't just keep ignoring these
things. They are fucking with
people's lives. I mean look at us.
Their checks are bouncing. I don't
have enough money to pay rent. Are
you not even going to consider that
they are already gone?! That maybe
we should start looking for new
jobs.

Slamson shoots a pissed off look at Steve. He rips off the
medical equipment. Steve tries to stop him to no avail.
Slamson makes his way out of the room with his night gown
undone in the back.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

THE SUITS LISTEN TO THE CONVERSATION OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL IN
A VAN.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

The Mayor walks into an old catholic church. He observes the stain-glass windows and walks down the pews. He makes his way to the confession booth. He enters.

INT. CONFSSIONAL- DAY

The mayor kneels down.

MAYOR

Forgive me father for I have
sinned, it has been a year since my
last confession.

Slamson pulls back the window to reveal he is sitting in the other confession box.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Good spot to meet...

Slamson looks through the window dressed as a priest.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry you feel like you've been
left in the dark on some
things...but I can promise you we
are still in a good spot.

Slamson still stares.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

This is a game of poker. We knew
they would come back at us with
everything they got. They laid out
their cards. We have some Kings
that they don't know about...

Slamson sits back in his seat.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Something like a Royal Flush. I
know you have your doubts...but
have faith. In trying times
sometimes that is all we have.

Slamson looks to the cross.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

I have to be somewhere tonight. I
am sorry I can't be there for 'Here
We STAY' tonight. Give them hell
and be safe.

They both do the sign of the cross and exit.

EXT. ARCO ARENA PARKING LOT

People who protest the arena are picketing in the front of the arena. Kings fans are hot. They are debating the development of the arena downtown and what that means economically to the region (Have a generic arena debate "Billionaire owners don't need tax dollars, its our community we need to invest in its development").

There are sexual misconduct allegations against the mayor.

INT. ARCO ARENA

The suits walk past Steve and Slamson, they smile.

STEVE

Slamson I have to talk to you...

Slamson motions "not right now". Slamson looks in the crowd but Billy didn't make it. Looks up into the box seats and sees the McGoofs watching. The Kings fans try they end up losing to the Sixers.

The fans are exiting the stadium. Sasquatch watches from the shadows.

EXT. ARCO ARENA PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Steve and Slamson are walking out of the arena. See the McGoofs getting in the limo.

STEVE

I thought after we lost the Western Conference finals that it couldn't get much worse but it can always get worse.

Slamson looks down defeated.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Slamson I have to talk you.

Slamson stops walking.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I got another job offer.

BEAT.

STEVE (CONT'D)

It's in Milwaukee. Which in Navajo means good land.

Slamson kicks a trash can over.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What do you expect me to do? Juan Pablo and Morgan lost their jobs, fucked up their lives. For christ sake look what they are doing to the Mayor. Look what they are doing to us.

Slamson starts pacing angrily. Kicking over a trashcan. Steve tries to grab Slamson.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I have learned a lot from you but this is the real world. We could mess up the rest of our lives.

Slamson shakes his head "no", as he starts to walk away from him. Steve grabs him again.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Think about your family Slamson. They need you. Without them you don't have anything.

Slamson gets into his car. He pauses for a second then starts banging his head on the steering wheel.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Slamson and his wife are receiving the ultrasound for their baby.

HELEN

My parents said we could stay with them for a couple months if we sell the house before we find a new one.

Slamson doesn't react.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Why are you being so quiet?

Slamson throws his hands up.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Well you could say something.

Slamson shows her the newspaper that reads "Fallen King" about the mayor having sexual assault allegations about her.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Yes its all so tragic but...

Slamson looks out the window. The doctor comes in.

DOCTOR

Hi folks.

Helen starts to tear up. She can barely get out the words...

HELEN

Hello doctor. How are you today?

The doctor assess the situation as he enters the room. Looks at Slamson with his hands crossed in the corner.

DOCTOR

I just got to say- I am a huge fan of yours. Do you think I can get your autograph?

Slamson motions for a pen. Helen rolls her eyes.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Wow. The guys are never going to believe me.

Helen grunts.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Yes...of course.

The doctor gets back into a professional tone. He lifts up her shirt and squirts petroleum jelly on her stomach.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Oh sorry about that. I guess thats why I don't have kids.

Slamson and Helen look at him weird. He continues to perform the ultrasound.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Everything looks fine. I know that in the past Slamson has delivered your babies at home but unfortunately with your age and her irregular heart beat we are going to recommend that you have your baby at the hospital.

Slamson and Helen both react.

HELEN
We are having a girl?

DOCTOR
Oh you didn't know that? Yeah
sorry.

Helen tears turn to tears of joy. Hugging and kissing.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
You guys are like the happiest
couple I have ever seen who found
out they are having a girl.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

The doctor walks out with his folder. Turns down the hallway
and runs into the suits.

DOCTOR
He signed it.

The doctor hands him a piece of paper that says he has
accepted a job in North Dakota as a minor league mascot.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
He didn't even look at it.

The suits hand the doctor something and walk off.

INT. CHRIS PALLMER'S HOUSE

Chris sits in his house smoking a cigar. The suits walk up to
him and hand him some paperwork.

CHRIS
God damn you guys are good.

He opens the folder.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
So these are the potential
investors...

SUIT
That is correct.

Chris looks perturbed.

CHRIS

These are some actual investors.
Why the fuck would they want to
keep the team in Sacramento? I feel
like I am taking crazy pills!!!

SUIT

I wouldn't worry about it too much.
Public support is on your side.
Their spirit is all but broken.

Chris nods.

CHRIS

Good, good. Now let's finish them.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL- DAY

Slamson goes into see Billy. Billy does not appear to be
doing very well at all. Slamson comes in and sits next to
him.

BILLY

Slamson you came...

Billy perks up a little bit. Slamson rubs his head.

BILLY (CONT'D)

So they said I get to have one
wish.

Slamson taken back.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Cause I am dying...

Slamson tries to act like its not true.

BILLY (CONT'D)

So I've been thinking about it. A
lot. They told me what other kids
asked for and I don't want anything
like that.

Slamson just stares at him.

BILLY (CONT'D)

If I had one wish, one wish in the
whole wide world...I think it would
be for the Kings to stay in
Sacramento.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)
That would make everyone happy and
that would mean you could stay here
forever. That would make me happy.

Slamson reminds quiet.

BILLY (CONT'D)
That is all I want.

A single tear falls out of the Slamson's mask and lands on
the floor. As he hugs Billy.

INT. SLAMSON'S HOUSE - DAY

Helen and the kids are packing to go stay with her mom.
Slamson quickly gets out the car.

HELEN
No use in saying anything, my mind
is already made up. One of us needs
to think about this family.

Slamson gestures to her stomach.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Are you kidding me right now? This
has nothing to do with my hormones,
this has to do with your blatant
disregard for the real world, this
isn't a fairytale...bad things
happen and this is just a sports
team and you are letting it destroy
us.

Slamson tries to hug her.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Don't touch me. I am so mad at you
right now, I can't even think
straight. You got another job offer
and you turned it down?! Why?!

Slamson just stares at her with a blank expression.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I finally see your priorities and
its sad. You don't even think to
discuss this with me, for us to
have a conversation. I knew I
should have married Tim Johnson.

She opens the door.

HELEN (CONT'D)

When you finally decide to grow up
and take our lives seriously, give
me a call. I'll be at my parents.

RUTHIE

I still love you dad!

Reggie is working on his laptop in the car with his
headphones on. Slamson stands there as they leaves. A old
Homebound RV drives past him .

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

Steve sits in the waiting room. Looks around the room and
makes awkward eye contact with a few people. Looks up at the
television.

News anchors give updates on the Kings situation.

TV ANCHOR

The never ending Kings saga
continues. As the NBA relocation
committee will head to Sacramento.
They will give their report back to
the NBA board of governors for the
final vote. The NBA has never
rejected a relocation submission in
its existence. So things are not
looking good for Sacramento...

TV ANCHOR #2

Things are not looking good for
Sacramento indeed. In other news
another lemur has escaped from the
Folsom zoo...

Hugo (53) a Richard Gere look a like, opens the door to let
out his other patient.

HUGO

Remember you are strong, he is
wrong and until he takes
responsibility for his actions you
won't be around.

Hugo looks at Steve.

HUGO (CONT'D)

Hi Steve you can come back now.

INT. HUGO'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is classy, many leathered bound books and nice woodworking.

HUGO
Well its been quite awhile.

Steve sits across from Hugo.

STEVE
Yes it has.

HUGO
Well how can I help you today?

Steve can't seem to find the words.

HUGO (CONT'D)
I have been thinking about you with this relocation saga going on. I would imagine this has not been easy for you.

STEVE
It hasn't been. I was so sure for so long that they couldn't take this team away from me.

HUGO
Well you first came in here about 10 years ago. You weren't in good shape then but you look much worse now.

STEVE
Thanks.

HUGO
People always think that things cant get worse but they can. Seems like they usually do.

Hugo gets up.

HUGO (CONT'D)
Are you and Slamson in a fight?

Steve doesn't look up.

STEVE
He has been my best friend for almost twenty years. Without him I wouldn't be here today.

HUGO
That is true.

STEVE
What is that supposed to mean?

HUGO
Your best friend believes he is a lion. He lives in an imaginary world where a professional basketball team is the most important thing.

Steve tries to interrupt.

HUGO (CONT'D)
Don't you think he has been holding you back? Imagine where you could have been if you went somewhere different than Sacramento the last few years. You'll be starting all over.

STEVE
He hasn't held me back.

HUGO
Are you sure about that?

STEVE
I think he has made me better.

HUGO
How are things going with your wife...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Slamson sits on the bed watching tv. Steve comes in.

STEVE
Hey bud. How are things going?

Slamson shakes his head.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Yeah I heard Helen took the kids to her parents. I don't want to tell you I told you this would happen but...

Slamson notices a commercial for renting a RV.

STEVE (CONT'D)
We tried everything.

Slamson points at the tv.

STEVE (CONT'D)
What? You want to rent a RV? Why?

Slamson runs out of the room.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You can't keep running from your
problems!!

INT. AIRPORT- EVENING

NBA relocation committee arrives in town. Leading the group was Clay Travis (60) - tall, lean, perfectly pressed blue blazer, expensive loafers with no socks, hair combed like he was running for governor somewhere in the South. He scanned downtown Sacramento with the expression of a man who never changes his mind.

Beside him stood Paul (31) the mayor's assistant - short, sweaty, nervous, with a cheap purple tie hanging crooked over a Kings polo. He carried three folders, two iced coffees, and the exhausted energy of a man who hadn't slept in days. Paul forced a smile.

CLAY
Well here we are are...the armpit
of California.

They drive from the airport and you can see that there is really nothing around.

PAUL
So this is the 11th largest market
in the US. We got the best fans in
the NBA, the farm-to-fork capital
of the world, and more trees than
you people probably expected.

CLAY
ALLEGEDLY.

They stop at the proposed downtown site. As the guys walk towards the downtown plaza mall they stand at the sight.

PAUL

This is the potential site. Our numbers show that after just 5 years the growth of our town will triple investments.

A homeless woman starts to take a dump on the side of the building.

Paul tries to make things better.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Whose hungry?

INT. MIKUNI'S

The guys all sit around a table as they discuss business. One of the suits puts something in their drinks.

PAUL

Thank you all for coming to take a look at what we have planned. A chance to look at our city and see the potential for growth.

They all take a drink.

CLAY

This sushi looks delicious.

The suits walk out the door.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Clay is violently throwing up. He comes out of the bathroom sweating profusely and falls onto the bed. A homeless lady is screaming "kitty kitty kitty" outside is hotel room.

He starts to have a vision. He is being chased by something in the jungle. He is running...

Eventually a lion jumps out at him.

INT. HOTEL - NEXT MORNING

Steve sits at the desk looking at his contract for the new job. He takes a deep breath and signs it. As soon as he does he hears honking outside. He goes to the window and peers out. There is Carmichael Dave and Juan Pablo in a RV.

EXT. HOTEL

A dusty 1986 Winnebago Chieftain rumbles into view, its faded maroon and beige stripes streaked with bug guts and highway grime. The roof rack is overloaded with duffel bags, an old drum, a Kings flag flapping in the wind, and what looks suspiciously like a satellite dish held in place with bungee cords and duct tape. One headlight flickers like it's lost the will to live.

