

MADISON SQUARE
EPISODE 101 - "PILOT"

Written by

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An original series

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ACT I

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE

It's late June, just two days before the start of the NBA free agency tampering window. We're in the press room of Madison Square Garden, where the New York Knicks are about to introduce their new General Manager. Behind a series of microphones are three men:

-JIMMY CARTWRIGHT, 46, owner of the Knicks; owner, president, and CEO of Cartwright Cable Systems. Not a large guy, but definitely the look of someone who hasn't been taking care of himself: carrying booze weight and wrinkles, skin a little too leathery for his age, bad dye job, poorly grown goatee and stubble, other signs of indulgent excess. Dressed in a suit that isn't as well-designed or well-fit as it should be for a man of his means and position. Generally boisterous but also wary of the media.

-PAUL GOLDMAN, 38, the new General Manager of the Knicks. Slender, well-groomed, in an inexpensive but well-fitting and clean suit, skinny tie. (Possibly glasses?) Composed and thoughtful in comparison to Jimmy, if a little more easily flustered by the attention of the cameras.

-HEATHCLIFF "CLIFF" HAWKINS, 47, head coach of the Knicks. Former player, with the imposing size, physique, and energy (picture i.e. Keith David) to match. Dressed in a warmup suit.

Jimmy is reading from a prepared statement, but doing his best to imbue it with sincerity and spontaneity.

JIMMY

"...Even though his body of work is limited, it's very impressive. Paul Goldman is an innovative thinker who's ahead of his time when it comes to the game of basketball, and his fresh take on the game and tireless work ethic are just what we need to return the Knicks to their status as one of the NBA's premier franchises."

(beat)

Okay. Floor's open.

Reporters start raising their hands; Jimmy indicates one.

REPORTER #1

Your new general manager has very little basketball experience. He interned for the Celtics for a couple of summers, but you hired him directly from the statistics department at MIT. Aren't you taking a big risk here?

Jimmy takes a second to consider.

JIMMY

Paul here is one of the smartest people I know. You may think he's just an academic nerd, but he's got a real mind for the game. I think he can best answer that question for himself.

Paul is already not well-versed in handling media, and on top of that is taken aback by Jimmy calling him a nerd, but he tries his best.

PAUL

Thanks, Jimmy.

(to the press)

One of my specialties at MIT was applied analytics. I've been working on developing models to quantify performance in basketball. To find out which qualities and skills correlate with winning games, and specifically which ones are not valued by readily available metrics--

Cliff interjects.

CLIFF

Let me translate that for you from geek speak.

The press laughs. Cliff knows how to play them well.

CLIFF (CONT'D)

Basically, Paul is looking for things we haven't considered before. To find players who are underrated. But I'm still here to coach, to put it all together. Someone who knows the ins and outs of how basketball really works.

Softer chuckles from the press this time. Paul looks like he wants to interject, but Jimmy cuts him off.

JIMMY

It's a good dynamic. We have a good, complementary braintrust here. Next question.

REPORTER #2

Midway through last year, you hired Blue Robinson out of retirement for a senior position. How will he fit into this new front office structure?

JIMMY

Blue's a legend. I don't need to tell you all that. Anytime you can tap into the wisdom of someone with such a celebrated career, you do so.

REPORTER #2

Some would say it's a stunt hiring, that he's 74 years old and doesn't have anything left to contribute. That he's just a name to distract from the recent scandals.

JIMMY

(starting to get
irritated)

Are you saying that?

REPORTER #2

Well, all due respect, but he's not even here today. How important can he be?

JIMMY

Important enough that he doesn't have to participate in this dog-and-pony show.

A little murmuring from the reporters at this answer.

REPORTER #2

What's his role, exactly?

JIMMY

Paul gets the players, Cliff coaches them, Blue offers his advice, and I sign off on everything. Someone else?

REPORTER #3

As mentioned, Paul Goldman is a virtual unknown with little basketball experience. Was this hire an attempt to save money?

Naturally, Jimmy's irritation grows even more with this question.

JIMMY

Why would I need to save money?

REPORTER #3

Well, considering the settlement you had to pay out in the sexual harassment lawsuit brought against the previous general manager...

Jimmy looks like he might break on this one, although he tries to keep himself on topic.

JIMMY

Look, let me tell you something. No one cares about winning more than I do. I hired the best man for the job. You'll see.

Beat, then Jimmy can't help himself...

JIMMY (CONT'D)

And that lawsuit? Ridiculous. Yeah, we paid her off to make it go away. But Dennis Dickinson is a good man. And you know what, that girl lawyered up once she realized she could make a few bucks off it, but I'm in this office every day, and I'm telling you, she liked the attention--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - THE NEXT MORNING

We can tell it's a new day because everyone has different clothes on (although the same aesthetic). It's Jimmy, Paul, and Cliff, along with CONSTANCE DIAMOND-WALLACE (44, not cold but firm and professional), corporate counsel for CCS / NYK, to make sure this goes better than yesterday.

Jimmy is looking directly down at a piece of paper, not even pretending this is improvised or sincere.

