

ONCE
UPON A GAME

TREATMENT BY IBRA AKE





INTRO

WE ALL LOVE A GOOD STORY. AND FRAMING ESPN'S COLLEGE FOOTBALL COVERAGE AS A TRUE STORY FOR THE AGES IS BRILLIANT IN ITS SIMPLICITY.

WE HAVE ALL THE ELEMENTS OF A GREAT TALE AT HAND: CINDERELLA-LIKE PLAYERS BARELY OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL SUDDENLY THRUST INTO THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT TO BECOME HEROES AND FUTURE NFL SUPERSTARS... AND CENTURY-OLD RIVALRIES BETWEEN COLLEGES - EACH STADIUM A FABLED ARENA PLAYING HOST TO THE DRAMA OF COMPETITION.

WATCHING THESE TEAMS, PLAYERS, COACHES AND FANS PUNCH IT OUT OVER A GRUELING SEASON AS THEY MARCH TOWARDS THE COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF IS TRULY STORYBOOK WORTHY. ALL LEADING TO A BLOCKBUSTER RESOLUTION:

TO THE WINNER GOES THE SPOILS.

THESE FILMS ARE A FANTASTIC WAY TO BRING THIS FAIRYTALE OF A SEASON TO LIFE.

A football player in a red Alabama jersey with the number 40 is celebrating with his arms raised in the air. He is wearing a white glove on his right hand. The background is filled with red and white confetti, suggesting a victory celebration. The player's jersey features the SEC logo, a '2021' patch, and the Alabama state logo. The text 'TO THE WINNER GOES THE SPOILS' is overlaid in white, serif font across the center of the image.

TO THE WINNER GOES THE SPOILS

APPROACH

THIS CAMPAIGN IS MADE UP OF THREE IMPORTANT LAYERS THAT WE'LL BRING TOGETHER TO CRAFT AN EPIC, CINEMATIC STORY.

THE FIRST ELEMENT IS THE FRAMING DEVICE - THE STORYTELLING SCENE BETWEEN GRANDPA AND HIS GRANDDAUGHTER. THE COZINESS AND WARMTH MAKES THIS MOMENT REALLY REMINISCENT OF THE CLASSIC PRINCESS BRIDE, WHICH IS FANTASTIC BECAUSE IT WILL MAKE THE DYNAMIC INSTANTLY FAMILIAR TO OUR AUDIENCE. WE REVEL IN HIS STORYTELLING, BUT IMPORTANTLY IT IS HER IMAGINATION THAT INSTINCTIVELY POPULATES THIS WORLD WITH THE PLAYERS AND TEAMS OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL.

THE SECOND ELEMENT IS THE ESPN GAME FOOTAGE AND THE CUTAWAYS TO SCHOOL AND TEAM IMAGERY.

SINCE WE'RE COMPARING THESE TEAMS/SCHOOLS AND PLAYERS TO KINGDOMS AND 'CHAMPIONS', WE SHOULD PUMP UP THEIR LEGENDARY STATUS BY MAKING IT MORE CONNECTED TO THE EPIC DIALOGUE.

TO PLAY INTO THIS, WE MAY WANT TO REPHRASE SOME DIALOGUE SO THAT THE FAIRYTALE FEELS MORE VISCERAL AND EXCITING, AND ALSO HELPS US BUILD THE TENSION AROUND SPECIFIC PLAYERS AND TEAMS, FURTHER RAMPING UP THE DRAMA.

ONE ADDITIONAL THOUGHT IS TO PROJECT SOME OF THIS FOOTAGE WITHIN THE FOUR WALLS OF OUR GRANDDAUGHTER'S BEDROOM, ALLOWING HER IMAGINATION TO COME TO LIFE ALL AROUND HER ON THE WALLS AND CEILINGS.

BESIDES THE STOCK FOOTAGE, WE'LL ALSO CUT AWAY TO IMAGERY THAT AMPS UP THE GRANDEUR AND MYTHOLOGY OF THE POWERHOUSE PROGRAMS REIMAGINED IN STORYBOOK CONTEXT.

THE THIRD ELEMENT WILL LINK EVERYTHING TOGETHER - ILLUSTRATING GRANDDAD'S EPIC STORY WHILE CONNECTING IT TO OUR STOCK FOOTAGE AND CUTAWAYS. TO DO THIS, I'D LOVE TO CREATE A TACTILE D&D-STYLE DIORAMA COMBINED WITH A STRATEGY GAME-STYLE TACTICAL MAP MADE UP OF MINIATURE FIGURINES, LANDSCAPES AND BUILDINGS. BUT MORE ON THAT LATER...