The side door creaks open with a hiss of compressed air, and out steps Slamson, framed in the doorway like some kind of fuzzy messiah. His mane is wild, windblown from the road, his purple jersey slightly crooked.

STEVE

What the hell is this?

Behind him, inside the Winnebago, you can make out Carmichael Dave at the wheel, wearing sunglasses and a headband like a renegade sportscaster on a mission, while Juan Pablo lounges on a beanbag, shirt half unbuttoned, sipping from a Kings-branded thermos, flipping through an old comic.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

It's what Slamson is calling the last stand.

JUAN PABLO

We are going to follow the Kings on their last road trip. Slamson thinks we need to get the other cities on our side.

STEVE

I don't know guys.

Slamson looks at Steve.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

This is the best idea we have left.

JUAN PABLO

It's all we have left. C'mon Mr. Steve.

Steve looks at them unable to say no.

STEVE

Alright, let me get my things.

The group cheers.

INT. RV

The vehicle smells like coffee, jerky, and dreams that should've died in the 90s but refused. This is not a getaway vehicle—it's a battle wagon for misfits, outcasts, and believers. Slamson gets into the driver seat. Steve sits next to him.

STEVE

First stop, Golden State.

The road trip has officially begun. Their first stop Oakland.

EXT. ORACLE ARENA

The only northern California team before 1984, older Kings fans most likely grew up Warrior fans. We were the John to their Rick Barry.

The RV pulls up to some fans tailgating. Carmichael Dave and Juan Pablo exit. DIMITRI (47) an Oakland Warriors fan walks by.

DIMITRI

Luckily for Sacramento people they can bring their house to every game.

The crowd laughs.

JUAN PABLO

Was that a racist comment?

WARRIOR FAN #1

Of course not. I was simply pointing out that you guys are hill billy's.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

I mean that's kinda racist towards me.

WARRIOR FAN #2

If anybody's racist its you guys.

The tension starts to build.

JUAN PABLO

Listen we are just here to try and save our team. Have a few beers and bring some plight to our fight.

Someone in the back yells.

WARRIOR FAN #3
Kick his ass Dimitri!!

As Juan Pablo is talking to the crowd. Slamson walks out of the RV.

DIMITRI
Holy shit! Slamson is that you?!

Slamson looks and then goes to embrace Dimitri.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)
It's been too long old friend. How are you?

Slamson puts a fake gun to his head.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)
Yes I know. I am sorry ol' boy.
Didn't realize these guys are with you.

Dimitri looks to Juan Pablo and Carmichael Dave.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)
We are were only busting balls.

Reaches out to shake their hands. They extend.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)
He fellas lets get these guys craft IPA's.

CARMICHAEL DAVE
That sounds lovely.

DIMITRI
Ah me and Slammy go way back. All the way back to Mascot camp.

JUAN PABLO
You were a mascot?

WARRIOR FAN #1
He is Thunder.

Dimitri half heartedly smiles.

DIMITRI
I was Thunder.

Slamson gives him a bear hug.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

Thanks ol' friend. Its a crying shame what they are doing to you guys. Owners are like a cheap whore, pay for the pleasure but never give her your heart.

Everyone looks around.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

But I am paying her tonight, let's party!!!

The three Sacramento Kings fans join in the pre game shenanigans. Slamson shot guns a beer. Carmichael Dave is grilling meat. Juan Pablo is hitting a big bong. They all start dancing, drinking and enjoying each others company.

WARRIOR FAN #2

We really have no reason to not like each other.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

That's true. We have never been good at the same time.

WARRIOR FAN #3

That's right. We had run TMC, you guys got Richmond, then you had C-WEBB and then we had the we Believe team.

JUAN PABLO

We could never hate you guys.

STEVE

Yeah you aren't annoying band wagon fans like the Lakers.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

And you never could be. You guys are too likable.

STEVE

Fuck LA! Fuck LA!

Everybody laughs really hard. The music continues as we show the Dimitri put on the old Thunder Costume. They continue the party around the stadium building support for their cause with each person they encounter.

INT. SUITS CAR - NIGHT

Two suits look on as Slamson and Thunder are roller blading in unison. One of their phones ring.

SUIT #1

Yeah we see.

CHRIS

Well what is he doing?

SUIT #1

They are getting drunk and high with some warriors fans.

CHRIS

What else are they doing?

SUIT #1

Talking and debating useless sports knowledge.

CHRIS

At least they have finally given up. Alright update me if anything else happens.

SUIT #1

Well it looks like Slamson and the old Warriors mascot are roller blading in some sort of synchronized dance.

CHRIS

I am sure it is beautiful.

SUIT #2

It's mesmerizing.

CHRIS

Just do something to slow that RV down.

SUIT #1

Sure thing boss.

The Suits gets of their Lincoln town car and make their way over to the RV. They check around to make sure nobody is looking and cut the battery wires.

EXT. ORACLE ARENA - NIGHT

Slamson, Dimitri and the rest of the gang is passing a joint around as they make their way back to the RV.

DIMITRI

I hope you stay in Sacramento
Slamson. You were always the best
of us. You are good people.

They embrace and walk away.

STEVE

At least that game was competitive.
But who is going to drive?

JUAN PABLO

I can't.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

I can't.

STEVE

I can.

They get in the RV. Dave tries to start it but its not turning over.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

Shit.

He gets out to check under the hood.

STEVE

Is it the carburetor?

JUAN PABLO

RV's don't have those.

STEVE

So we can rule that out.

Slamson goes out to help Dave. JERRY REYNOLDS (72) looks like the human embodiment of an old basketball gym. Average height and slightly slouched, with white hair combed over just enough to suggest he tried, he carries himself with the relaxed confidence of a man whose seen every kind of bad Kings basketball imaginable and somehow survived it with a sense of humor intact. His face is weathered and expressive - equal parts small-town coach, late-night storyteller, and exhausted history teacher. When he talks, he has the casual rhythm of a guy who could explain a pick-and-roll and a tractor engine with the exact same voice. His grin always looked half amused -- comes around the corner.

JERRY
Hi fellas, how are we doing
tonight?

STEVE
Not good Jerry.

Jerry looks under the hood.

JERRY
Looks like some field mice chewed
up the wires to your battery. Lucky
for you I have some Indiana wheat
wire that will work to patch that
up.

He pulls something from out of his pocket and starts to fix
it.

JERRY (CONT'D)
At least that was a competitive
game. It's amazing what happens
when the balls moves and you play
team defense...alright Juan Pablo
give it a try?

Juan Pablo starts the RV right up.

JUAN PABLO
You are the man Mr. Jerry.

Jerry looks at the group.

JERRY
You know what, I would like to
drive you guys down to LA. That
sounds more fun.

He starts to get on the RV. Nobody in the group questions
him, they just follow.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Everybody gets into position. Jerry puts on his glasses.

JERRY
Alright here we go...did I ever
tell you the time when I met Jerry
Lewis in Fingerlick....

Jerry continues his story as the group fades off to sleep.
Slamson texts his wife "I love you".

EXT. HELEN'S PARENTS HOUSE - DAY

Helen is outside working in her parents garden when the Mayor pulls up.

MAYOR

Hello Helen.

Helen doesn't look up.

HELEN

Mr. Mayor, he isn't here right now. I don't know where he is at the moment and I really don't care.

MAYOR

I wasn't looking for Slamson. I was looking for you.

HELEN

Why would you be looking for me? Shouldn't you be hunting whales or filling my husband with some ridiculous notion that this is an actual winnable battle. I mean at what point do you cut your loses.

Mayor pauses.

MAYOR

I wish I could. But I just don't believe it. The world can't be this cynical, it can't be solely based off of money and greed.

HELEN

But it is...pettiness and greed. You are a politician, you know that better than anyone.

MAYOR

I am not going to speak at the town hall meeting. I would like you to give the speech.

HELEN

Are you high?

MAYOR

Not since the 90s. I am working with two more potential whales. That if I can convince them on Sacramento, we are that much closer to our end goal.

HELEN

I don't think I can.

MAYOR

I don't think there is a better person to explain to the committee about why this team should stay in Sacramento. You moved from San Diego to live here...why?

Helen pauses.

HELEN

I fell in love...

Beat. Then Ruthie yells from outside of the house.

RUTHIE

Mom! Dad is on TV!

INT. HELEN'S PARENTS HOUSE

Helen comes in the house too see her parents Dick (85) on the lazy-boy and Laura (83) watching the tv.

NEWS ANCHOR

It was a scene before the pre-game tip in Los Angeles as the Lakers vs Kings is still alive.

Cut to footage of a crowd looking hostile and surrounding Slamson and his gang.

LAKERS FAN

We won 2002 fair and square.

Steve head butts the guy in the face. Slamson starts throwing punches.

NEWS ANCHOR

More violence from these two cities who have gone at it for years. Will this be the last time we see blood spilt. For ratings sake I hope not. In political news Gavin Newsom promises high speed rail and an end to homelessness...

RUTHIE

Is daddy in trouble?

DICK

You are only in trouble if you get caught.

LAURA

Don't tell her things like that Dick.

Helen looks on.

HELEN

He's losing it.

INT. CASINO SUITE

Chris Pallmer is watching the news with the suits around seeing the broadcast.

CHRIS

He is losing it.

Snaps his fingers.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Make sure you find the guy that he head butted so we can press charges. I am sure that pussy already has but this is our chance to get Slamson behind bars.

SUITS

Sure thing boss.

Joe, Gavin and George are playing in the indoor pool. George is chasing Gavin.

CHRIS

God dammit! How many times do I have to tell you fucks to stop running around the pool. Jesus, I see why you guys sold your alcohol distribution company.

The three McGoofs look sad.

JOE

Ouch.

EXT. PHOENIX SUN'S TAILGATE - DUSK

The battered purple RV idles in the desert sun. Kings flags whip in the dry wind.

Carmichael Dave adjusts his mic, headphones half on. Juan Pablo grills carne asada on a hot plate. Steve tapes down cords, silent. Slamson stretches while icing his back.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

(into mic, smooth,
reflective)

Live from Phoenix, Arizona. A city of mirages. A city that gets so close you can taste the water, but the cup is always empty. For Suns fans, that's the story: Barkley against Jordan, Nash against Kobe, Almost. Always almost.

A cluster of SUNS FANS hover nearby, curious. Orange jerseys. Faded Nash throwbacks. They jeer and grin in equal measure.

CARMICHAEL DAVE (CONT'D)

That is something Sacramento can relate to.

SUNS FAN #1

You know what, this is exactly what I thought Sacramento Kings fans would look like.

The other Suns fans laugh mockingly.

JUAN PABLO

I'll take that as a compliment.

SUNS FAN #1

Take it as you will.

JUAN PABLO

I will.

SUNS FAN #1

Good.

STEVE

Fun fact, Sacramento's first ever playoff series win was against the Suns.

SUNS FAN #2

Did that feel as sad as that sounded?

STEVE

Yeah kinda.

They all laugh.

SUNS FAN #2
At least we made the finals.

JUAN PABLO
I don't think that is better.

A fan walks back in a Lakers jersey.

SUNS FAN #1
Well look at the this piece of
shit.

Lakers fan walks by with his hot girlfriend.

STEVE
I hate people that wear jerseys of
teams that aren't playing. You like
men!!!!

Juan Pablo whispers to Slamson.

JUAN PABLO
What has gotten into Steve?

Steve and the Suns continue to berate the Lakers fans.

LAKERS FAN
Rings boys, rings...

SUNS FAN #1
You just got a lot because you get
so many divorces.

CARMICHAEL DAVE
(continuing podcast)
Two cities. Different timelines.
Same curse. The league's gravity
pulls toward the coasts. Toward
glamour. But here in the desert,
here in the valley, we know what it
is to fight uphill.

A stir. CHARLES BARKLEY ambles in, Styrofoam cup, eyebrows
amused.

BARKLEY
I respect Sacramento, I always
have. There are some great people
up there in Northern California,
some good people. I've gotten some
great head there.

Slamson pantomimes polishing Barkley's head – a halo. Chuck chuckles despite himself.

A SHADOW flips into frame – THE SUNS GORILLA cartwheels, lands in a split, points at Slamson: you and me.

Beat his chest: tonight.

Slamson bows, slow and royal.

