

THE NETWORK



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The Network

-a screenplay-

By David Zane

The Network

A 60-page Pilot (shooting script basis)

Ozzie McKenzie grew up dirt poor in the deep south - but still dared to dream. Skipping rocks on a sun-baked road after school always had that same daring dream... and it showed in College, the Pros, and now as the NFL's first African-American President & General Manager. The weight of every minority firmly on his shoulders from such a title, not to mention being the father of a photogenic Los Angeles family... wife Evita plus Alexa and Tasha always smiled back at all the attention. Evita even joined 'The Network', a Network that covers the NFL far too closely for her husband's liking. Los Angeles Bandits' President & General Manager Ozzie McKenzie is trying to balance family and work, trying to come out on top in this ruthlessly-competitive world that takes him away two-hundred nights of the year.

Sporadic conversations with his aging Uncle Ike help, since he's experienced the pain of being a world war two vet, a recovering alcoholic... and keeping a family secret that only Ozzie knows.

"The entanglement of Big Time Sports with human exploitation is bizarre up close."

Nobody survives the complex world of big time Sports with merely a commitment to decency... some teams are worth over a billion dollars!

"Serve our Advertisers and find that next Superstar!"

The Corporate Sports World is a great place to exploit character diversity... since sports is full of those seven attached sins. Big Media - Don Sharp, Narcissist. The NFL Network - Steve Bernstein, Charming. Big Cathedrals - Jerry Tyrell... obsessive Genius who wants to have the best security cameras in every Stadium and that's that. Vice-President Janice Bradshaw, Ozzie's longest serving Staff and workaholic sidekick who never leaves the building and will do anything for him anytime anywhere.

Giant athletic bodies wrapped in equally-giant egos; it is a world we know little about except for what we see on television. MadMen exposed the advertising world. The Wire showed layers and layers of policing and governing and gang-structure. The Network exposes mind-blowing lifestyles that will hook the viewer. What kind of relationships do People in this world have? What kind of families do these People have? How do these People live? And travel? Who is sleeping with who? And when and where? Who owns this world?

When the Los Angeles Bandits' General Manager Ozzie McKenzie stands up on that podium... and then calmly announces that he is drafting Lamar Lincoln with his first pick of 2006. He really believes this is going to be his ticket to winning the Super Bowl.

Owner Art Levitt and Coach John Ellison are all smiles.

If life was only that simple.

Act 1/scene 1

The dark screen begins with the sound of a deafening crowd... then suddenly the camera opens up showing the panorama of that deafening crowd... an excited crowd that is attending a major sporting event in a state-of-the-art stadium.

The camera shows different angles of that glistening stadium... including the giant screen hanging from the roof.

The camera settles in on the field... on the massive Gladiators grunting and groaning as the game goes on.

The crowd cheers.

The camera then settles in on showing one man standing on the sidelines staring into that game with great focus.

10, 9... (the crowd counts)

"This is going to be history folks", the Announcer screams into a TV audience of two billion at least.

8, 7...

"Nothing is impossible... just unthinkable", echoes in Ozzie McKenzie's head as he stands and stares at the field in front of him... trying his best to hold back tears that really want to come.

6, 5...

"This is not your father's football league that's for sure", the play-by-play Man declares to the world.

4, 3...

"Absolutely not Troy... the stigma has been broken forever.

2, 1...

"It most certainly has Jim. Congratulations Ozzie... lord knows you've earned it. Now let the celebrations begin", the Announcer yells over the frenzy.

*Cannons suddenly go off.
Confetti rains down the massive Superdome ceiling.
Blowing around like a Buffalo blizzard in February.*

"Daddy, Daddy, Daddy."

The place is going wild.

Ozzie reaches down... *mwa...* and hugs his ecstatic family...
every one of them... *mwa...* along with... *mwa...* juicy kisses
for everyone.

"Congratulations My Love."

"Thanks Baby... and thanks for all the love."

Tears roll down both their faces as they embrace for a long
second. "I couldn't have done it without you."

Suddenly they're locked in an embrace that spans fifty-two
years; she knows exactly what this journey has been like...
absolutely she does. "I'm so proud of you." The highs and lows
are meant for Ozzie's amazing wife and Uncle Ike only - and
he's not here because he doesn't like to fly, he refuses
actually. Ozzie and his wife continue to embrace.