**THE KEY IS TO HAVE A VARIETY OF IMAGERY BOTH
EXCITING AND MODULAR SO TEAMS/PLAYERS CAN BE
SWAPPED OUT AS THE CFP PICTURE BECOMES CLEARER.**





CINEMATOGRAPHY

THE CINEMATOGRAPHY IS MEANT TO BE SIMPLE. THE CHILD AND HER GRANDFATHER WILL BE FRAMED IN A MANGER-LIKE TABLEAU. MEDIUM, WIDE AND ALSO CUTTING TO SUPER CLOSE MACRO SHOTS, SO WE CAN ALMOST FEEL THE GOOSE BUMPS. WE'LL EVEN CAPTURE CLOSE UPS OF HER GRIPPING THE SHEETS IN CERTAIN PARTS OF THE STORY.

A GREAT LIGHTING REFERENCE I'VE FOUND IS THE BOY'S ROOM IN THE INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD. I WANT SOMETHING LIT, BUT MOODY ENOUGH WHERE WE COULD PROJECT ESPN CLIPS IN PARTS OF THE ROOM TO CONNECT THE WORLD.

ONCE WE TRANSITION TO OUR DIORAMA, WE'LL USE MACRO LENSES AND CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPHY TO BRING THIS MINIATURE SCENE TO LIFE IN A VIS-CERAL BUT PLAYFUL WAY. OUR LENS CHOICES WILL BRING STATURE AND GRANDEUR TO THESE MINI SCENES.





NARRATIVE

THE STORY IS SIMPLE.
WE'RE ENTERING A CHILD'S IMAGINATION.

AND THE ARTIFACTS IN HER CLUTTERED ROOM ARE
GOING TO SERVE AS AN EXTENSION OF HER STORY,
BRIDGING THE GAP INTO OUR CLIP SHOW. WITH SOME
CAMP AND KITSCH TO CONNECT THE INTENSITY
LEVELS OF THE TWO WORLDS A LITTLE MORE
GRADUALLY, AND PALATABLY.

JUMANJI IS A GREAT REFERENCE HERE.









NARRATIVE

LAUNCH ANTHEM

THE STORY :60

OPEN IN A YOUNG GIRL'S ROOM. IT'S GOT A MAXIMALIST FLARE... FILLED WITH COLLEGE FOOTBALL-THEMED TOYS, KNICKKNACKS, BOARD GAMES, AMERICANA. A PLUSH VERSION OF THE UT MASCOT BEVO SEEMS TO BE LOCKING ITS HORNS WITH GEORGIA'S LOVABLE BULLDOG, UGA. COZY, WARM VIBES.

IN A CORNER, WE GLIMPSE A D&D-STYLE DIORAMA - POPULATED BY GAMING TOKENS AND FIGURINES THAT SEEM LIKE MONOPOLY PIECES. A COLLAGE OF ALL THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL IN AMERICA AS WE KNOW IT - LIKE A MIX BETWEEN A FOOTBALL FIELD AND STRATEGY GAME BOARD.

SHE'S IN BED WITH A CAST ON HER ARM - IT'S COVERED IN GRAFFITI... OF COURSE, COLLEGE FOOTBALL THEMED AS WELL. SCRAWLS OF 'ROLL TIDE' COMPETE WITH 'FIGHT ON' AND DOODLES OF A CLEMSON TIGER.

HER GRANDFATHER IS SEATED BESIDE HER BED, ABOUT TO READ HIS GRANDDAUGHTER A STORY. HE OPENS A PIGSKIN-COVERED TOME: 'THE GREATEST STORY EVER PLAYED'.

SHE LOOKS AT THE BOOK, EXCITED.

GF: SO WHERE WERE WE?

GD: THE PLAYOFF!

HIS GRANDDAUGHTER BEAMS - SHE'S BEEN WAITING ALL YEAR TO SEE HOW THIS FAIRYTALE ENDS.

GRANDFATHER OPENS THE BOOK TO A CHAPTER CALLED "THE PLAYOFF".

GF: ONLY A HANDFUL OF TEAMS REMAINED.