INT. FOOTPRINT CENTER – HALFTIME

Baseline. Strobe. The floor gleams like a mirror you don't trust. At center court: GORILLA and SLAMSON circle – not enemies, emissaries– Slamson WORMs the mid-logo, rises to a moonwalk.

CARMICHAEL DAVE (V.O.)

They keep telling us the fun is
elsewhere. We keep inventing it.

SUDDEN – A HARD BLACKOUT.

Sound dies. Exit signs glow like shipwreck fire.
A silver seam in the dark. THE SUITS appear – black outlines,
purpose for faces – fanning from the tunnel.
Fans cheer, thinking: bit. Phones rise like a field of
constellations.

PA.

Ladies and gentleman there has been
a warrant out for Slamson's arrest.

STEVE

(near, urgent to Slamson)
Left tunnel, now.

Gorilla steps into the Suits' path – exaggerated slip,
pratfall, whistle from a belt – the clown who knows he's
buying seconds.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Sirens bounce off concrete. Steve and Slamson run down the
hall. The suits are in hot pursuit.

STEVE
(into radio)
Execute escape plan... Sarunas
Marciulionis!!

EXT. LOADING BAY - CONTINUOUS

The RV surges alive. Juan Pablo steady at the wheel.

CARMICHAEL DAVE (V.O.)
They'll tell you it's already
written. Contracts signed in rooms
with no windows. But paper is not
fate. Paper doesn't bleed. Paper
doesn't roar.

INT. CATWALK - SAME

Slamson and Steve sprint across steel. The RV barrels below.
Suits closing. At the edge, Slamson leaps - pure instinct.
Steve stops. Breath shakes.

STEVE
It's not worth it.

CARMICHAEL DAVE (V.O.)
This is the truth no scoreboard
shows you. Half of us wants to keep
trucking. Half of us wants to quit.
Both voices are real.

Slamson turns, paw outstretched. Silent command.
Steve stares - sees himself. He lunges. Slamson yanks him
midair, dragging him into the void.

EXT. MOVING RV - CONTINUOUS

WHUMP. They crash onto the roof. Metal screams.
SUV headlights slice from behind.

EXT. FREEWAY - DESERT NIGHT

The RV barrels into black horizon. SUVs scatter in popcorn shrapnel. Slamson rises through the sunroof, mane wild. Steve steadies him with a trembling hand.

CARMICHAEL DAVE (V.O.)
 The Suits always look the same.
 Sometimes in boardrooms, sometimes
 in jerseys. It's the same face. The
 same hand at your throat. But
 cities are stubborn. Cities
 remember. And remembering is a
 weapon.

The RV vanishes into desert night.

CARMICHAEL DAVE (V.O.)
 We are still here. And we are not
 done.

FADE OUT.

INT. REGGIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Reggie sits with his headphones on listening to Dave's podcast. He sits at the computer editing something and looks outside to the moon.

INT. RV - DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Slamson is driving but everyone is sitting in awkward silence.

STEVE
 So what does it say exactly?

JUAN PABLO
 It says that you are being charged
 with battery.

STEVE
 For what?!

JUAN PABLO
 I think it was for when you head
 butted that guy. You busted him
 open yo.

Slamson throws up the pussy sign.

STEVE

Classic Lakers fan. Got a family member that is going to sue me? I don't give a single fuck.

Steve cracks a beer. They all sit in silence again.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The RV hurtles down an empty stretch of road. SLAMSON drives, calm. STEVE seethes in the passenger seat. CARMICHAEL DAVE and JUAN PABLO sit in back, eerily composed.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Can you guys even tell me where we are going next? I got in this RV but I need to get back to the real world.

Dave and Pablo answer together, flat, rehearsed.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

The first rule of Operation Bring the King Home—

JUAN PABLO

—we don't talk about it.

Steve stares at them, unsettled. Turns back to Slamson.

STEVE

This whole trip, this crusade — to save the Kings? This was our best idea? This is retarded.

JUAN PABLO

This was your idea, Mr. Stevie.

STEVE

(whirls around)
What did you just say?!

JUAN PABLO

Well, maybe it was Slamson's idea.

STEVE

That's what I thought.

He slumps back, shaking, furious. Dave and Juan Pablo look at each other concerned.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I have spent the last 20 years following you around. Bending the knee, doing what ever crazy ridiculous thing you want to do and where has it gotten me.

Slamson shakes his head.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I can't do this anymore. Why would someone I call a friend do this to me? That is why I got to take that job in Milwaukee.

Slamson looks at him and the RV starts to drift off the road.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Slamson uses sign language to communicate with the guys. He signs "what do you wish you would have done before you die?".

STEVE (CONT'D)

What kind of stupid psycho analytical bullshit is this?

Slamson repeats his sign language to the guys in the back.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

Rafted the south fork of the American river without a helmet.

JUAN PABLO

Run with the llamas in Machu Picchu.

Slamson signs back to Steve, "and you?".

STEVE

I don't know watch the road.

Slamson lets go of the wheel.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I wish I would have been a more present father and husband.

Slamson still doesn't grab the wheel.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I answered your stupid question!! Stop messing around.

A semi truck is coming towards them the other way. Slamson signs, "if you were to die right now, how would you feel about your life?"

Slamson veers out of the way. Starts to fish tail.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Fuck the Kings. God Dammit!

Slamson signs "Look at you, you are pathetic. You think this is rock bottom, do you remember when we met?"

Steve sits back in his chair and thinks.

STEVE (CONT'D)
(Low, shaken)
...2002

Visions flood: the Kings robbed, C-Webb injured, trades, the long years of losing. His own life unraveling in parallel.

Slamson signs, "**We will never be that low again. Stop thinking rational. Leave it to me. The only way forward is to let go**".

Dave and Juan Pablo exchange a glance. Wordless. Both quietly click on their seatbelts.

Truck headlights loom larger, blinding.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The suits are looking at the RV.

SUIT
Jesus, are they drunk? It looks
like they are coming right for us.

Other suit takes a sip of his coffee.

SUIT #2
No, its just those new headlights.

INT. RV - CONTINUOUS

Steve sits there in a daze. Juan Pablo and Dave brace themselves.

Slamson signs, "you need me, I am everything you are not".

Steve looks over and Slamson is not there. He reaches out to grab the wheel.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

SUIT #2

Oh shit, they are definitely coming right for us.

The RV drifts off the road as the truck rams into the side flipping it over and over. The screen goes black.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

There are flames coming up from the RV and the truck as they both try to climb out of the car. CD and Pablo are struggling to get Steve out of the RV.

CARMICHAEL DAVE

He isn't moving!!!

JUAN PABLO

Dammit, Mr. Stevie wake up!!!

CARMICHAEL DAVE

I am going to have to cut him out of the seatbelt.

Carmichael dave pulls out his trusty pocket knife and cuts the seatbelt free, fire starts pouring over the RV.

JUAN PABLO

Hurry.

Steve starts to come to.

STEVE

Slamson...where is slamson?

Carmichael Dave grabs Stevie and starts carrying him out.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Slamson!!! Slamson where are you!?!

The smoke starts to fill up the RV as Pablo smashes out a window so they can escape. When he smashes it out it causes a back draft and another explosion erupts. Everything goes black.

Police siren and ambulance lights can be seen in the background descending on the crash sight.

EXT. NIGHT DESERT

Steve is getting dragged away from the sirens by someone or something. He is so out of it that he tries to look but he passes out. They throw his body into the back of pickup truck and drive out into the desert.

The pickup truck barrels deeper into nowhere. Its taillights shrink until the horizon swallows them.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - BED - NIGHT

STEVE sprawls in the bed, half-conscious. His breath rattles. He forces his eyes open.

STEVE
(weak)
...Slamson?

The desert wind answers with silence.

In the cab ahead, SHAPES move - blurred silhouettes. One turns, and for an instant Steve swears he sees the SLAMSON MASK reflected in the glass.

He blinks - gone.

The truck hits a bump. Steve's head slams the metal bed. He fades, eyes rolling back.

BLACK.

EXT. NIGHT DESERT

The police and first responders have shown up to the crash. They are questioning everybody. Carmichael Dave and Pablo watch as the cops talk to the suits. They finally make their way over to them.

COP
How are you guys holding up?

PABLO
Que?

CARMICHAEL DAVE
Did they tell you where our friend
is? Is he okay?

COP

They claim to have not seen anybody else. They said that you were driving.

Cop points to Pablo.

PABLO

No habla english.

Behind them, the wreck smolders. Firefighters shout. A gurney rolls past with a black body bag. Slamson's paw is burnt as they finish zipping it up.

INT. HUT - MORNING

Steve awakes in a small hut. He is maniac, concussed and in severe pain from the crash.

STEVE

Hello?!? Where am I?!? Where is Slamson? What have you done with him!

There is no answer. Complete silence. Steve looks out the window and sees what appears to be a little village in the mountains.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Please!! Let me go.

Steve starts to have withdraw like symptoms. He is rolling on the floor screaming. Eventually a small asian man CLIFF (52) compact, wiry man with a broad, expressive face, alert eyes, a slightly crooked grin, strong forearms, quick hands, comes in to give him food and water.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Where am I? Who are you?

CLIFF

Right where you are supposed to be.

Steve is not in the mood.

STEVE

You are not going to get away with this. My friends will find me and then you guys will be in big trouble.

CLIFF

The cops and those gentleman
wearing suits are already looking
for you.

STEVE

Did they get Slamson?!

Cliff ignores him as he makes his way to the door and locks
it.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I asked you a question!

Cliff points to the charred mask of Slamson. Steve goes into
shock.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What did you do!!!! What the fuck
did you sick mother fuckers do!!!
They killed him. He's dead.

Cliff continues walking away. Steve continues to cry out.

STEVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

YOU BASTARDS!!! YOU KILLED HIM.
YOU'LL PAY!!!

EXT. LEAGUE OF SHADOWS HOME BASE

Cliff walks through a small village and makes his way to the
main house. He walks through several people praying and
meditating. Cliff enters the "Phantoms", quarters. PHANTOM, a
heavysset, broad-shouldered man with sloped posture, a round
face softened by age, thinning gray hair, hooded eyes that
droop with weary intelligence, fleshy hands, and a body that
feels more burdened than powerful.

PHANTOM

How is he?

CLIFF

Not well.

PHANTOM

Give him another 24 hours.

CLIFF

Is this really worth the trouble?

PHANTOM

Are you questioning my leadership?

CLIFF

Never...but this doesn't appear to be the man you think it is.

PHANTOM

You would be amazed at who we can become when we put on the mask.

CLIFF

Yes but he thinks Slamson is a completely different person.

PHANTOM

Then you have your work cut out for you.

Cliff nods.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

He is everything that the prophecy said he would be. Now it is time for us to play our part.

Cliff nods.

INT. HELEN'S PARENTS HOUSE - DAY

Helen is sitting on the couch, her fingers nervously tapping the armrest. The sound of footsteps outside the door grows louder, and her body stiffens in anticipation. She rises slowly, taking a deep breath before walking toward the door. She pauses, her hand trembling as she reaches for the handle. The knock comes again—louder this time. Helen takes one last breath and opens the door.

Two uniformed POLICE OFFICERS stand at the doorstep. One of them holds a small, white cloth bundle in his hands. His expression is solemn, and the other officer stands behind him, looking unsure of how to proceed. Helen stares at them for a moment, her brow furrowing.

HELEN

Where is Steve? Is he okay? Please tell me he is okay...

The officers exchange a brief glance, and Officer 1 steps forward, holding the bundle with a hesitant motion. Helen's heart sinks, her body reacting before her mind can process.

They present her with one of his burnt paws. She starts to cry and sends Reggie away with Ruthie.

OFFICER #1

We... we found this in the wreckage. It's most likely from your husband, ma'am. We... we believe he didn't survive the fire.

She looks at the bundle, her eyes glazing over, the weight of what the officer said sinking in like a sharp ache. She slowly unwraps the cloth, revealing the charred remains of a paw—broken and blackened, unrecognizable. Her body trembles as she stares down at it. The sight of it makes her vision blur.

RUTHIE

Mom, where is dad?

INT. HUT

The hut is no bigger than a toolshed. No windows. Just slats in the wood letting in cold slivers of moonlight. A storm growls outside, but inside, the louder storm is Steve's mind.

He sits hunched in the corner, barefoot, shirt clinging to him with sweat. The walls seem to breathe — pulsing, closing in. He scratches at his forearm even though nothing itches.

