

TORNADO ALLEY

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FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

CAMERA dollies at GROUND level down the hallway of an unknown, FUTURISTIC looking HOSPITAL. It is one of the residential areas of the hospital, as it is rather quiet and dark.

A GROUP of two NURSES pass by the CAMERA talking to each other. A LONE DOCTOR walks into one of the ROOMS and closes the DOOR.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

An OLD MAN lies in a bed with an IV tube in his arm and a breathing apparatus hooked to his nose. His eyes are closed and he is covered exposing nothing but his arms and neck.

An OLDER HISPANIC WOMAN with gray hair sits at his bedside holding his hand. We can tell by her aged features, in her youth, she was striking.

SFX: SLOW ELECTRONIC HEART BEAT and BREATHING

The OLD MAN opens his eyes barely and slowly turns to her.

OLD MAN
(slowly, deliberately)
It's funny. I keep thinking about
when I first met you.

SHE smiles at him, as tears form in her eyes.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Though I don't look it (beat) I
still feel the same way about you
as I did then.

HE smiles at her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

CLOSE on a small glass VASE with a solitary RED ROSE.

DISSOLVE

EXT. MIAMI STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

TITLE OVER: FORTY YEARS AGO

The SKY is on fire with a reddish-orange glow. SUNSET in Miami is spectacular. As the SUN dips, we turn back slowly from the sea through PALM TREES, back to the city and the life that is Miami. We see a couple of noted landmarks on a perfectly clear evening.

A tall, well built MAN exits from a small apartment BUILDING with a cigarette in his mouth. He looks around, almost furtively, taking in the PASSING CARS and the PEOPLE passing on the street. It almost feels as though he is being watched.

The surroundings are all small story apartment BUILDINGS. Drying CLOTHES draped on lines decorate the weathered brick and stucco buildings.

SFX: A few PEOPLE yelling at each other, the LAUGHTER of children and a distant SIREN all blend into the sounds of the city.

CLOSE - MAN

CHRIS HUNTER, an ex-athlete gone a little soft over the years, takes a long deliberate drag on his smoke and with a deft move, born of years of practice; he flicks the CIGARETTE BUTT to the ground.

We watch the butt move through the air and land on the pavement and then the next second a dirty, well worn shoe lands on it, extinguishing it completely. Then the other foot lands and we move through the pulsating sounds of feet pounding the street, till we are distracted by the sounds of kids yelling.

EXT. GROUP OF YOUNG BASEBALL PLAYERS IN STREET - DUSK

We draw closer and see a group of young baseball PLAYERS with a beat up wooden baseball BAT and weathered BALL. They are all barefoot using a cardboard piece as home plate.

ONE of the kids hits the ball and it goes into the shallow infield of the street.

EXT. CU - HUNTER

HUNTER stops suddenly and is caught in a trance as he watches the ball in the air fall into one of the boy's worn gloves.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

A large crowd is gathered in a college baseball stadium. Cheers and yelling are heard in the haze of the lights.

A young MAN with HUNTER across his back and the number 6 is standing on the mound. He is looking intently at the plate.

We flash to the scoreboard and realize this is the pitch to win the game. FULL COUNT with the bases loaded. Hunter is cool and composed. He shakes his head.

REVERSE ANGLE TO CATCHER

Another signal.

HUNTER nods and slowly winds up and throws. It is hit and goes into the shallow infield where the shortstop catches it. The game is over. The CROWD goes wild.

The TEAM comes running in from the field and from the dugout and embraces the pitcher. He is in a state of frenzied excitement. He embraces the CATCHER who throws his mask in the air.

We get a good look at the CATCHER who is a good-looking man with a moustache.

HUNTER somehow extricates himself from the celebration and runs across the infield into the stands and jumps into the BLEACHERS to embrace an older, distinguished MAN of about seventy.

EXT. CLOSE - ON PITCHER AND OLD MAN

HUNTER
(excited)
Strong Arm!

OLD MAN
Wicked Curve!

HUNTER AND OLD MAN
(in unison)
Three strikes you're out!