As the make-shift stage gets assembled quickly for the
upcoming Presentation ceremony, Ozzie's legs won't stop their
shaking - "I can't believe this... I just can't", he says
under his breath... taking this all in provides a feeling of
such intense joy... such a surreal moment. Now Ozzie knows
what that word actually means.

"Come on", a Chaperone yells at Ozzie and his family with his
arms waving.

Ozzie gathers his brood in response... and starts to lead them in
tow, with his heart racing with every step. He's following this
guy onto a stage reserved only for Champions... for League
Champions!! He wants to cry... but he can't because of all the
staring faces. Stoic was how Ozzie was raised.

His smile feels like it's stretching his face to new
proportions.

The big man in the black blazer and earphone has them all up on the stage... and ready. The Commissioner of the League.

The Head Coach. Two very sweaty Captains. And Ozzie.

The Pandemonium suddenly hushes when the Announcer grabs the mike... and uses his other hand to signal to the crowd that they're ready.

Bizarre.

You could hear a pin drop... and so could 80,000 others.

It's beyond bizarre.

Scene 2

"Hi Mrs. Johnson."

Skipping rocks after another day of school.

"Hello Ozzie."

Along dirt roads baked dry from an unforgiving sun.

"Hello Mrs. Tomlinson."

Greeting his neighbors, some real decent smiling folks... nine-year-old Ozzie gives them all a friendly wave back while they're perched on their porches of dilapidated shacks going back generations.

"Hello Ozzie."

Shacks that barely function as homes, to the naked eye.

"Have a good day Mrs. Robinson."

It is a cluster of weed-filled American shame that painted every part of rural Alabama that Ozzie ever saw.

"You too Ozzie."

Unfortunately this way of living was normal to Ozzie - skipping the flattest stones into the many marshes along the route so he can try and beat his record - which was part of the problem with living in the south of the '50's.

The camera keeps showing a young Ozzie walking down the dirt road with a face of youthful wonderment.

Ozzie didn't know any different really, not until that first trip out of State - although out of the Planet was more like it.

"I'm going to skip it six times", Ozzie announces to himself.

There was far more Press than when his Auburn Tigers played for the National Championship; although this was the Heisman Trophy after all.

Reaching down, grabbing something immediately. "This one is going to skip forever", with a wide grin.

Shocked would be the best way to describe seeing those bright New York lights... a Dream beyond Dreams now that he thinks about it... that never-ending skyline of concrete and steel... and those neon flashes from Times Square. Blacks and whites on the same sidewalk... even in the same restaurants.

The rock skips forever, "Yes!", Ozzie yells.

When he was there Ozzie saw his first black Police Officer, which opened his eyes like never before; from that first day in downtown Manhattan Ozzie's dreams reached far beyond his own Jim Crow Alabama.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!", Ozzie starts to run down the road.

The camera shows the dust coming up with every stride of Ozzie's. He's passing trees that are tall with massive trunks.

"Hi Mrs. Dunlap."

"Hello Ozzie", yelling back from her porch, "you be careful now child... oh those kids today need to be careful", going back into her small house, the tilted screen door slams.

Ozzie runs right past the local pond... with so many other kids swimming, screaming with fun.

"Come on in Ozzie", one yells.

"Can't, gotta get home to see Uncle Ike."

Backstory.

Walking home from school was a ritual Ozzie looked forward to... even when it rained. It was normal to see rabbits and rodents scurry by, so was swinging on the tire at the local water-hole, which Uncle Ike called *McKenzie Lake*...although *McKenzie Pond* is more like it. You get used to the turtles and snakes and stray dogs that lay by its' cool banks. Back then Ozzie had no idea that in order to find himself, to really find peace in his own skin, he needed to lose himself in the wondrous arms of nature... at least for a little while. From sun-up to sun-down every kid of the neighborhood would be out during those sweltering summer months... swimming, tossing a frisbee, a baseball... even a football. To this day Ozzie still tries to escape to the closest green-space he can find at least once a week; peace is hard to locate when you're living out of a suitcase two-hundred nights of the year. And the fact that these are mostly five-star accommodations means little... since Ozzie is still the same kid from rural Alabama who finds pleasure from the things that money can't buy.

The camera shows a wide shot of Ozzie running home.