Flies buzz. Water drips. Time melts.

Around him: a half-eaten crust of bread, a broken watch, a torn photograph of someone who used to love him. Or maybe still does. Maybe not.

STEVE

KILL ME!!! Just kill me and get it over with.

Cliff is walking by his cell and stops to look into his cell.

STEVE (CONT'D)

They forgot about me... I knew they would. I told them not to. But they did anyway..."

He punches the wall. Then apologizes to it.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Sorry. You didn't mean it. I get it.

He starts laughing. Not with joy. The kind of laughter that comes from a mind cracking down the middle, where reason has packed up and left.

He clutches his head, rocking. The shadows on the wall shift – one of them looks like his father. Or the devil. Or both.

The door doesn't exist anymore, not really. Just a frame he's too afraid to walk through. Because outside is freedom... and the weight of everything that put him here in the first place.

He whispers to the darkness:

STEVE (CONT'D)

If I leave, I might find them.
But what if they find me first?

His eyes are bloodshot. His fingernails, black with dirt. The air in the hut is thick – like it's been breathing him in.

And outside, the wind howls like it's laughing at the lion he used to be.

Cliff starts to walk away.

INT. CASINO SUITE - NIGHT

The suits come into Chris Pallmer's house and deliver him the news that they stopped the RV but they don't know where Slamson is.

CHRIS

What the fuck do you mean you don't where he is?

SUIT

There was no body. Just part of his costume.

CHRIS

That doesn't make any sense.

SUIT #2

Yes it is quite the anomaly.

Chris thinks.

CHRIS

Is he dead?

SUIT #2

Possibly.

CHRIS

That would make my life so much easier.

SUIT

I mean nobody could survive much longer out in the desert.

INT. HUT - MORNING

Light. Real, golden light. For the first time in what feels like years.

Steve blinks awake, eyes red-rimmed but open. He's on the same dirt floor, but the air is... still. Clear. Birds chirp softly outside. No more storm. No more madness.

The door – the door that never existed – is now wide open.

Sunlight pours in like a promise.

Steve stares at it, untrusting. He slowly lifts himself onto all fours. Breath shallow. Movement cautious. He crawls toward the open doorway as if expecting the walls to close in again... but they don't.

He reaches the threshold.

Nothing stops him.

He sprints out of the hut – a burst of animal panic – then stops, skidding in the dirt. He glances around. No one. Just silence and sky.

EXT. LEAGUE OF SHADOWS HOME BASE - MORNING

Steve walks now. Slow, like a ghost in someone else's dream.

He's in what looks like a hidden commune – homes built into stone, solar panels glinting on wooden roofs, gardens blooming with squash and lavender. Wind chimes hum gently. Prayer flags ripple in the breeze.

But where is everyone?

Laundry sways on a line. A pot simmers unattended over an outdoor fire pit. There's no sound of footsteps, no voices.

Only the mountain breathing.

Steve moves toward the edge of a cliff. Below: endless pine forest, mist drifting through the canyons like smoke from a divine fire.

Then...

A shift in the light.

From behind a twisted juniper tree, PHANTOM appears.

Not a man. Not a monster. Something in between.

Steve freezes.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE - MORNING MIST

Stevie stands at the edge of the world – behind him, the commune fading into silence. Before him, the canyon yawns wide.

PHANTOM stands a few feet away, still and watching. The wind tugs at his pale robes. His mirrored mask reflects Stevie's fractured face.

PHANTOM

You could jump.

Steve looks over the edge.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

Do you remember who you are?

STEVE

Not really no.

PHANTOM

This moment was foretold, the lion that would save the world.

STEVE

He's dead. Slamson is dead.

Phantom pauses.

PHANTOM

The suit burned. But not the spirit. You carried him here.

STEVE

No, no, no. You don't get it! Slamson was everything I'm not! He was—God—he was good. A good friend. A good husband. A good father. He danced in the crowd and loved everyone and made people believe in something better!

A tremor in the earth. On all sides, from behind trees and rocks, they emerge – a slow procession of mascots in ceremonial garb. Ancient versions of modern icons. They move with reverence. With purpose.

A flamingo with obsidian feathers. A tiger with a broken mask. A coyote dragging chains.

STEVE (CONT'D)

And I'm just a man who wakes up scared every single day. I flinch at my own thoughts. I panic in line at the grocery store. I hide. I sabotage everything that ever mattered. I hate myself so much, and the only time I didn't... the only time I didn't was when I had that fucking lion's head on. When I wasn't me.

The wind howls. The mascots bow their heads.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I need to get back to my family.

PHANTOM

You went deeper than most ever dare go. And in that brilliance... you lost yourself. Do you think heroes are born whole? No. They are shattered. Pulled apart by duty, grief, madness – then stitched together by love and purpose.

The mascots surround him.

STEVE

Please just let me leave. Let me go back.

PHANTOM

You are always free to go, you just have to get through them.

Steve tries to push through the crowd. At first the mascots do not move but as soon as Steve starts to run, an Old beaver mascot clocks him over the head and knocks him out.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

Jesus Harry.

HARRY

Sorry boss, I didn't know what to do.

PHANTOM

Carry him back to his quarters.

The mascots lift Steve back and set him in his room.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

Tomorrow is the day we have been waiting for.

INT. HUT

Steve awakens to the sun hitting his face. There is another man sitting in his hut without a mask (it is Phantom).

STEVE

Mr. Giribaldi? Is that really you?

Steve gets excited and runs over to him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Thank god, you got to get me out of here!

PHANTOM

My beautiful little Stevie. I plan on it.

STEVE

What are you doing here?

PHANTOM

That was me you talked to yesterday Stevie. I was up on the ridge. I am Phantom.

STEVE

What?

PHANTOM

How long has it been old friend?

STEVE

30 years? I haven't seen you since I graduated your mascot program in 85'.

PHANTOM

That's right. Terry G's Mascot Masters, best mascot school this side of the Mississippi. You were one of the best and brightest.

STEVE

What is this place?

Terry stands slowly, walks toward the archway overlooking the dark mountains.

PHANTOM

This...this is where the forgotten come to remember.

Stevie looks at him.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

After the leagues folded... after the owners cashed their checks and walked away...some of us had nowhere to go. We weren't just entertainers. We were living symbols. When your city loses its team, it's like losing a piece of your soul. And the one in the suit? He carries that loss in silence.

Phantom pauses, hands behind his back, eyes scanning the ridge line.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

They drifted in, one by one. A dolphin from Florida. A squirrel from Montreal. A knight from San Diego. An Indian from Cleveland and another one from DC. Mascots with no cities. No fans. No meaning.

STEVE

Is that how I ended up here?

PHANTOM

Fate I presume...or is it destiny?

He gestures to the rows of huts, the carved stone murals of mascots mid-dance, mid-dunk, mid-laughter.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

In Buddhism, they say ego is the illusion that you are separate. Being a mascot - when done right - is the exact opposite.

(MORE)

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

You disappear, so others can see themselves. You become joy incarnate. But when that joy is taken... you don't just lose your job. You lose your identity.

STEVE

So what is this? Rehab for mascots?

PHANTOM

Throughout history, people wore masks to commune with the divine. To become more than flesh. In Africa, in Japan, in the Andes – the mask wasn't a disguise. It was a transformation. A prayer made visible.

Steve stares at him.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

Mascots are the last true mythmakers in America. We dance, we stumble, we throw popcorn at the sky. But underneath all of it – we carry the weight of joy. The unbearable beauty of it. We remind people that even in failure... they are part of something.

Phantom turns to Steve now – firm, emotional.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

You remember those early twenty years? You wanted to be more than funny – you wanted to be felt. You didn't want the suit. You wanted the spirit.

STEVE

I was young, dumb and full of cum.

PHANTOM

You and Carl were the best I ever saw. You were fire – raw, erratic, heart-forward. He was ice – focused, elite, unshakable. Rivals. Brothers. And one of you... was going to be the One.

STEVE

The one of what...

PHANTOM

There's a prophecy, old as sport itself. That when the world no longer believes in joy... When stadiums become battlegrounds, and children stop dancing... One will rise from the ashes of loss. One mascot – born not of foam and fur, but of spirit and suffering. And he will remind the world why we gather... Why we cheer... Why we believe.

STEVE

You think that's me?

PHANTOM

I think you died. And something sacred is trying to wake you back up.

He crosses the room, lifts a stone lever. A massive slab shifts, revealing a narrow winding trail descending into darkness, carved into the mountain face.

They walk into the first trial.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)

That's what the rituals are for.
They're not performances.
They're baptisms.
Each trial – silence, memory, pain,
laughter – strips you down.
Burns away the ego.
What's left... is truth.

Phantom looks back to the masks on the wall.

INT. ANCIENT GYM

PHANTOM leads STEVIE into a the first room. A repurposed underground gym, torch-lit and echoing with groans of old metal and creaking ropes. The walls are lined with gym mats and banners of lost teams. In the center: a circular, matted pit surrounded by silent former mascots – retired warriors from extinct franchises, each wielding non lethal weapons.

PHANTOM

This is the "Trial of Physical Abuse". The body remembers what the soul won't admit.

STEVE
Non lethal right?

PHANTOM
Mostly.

"THE TRIAL - PHYSICAL ABUSE"

Phantom enters first, silent, robed, flanked by two monks in full mascot gear – one an old koala, one a defunct dragon.

Steve walks in shirtless, still bruised from the mountain. No mask. Just resolve.

The other mascots circle around him with slow, practiced ritual. They bow once, then grab weapons from the racks – and the room becomes a blur of spinning foam-bladed choreography:

A dragon mascot twirls a twin pair of inflatable tonfa in rhythmic arcs

A bear with a broken crown swings a Nerf-wrapped staff in wide, heavy spirals

A sleek fox in gray robes flips a rubber sai from hand to hand, testing balance

The dojo is silent now. Tension crackles in the air. The circle has formed.

Steve steps barefoot into the arena, muscles stiff, nerves twitching. A foam-wrapped bo staff is placed in his hands. It's heavier than it looks – weighted at the tips, off-balance, designed to disorient as much as strike.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)
ATTACK!!

They charge.

Steve meets them.

A whirlwind fight – Jackie Chan meets Looney Tunes. Stevie scrambles, improvises.

- He disarms the DOG with a baton.
- Ducks under the FOX's sais.
- Gets SLAMMED by the GORILLA's staff.

He gets knocked out again.

INT. TEMPLE CHAMBER - LATER

"THE TRIAL OF LAUGHTER"

Dim, silent. A single MONK sits cross-legged, expressionless.

Steve bows, then launches into a desperate routine - pratfalls, juggling rocks, breakdance moves, miming.

The monk does not move.

Steve, desperate, attempts a backflip. He SLAMS his head on the stone floor.

KNOCKS HIMSELF OUT cold.

The monk blinks once. Then resumes stillness.

EXT. MONASTERY COURTYARD - NIGHT

"THE TRIAL OF VISION"

A bonfire burns at the center of a ceremonial stone ring. Steve sits across from CLIFF, who prepares a steaming bowl of thick, dark liquid. The surrounding mascots chant softly in a dozen dialects - a prayer, a warning, an invitation.

Cliff hands Steve the bowl.

CLIFF

Now face what lives behind those eyes.

Steve drinks. His face twists. Bitterness. Smoke. Fire.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. TRIAL CHAMBER - UNKNOWN TIME

Steve stands in a void. Black nothing. Then - light floods in.

A STAGE APPEARS - a mascot-style comedy club.

The retired mascots sit at tables, now wearing tuxedos and sunglasses like Vegas legends. Spotlights hit the stage. A mic stand waits.

Steve is shoved forward.

SFX: APPLAUSE (SYNTHETIC, CREEPY)

One by one, the mascots take the mic and begin to ROAST HIM.

SFX: APPLAUSE (SYNTHETIC, CREEPY)

One by one, the mascots take the mic and begin to ROAST HIM – vicious, sharp, and personal.

– THE BEAR: "Stevie, you're not a lion – you're a sad unemployed drama major in a fursuit. I am not saying you are a homo but you sapians"

– THE FOX: "You make thirty grand a year to sweat in a costume and hug strangers' children. Your kids don't need a mascot – they need a dad who can afford insurance."

– THE DOG: "Your wife stays because it's cheaper than explaining to the kids why Daddy's one failed backflip away from a GoFundMe."