CUT THROUGH VARIOUS SHOTS OF THE DIORAMA. FIGURINES REPRESENTING THE PLAYERS, FANS AND CHEERLEADERS... WIDER SHOTS REVEALING IT'S ACTUALLY DEPICTING A VERSION OF THE COUNTRY. THE FIGURINES ARE LITERALLY ON A HUNT FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY.

FROM THE NORTH, WEST, EAST AND TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA.

CUT TO AN OSU BUCKEYE FIGURINE ON THE DIORAMA... A HOKUSAI-INSPIRED RED WAVE FOR 'BAMA... A BENGAL TIGER FOR CLEMSON... A TROJAN HORSE FOR USC... THEY ALL ARE FACING TOWARDS L.A.

WE INTERCUT THIS DIORAMA FOOTAGE WITH VISCERAL, DYNAMIC FOOTAGE OF PLAYERS FIGHTING FOR EVERY INCH. IT LOOKS AND FEELS LIKE SOLDIERS COLLIDING ON A BATTLEFIELD: CLOSE SHOTS OF DEFENSIVE LINEMAN COLLIDING WITH A STOUT O-LINE... A POCKET COLLAPSING AROUND QB CALEB WILLIAMS... STETSON BENNETT DIRECTING HIS LINEMEN LIKE A FIELD GENERAL.

THE IMAGERY IS ROUGH AND BRUTAL. UNPOLISHED AND GRITTY. PICTURE BRAVEHEART.

ALL VYING FOR A SPOT IN THE PLAYOFF.

CUT BACK TO THE BEDROOM. GRANDPA'S GETTING WORKED UP AS HE GETS DEEPER INTO THE STORY... SHE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S BEEN WAITING TO SEE HOW THIS TALE PLAYS OUT.

BACK TO THE DIORAMA AS MACRO SHOTS GET US UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH THE FIGURINES ON THE MOVE... WE WATCH AS A BUCKEYE IS TOPPLED BY A NITTANY LION, FALLING TO THE DIORAMA WITH A THUNDEROUS CRASH.

MATCH TO GAME FOOTAGE AS OSU QUARTERBACK CJ STROUD IS BRUTALLY SACKED BY PENN STATE DEFENSIVE END CHOP ROBINSON.

CUT TO SHOTS OF VARIOUS DEVICES STREAMING THE GAMES:

SMARTPHONES

TV'S

EVEN BIGGER TV'S

THEN A RIDICULOUSLY HUGE TV.

FINALLY, A JUMBOTRON AT THE LA COLISEUM - THE OLYMPIC FLAME FLICKERING JUST ABOVE THE PERI-STYLE. IT'S AN EPIC, NEAR MYTHIC IMAGE...

AN EPIC EVENT THAT WOULD BE WATCHED BY EVERYONE IN THE LAND.

CUT TO VARIOUS FOOTBALL ARTIFACTS AROUND HER ROOM:

A CHILD'S DRAWING OF NICK SABAN AS A GENERAL IN A RED MILITARY UNIFORM (PICTURE TONY SOPRANO ON HIS STALLION... BUT THE KIDS VERSION).

A FRAMED PHOTO OF JIM HARBAUGH SCREAMING FROM THE SIDELINE.

POSTERS OF DABO SWINNEY AND LINCOLN RILEY.

CUT TO GAME FOOTAGE TO EACH OF THESE COACHES IN THE HEAT OF THE FIGHT. RUNNING DOWN THE SIDELINES... SCREAMING AT REFS...

SABAN CELEBRATING A NARROW ESCAPE AT UT EARLIER IN THE SEASON...

KIRBY SMART CLOSING HIS EYES IN RELIEF AS GEORGIA NARROWLY SLIPS PAST MISSOURI...

EACH TEAM LED BY A GREAT COACH.

ON 'FEARLESS', WE CUT TO CALEB WILLIAMS ESCAPING THAT POCKET COLLAPSE FROM EARLIER...

WE SEE GEORGIA RUNNING BACK KENDALL MILTON BREAKING TACKLES ON HIS WAY TO A FIRST DOWN.

FEARLESS PLAYERS.

CUT TO FOOTAGE OF LEGIONS OF FANS PACKING STUDENT SECTIONS ACROSS THE NATION, MANY IN BODY PAINT:

A SEA OF ROARING CRIMSON IN TUSCALOOSA.

