

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - DAY

The doorbell rings. Tony approaches and opens the door. Outside is Willie, holding flowers. Willie holds the flowers out to Tony.

WILLIE  
I got you flowers.

TONY  
For me?

WILLIE  
Yeah.

Tony laughs.

TONY  
Come on in. You want a beer?

They walk into the dining room.

WILLIE  
Sure.

TONY  
I don't really cook so well, but  
you gotta try this jambalaya.

They sits at the table with bowls.

TONY (CONT'D)  
It's my recipe. Sort of...  
(Beat)  
How do you like it?

It's disgusting.

WILLIE  
It's... Hot.

They laugh, then a beat of silence.

TONY  
We gotta talk about some basics.

WILLIE  
You're getting ready to yell at me,  
right?

TONY

No, come on... Cap going down was really tough on me, I realize you're just learning the system. The pressure's gotta be -

WILLIE

I can handle it.

TONY

I know you can, but if the playbook is too complicated, we can simplify it.

WILLIE

The playbook is too slow. When I'm on the field, I just have to feel it. I gotta let it out -

TONY

- Is that why you've been changing plays?

WILLIE

No, I'm just trying to read the defense.

TONY

I'm not talking about audibles, I'm talking about in the huddle.

(Beat)

Look, when you change plays, you're showing disrespect to a lot of people -

WILLIE

- I don't mean any disrespect -

TONY

- You're disrespecting people who have worked over years in this club, around this league. People sacrifice more than you'll ever know to be in -

WILLIE

I'm trying to win, coach. I ain't trying to disrespect anybody, but winning is the only thing I respect.

TONY

Okay, kid, I want you to listen very carefully, because one day you're going to realize this is the truest thing you've ever heard. This game has got to be about more than winning. You're a part of something here. Lombardi, Tittle, Sammy Baugh, Uinitas, hundreds of great players. Those men on the wall. You're part of that now. And along the way, I want you to cherish it, because when it's gone, it's gone. Forever.

WILLIE

When I look at those pictures and trophies and stuff, it just makes me sad. It's like a room full of ghosts. When I'm done with this game or the game is done with me, I don't wanna be a ghost on the wall, I wanna be more than that.

Beat.

TONY

It looks like Cap is gonna be back in time for the playoffs.

WILLIE

What?!

TONY

I'm gonna start him.

WILLIE

I knew that was the only reason you got me out here. I knew you were going to sell me out.

TONY

Cap's a leader. He's a team player.

WILLIE

Bullshit. He isn't half the athlete I am. You look me in the eye and tell me Cap is a better player.

TONY

Cap's a better player.

WILLIE

I guess that was somebody else out there winning those last two games, huh? I put the points on the board. He lost four in a row, I lead by doing --

TONY

-- Yeah, you kicked ass --

WILLIE

-- Yeah, I did.

TONY

But I'll tell you something, Cap Rooney's been doing it for years.

WILLIE

And his time is over. And yours is too, unless you start taking some risk and start playing the game the way it's played today. It is not about those pictures and trophies on the wall --

TONY

-- I've played this game for three decades, kid. I know football. Now those men on the wall --

WILLIE

-- They wanted to win. Just like you do. You can feed the press and fans that whole sacrifice and glory of the game crap. You do it well. But I've been there. I've seen the line of coaches just like you in college with that same old bullshit half-time speech.

TONY

Bullshit?

WILLIE

Yes, you know why it's bullshit? Because it's about the money. It's about the TV contracts, fat-cat boosters sitting in the sky boxes, the coaches trying to up their salaries, and the whole time, what are you looking for? You're looking for the next black stud to take you to the top ten. Get you in a bowl game.

(MORE)

WILLIE (CONT'D)

It's the same way in the pros.  
Except in the pros, the field hands  
get paid.

TONY

Come on, don't play that race card  
on me, kid. Twenty five years I've  
worked with men of your color.

WILLIE

Maybe it's not racism, maybe it's  
place-ism. A brother has to know  
his place, right boss?

TONY

What are you talking about? You  
don't trust anybody because of what  
happened to you in college? Come  
on, Willie! You knew the rules. You  
were the one who broke them.

WILLIE

Broke them? How'd I break them?

TONY

How'd you break them? You broke  
them, that's how you broke them --

WILLIE

-- I lost a million dollar signing  
bonus because I took a \$300 suit  
from a booster to go to this kid's  
wedding and I didn't even know the  
guy. What is a brother supposed to  
do when he's in college? He doesn't  
have any money. He wants to go out  
on a date, what if he gets some  
nice clothes? Everybody had their  
hands out, but it was me they  
suspended. I dropped six rounds in  
the draft because of that, and then  
coaches labeled me, "oh, he's a  
troublemaker, he's arrogant, he  
doesn't wanna play ball." You talk  
about sacrifice, I sacrificed  
almost ten million dollars because  
dumb rednecks like your coaching  
friend in San Diego made me a  
cornerback because he said I have  
quick feet. He's the one who  
separated my shoulder, had me out  
there tackling 250 pound  
motherfuckers, I don't do that kind  
of shit.

(MORE)

WILLIE (CONT'D)

I was a great football player, but nobody gave me a day or a season to let my shoulder heal, then they just traded me out of there.

TONY

That's right, blame everybody but yourself, Willie.

WILLIE

Whatever.

TONY

You see, because that's what a leader is about. Sacrifice. The times he's gotta sacrifice because he's gotta lead by example. Not by fear and not by self-pity.

WILLIE

Who do you think you're talking to? Half of my football career is over and you want me to go back to the bench to sacrifice for the greater glory of Cap Rooney? Well fuck you, coach. I ain't buying your brand.

(Beat)

Just because you're some scared old man. You feel like if I play my way, I just might win. And then what the fuck was your life about, anyway?

TONY

You're not some flash in the pan corner or receiver, you're a goddamn quarterback! You know what that means? It's the top spot, kid. It's the guy who takes the fall. It's the guy everybody is looking at first, the leader of a team. Who will support you when they understand you. Who will break their ribs and their noses and their necks for you because they believe. Cause you make them believe. That's a quarterback.

WILLIE

Yeah. I'm the leader of your team... Until Cap's back up. Then I'm back on the bench.

(MORE)

## WILLIE (CONT'D)

Shit, you hadn't said two words to me until Cap went down, then it was "go out there and play like you're in the hood and you're throwing the ball and your mama's ringing the dinner bell." All you do is talk at me. So I'm gonna stay who I am. Steamin' Willie Beamen. And with the time I've got left, I'm gonna play my way, get my dollars up. So when you go to waive me, trade me, injure reserve me or whatever the fuck y'all do, I'll be worth ten times what I was worth before I got here.

Willie walks away.

## TONY

Your'e very very young. And you're very... Very... Stupid.