The crowd of mascots howls, pounding tables, wheezing.

Popcorn rains down on Stevie. The laughter distorts. The lights flicker. The microphone melts in his hand.

His family, his father, appears in the back row. Stone-faced. Disappointed.

The FOX reappears beside him, now unmasked, whispering in his ear:

FOX (V.O.)

"Grow up. Live in the real world. Nobody believes in you. Not even you."

The spotlight burns white.

Steve screams.

EXT. DESERT

"THE TRIAL OF EXILE"

Cliff stands with Stevie. Cliff smokes a joint.

CLIFF

You starting to trip?

Steve looks around and watches the desert breathe.

STEVE

Yeah, a little bit.

CLIFF

Alright well here is a pack. Time
to go into the desert.

Steve is mesmerized by the stars. Cliff handed him a tattered pack – nothing more than jerky, a flask, and a knife that looked older than the earth.

STEVE

What is this trial?

Steve looks back and Cliff is gone. It starts to rain. He makes his way across the desert.

Steve staggered into the desert like a man chasing the end of his own shadow. His mouth was dry as chalk. The brew Cliff had slipped him – mushrooms, peyote, drops of liquid sunburn on his tongue – churned in his gut like a carnival gone wrong.

The desert didn't sit still. The rocks breathed. The saguaros swayed like dancers with spines for arms. Every grain of sand seemed alive, whispering insults and prayers in the same voice.

Steve's pupils were black holes, galaxies collapsing inward. The desert exhaled. Steve laughed. Or screamed. It didn't matter.

At first it was just a sprinkle, cold pinpricks on his face. Rain. Sweet, impossible rain in the desert. He tilted his head back, opened his mouth like a child, catching drops on his tongue. They tasted metallic, electric.

The sprinkle thickened. Sheets of water tore across the canyon. Lightning carved the horizon into jagged teeth. The desert itself buckled under the weight of the monsoon. Steve trudged forward, arms outstretched like some holy drunkard, the sky cracking open above him. His footprints filled instantly with water, each one glowing faintly blue in his delirium.

Then – a sound. Low, guttural, ancient.
A MOUNTAIN LION.

She stood in front of him, golden eyes burning through the storm, tail twitching like a fuse ready to blow. Steve froze. His breath rattled.

The rain came sideways now, slashing at them both. The lioness took one step forward. He stumbled backward, heart slamming, until the cliff spat him toward a cave mouth gaping black against the rock. He tries to run but can't.

The lioness followed, driving him inside with her stare. The cave swallowed them both. And then – she walked past him. Not a snarl, not an attack. Her body trembled. She collapsed, muscles seizing, claws scraping stone. Blood pooled beneath her hind legs. She was in labor.

She bared her teeth – not at him, but at the pain splitting her in half. Her ribs heaved like bellows. The sound was deeper than thunder.

Steve crouched, trembling, eyes dilated to the size of moons. Every nerve in his body screamed run, but something older kept him there – the same something that had driven him this far into the desert. He murmured nonsense, prayers, apologies.

The lioness roared, claws raking stone, sparks flying. She strained, but the first cub was stuck – half emerged, shoulders twisted wrong, slick with blood. The animal buckled, gasping, eyes rolling. Steve gagged on fear but shoved his shaking hands forward. His fingers disappeared into heat and violence. He pulled, cried out, pushed harder, twisted, pleading with forces he didn't believe in.

Visions surged – neon Kings jerseys melting into petroglyphs, his daughter's face framed in lightning, the Slamson mask glaring back at him from the cave wall. He was tearing open the veil between human and spirit.

Then – a sickening slide. A wet plop.

The cub hit the stone floor limp, blue, lifeless.

STEVE (CONT'D)

NO, no, - no.

Steve scooped it up, rubbed its chest, slapped it, screamed in its tiny face. Nothing.

He dropped to his knees, lips pressed over its muzzle, and breathed air into lungs that had never known it.

STEVE (CONT'D)
C'mon, breathe...BREATHE!!

The cave echoed with his sobbing.

Then, like a miracle, a cough. A thin, pitiful squeak that split the storm. The cub shuddered, alive. The lioness convulsed again. A second cub slid free in a gush of blood and fluid, wriggling immediately, claws scratching at the wet stone.

Steve collapsed back, drenched in afterbirth, tears and rain washing down his face. His chest heaved like a furnace. The lioness dragged herself forward and began to lick her cubs, her tongue rasping over their slick fur, her eyes briefly locking on Steve's. Not predator to prey – but mother to mother's helper.

Steve pressed his hand to the cave floor, still trembling. The lioness lowered her head and, astonishingly, licked his palm once, leaving it slick with blood and gratitude. The storm outside howled. The cave pulsed like a living lung. Steve laughed and sobbed at once, unable to tell the difference. He was shaking, broken, but alive in a way he'd never been before.

The storm tapered to a hiss, as if the desert had wrung itself dry. The lioness curled around her newborns, breath slowing, eyes drifting shut. The cubs squeaked and rooted at her belly. Steve just sat there, soaked in blood and rain, chest heaving, the echo of her roar still vibrating in his skull.

When he finally stumbled out of the cave, dawn had cracked the horizon. The desert steamed. Every stone glowed faintly in the wet light, as if the world had been baptized with him. He walked barefoot, mud-caked and half delirious, back toward the camp. His mind was quiet now. No mascots jeering, no monks staring, no fathers disappointed. Just silence, punctuated by the memory of two tiny hearts starting to beat. By the time he reached the fire circle, the elders were waiting. Drums beat slow, solemn. The mascots who had thrashed him earlier stood in reverence now, their broken costumes lit by morning flame. The Phantom stepped forward, eyes wet but proud.

PHANTOM

You went into the storm as Steve,
you returned as something more.

STEVE

Let's do it.

"THE TRIAL OF OFFERING"

INT. DOJO

A SHRILL MASCOT HORN BLASTS.

They charge.

CUT TO – A RAPID, BLOWS-ONLY MONTAGE – HERO SHOT STYLE

– Steve moves. Not frantic. Economical. A predator's economy:
small motion, enormous effect.

– He catches the DOG's baton on his wrist, twists, and sends
the dog flipping into a stack of padded crates.

– The FOX lunges with twin sais – Steve slides under the
blade, rips the fox's mask strap free with a single,
disgusted twist. The fox stumbles, unmasked and humiliated.

– The GORILLA swings a heavy staff. Steve meets it with his
shoulder – bone-on-wood, the sound like a knell – then uses
the staff's momentum to vault the gorilla and slam it face-
first onto the mat.

– The PENGUIN dives from a column; Steve catches him midair,
spins, uses him as a human shield to absorb the CHICKEN's
padded mallet, then flings the penguin into a pile of foam.

– The MOTH lashes with puppet arms; Steve steps close, snaps
the moth's arm with a quick elbow – nonchalant, surgical.

– The BISON charges like a freight train. Steve ducks at the
last second, grabs the bison's leg, and trips him into a
textbook sweeper, hip into knee. The bison collapses in a
dust cloud.

TIME STRETCH – SLOW-MO

Steve's pupils are pinpoints. His breathing is a metronome.
Every move is a cut. Every cut draws a new line across space.
The mascots go from coordinated to chaotic, flailing like
marionettes with severed strings.

END MONTAGE – BACK TO REAL-TIME

The CHICKEN, last standing, raises the padded mallet for a
theatrical BOOP. Steve steps forward – not with menace, but
with a grin that is nothing like a smile. He snatches the
mallet mid-swing and, with absurd grace and knocks the
chicken the fuck out.

Second, the monk. That same blank face, eyes closed, waiting.
Steve walked in, bowed, and sat. He said nothing. Did
nothing. The silence stretched.

Then, with perfect timing, Stevie shifted his weight, let out a long, echoing fart, and sat still again. The monk starts to laugh.

The neon corridor. Spotlight.
STEVE at the mic:

STEVE

I am not saying the Silver fox is gay, but he can tell the flavor of a popsicle by sitting on it.

Everyone is laughing.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Barry the Bison, went on match.com and paired with a bottle of lotion.

Steve goes stronger.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Chief nac a homa. Am I saying that right? You beg the question why is the young boy's ass red.

The mascots howl, pounding tables. Even the FOX bows his head, beaten.

The canyon floor. Drums pound harder, faster. Stevie moves with grace and fury – leaping, spinning, clawing. His body becomes rhythm, the ROAR made flesh. The crowd of mascots and elders CHEER, stomping in unison.

From the firelight, SISTER MEI steps forward. She carries the new SLAMSON OUTFIT – golden fur, obsidian eyes, mane threaded with sacred beadwork. She drapes it across Stevie's arms.

SISTER MEI

This is no costume. It is the spirit the guides you.

Stevie pulls the headdress over his face. The drums ERUPT. The crowd ROARS.

He is SLAMSON.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CAMP SITE- NIGHT

The suits get of their black SUV's and surround the mountains like a swat team.

Steve is saying his goodbyes to all of the other mascots. He gets to Phantom. They embrace.

PHANTOM
It's time to go home.

STEVE
What happens if I can't get them to stay?

PHANTOM
I think you know the answer to that question.

Phantom smiles. A sniper takes aim at Steve. A prarie dog mascot stands up and looks around.

PRARIE DOG
GET DOWN!!!

The sniper takes his shot and misses Steve but hits Phantom. Everyone starts to scramble as tear gas gets shot in and bullets start flying.

Steve jumps on top of Phantom.

PHANTOM
I am alright. Go Stevie! Grab your roller blades and go!!

The horizon erupts – SUV headlights, a wave of corporate enforcers descending like locusts. Behind them: black drones, slicing the air, spotlights sweeping. Mascots from across the desert – The Royal, The Bison, The Panda, The Guinea Pig – form a ragged line beside Slamson, makeshift weapons raised.

ROCHESTER ROYAL
(long exhale)
As they say after the show is the after party.

PITTSBURGH GUINEA PIG
(snorts)
Hope they brought snacks. I get violent when I'm hungry.

NEW MEXICO PANDA

(stretches)

Hey Stevie...make it count, man. We
will buy you some time.

Slamson nods. The drums begin – the tribal beat that carried him through the trials. It thunders beneath the wind.

SUIT

Neutralize the symbol.

Tear gas hisses. Gunfire rips through the dust. Drones drop flash bangs that turn the canyon white. Mascots charge – foam and fury colliding with armor and glass.

The Royal impales a drone with his golden scepter. Bison flips an ATV with his bare arms. Panda tackles a suit off a ridge. Guinea Pig goes down laughing, clutching a detonated smoke bomb.

Through the chaos – Slamson runs. Sasquatch has an AK-47 and starts shooting at Slamson from a distance.

Bullets kick up sand at his heels as he sprints for the cliff edge. He hits a slope of shale, slides down, skidding on his knees, sparks bursting from his rollerblade wheels.

He rockets forward, weaving through falling debris as the cliff collapses behind him. A drone swoops low – he leaps, grabs it, spins midair, uses it as a shield as the Suits fire. It explodes, flinging him over the canyon edge. For a heartbeat – silence.

Then – he lands, knees bent, blades smoking. He takes off again, carving across the steep face of the cliff like a downhill saint, dodging rocks and gunfire.

Above, ATVs and dirt bikes roar after him, engines screaming down the switchbacks.

SUIT (CONT'D)

He's on the north slope! Cut him
off at the dry riverbed!

Slamson skates harder, faster, tears streaking his dust-caked face. The desert stretches endless before him – empty, but alive. He glances up at the moon.

He hits the last drop – a vertical fall into darkness – and leaps. His body twists through the air, spinning like a comet, before his blades spark against asphalt.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

A lone semi-truck barrels down the road – its taillights two dying suns.

Slamson lands behind it, skating hard, reaching—
—his claws clamp onto the rear ladder.

He's dragged behind, his mane whipping in the wind, dust trailing like smoke from a pyre.

The truck hauls him toward the lights on the horizon.
Sacramento.

Behind him, Suits on dirt bikes launch from the cliff, guns blazing, chasing down the highway.

He dodges bullets, swings onto the side of the truck, crawls to the roof, crouched low against the wind. The lion mask gleams like a war god under the stars.

A drone swoops in front of him – camera lenses glaring like eyes.

Slamson stares right into it.

STEVE

Daddy's back.

He rips the camera from the drone and hurls it into the chasing convoy.