Scene 3

Every day after school little Ozzie McKenzie looks forward to seeing Uncle Ike on his tilted porch rocking back and forth while smoking his pipe and whittling, or, head back, taking a mid-day nap.

"Hey Uncle Ike", became the usual while moving up those creaky sun-stained steps.

"How was school today Ozzie?" A loving smile little Ozzie grew to rely on; like it was yesterday he remembers that day.

Thinking back it did seem like any other, really it did... stopping to feed the rabbits with some lettuce he'd saved from lunch. "Here Maggie, come on, that's it... good girl."

Ozzie always named the animals of his world. In fact to this day he still leans towards kids who had pets growing up... or still do; Ozzie has his reasons. Any General Manager can crunch numbers, what Ozzie's looking for is character, a deep responsibility to others... not just out-of-this-world ability. Big-time Sports is way too hard for just ego alone.

Showing Ozzie running down a narrow road, you can see a small out-in-the-middle-of-nowhere shack getting closer and closer.

Heavy breathing.

Ozzie suddenly spots an empty chair on the front porch?? Instead of preparing his usual greeting with Uncle Ike while halfway up the driveway, Ozzie's face turns anxious from that empty chair. He now moves towards the house with an uneasy sense... turning his head from side to side the entire time he's climbing those creaky old front steps. "Hello?" Opening the front door, "Hello Uncle Ike?", and moving in nervously.

"Hello?... Anybody home?... Uncle Ike?" Hearing the floor squeak only makes Ozzie's heart beat faster. Wide-eyed with every step while looking for a decorated World War Two Vet who returned home with plenty of issues... and little empathy from his Government. Every stride sends stabs of worry through Ozzie... he knows he can't take losing... moving from room to room.

Where is he?

In a heart-pounding panic at this point; it does not take long to search a tiny house meant for Sharecroppers almost a century ago?

Suddenly through the rear window Ozzie spots his Uncle... and freezes. "Uncle Ike", yelling while the fear finally loosens its' grip. Ozzie heads towards the back-screen door. "Uncle Ike are you ok?", and charges through.

"The bomb exploded at around 10:20 this morning at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. The carnage is everywhere"... sirens wailing... "The bomb blew a massive hole in the rear wall of the Church, destroying the back steps."

The radio next to Uncle Ike spews out incredible words... beyond belief every one of them. Ozzie needs to sit down to try and absorb them.

"There were children in the basement at the time."

Seeing the catatonic state on Uncle Ike's face.

"They were preparing for choir", the Announcer's voice cracks.

Nine years old is not an age where hate like this can be understood.

Scene 4

With a rolled-up dress-shirt and slacks... Ozzie walks through the doorway into a large board room. "Ok who does everyone have as their number 1?", Ozzie screams to those sitting around a massive board room table.

"I like Lewis", one yells.

It looks like the table is surrounded by a posse of Ozzie's trusted Coaches. "Anybody else?" Ozzie's voice confirms this. Steaming coffees in front of everybody... heads are buried in their paperwork.

The multi-cameras are moving all around the room, showing the stress on everyone's faces from different angles.

"I've got Henderson as my number 1."

"Marvin Jones is the best on my board, Oz."

Backstory

Since free agents and their pricey demands can absolutely put any General Manager's job in jeopardy; bar none the spring draft is the single biggest contributor to improving any team's fortune. It's all about picking kids who can make a quick transition to the Pros. It's where you can get their first three years under contract for a steal, in order to spend it elsewhere. The first day after the Super Bowl is when it all starts.

"Quinn is my choice Boss."

"A. J. Lambert Ozzie... the kid can fly."

Ruffling through a table covered in paper.

"Who do we like at 2?", Ozzie challenges the group with tone. "Anybody going to give me their number 2?", his voice says so, "anybody?", circling the table.

Watching twelve hours of film in his dark office, then calling high school and college coaches for their personal opinions... and then of course flying around to every one-gas-station town trying to spend quality time with these candidates and their families - hopefully while not bumping into other NFL GM's... which most certainly happens at the airport or at a motel with little water pressure and a horrible mattress.

The camera shows that the board room table is a massive trunk of a tree.

Whenever Ozzie spotted it along the drive, he always made a point of stopping for some precious green-space time... walking in it really makes the difference on his frenetic psyche.