They continue to enjoy the CELEBRATION as we move farther and farther away.

CUT TO:

EXT. GROUP OF YOUNG BASEBALL PLAYERS IN STREET - DUSK

HUNTER turns his back on the scene and crosses the street.

CUT TO:

INT. SEASIDE BAR - NIGHT

The bar is a nicely decorated sports bar, small, cozy and everything the chain restaurants are not. Hunter is sitting at the end of the bar by himself. There are quite a few patrons in the booths and at the bar.

He's drinking a scotch on the rocks while looking at one of the many televisions. ESPN is tuned in and Sports Center is on with the trademark rapid fire delivery of sporting news.

The bartender, JIM FELDMAN, looks down at him.

JIM
Hunter, you need another?

HUNTER
Nah. I'm good.

Jim attempts to make idle chitchat. It is apparent that Jim is not only the bartender, but a friend of Hunter's.

JIM
(upbeat)
Did you catch the Marlins?
Won their opening game this week.

HUNTER
Yeah. I noticed that.

JIM

Jose Hernandez was playing right field. (beat) Didn't you play with him at Miami?

Hunter keeps staring at the television blankly.

HUNTER

(disinterested)

Yeah. I knew him. Couldn't hit a slider worth a shit.

INT. HUNTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is a small, modest, yet tidy, one bedroom place. On the wall there are several pennants and framed posters of baseball teams, as well as a couple of trophies.

There is one framed picture of the celebratory pile up that we had seen earlier. A baseball bat is in a corner of the room.

A baseball glove and ball nestled in it are sitting on a table and look like they have been constantly used. A framed CHRIS HUNTER baseball card from his pre-draft college days looks hauntingly back at us.

HUNTER walks in through the front door. He throws his keys on the coffee table and walks into the bathroom. His beeper starts buzzing doing a little dance across the table. Chris looks out from the bathroom and runs his fingers through his hair in frustration.

He walks over to his beeper, checks the number and dials the cordless phone nearby.

HUNTER

(slowly)

Jaime. It's me. I'll meet you tomorrow morning at the usual..

He's interrupted and we can sense his frustration.

HUNTER

(impatiently)

We're on a phone line. (beat)
Yeah. I got the shit, just bring the dinero amigo.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm rings. The sun is peaking through the blinds.

Hunter reaches over and taps the alarm. He lies there for a brief second. Suddenly, the phone rings. He tries to turn off the alarm again.

The phone keeps ringing and he jumps up, realizes it's the phone and has to physically get out of bed to pick it up from the nightstand.

HUNTER

(angrily)

Jaime!! I thought you said 9.

O.S.

(politely)

Good morning Mr. Hunter.

My name is Stanley Vanderberg. I represented your grandfather's affairs.

Hunter, dressed in boxers, looks surprised and spins around with the phone now fully awake.

HUNTER

(mellowed)

I'm...I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else.

INT. VANDERBERG'S OFFICE - MORNING

STANLEY VANDERBERG is sitting at a large maple desk in a typical legal office with the ubiquitous library of legal books in the background.

VANDERBURG

Not a problem Mr. Hunter. (beat)

I regret to inform you that your grandfather recently passed away.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - MORNING

Hunter sits back down on the bed. His head falls downward as he keeps the phone to his ear and strokes his hair with his left hand.

VANDEBURG O.S.

(CONT'D)

He was a good man. I'm sorry.

HUNTER

(softly)

When did he... pass away?

VANDEBURG O.S.

Yesterday. It was old age you know.

(beat) He went peacefully in his sleep. (beat) I will have my secretary send you all of the details on the burial and service as soon as I'm aware of them.

HUNTER

(grabbing his baseball and glove)

Is there anything I can do?

INT. VANDERBERG'S OFFICE - MORNING

VANDEBURG

Thank you for asking. I believe I have everything in line. (beat) There is one thing. (beat) Your grandfather had majority ownership of a Single A minor league baseball team in Wichita. (beat) You are the sole heir of the Wichita Tornados.

INT. HUNTER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Hunter is just sitting there in shock with his baseball glove on one hand. Absentmindedly he begins to toss the baseball into his glove.