It detonates. Fire consumes the lead bikes.
The rest fall back, swallowed by the desert dust.

Slamson rides the truck onward – the wind howling through his mane, the city lights flickering in the far distance.
The drums fade into a heartbeat.

INT. WAR ROOM - NIGHT

The McGoofs and Pallmer sit around a desk watching footage of the attack going down on a tv.

GAVIN

He's alive!

EXT. TOWN HALL -NIGHT

As people start to file in there is a very somber mood throughout the crowd. Everybody starts to file in. There are still people protesting the arena outside.

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

After everyone has sat down. The speaker gets up to speak.

SPEAKER

Well I would like to thank everyone for coming. Today will be the last meeting we have before the NBA makes its final decision on the relocation of our Sacramento Kings. We would like to thank the relocation committee for coming to Sacramento and spending time with us.

Clay looks like he has had a rough few nights.

SPEAKER (CONT'D)

The mayor couldn't be here today so he has asked someone else to speak to the committee. Then we will have our final vote on the stadium proposal.

Helen gets up to speak.

HELEN

(chokes up a bit)

Hello everyone, my name is Helen Slamson. It would be more appropriate if my husband were here that he would speak to you.

She sighs.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I am not sure why the mayor chose me because I am not even from here. I am from San Diego.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I came to Sacramento to visit a friend 20 years ago and I never left. I always thought I would live next to the beach but God had something else planned for me. If you think Sacramento is a cow town now you should have seen it back then.

Some people in the audience chuckle.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I came to visit a friend, she had just graduated Sac state so we went to celebrate at the 'The graduate', little did I know my life would never be the same...

INT. BAR (FLASHBACK)

A young Helen is standing at the bar with her friends and a couple guys. Very 80's vibe. Clothes, hair, everything. It is a halloween costume party.

GUY

So yeah this is a real rolex. I am thinking about buying this place in Malibu but not sure if it's modern enough for me....

Helen rolls her eyes. Her eyes move over to the entrance of the bar. The Heart cover band in the bar starts to play "All I wanna do".

Slamson enters the bar in a leather jacket, a Barry Bonds/George Michael cross earring, a mullet, blue jeans and one of the most magnificent mustaches this world has ever seen. It is raining outside.

GUY (CONT'D)

Sacramento just sucks. I can't believe they got a NBA team. My company has season tickets if you ever want to go. There really isn't anything else to do. I got a good blow connect-

Slamson makes his way through the bar. He starts dancing with a girl and then suddenly stops. He walks by a table and they hand him a shot, he takes it. He struts and shimmies through the bar, until he catches Helen's eyes. Once he does, he doesn't break eye contact as he walks towards her.

GUY (CONT'D)

God I hate this fucking town, my boss told me to get up here and start them up and then I could get out...

Guy pulls out some cocaine and does a bump. As soon as he does Slamson grabs Helen by her hand and brings her out on the dance floor.

They dance together in a beautiful spectacle that rivals the scene from dirty dancing. Everyone in the bar is watching the magic.

GUY (CONT'D)

What the fuck?!?

Helen and Slamson are lost in a moment together.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM

Slamson and Helen make love in a Top Gun esque scene. Very graphic, very sexual.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN HALL

The crowd looks stunned.

HELEN

I fell in love with a man in a lion mask. We have two wonderful kids, with a third on the way. It makes me sad to think that they will miss out on this painfully wonderful experience of being a Kings fan. I've always thought sports are a metaphor for life because they take everything we feel in private—hope, failure, discipline, unfairness, and joy—and make it visible in public. They teach us that effort matters more than control, that we need other people to win, and that even when the result isn't fair, how we show up still counts. And in the end, they remind us that meaning doesn't come from guarantees or scoreboards, but from commitment—showing up, together, again and again. I love Sacramento but not as much as my husband. Sometimes I think he loves the Kings more than he loves me...

Helen starts to tear up.

HELEN (CONT'D)

He is a great father and a skillful lover. He is always more concerned with the well being of others than he is himself. That is one of the reasons I fell for him. He just wants to make everyone else happy, he forgets about himself.

She starts to cry.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Maybe its the hormones of being pregnant but it makes me terribly sad to think of this city without the Kings or the Kings without this city .

She looks around.

HELEN (CONT'D)

But he is doing something that is bigger than our family. This is about greed, corruption and everything wrong in our world today. This is a fight for the future of our city. A fight between good and evil.

The crowd groans in supports.

HELEN (CONT'D)

No one will love this team more than Sacramento does. I know for better or worse isn't popular anymore but thats what love is. And I believe that true love conquers all. Thank you for your time, in Slamson we trust.

CROWD

In Slamson we trust.

Applause crashes and then slowly fades. Not the polite kind. The earned kind.

Helen stands at the podium, hands gripping the sides, holding herself together. She takes a breath. She did it. From the back of the crowd— movement.

People turning. Whispers. A ripple that doesn't feel planned. Helen looks up. Through the bodies, pushing past shoulders— STEVE.

No costume. No mask. Hair a mess. Jacket half-zipped. Eyes red. Chest heaving. Like a man who ran the last mile of his life.

Helen drops the microphone. She wraps her arms around him so tight it hurts. Steve buries his face into her shoulder, shaking. Like if he lets go, he's gone again. The crowd explodes—but it's distant now. Muffled. Helen pulls back just enough to see his face.

HELEN
(crying, half laughing)
I thought you were dead.

Steve grins.

STEVE
So did it I but it turns out I am
not.

That's all he gets out before— RUTHIE slams into his side. REGGIE grabs onto his back like he's afraid Steve will disappear again. Steve buckles under the weight of them. He drops to a knee, arms around all three.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Daddy's home kids.

The noise of the crowd swells around them, chanting, cheering—but they don't hear it. The family stays there, locked together. In the middle of everything. Home.

SPEAKER
Order! Order!

Town hall starts to chant.

THE PEOPLE
"SACRA-MENTO!!!"

The relocation committee looks at each other. The suits in the corner.

SUIT #1
Either Slamson's wife is cheating
on him with this dipshit or that is
him.

SUIT #2
Jesus. You really think thats what
he looks like?

SUIT #1

I don't know but call it in.

Suit calls it in.

The relocation committee votes 7-1 in favor of the stadium proposal.

EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

The doors swing open. People spill out into the cool night air—clapping as they go, buzzing, emotional. A civic exhale. History just happened in that room.

Steve steps out with Helen and the kids tight around him. Ruthie holds his hand. Reggie stays pressed to his side. Helen never lets go of his arm. Applause breaks out again when people recognize them. Not wild. Respectful. Protective. Then— SIGN MAN bursts through the crowd, breathless, urgent.

SIGN MAN

Yo, we got to hell the out of here.

STEVE

Dammit man I thought you were going to stop doing drugs.

SIGN MAN

When did I say that? and let me be specific we got to get you out of here!! I heard it on the police scanner, you got a warrant out of assault.

Steve clocks the shift immediately. Down the steps—Black suits. Uniformed police. Moving fast. Coordinated. The temperature drops. People see it too. The crowd instinctively stalls. No one clears a path. No one steps aside. Steve pulls his family in closer.

HELEN

We are going with you.

The suits push forward. They don't get far. The crowd doesn't boo. Doesn't yell. They simply don't move. A wall of bodies. Neighbors. Fans. Families. Old couples. Kids on shoulders. Sign Man gestures sharply.

SIGN MAN

This way!

He leads Steve and his family sideways—through a narrow human corridor that opens just long enough, then seals shut behind them.

EXT. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

They arrive at the edge of it. Dark. Low. Hidden beneath the city's spine. Firelight flickers against tarps and torn tents. Shadows move where people don't quite sleep. A man argues with no one. Another rocks back and forth, murmuring. The smell—smoke, river water, sweat, something chemical. A lady is yelling "kitty, kitty, kitty" in the distance.

Ruthie tightens her grip on Steve's hand. Reggie instinctively steps closer to Helen. Steve notices everything. Sign Man slows them.

SIGN MAN

Just stay close. We figured you
would be safe here.

A woman stumbles past, eyes blown wide, talking fast to herself. She doesn't look at them—walks straight into the dark.

Then— Someone steps forward from the shadows.

HOMELESS PETE

Ugh— who da fuck are you?

Sign man slaps him in the face.

HOMELESS PETE (CONT'D)

Everything is ready my liege.

SIGN MAN

Thanks Pete.

The tension eases—not gone, but managed. People watch. Some curious. Some too far gone to care. A few nod, respectful. Sign Man leads them deeper. They pass through the rough part—Broken tents. A shopping cart graveyard. Someone coughing violently inside a tarp. Then the ground changes. Cleaner. Intentional.

Three single, well-kept tent sits near the riverbank. Canvas. Zipped. A battery lantern glowing warm inside. Like a family camping site dropped into the middle of chaos.

EXT. HOMELESS CAMPSITE - NIGHT

A small fire crackles. Hot dogs hiss over a bent grate. Someone hands Steve a beer—no label, already cold. Another beer finds its way into Helen's hand.

Ruthie and Reggie sit on overturned milk crates, wrapped in blankets. Paper cups of hot chocolate steam in their hands. For a moment— It feels almost normal. Steve takes a bite of the hot dog. Smiles despite himself.

STEVE

This is fun.

Helen clinks her beer gently against his.

HELEN

Your idea of fun is always interesting...Did Ruthie tell you she made the boys 6th grade team?

STEVE

No she did not.

RUTHIE

Yeah its not a big deal.

STEVE

I think it is.

RUTHIE

Our boys team kind of sucks so its not that impressive.

HELEN

She hit 7 three pointers in her last game.

STEVE

Is that true?

RUTHIE

Straight cash homie.

HELEN

And Reggie is doing great as the stage director for his schools play 'Oklahoma'.

REGGIE

I know its kinda gay.

STEVE

No its not at all. Theater is only
as gay as your make it son.

HOMELESS PETE

I love Oklahoma.

REGGIE

I run the lights. Sound cues. Scene
changes. Everything.

HELEN

The boss.

She smiles at him. Steve raises his beer.

STEVE

I can't wait to come watch a game
and see 'Oklahoma'. I missed you
guys.

Helen checks her watch. She doesn't say anything at
first—just takes in the fire, the kids wrapped in blankets,
Steve sitting there like he's afraid to blink.

HELEN

Alright bed all of you.

Sign man checks his pocket watch.

SIGN MAN

Jerry christ, I didn't realize it
was so late.

Ruthie stands, stretching. Reggie drains the last of his hot
chocolate. Ruthie hugs her dad tight.

RUTHIE

Love you dad.

REGGIE

I have been working on this video
for the game tomorrow. I want you
to watch it and see what you think.

STEVE

Of course big guy.

Reggie gives him a hug.

HELEN

What about you?

STEVE

I need to run my routine a couple times. It could be my last one.

Helen nods and gives him a kiss.

HELEN

Alright well tell these people I sleep with a knife on me.

STEVE

They can tell how Italian you are honey.

She zips the tent closed behind them.

Steve stands alone by the fire. The embers crackle. SIGN MAN steps out of the dark beside him. He whistles—sharp and practiced. Figures emerge from the shadows. Men and women. Some steady. Some shaking. A few wired. A few worn down to bone. They gather in a loose circle. Watching.

SIGN MAN

This is the best I could do.

Steve scans their faces. Sign Man reaches into his coat and hands Steve a burner phone.

STEVE

Thanks man. I need to call in a few favors tomorrow if we want to put a on a show.

Sign Man steps back, gesturing to the circle.

SIGN MAN

When you're ready!

The crowd leans in. The river moves behind them. Steve begins to practice.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT - DAWN

Morning in Sacramento has a way of pretending it isn't important. It comes in sideways, through cottonwood leaves and the backs of old buildings, slipping along the river like it's got somewhere better to be.

Steve stepped out of the encampment just as the sky began that pale business of turning itself into daylight, and for a moment the city looked honest.

Helen stood behind him, arms crossed, already awake like she always was when something mattered.

HELEN

You need to go.

He nodded.

STEVE

I'll see you at the game.

She smiled—not the worried kind, not the brave kind. Just the kind you give when you already know how the story goes. Ruthie hugged him with the enthusiasm of someone who expected victory. Reggie handed him a flash drive, small and unremarkable, which is how important things often arrive.

REGGIE

The video I made.

STEVE

What's on it?