GEORGIA FANS IN RED, BLACK AND WHITE - BARKING LIKE UGA.

A FIELD OF CLEMSON ORANGE

AN UNDULATING WAVE OF BLUE AND MAIZE WOLVERINE FANS.



AND DEFENDED BY THE LOYALEST OF FANS.

CUT TO FOOTAGE OF ICONIC PLAYS FROM PAST CFP GAMES:

- OHIO STATE ON THE WAY TO AN UPSET OF ALABAMA IN 2015... AS EZEKIEL ELLIOTT BREAKS FOR HIS EPIC 85 YARD TD.
- CLEMSON'S DESHAUN WATSON UNLEASHING BOMB AFTER BOMB AGAINST 'BAMA IN 2017.
- THE TIDE'S TUA TAGOVAILOA LEADING A MIRACLE DRIVE IN OVERTIME TO BEAT GEORGIA IN 2018.

SOON THEY WOULD TAKE PART IN AN EPIC PLAYOFF BATTLE FOR THE RIGHT TO CALL THEMSELVES NATIONAL CHAMPIONS.

BACK TO THE DIORAMA AS WE SEE DEPICTIONS OF BURIED TREASURE... JEWELS, DIAMONDS, GOLD. (PERHAPS A SIGNED MINIATURE NIL CONTRACT AS WELL :))

AND TO THE VICTOR GO THE SPOILS.

BACK TO THE GIRL NOW SITTING UP IN BED, AS EXCITED AS GRANDPA. HER EYES WIDEN WHEN SHE HEARS "SPOILS".

ANGLE ON A HAND DRAWN DEPICTION OF THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY HANGING ON HER WALL... IT MATCHES TO A BEAUTY SHOT OF THE REAL TROPHY RESTING ON A REVERED PODIUM.

A BEAUTIFUL TROPHY.

CUT TO VARIOUS ONFIELD CELEBRATIONS AND PARADES SINCE THE START OF THE CFP. CONFETTI RAINING DOWN AS FANS SURGE ONTO A FIELD... QUICK PROGRESSION OF SHOTS SHOWING VARIOUS COACHES OVER THE YEARS (LET'S BE HONEST, MOSTLY SABAN) RAISING THE CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY ON A PLATFORM ON THE 50 YARD LINE.

A GRAND CELEBRATION.

CUT BACK TO HER ROOM - A WIDE SHOT OF HER OWN PERSONAL WALL OF FAME. PHOTOS, DRAWINGS, POSTERS...

AND BRAGGING RIGHTS THAT STAND THE TEST OF TIME.

CUT BACK TO GRANDFATHER AS HE SHUTS THE BOOK. HE'S ALMOST BREATHLESS WITH ANTICIPATION AS WE CUT TO HER WIDE EYES - NOT EXPECTING THIS UNEXPECTED CLIFFHANGER.

GD: AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED???

HER GRANDFATHER SMILES ENIGMATICALLY.

GF: WE'LL FIND OUT SOON.

SUPER APPEARS OVER THE PICTURE.

SUPER: THE GREATEST STORY EVER PLAYED

CUT TO CARD.

CARD: THE COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF ON ESPN





NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP (TBD)

THE ENDING :30

OPEN ON OUR GRANDFATHER READING HIS GRANDDAUGHTER THE LAST CHAPTER OF OUR STORY.

GF: OKAY, THIS IS THE LAST CHAPTER.

CUT TO FOOTAGE OF ALABAMA AND GEORGIA.

THERE WERE TWO TEAMS LEFT.

CUT TO FOOTAGE OF GEORGIA CELEBRATING LAST YEAR'S' CHAMPIONSHIP.

ONE LOOKING TO DEFEND THEIR CROWN.

CUT TO FOOTAGE OF ALABAMA CHAMPIONSHIPS IN THE PAST YEARS.

AND ONE LOOKING TO RECLAIM IT.

CUT TO THE BEDROOM. THE GRANDDAUGHTER SITS UP IN BED AS HER EXCITEMENT BUILDS.

ABOUT TO FACE OFF IN THE GREATEST BATTLE IN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP HISTORY.

CUT TO FOOTAGE OF ICONIC PLAYS IN PAST NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES.

TO SEE WHO WOULD BE THE LAST ONE STANDING.

CUT TO THE BEDROOM. THE GRANDDAUGHTER IS NOW STANDING BECAUSE SHE'S SO EXCITED.