The camera keeps scanning the 'war' room.

Football for Ozzie McKenzie is 24/7.

The camera shows the trepidation on all his Coach's faces.

"We need a second-round choice here People!"

Ozzie's phone rings. "I've got to take this." Ozzie has been roaming the room forever, circling the board room table like a Mother Hen. "Hello Ike", walking outside the room... back towards his office.

The camera shows a corporation of offices working away... people, phones, it is a busy office.

"Sorry to bother you Ozzie."

"It's no bother."

"It's just that I need you to pick me up at 6, not 7 like I thought."

"No problem, I'll be there", Ozzie's voice is different than the board room, "You feeling ok today?"

"Every day above ground is a good day."

"Yes it is", Ozzie cracks a smile.

An employee moves close to Ozzie with a serious face.

"I don't want to keep you, I'll see you soon."

The exchange shows the depth of respect between Ozzie and his Uncle Ike. Ozzie has been staring with a concerned face at this woman for a few minutes, his eyes say for her to wait. It's the look of a busy man with too much responsibility.

"See you soon", Ozzie hangs up the phone. "Yes Janice", immediately at the woman. "The auction needs the paintings to be there by 4... they're preparing the room for the silent auction."

"Here's the storage number, call them and arrange it", Ozzie works his phone so he can retrieve that information for this professionally-dressed woman.

"What time is the auction?", he asks.

"They said 9."

Ozzie keeps working his phone.

"They're expecting a big crowd."

"They better... there, I've sent it", Ozzie smiles quickly... and moves past once he's done with what she's asked. His stiff body language looks to be busy and in a hurry.

His phone rings.

"How can I help you Sid?", answering with more stiff body language.

"I understand you need a running back", the caller announces.

"Who doesn't?"

"You want Lamar Lincoln?"

Ozzie's face goes flaccid, "Who wouldn't?"

"I think I can help you get him."

"What's it going to cost me?"

"I want Kirkland and a one."

Ozzie's face reacts, "Let's talk later, I'll call you back in a few hours", Ozzie is right at the board room door.

"Make sure."

"I will", hanging up the phone.

"I need a number 2!", walking through the doorway of the board room with strength.

All eyes look up.

Ozzie has more than one side.

Scene 5

Entering the grand ballroom of a black-tie affair that is in full swing.

Jazz music playing.

Waiters/Waitresses serving guests food & champagne.

Ozzie is holding his wife's hand.

The crowd noise gets louder the further they're inside this tony ballroom.

His wife Evita looks back at Ozzie, who is suddenly distracted with the crowd. She moves in, "Go make the deals that will bring this city a Championship", staring into his eyes with seriousness, "I've got your back."

Ozzie knows exactly what she means. He leans in and gives her a kiss. Ozzie and Evita do look great together. Then he flees into the crowd.

Ozzie skirts the many guests with a smile... and if he has to a handshake and a few kind words.

Ozzie looks experienced at this.

A waiter comes right up to Ozzie... and stops. He leans in with a tray of champagne, "Sir", smiling. Ozzie grabs two... and walks towards his head coach, who is with his family.

"Hello Laura." Kiss. Ozzie hands Laura a glass.

"Oh thanks." Laura Ellison is John's beautiful blue-eyed blond wife, who used to be a professional soccer player ten years ago. She clanks her glass with Ozzie's. "That's why you're my boys Godparent", smiling. Now she's just Mom to Justin and Jameson, 8-and-10-year-olds who look just like their Dad.

"Hi boys."

"Hello Ozzie." They both reach in with respect.

Ozzie and John Ellison, Ozzie's first offensive co-ordinator when he landed in the Pros, start walking away. John is a block of a man. He's in a suit, but does not look comfortable. Ozzie is in a tux. Ozzie is leading John into a corner. "What if I told you that I can get my hands-on Lamar Lincoln?"

Noise in the background. Glass clanking.

John stares back at Ozzie... then looks away. Something in that look made John trust what Ozzie just said. "You know he's good for 25 carries a game", John declares to Ozzie as they both stare into the crowd. "Our play-action will give us 4 scores every time he gets 25 carries."

"Maybe more", Ozzie says with a straight face. "Guess I have your approval."

"Most definitely", John says also looking into the crowd.

Ozzie walks away from John. He puts his phone to his ear. "You sure about Lincoln?"