REGGIE

Everything.

Steve hugged his family and set off.

EXT. SACRAMENTO - MORNING

The river was doing what it always did—moving along without any concern for deadlines or ownership groups or the opinions of men in suits. Steve followed it, boots tapping against the path, nodding at a jogger who looked too cheerful for that hour.

Old Sacramento sat quiet and wooden, as if it had decided to rest on its reputation for the morning. The riverboats were still asleep, tied up like tired animals, their names painted in hopeful letters. Steve liked that. A city that remembered it used to be something else.

He passed a man sweeping a sidewalk that would be dirty again in ten minutes. Passed a woman unlocking a coffee shop, already resigned to the fact that no one would say thank you. This, Steve thought, is what holds a place together.

As he cut inland, the city shifted its tone— murals stretching across brick walls, political posters peeling in protest, palm trees standing around like they'd wandered in by mistake. Steve read half a headline in a newspaper box and decided that was enough news for one day.

Somewhere a radio debated the fate of the Kings with all the confidence of men who would not be asked to do anything about it. Steve smiled. He knew better.

He crested the hill just as the sun finally broke through. There it was. Arco Arena. Old. Squat. Unapologetic. Concrete and memory and noise waiting to happen. Fog clung to it like breath on cold glass. Like the building itself was alive and nervous.

Steve stopped.

This wasn't just where games were played. This was where fathers took sons. Where daughters learned what it meant to believe in something that couldn't always love you back. Where joy was loud and heartbreak had a scoreboard. He exhaled.

The parking lot was already stirring—security, staff, early believers pacing with coffee in their hands. The day felt charged, like static before a storm. He didn't sneak. He didn't hide. He walked straight toward the doors. Someone recognized him. Not as a mascot. Not as a hero. As a complication. A radio crackled. "That's him."

INT. ARCO ARENA

Steve makes his way into the employee entrance. He notices Cletus and Beverly are not there. He pauses for a second. Then he is swarmed by suits. They knock him out.

INT. ARCO ARENA SECRET UNDERGROUND ROOM

A dim, flickering bulb sputters to life in a concrete corridor. The walls are sweating. Steam hisses through old pipes. The floor trembles with the ghost of cowbells. STEVIE is dragged through by two SUITS, his wrists bound with zip-ties. His Slamson mask dangles from one of their hands like a trophy.

They shove him into a narrow room beneath the court – the old maintenance tunnels. Dusty signage reads:
“ARCO SERVICE – 1988.”

A single steel chair sits under a dripping pipe. He’s forced down onto it.

SUIT

You just couldn’t stay away.

STEVE

You act like I had a choice.

The door creaks.

Enter MR. PALLMER – Seattle-smooth, in a dark navy suit, hair slicked back with enough product to survive a tsunami. He carries a paper cup from a third-wave coffee shop no one’s heard of yet.

He sits across from Stevie, sets down the cup.

CHRIS

Sweet Jesus, you are quite the thorn in my cock.

Stevie doesn’t say anything.

CHRIS (CONT’D)

This all could have been avoided if you would have just left it alone.

STEVE

That wasn’t an option.

Chris smiles.

CHRIS

I see that. I admire you Stevie, I do. I lost the Sonics and this is my way to bring them back. You can understand that can’t you?

Stevie can.

CHRIS (CONT’D)

This was my way of bringing back joy to Seattle. Would you not do anything it takes to make that happen?! Would you not use all of your resources to make it a reality!?

STEVE

I would. But not this team, not like this.

CHRIS

I am sorry you feel that way. This was never personal.

STEVE

You made it personal.

Sasquatch enters the room.

CHRIS

I believe you two know each other.

His old Seattle SuperSonics fur suit has been reforged into armor: green-gold leather plating, mascot pads studded with iron rivets.

He cracks his neck, then slips on a pair of brass knuckles engraved with tiny emerald lightning bolts.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Every myth needs a martyr. And every martyr needs a monster.

He nods.

The Suits jerk Stevie upright.

Sasquatch circles him – slow, deliberate.

SASQUATCH

I've been waiting for this night.

STEVIE

You must have a really sad life.

A flash of fury – CRACK!

The first punch caves into Stevie's ribs. The sound echoes through the pipes.

Another hit. Jaw. Stomach. Temple.

The Suits hold him steady, forcing him to stay standing as the blows keep landing. Each impact punctuated by the wet crunch of brass and bone.

CHRIS

Enough to bruise the ribs. Leave the face. I want Sacramento to recognize its savior when we hang him on the news feed.

Sasquatch grabs Stevie's chin, forcing eye contact.

SASQUATCH

Good luck bitch.

He drives a final shot into Stevie's gut – deep, brutal – then lets him fall. Stevie collapses to his knees, gasping. Blood spatters on the old Arco concrete.

CHRIS

Oh shit, I felt that. Alright well its time for me to get into those shitty box suites and watch the Lakers gut you one last time. Kobe is the best, invincible really.

He turns to leave. Sasquatch lingers, towering over the broken man.

SASQUATCH

You hear that? That's your city dying above us. All that noise, all that faith – turning to static.

He tosses the blood-stained brass knuckles onto the floor beside Stevie.

SASQUATCH (CONT'D)

If you make it out of here, I'll be waiting on the hardwood.

Steve lies on the floor and blacks out.

A silence settled. Then footsteps—familiar, unhurried, almost grandfatherly—entered the room.

Jerry Reynolds, veteran commentator, long-suffering witness to all the franchise's tragedies, arrived with a canvas bag slung over his shoulder and a look of resigned affection upon his weathered face.

JERRY

(muttered)
Lord love a duck.

Jerry crouched to Steve's side.

Jerry (CONT'D)

You look like you've been wrestling a wood chuck in November.

With the ease of a man who had fixed every kind of problem from microphone malfunctions to broken hearts, Jerry snapped the zip ties with a Leatherman tool and rummaged through his bag. From it he drew a relic that shimmered with the awkward grandeur of memory: Slamson's spare suit. Threadbare. Golden. Revered.

And, wrapped in a small cloth pouch, a gnarled Navajo root.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I was told to give this to you.
Phantom said it would ease the
pain...though he did mention you
may see visions, ghosts, or the
first time you knocked on wood.

Steve managed the faintest breath of a laugh. Jerry pressed the root to his lips.

The walls bent.
The shadows breathed.
The air began whispering rumors of destiny.
Then Jerry helped him up, brushed dust from his shoulders,
and turned him toward the tunnel.

JERRY (CONT'D)

This might be our last rodeo.

Steve looks at Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)

So let's dance like a couple of
weasels in the pale moon light.

INT. ARCO ARENA - DJ BOOTH

Above them, a stagehand handed the DJ a CD—scrawled with “Final bow”. A destiny disguised as outdated technology.

INT. ARCO ARENA - TUNNEL

The walls were moving.

Not metaphorically—the walls were actually breathing, the concrete rippling like the ribs of some buried titan waking beneath Arco Arena. Steve—now Slamson in all but fur—walked the long service tunnel with his hand out, palms brushing the vibrating surface. Every step made the floor hum. Every heartbeat thumped through the stone.

Jerry Reynolds' medicine—the Navajo root—was still dissolving in his chest like a miniature sunrise. It made the pain soft around the edges, like someone had melted the world and poured it back together wrong but kinder.

And then— the drum. A heartbeat of a nation, a tribe, a city. Low. Ancient. Calling.

Slamson stepped from darkness into the first crack of purple light as the tunnel yawned open. The crowd didn't roar—they inhaled. Forty years of heartbreak gathered in one shared breath.

And the walls... the walls of the tunnel continued to shift, as if the mountain monastery itself had followed him here; the old murals, the cave art, the ancient stories he danced upon in the canyon floor—they bled onto the hardwood, ghost images flickering like memories carved in smoke.

He could see them: The Nemean Lion, Narasimha, The First Mascot of Legend, leaping through flame, The Phantom watching in the shadows.

Then the tribal flute entered—thin, mournful, cutting straight through bone. Slamson staggered, overwhelmed. The weight of the mask. The weight of the moment. The weight of a city kneeling on his spine. He stepped out—and began to dance.

The arena went silent, the kind of hush where even hope forgets to breathe. His motions were slow, deliberate, every gesture carved with the precision of Phantom's canyon lessons.

A plié.

A rise.

A turn that felt like a prayer.

This was not comedy.

Not entertainment.

This was ritual.

A lion shedding the skin of a man.

The Royal Court Dancers appeared behind him in a V formation, their hands moving like flames, their feet gliding like ink poured over stone. They mirrored his movements—not to imitate, but to testify. To witness. To honor.

The spotlight tightened.

The drum line softened to a heartbeat.

And then—

Slamson collapsed to the hardwood, chest heaving, arms outstretched like Christ meeting the earth.

The crowd didn't cheer.

They didn't clap.

They felt.

Even the rafters seemed to hold their breath.

For one impossible second, Slamson lay motionless, the lion defeated, the man crushed, the myth unfinished.

Then—

a beat.

A slick Bay Area hi-hat.

A bassline that punched like caffeine.

Mistah F.A.B.'s "Still Feelin' It."

The crowd exploded.

The spotlight burst into purple strobes.

And Slamson—

still on the ground—rose on one knee first, head bobbing, shoulders loose, eyes half-lidded like a man who just remembered who he was.

He stood up slow. The Jabawookez come out from behind the prop mountains and perform with him.

Arco is alive again.

Sacramento felt young, rowdy, joyful — like the whole building had been waiting ten years to exhale.

And right when the energy peaked—

Slamson takes center stage — poses — a god reborn.

Sudden darkness.

TWAAAANG. "It smells like teen spirit" by Nirvana plays.

A sour guitar note echoes. Another. Another. Lights flicker on.

The first step Slamson took toward Sasquatch felt like a stone dropped into a lake—one tiny movement, and the entire arena rippled. The suits kept thrashing their guitars. They expected Slamson to freeze. Or retreat. Or slip back into routine mascot comedy. Instead, he advanced.

Slow.

Quiet.

Inevitable.

For a moment, the entire arena balanced on the thin edge between grunge and catastrophe.

Then—

Sasquatch STOMPED the bass pedal, jolting Slamson backward a few inches. He launched into a violent drum roll, a tantrum of noise and spite. The suits leaned into their guitars, surrounding the lion with sonic aggression. And yet Slamson stayed focused.

He raised his head.

Tilted it.

Smiled — as much as a lion mask can smile.

And then he moved. Snapped his fingers and "Rock and Roll pt 2" starts to play.

The West Side Story energy took hold instantly — the dancers slipping back onto the court like phantom gangs, their fingers snapping in sharp syncopation, their bodies forming two opposing lines: the Lion's Pride and the Emerald Suits. All eyes cut to the center.

Slamson.

And Sasquatch.

Two titans.

Two gods in fur and foam.
Two symbols of cities battling for the same soul.

They circle each other as the stage is set. A basketball is placed in the middle as each of their respective teams gives them prop weapons. Similar to the battle between Hector and Achilles. Then two trampolines are placed at the three point line and a hula hoop is lit on fire.

SUIT

Fight!!

Slamson dropped into a low stance – a mix of ballet and brawl, elegance sharpened into something dangerous. Slamson spun through the air, catching the shield with a kick so precise it sent Sasquatch spinning like a toppled statue. Sasquatch barreled forward, swinging an axe in a vicious arc. Slamson ducked under it, hands sweeping the court like a breakdancer, legs scissoring Sasquatch's ankles just enough to stagger him.

They reset.

Circling.

The music still blaring.

Lights still flickering like lightning.

Sasquatch lunges towards him. Slamson hip-tossed him into another suit, sending both crashing into the spilled drum kit. The crash cymbal rang out like a distant church bell announcing holy war.

Sasquatch roared – a guttural, primal sound – and picked up another axe.

He swung it at Slamson's head.

Slamson ducked.

Barely.

The axe splintered across a stanchion with a "CRACK," wooden shards raining down like confetti.

The crowd chanted–

CROWD

SLAM-SON!

SLAM-SON!

SLAM-SON!

Slamson shook his head, regained his footing, and–

That was when Sasquatch cheated.

He signaled to one of the suits.

The suit spilled water behind Slamson.

Sasquatch charges and forces Slamson to take a step back. He slips and falls down to a knee. Sasquatch knees him in the head and then slams the axe down on Slamson's shield. He keeps hammering down with his untethered rage. Fans are scared.