He begins to do it harder and harder and the sound is loud in the quiet room.

The bed near him stirs and we see a woman's leg and naked body partially covered by the sheets.

WOMAN

Chris, not so loud..

INT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

A loud speaker blares 'Now arriving from Dallas, Flight 1199. Meet your party at gate 18.'

INT. GATE 18

Hunter walks through the door. He is wearing blue jeans and a Hawaiian shirt. He has on a U of Miami baseball cap. His sunglasses are on. He is holding two leather duffel bags. He pauses for a brief second but there is no one to greet him.

Amidst the bustle of people greeting their loved ones, he makes his way through the crowd to the cab stand.

He jumps into the next available cab.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The cab pulls up to the apartment building. Hunter exits, pays the cab driver and grabs his bags.

INT. SEASIDE BAR - NIGHT

The crowd in the bar is non-existent. Hunter is sitting at the same spot. He has had one too many drinks. Jim walks over in front of Hunter on the opposite side of the bar.

JIM

(casually)

What's the deal buddy? You wanna talk?

HUNTER

(slightly slurring)

My grandpa just passed away.

JIM

(concerned)

I'm sorry bud.

HUNTER

He was the best. (beat) He was the only one that believed in me.

(beat) Really believed.

JIM

Yeah, I know. I remember the stories. Taught you everything you know, right.

HUNTER

(agitated)

Right. Never missed one of my games. And I ... I missed his final inning. (beat)

HUNTER (CONT.)

(wiping tears away)

After I pitched my first game he took me out for ice cream. Kinda became a tradition for us, you know. I remember this one time; we were in some small two-bit town. I'd pitched the first damn no-hitter in six seasons. (beat) We go looking for an ice cream place after the game. Musta driven every inch of that town before we found one...(beat) Shit Jim. (beat) I'm sorry man ... I'm blabbing away like a sorry ass drunk... .

JIM

(interrupting but concerned)

Nah nah it's OK... what flavor ice cream?

HUNTER

Rocky Road ... win or lose it was always rocky road. He always said you gotta take the bumps with the smooth.

JIM

(raising his coffee cup in a cheer)
That's life. Smart man.

HUNTER

(raising his glass and looking at it)

Thanks. (beat)

JIM AND HUNTER

(chanting together)

half full, half empty; fuck 'em all, swing free..

HUNTER

(laughing)

My grandfather left me something.

JIM

What?

HUNTER

(smiling)

He left me the Wichita Tornados.
(beat) Farm team for the
Cincinnati Reds. (beat) Can you
believe that???!?

JIM

He left you the whole team?!!

HUNTER

The whole team! (beat) I haven't
followed the Tornados this year...
shit--- or any year for that
matter, but...

JIM

(still incredulous)

He left you the whole team?!!

INT. FRONT DOOR OF BAR - NIGHT

A younger HISPANIC MAN JAIME ALVAREZ walks into the bar. He has a shaved head and wears an expensive suit with several gold chains around his neck. Another larger man with long black hair and a flannel shirt buttoned to the top follows him into the bar.

They walk toward the end of the bar where Hunter is sitting.

JAIME

Hese. We need to talk. Outside.

Hunter looks up at the first man and then to the second.

HUNTER

Jaime. Jose. Buenas Noches.

HUNTER looks at Jim.

HUNTER

(gesturing)

It's OK. I'll see ya around.

He finishes his drink, gathers his wallet leaving some cash on the bar and follows the men out the door.

EXT. SIDE ALLEY - NIGHT

The alley is dark with a light dimly exposing the brick walls of the small buildings. A dumpster is also visible in the back ground.

HUNTER

(casually)

So what's the occasion fellahs..

JAIME

The shit you sold us was bad.

HUNTER

(surprised)

What the fuck you talking about?

JAIME

(anger now in his voice)

Bad shit miho. We got customers.
(beat) That was almost half a key
and they don't pay us. We paid
you, now we want our money back.
Si?

Jose reaches behind his back and pulls out a switchblade. He opens it up and holds it menacingly.

JAIME

We want our money.