"We've known each other too long for bullshit, Ozzie."

"Then we're good", Ozzie finds a spot to stand.

"Unfortunately this is a fluid situation... Kirkland and 2 number ones now."

"You're killing me."

"The market is killing you not me, you're lucky I'm even telling you this."

Ozzie sees her coming. "I'll get back to you."

"Don't bother, you've got thirty minutes. Then you're back in the mud with all the rest of them."

The phone disconnects.

Ozzie starts to quickly text...

Get me to Jackson Mississippi by Thursday!

"Come on Honey, you need to start off the auction", Evita comes to get Ozzie and bring him back to his responsibilities.

Ozzie puts his phone away inside his suit jacket.

That text was sent to his long-serving Vice-President Janice Bradshaw.

Ozzie moves swiftly with Evita by his side... getting up on stage like a man-in-charge. He has put on a new and very appropriate face. "Thank you all for coming here tonight, we have a great night planned. I've seen some of the items for our silent auction and they are truly one-of-a-kinds." Ozzie takes a breath, then stares at Evita because he can't get enough of her. "Everything we do here tonight goes towards raising funds for all kinds of addiction therapy that can and will help People and their families get their lives back." Ozzie's face gets really serious. "You have my solemn promise that all the money raised here tonight will go exactly where it needs to go to do that." Ozzie's tone captures the crowd. "This is a cause I care deeply about... it's one of the causes I would like to see eliminated from the face of this earth."

The crowd claps in approval.

"May the gods of good fortune bless everyone here."

Ozzie looks in full control up on stage.

He has never given up on his beloved Uncle Ike.

Scene 6

A twin of McKenzie Alabama, Chickasaw County Mississippi is remote from the big city of Jackson, its 19,000 inhabitants spread-out over a vastness of un-kept rural-ness that grows nothing but cotton or tobacco.

The camera shows a plane touching down in a rural airport.

Ozzie steps off the plane... stops... looks around... and leaves a blank expression from what he sees. He is here to meet with his prized draft pick that he has just traded away the farm for.

"Thank you Sir", the lady at the counter gives Ozzie his car keys and a big country smile.

Ozzie turns... "Thank you", just before he walks away. Ozzie heads out of the tiny airport. Ozzie's face shows that he is well aware that Lamar Lincoln is both his present and future.

"You have 26 new messages", his phone by his ear says.

Ozzie keeps walking, disregarding his phone. He leaves the terminal holding his briefcase in one hand and his small duffel in the other. He takes a few steps into the blazing southern sun, and looks up, and squints. He stops. He takes off his blazer without hesitation... and then loosens his tie along with a top button.

Ozzie then walks through the small parking lot.

Beep... car locks open.

Opening the back door... throwing his suitcase and duffel bag into the back seat.

Ozzie gets into the car... and starts it and then turns on the a/c. He takes a deep breath like he has to... and stares straight ahead for a minute. Then he pulls out of the lot.

The camera shows the rural-ness of where he is and where he is going.

No sidewalks.

No streetlights.

Lots of pick-up trucks.

An 18-wheeler goes by fast on the narrow road.

Ozzie's boring sedan drives off into the distance.

Scene 7

Driving a narrow and very deserted country road with trees everywhere... Ozzie checks his phone's GPS... he looks closer because he is not sure it's working. He stops the car even though he was going rather slowly. He looks outside... and rolls down his window. He looks to be inhaling the air. He is looking into the trees.

A scene of a young boy breathing heavy while running through the thick bush flashes quickly... there's lots of mystery attached to it because the camera feels like it is on his shoulder. Is he being chased? Is he playing? The boy keeps breathing and running through the bush without letting us know. The face and color of the boy is hidden.

Suddenly the dream-sequence stops as quickly as it started. Ozzie checks his phone again. Nothing. He then puts the car in drive... and slowly pulls out.

A few minutes later he turns down a driveway... and pulls up to a house that has seen better days.

Ozzie stops the car... and gets out. No briefcase or duffel. He looks around with big eyes... like he is fond of such a landscape. Then he turns and heads for the front door.

Up a few steps... Knock Knock (on an old screen door)

"Hello?", from inside.

"Hello right back at you." Ozzie's voice is warm.