ALL THAT WAS LEFT TO DO WAS WATCH.

THE GRANDFATHER TURNS OVER THE LAST PAGE AND SHUTS THE BOOK.

WE CUT TO A FLURRY OF THE TWO TEAMS IN THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP.

CUT TO CARD.

SUPER: THE GREATEST STORY EVER PLAYED

CARD: ALABAMA VS GEORGIA

THE COLLEGE FOOTBALL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP



THE DIORAMA

WE'LL POPULATE THE DIORAMA WITH FIGURINES AND TOKENS NORMALLY FOUND IN A GAMING SETUP THAT WILL REPRESENT PLAYERS, CHEERLEADERS... AS WELL MYTHOLOGICAL BEASTS AND EVEN ANIMALS. THIS WILL BE A LOOSE REPRESENTATION OF AMERICA - STRETCHING FROM EAST TO THE WEST. WE'LL ALSO PLACE GOLDEN GOALPOSTS AT EITHER END, AS IF THE COUNTRY WERE ACTUALLY AN EPIC FOOTBALL FIELD. EACH TEAM'S MINIATURE 'ROYAL' BANNER MAY ALSO HANG ON A CASTLE IN THE CENTER OF THE DIORAMA - ALLOWING US TO REMOVE/ADD THEM AS TEAMS FALL OFF THE TABLE OR CLIMB THE RANKINGS.

THIS EPIC DIORAMA WILL RESIDE IN A CORNER OF HER ROOM AND AS GRANDPA READS TO HER, THIS WILL BE WHERE HER IMAGINATION COMES TO LIFE. WE'LL INTERCUT BETWEEN STORYTIME AND STOCK FOOTAGE... AND TO THE ACTION ON THE DIORAMA IN A PLAYFUL WAY THAT WILL PUNCTUATE THE REAL LIFE DRAMA OF THE CFP AS THE MINIATURES MOVE WEST TOWARDS THE CHAMPIONSHIP IN LOS ANGELES.









CHARACTERS

THE CHARACTERS SHOULD BE SIMPLE AND SPEAK TO AN IDEALIZED PERSPECTIVE ON AMERICANA AND THE GAME OF FOOTBALL AS IT'S SHARED BETWEEN THESE TWO GENERATIONS. THE GRANDFATHER WILL SERVE AS OUR FOUNDATION FOR THE ORATION, SO WE SHOULD FIND SOMEONE WITH THAT FEELING OF GRAVITAS. FOR THE GIRL, WE'LL LOOK FOR SOMEONE WHO CAN CAPTURE THAT SENSE OF WONDER AND EXCITEMENT. HER ENTHUSIASM AND AWED REACTIONS SHOULD BE INFECTIOUS, BRINGING THE AUDIENCE ALONG FOR THE RIDE - ALLOWING US TO SEE IT ALL THROUGH HER CHILDLIKE PERSPECTIVE.





SET DESIGN

THE SET WILL BE DRESSED LIKE A MESSY KIDS ROOM FILLED WITH TOYS, AMERICANA/FOOTBALL PARAPHERNALIA, AND NCAA MERCH. THINK 80'S SPIELBERG. E.T. VIBES. WE'LL ALSO CREATE A CANOPY BED FRAME WE COULD POTENTIALLY PROJECT FOOTAGE UNTO.



SOUND/MUSIC

MY IDEAL SOUNDSCAPE WOULD FEEL SIMILAR TO DANNY ELFMAN THEME SCORE FOR MEN IN BLACK. SOMETHING PLAYFUL AT FIRST (ALMOST LIKE HOLIDAY) MUSIC THAT TRANSFORMS INTO MARCHING INTO BATTLE MUSIC. SWELLING BIGGER AND BIGGER TILL IT FEELS BIG ENOUGH TO GET YOU PUMPED FOR A GAME OF FOOTBALL.



THANK YOU

THANKS FOR LETTING ME PITCH ON THIS INCREDIBLY UNIQUE JOB!
IT'S BEEN A REAL PLEASURE DIGGING IN ON IT. PLEASE KEEP IN MIND
THAT I'M A COLLABORATOR AT HEART AND I REALLY BELIEVE THAT
TOGETHER, WE CAN CREATE SOMETHING TRULY SPECIAL HERE.
PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

IBRA





SOMESUCH

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