Slamson rolls out of danger and then gets kicked in the rib. Sasquatch looks at him and then tosses his weapons at him. Goes and grabs the basketball.

But this wasn't a game.
 There were no refs.
 Only destiny.
 The monster spun the ball on his finger, taunting.
 Then pointed to the rim.
 He was going to end this with humiliation.
 Slamson forced himself up, shoulders trembling, vision
 blurring.
 Sasquatch sprinted.
 The suits cleared a path.
 He leapt – a massive two-footed takeoff, soaring toward the
 rim. Through the ring of fire.
 Slamson summoned everything he had left –
 every trial, every dance, every moment of heartbreak, every
 memory of his family, every ounce of Sacramento's soul– And
 he LAUNCHED.

The rim bent toward him like it already knew its fate.
 The ball rose above the cylinder, victory already rehearsed.
 And then–
 From behind–
 SLAMSON LAUNCHED.
 A blur of purple and gold, exploding off the hidden
 trampoline with impossible violence. Not graceful. Not
 elegant.
 ANGRY.
 The crowd inhaled as one.
 Sasquatch felt it before he saw it – a shadow swallowing him
 whole.
 At the peak of the jump, Slamson came down on him, paw
 smashing the ball against the backboard with a force that
 felt illegal in several states.

CLETUS

My nigga.

CRACK.
 Slamson's momentum didn't stop at the ball.
 He DROVE SASQUATCH INTO THE BACKBOARD.
 Foam and fur and bone collided with plexiglass in a
 deafening, gut-level THUD. The entire stanchion shook. The
 shot clock flickered. A ripple ran through the glass like a
 scream trapped inside it.
 The arena detonated.
 People screamed.
 People leapt.
 People fell backward into strangers' arms.

Sasquatch bounced off the backboard and crashed to the floor,
 his body folding unnaturally, mask twisted sideways. He slid
 across the paint and didn't move.

Slamson landed hard, skidding on one knee, paw pressed to the floor, chest heaving. He looked up at the rim, then down at the fallen monster.

He didn't celebrate.

He nodded.

From the tunnel, two BEAVER MASCOTS emerged, stone-faced, pushing a gurney like trained orderlies in a fever dream. One checked Sasquatch's pulse. The other lifted his arm - it fell limp.

They exchanged a solemn nod.

The crowd applauded slowly as the beavers hoisted Sasquatch onto the gurney and wheeled him away, his mask dangling off the side like a defeated crown.

As he disappeared into the tunnel, the crowd rose again - louder than before.

Not laughter.

Reverence.

Slamson stood alone beneath the rim now, backboard still vibrating faintly, the ghost of the impact humming through the glass.

CROWD

Slamson! SLAMSON! SLAMSON!!!

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentleman, welcome to Arco Arena....

INT. ARCO ARENA - CONTINUOUS

The Kings play the Lakers. Fitting for their final game. After a heart breaking loss which shows Kobe ripping the Kings hearts out again. He gives a nice interview after the game about playing against Sacramento all these years.

After the game is over the fans aren't leaving. Jerry and Grant give their final sign off.

GRANT

There is a lot of uncertainty that surrounds this team and its future. All we can say is that its been our pleasure, thank you Jerry.

JERRY

Thank you Grant...

They both start to tear up.

GRANT

We have a video tribute that we are going to play as we sign off, made by a young fan.

(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)

But I just want to say thank you to
all the fans. What a ride its been.

SHOW VIDEO OF KINGS FINAL SEND OFF THAT Reggie made.
(<https://youtu.be/rPqaSMjalpM?si=nFUPVnWkZGiJV5Jn>) *Watch it
now*

Slamson is roller skating around the arena as the fans chant
"SAC-RA-MENTO!!". People are crying. Very sad, emotional
scene.

INT. ARCO ARENA - CONTINUOUS

We show Slamson roller blade back into the back tunnel to
meet his family. He takes off his mascot head and looks at
his son.

STEVE

Reggie that was beautiful. I am so
proud of you.

The whole family embraces in a big hug.

EXT. NEW YORK HOTEL - NEXT DAY

REPORTER

The day of reckoning has arrived.
As the board of governors will meet
to determine the fate of the
Sacramento Kings.

A crowd of Kings fans has made the trip out to New York for
the meetings and they are chanting.

The McGoofs get out of the limo. The crowd gets angry and
starts throwing things at them.

Chris Pallmer gets out of his limo. Egging the crowd on.

The commissioner gets out of his limo and with one hand calms
the crowd. Then slowly raises his hands to let the fans get
louder.

The mayor gets out of the limo...Down the street comes an
ELEPHANT, gold-draped and absurdly majestic. Behind them came
dancers spinning fire, sword swallows, acrobats leaping
from rooftop to rooftop. Musicians pounded giant drums while
trumpets screamed through the canyon of sandstone buildings.
There Fans LOSE THEIR MINDS. Standing tall atop it- VIVEK
(57). Radiant. Calm. Smiling like destiny finally showed up.
He was wearing ivory robes threaded with gold so bright they
caught the sunlight like armor.

Jewels covered his chest and wrists. A purple cape dragged behind him like royalty itself was following in his shadow.

FAN

There he is!!!

Vivek dismounts slowly. Takes it all in. He bows slightly to the fans—royal, grateful, unshaken. He shakes hands. Waves. Walks toward the hotel doors like Prince Ali himself. As he enters, the chants echo after him.

INT. BASKETBALL GYM - DAY

Steve sat on the worn wooden bleachers, the glow of his phone screen lighting up his thigh each time it buzzed. Texts, news alerts, missed calls—they were all about the vote. The vote. The one that could decide whether the Sacramento Kings stayed or vanished to Seattle forever. But here, in this little middle school gym that smelled like popcorn and floor wax, he didn't look. He couldn't. His eyes were on his daughter number 7 —threading her way through a pack of boys, fearless and fluid.

She crossed half-court, ball on a string, and stepped back into a three that had no business being that smooth. In that moment, she was Mike Bibby at Arco—beautiful, audacious, rewriting expectations with every shot. And as his phone buzzed again, more urgent this time, he didn't break his gaze. The world could wait. The vote could wait. Because right now, for the length of this game, he wasn't a symbol or a martyr or a mascot. He was a dad watching his daughter shine, and it was the purest thing he'd touched in a long, long time.

INT. EDH THEATER - NIGHT

Steve, Helen, and little Ruthie sat shoulder-to-shoulder in the dim auditorium, their programs folded and refolded into soft creases. Helen kept dabbing her eyes—partly because she was proud, partly because she always cried at live theater no matter the genre. Ruthie swung her legs in the seat, humming along even though she only knew about three lyrics, and Steve... Steve stared at the stage like it was the most important show on earth.

He wasn't thinking about the rolling vote count happening downtown. He wasn't thinking about arenas or owners or relocation. Right now, his world was the kid behind the glass window in the control booth—not on stage, but above it—running the lights, the sound, the whole production.

When the spotlight hit center stage at the exact moment Laurey sang her solo, the effect was magic. And it was Reggie. Their boy.

HELEN
He's really good.

RUTHIE
This is kinda gay.

Both of her parents quiet her.

HELEN
Ruthie Bolton, don't talk like that.

RUTHIE
It means happy!

Then, during a quiet moment before a scene change, Steve looked up—almost instinctively—toward the control room. He saw Reggie's silhouette freeze, illuminated by the faint glow of his phone. The boy's head dropped slightly. His hand covered his mouth. Steve didn't need to hear the words. He knew the look. Something had happened. Something big.

But before the actors could reposition, the control room door slammed open. Reggie practically flew down the narrow stairs, skipping steps, his sneakers squeaking across the polished wood.

He barreled through the side curtain and onto the stage—right into the spotlight he himself had programmed. The cast froze mid-exit; the audience blinked, confused. Teachers stood up in the back. It didn't matter.

REGGIE
THEY SAID NO! THE KINGS ARE
STAYING! SACRAMENTO IS KEEPING THE
TEAM!

Gasps rippled across the crowd, then cheers—real, visceral cheers—overtook the polite applause of minutes earlier. The actors looked around bewildered, some dropping character entirely. Helen covered her mouth and sobbed. Ruthie sprang to her feet, hands in the air like she'd just witnessed a buzzer-beater.

Steve didn't move. He just stared at his son—who was standing in front of hundreds of people, breathless, proud, emotional—declaring salvation. For a moment, the play didn't matter. School didn't matter.

The stage was no longer the dusty plains of Oklahoma! It was Sacramento. And Reggie had just delivered the miracle.

Then, almost sheepishly, Reggie looked at the stunned actors and added under his breath, into the microphone.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Uh, we can continue...

But the crowd didn't sit. They kept cheering. Because for this audience, for this night—nothing on earth was more dramatic than the truth.

Steve sat frozen in his seat as the auditorium buzzed with the aftermath of Reggie's declaration. People were turning to each other, whispering, cheering, pulling out their phones. Helen wiped her eyes and laughed through her tears, and Ruthie hopped excitedly in place.

RUTHIE

(Harry Carey impression)

Kings win, Kings win!

And then—like the world itself wanted to underline the moment—an usher slipped quietly down the aisle toward them. An honest-to-God courier in a navy jacket and cap, holding a slim cardboard box with Steve's name written across the top in bold black marker.

COURIER

Delivery for you sir Slamson.

The weight was strange—light but... purposeful. He peeled back the tape with shaking hands. Helen leaned closer. Ruthie craned her neck. When the flaps fell open, all three gasped. Inside, nestled like sacred relics, were a pair of roller skates. Not just any skates—golden plated skates. The wheels shimmered metallic under the stage lights, like they were forged from championship banners. Steve lifted them from the box, and for a moment, the world around him blurred. He remembered the mountains. The prophecy. The duty. The mask. But tonight... before the suit... before the arena... before the war for a city... These weren't a burden. They were an invitation. A calling. Helen looked at him—truly looked—and understood. "It's time," she whispered. Ruthie reached out with a small hand and touched the golden wheel.

Steve stared at the skates in his lap while the crowd roared around him. The Kings were staying. His children were thriving. And the road back to Arco had just been delivered.

EXT. THEATER

The night air over Sacramento shimmered with possibility—still electric from the vote—as Steve tightened the straps on the golden roller skates and pulled the lion mask over his head. The new Slamson suit gleamed under the streetlights: richer fur, royal purple accents, and a mane streaked with metallic gold. It felt lighter than any he'd worn before, like it carried not burden, but birthright. He stood alone on the sidewalk for a breath. Then the opening synth of "Return of the Mack" thumped through the night—its swaggering beat synced with his first push off. He rolled.

Slow at first, then faster, a gleaming comet of gold and purple cutting through downtown. Pedestrians stopped mid-conversation. A couple leaving a restaurant gaped. A group of teens pointed, shouted, then chased after him on bikes. Slamson pivoted gracefully, spinning once, twice—showing off. The music pulsed louder, as if the city itself was the DJ, welcoming him back. He high-fived strangers. He ducked under a light rail crossing. He skated backwards past a row of bars, patrons flooding out to join him.

Like Austin Powers in London, his procession grew: street musicians, cyclists, office workers still in ties, bachelorette parties in sashes, kids in mini jerseys. Each encounter added another wave of joy, until a parade formed—half dance party, half victory march. Fire escapes filled with cheering fans. Drivers honked in rhythm. Someone tossed purple confetti from a balcony. Slamson pointed forward and pushed harder. The crowd behind him swelled—hundreds now—singing along: Return of the Mack... once again

He rounded the final corner and saw it—the rally.

Thousands of Kings fans packed into the heart of downtown. Signs waved. Drums pounded. Cowbells clanged. Purple smoke drifted upward like incense. It was a sea of belief—of history, heartbreak, and hope—waiting for a symbol to lead them.

And when Slamson rolled into the square, golden wheels flashing, music blaring, the crowd erupted.

Tonight wasn't about a mascot.

It wasn't about a vote.

It was about a city that refused to die.

INT. BAR

Sign man sits at the bar.

SIGN MAN

And that's how the Kings stayed in
Sacramento.

RANDY

Is that all true?

SIGN MAN

Every word.

RANDY

Wow. I had no idea.

Show a newspaper clipping on the wall amongst all the other
Sacramento Kings memorabilia the that shows Slamson
celebrating with people. "THE KING HAS RETURNED".