"Come in please Mister", a young girl of no more than ten opens the door politely, like she has been trained with being respectful to strangers.

"Why thank you pretty lady", Ozzie enters the house. He stares around when he is inside... giving a look of familiarity.

"Thank you Evi", a booming voice descends on Ozzie.

"That's a beautiful name, that's my wife's name too", Ozzie looks down with friendliness. She smiles back bashfully. "Tell everybody that dinner will be ready in ten minutes please", her hand is quickly outstretched, "Hello, I am Sadie Lincoln, walk with me."

Turning quickly after they've shaken hands. Cute Evi has gone into the other room like she was told. Full-sized Sadie and her apron start heading back towards a kitchen that is smelling-up the entire house with traditional smells Ozzie is very familiar with.

Ozzie glances over at the other room.

A God-given ability certainly, and a child-like naiveté for sure; Lamar Lincoln reminds Ozzie of Jimmy Holloway so much. Blessed with a smile that could light up a room, just like Jimmy's... Lamar is the baby of seven - five sisters and one brother... seeing him acting like a child in the other room.

"Lamar is a good boy Mr. McKenzie." Sadie inspects her food.

"I've no doubt."

"Can I get you something, juice, cola... maybe a beer?"

You could see this kid gets smothering love from all the
Lincoln women.

"A cola is fine, Mrs. Lincoln."

"Call me Sadie", going to the refrigerator, reaching in. And
giving him a cold coca-cola. "Thanks." "Follow me", Sadie
marches past with a stern stride of a woman who has no time
for small talk.

"Please... have a seat."

Sadie follows Ozzie's seat... beaming instantly from the glare
of her son's accomplishments. Ozzie feels the pride... the
'I've done it my way', kind of pride. Just the two of them are
now sitting in a cramped Chickasaw County living room on a
torn sofa with springs digging into Ozzie's backside.

"My boy is not stupid Mr. Ozzie."

Looking at Lamar's trophies overflow from every available
shelf; can this kid handle a six-million-dollar contract? And
probably a million more of just 'walking around' money? Ozzie
silently wonders while Lamar plays video games with his
brother and sisters in the other room. And can he live alone
in L.A.? Wondering even more.

"He knows exactly what he needs to do for his family."

If you've been doing this for as long as Ozzie has... starting
with illiteracy and poverty, you see plenty in common from
places like these.

"I'm not here to change that, Sadie."

"Good... because my boy needs as many people in his corner as
he can get. Them big-city wolves can tear-out a man's soul,
especially a young man." Sadie sounds like she is quoting the
scriptures. "Where you from Mr. Man with all the money?"

"I'm from McKenzie Alabama Ma'am, born and bred and still very
proud. I go back with my family every July for two weeks to
see my Uncle Ike. Built him a fine place to enjoy what he gave
me all these years. He taught me the right way to be. Nobody
does it by themselves."

Sadie looks away... impressed, but not showing it. "Why should I trust you from all the other ones?"

"Because barbeque and humidity is in my blood."

Sadie freezes at Ozzie while trying to hide a half-smile. Then she gets up, "Got to watch the ones with the smart words", heading for the kitchen. Ozzie stands after she passes, but stops to stare at all the trophies while Sadie has already fled. He gets closer and starts to read the accomplishments... plus admires all the Polaroids in tidy frames that show family.

"Dinner everybody", Sadie Lincoln bellows.

Backstory

One of the five most coveted seniors in the country, choosing the University of Texas under Bo Burzynski seemed like a great move from where Ozzie was sitting. He'd met Coach Burzynski many times, liked his approach, his dogged Philosophy to not only teach the game, but to prepare these boys for being respectable Pros and Citizens. "Yes Sir"... "No Sir"... "Pardon me Sir"... Lamar definitely showed a well-schooled politeness. Ozzie's concern went back to confidence, that inner poise to stand up to the leeches who purposely latch onto a kid like Lamar, especially in a city as diabolical as Los Angeles. Ozzie still visits Jimmy's grave whenever he's in South Carolina; he's never gotten over his derailment, which is the biggest reason he cares so much about kids like Lamar.