EXT. SIDE DOOR IN ALLEY - NIGHT

A door opens and a small, older man emerges carrying a couple of garbage bags. He sees what is happening in the alley and hurriedly drops the bags and closes the door.

EXT. SIDE ALLEY - NIGHT

The old man is the distraction Hunter needed. He swings a strong right and hits Jose solidly in the jaw knocking him out cold.

He turns and runs down the alley. In the background, we see Jaime bent over his partner turn and begin to

pursue. Hunter reaches down and picks up an empty beer bottle from an over strewn garbage can.

Jaime freezes and we watch Hunter turn and launch the bottle. The full force of his arm is now apparent as the bottle turns end over end and hits Jaime right in the forehead. He collapses in a heap.

DISSOLVE

EXT. MAIN STREET

A few cars are moving up and down the street. We hear the blare of a distant siren. There are several bars and shops that are still open and people are walking down the sidewalks.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

CHRIS HUNTER is finishing packing the same bags we saw him walking through the airport with. He picks them up and walks toward the front door and drops them.

He circles the apartment quickly making certain everything is off. He unplugs the television and stereo. It appears as if he is getting ready to leave for an extended period. He shoulders his bags and puts his cap on. He grabs his baseball glove and ball, leaving the bat. He takes one quick look around and exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL SHOT - EVERGLADES HIGHWAY - DAY

A 1970's beat up Buick convertible is driving north on a desolate highway in the Everglades.

INT. CLOSE ON HUNTER - DAY

Hunter is driving the car while rocking out to a Beatles tune. The car is slightly messy with the remnants of fast food on the floor of the passenger side.

He is smoking a cigarette and the top is down. His beeper goes off, once again doing its dance on the passenger seat. Hunter picks it up, looks at the number and then tosses it out over his shoulder.

The beeper bounces a couple times behind the car and then ends up on the side of the road. We see it still doing its little dance and then falling silent.

XCU - BEEPER LAYING MOTIONLESS

EXT. STREET IN DOWNTOWN WICHITA - DAY

The Buick pulls up to the front of a four story office building. Hunter steps out of the car confidently. He looks up at the building and then removing his shades, looks back at a piece of paper in his hand checking the address.

HUNTER casually strides into the building.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

CHRIS HUNTER walks down the hallway of the building. The building is not in the greatest condition and has a couple of vacancies that are noticeable as he walks past.

At the end of the hall, he sees an office with a glass door and the team's logo on it.

INT. TORNADOS OFFICE - DAY

An older spinster type woman with glasses on a long gold chain is behind a desk. She is thin and very prim and proper. She looks up briefly and then back down to her ledger.

SECRETARY

We don't do tryouts, walk-on's or transfer's in mid season.

He removes his cap and takes off his sunglasses.

HUNTER

Hi. How're you?

SECRETARY

(in an officious manner)
You're still here?

HUNTER

I'm, eh... Chris Hunter ... I'm here to see Jack Chandler.

The secretary stands up, and takes a very long look at him. Then she walks around the desk and extends her hand.

SECRETARY

Oh! I apologize, Mr. Hunter! My name is Madeline Connor. I'm the team's accountant, secretary, travel planner and a host of ... well other things.

HUNTER

(smiling)

Very nice to meet you Ms. Connor.

MADELINE

Mr. Chandler is expecting you if you'll follow me.

They walk down a hallway past another office with a man working in it.

Madeline knocks lightly on a door with the name JACK CHANDLER, GM OF OPERATIONS and opens the door.

MADELINE

Jack. Mr. Hunter's here.

JACK CHANDLER is a large man with gray hair and a moustache. He has small, rimmed glasses. He is wearing a cheap gray suit and polyester tie. He leaps to life coming around his desk and opening the door completely.

CHANDLER

(excitedly)

Mr. Hunter! So glad to make your acquaintance. Jack Chandler.

HUNTER

(shaking his hand heartily)

Thanks. Call me Chris.

CHANDLER waddles around the other side of his desk almost comically.

CHANDLER

(motioning to one of the leather seats)

Please... Please sit.