The number one running back in the country coming out of Chickasaw high school... 10,000 fans cramming a rickety old stadium of equal white and black, even some native Indians from the next county - rare such a racial mix down here - all of them catching a glimpse of this extraordinary specimen. Lamar ran a 4.3 - 40 coming out of high school. He scored 106 touchdowns from over 7,245 yards... a State record. And led his basketball team to the State finals... dunking over anyone at will, while never showing one ounce of emotion the entire time. Was he slow?... or just shy?... started to make the rounds.

At Texas the ascent continued. "He was the best player on the field", became Burzynski's standard phrase after each game. Lamar's media interviews showed an uncomfortable kid who just wanted to focus on helping his team win. His answers didn't come easy. People can be mean.

Six foot three and two-hundred and twenty-five pounds with blurring speed; after four years of college Ozzie was looking at a boy trapped in a man, a very large man's body. "Nice to see you again Lamar." Shaking hands. "Hello Mr. McKenzie." "Ozzie's fine."

Within seconds the kitchen fills with seven large children... and fourteen very hungry grandchildren. "Little ones over there", pointing to a table set up strictly for them.

Everyone listens to Sadie.

Before anybody dares to reach in, "Lamar, please say the blessing", Sadie announces.

Putting his hands together, closing his eyes and facing downwards, the table goes quiet.

"Thank you our Lord Jesus Christ for this meal of sustenance... and thank-you for this great family... and please bless Mr. Ozzie McKenzie... and..."

There has never been a Father in Lamar's life, but Sadie's a fine God-fearing woman.

Ozzie keeps staring at the deep commitment on Lamar's face for his family and his black lab.

"Pass the greens."

"Pass the greens... please."

Sadie is an impressive force.

Scene 8

"Thanks for the wonderful dinner Sadie."

"Anytime Mr. Ozzie."

Ozzie stops on the porch... and leans in. "Call me Ozzie... and I hope you take me up on that offer to meet my wife... I have a feeling you're going to feel much better once you see where Lamar is going to be living. And she really does make a mean pot roast", adding a persuasive grin.

Sadie looks to have warmed up to Ozzie. "I think I will... Hollywood is on my bucket list after-all", with excited eyes.

"And you... I'm picking you with my first pick. You're going to be the leading rusher in the league as long as I'm in charge", with a firm shake. Lamar's arm flexes... he's strong, but humble. "Thank you Mr. Mack... I mean Ozzie."

"I'll make all the arrangements", walking off the veranda... down a few steps... towards his very American middle-class four-door rental. "I'll call you as soon as I get back with all the details."

Waves from both sides.

Ozzie starts the car... and pulls out.

Kids playing in the yard.

Ozzie honks the horn while leaving.

It was as good a first visit as he could have expected.

Speakerphone

"I've been waiting for you to call all day... how did it go?", Evita asks with excitement in her voice. "Couldn't have been better... I really have a good feeling about this kid. He's going to be the difference, I really believe it."

"From your mouth to God's ears."

"Amen to that. How are the kids?"

"Alexa is really nervous about making the varsity team."

"She'll make it."

"It's an impressive team, but yes, she'll make the team."

"What about Tasha?"

"That girl is glued to her phone."

"I hate that phone."

"You and me both, but I'm trying to be reasonable. Only five hours a day, that's it."

"She sticking to it?"

Ozzie pulls over to the side of the road. "Honey I'm going to have to call you back."

"Ya, sure."

Click

Ozzie stops the car... carefully. He looks around at the cars moving past. The odd car keeps passing, but not many. Ozzie gets out of the car, but stays fixed on the inside of that forest. He closes the door firmly. It's a one lane country highway in the middle of nowhere.

Sound of another passing car going the other way.

Ozzie keeps staring into the forest... like nothing else matters. He heads right into it... passing the massive oaks that stand like a sentry at the front of the path.

"Come on... this way."

Ozzie hears it coming from his right... in the distance. He starts to move towards it. Through the bush... dodging trees... definitely not dressed for such an endeavour.

Ozzie looks determined.

The camera flashes back to that kid breathing heavy and running through the forest.

Ozzie stops... he hears something again... and follows that direction.

Further into the bush.

"Come on... point it this way."

Ozzie keeps moving.

Finally he comes out of the forest, and sees a Grandpa and a grandson spending a day fishing together.

"Point it into the weeds this way."

Ozzie wipes his brow.

And keeps staring.

Something has made Ozzie uneasy.

Contact David Zane for the
entire screenplay of - **The Network**.