JIMMY

(reading statement)

"...the comments I made yesterday do not reflect my values, the values of Cartwright Cable Systems, or the values of the New York Knicks. I apologize to everyone who was caused pain by my comments yesterday, and to all of my employees. Such remarks detract from the hard work they have done changing our culture to be a welcoming, equal-opportunity workplace, and are a reminder that we still have a long way to go, especially me."

Jimmy looks over to Constance after finishing. Constance nods - legal is satisfied. He wads the statement in one hand and stands up.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

No questions.

He starts walking off, followed by Cliff and Paul.

INT. JIMMY'S OFFICE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jimmy and Paul enter Jimmy's office, and start talking after they close the door behind them, walking toward Jimmy's desk. The office itself is mostly modern, glass and brushed steel, a couple of chairs in front of Jimmy's desk, a leather couch at the far end of the office. Behind Jimmy's desk the wall is all window, giving a view down into Manhattan. On one wall are a couple of TVs with seating, and a bookshelf with a few books and photos (all of Jimmy either with Knicks players or famous people). On the other hang a couple items of team memorabilia, a number of guitars (some signed), and a gold record (Kenny Wayne Shepherd's *Live On*).

JIMMY

Well, your tenure could have gotten off to a better start, huh?

Paul's taken aback a little.

PAUL

Sir, I--

JIMMY

(interrupts)

Relax. I'm just busting your balls a little. That was all on me.

(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Christ, though, I could use a drink
after that shit. Fucking press.

Jimmy's path takes him behind the desk, where he keeps a
decanter of whiskey (Glenfiddich 18) and a few highball
glasses. He pours himself two fingers neat, gestures for Paul
to sit, then sits as well.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

So, let's talk basketball. What's
the free agency plan?

PAUL

Well, I've identified some players
who could be great value according
to my models. Of course, my
methodologies are different than
most traditional basketball
scouting, so--

JIMMY

I know. I watched your talk at the
Sloan Conference two years ago.
It's a major reason I hired you.

Paul is taken aback-- he did not expect Jimmy to have the
kind of intelligence or interest for that.

PAUL

Why didn't you mention that // in
my interview--

Jimmy cuts him off.

JIMMY

Let me tell you why you're here.
You're my new general manager
because, even though we're in the
best city in the world, in the
middle of fucking Manhattan, big-
time players still don't want to
sign here. And it's because they've
seen what you saw yesterday and
today. They've seen what a shitshow
this has been. They think I'm a
joke.

Jimmy takes a breath to collect himself and rein his anger
back in.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I hired you because we have to get
creative.

(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

We have to get back to respectability before we can sign the big free agents. That's where you come in. You get us out of the cellar, show players we're doing things the right way, then we can attract big talent. *Capiche?*

Paul takes this all in for a moment.

PAUL

If I may be frank, Sir--

JIMMY

Of course.

PAUL

I think we'd be better off replacing Cliff Hawkins with a new coach. He doesn't seem to share my vision on team-building.

JIMMY

Can't do it. Players respect Cliff. He'll help us with recruiting.

(re: Cliff and Paul)

Old school, new school.

Paul looks at him with an interrogatory stare, like Jimmy isn't telling him everything. He's right.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

(con't)

Plus, he's my buddy.

PAUL

I knew it--

JIMMY

Look, I know we've got to change how we do things. But this is still my team.

(gestures toward the door, indicating the press conference)

You saw that out there. I don't have a lot of friends right now. I'm not sending away one of the few I can count on.

A pause as Paul nods, at least understanding that.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

(con't)

Plus, he knows how to handle the press a lot better than you do. One person putting his foot in his mouth around here is enough.

PAUL

If that's something that matters // to you, sir, I can--

JIMMY

(cuts him off)

I don't know if you've noticed this, but the media doesn't really like us. We've been a punchline for a while. Now, I earned that, but my point is, they're going to trash us no matter what I do.

PAUL

Yeah, I saw the *Post* headline.

(Paul is referring to the story the *New York Post* ran when his hiring was announced.)

JIMMY

I hire you, it's "Jimmy's lost his mind." I fire you, it's "Jimmy screwed up again." If I hired a traditional basketball guy, they'd say "Jimmy has no ideas and is going back to the same old failed ones."

(beat)

They're not gonna like you because you do things differently, and they're not gonna like me because of who I am. Sooner we accept that, the better. They like Cliff. Let him keep the heat off us a little.

PAUL

That's one of my concerns, though. That he's trying to undermine my authority by appealing to them.

JIMMY

Don't worry about that.

(beat)

One thing I want you to remember, Paul: Cliff didn't hire you, and the media didn't hire you. I did.

(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

They're going to criticize you no matter what moves you make, because you work here. But as long as I sign your checks, and I like the job you're doing, none of that matters.

PAUL

I just don't think he respects or listens to me.

JIMMY

If it becomes a real problem, we'll revisit it. But it's still early. Why don't you talk to Blue about him? He coached Cliff for a long time, you know.

PAUL

As far as I can tell he's the only person who's ever been able to handle Cliff.

JIMMY

Well, there you go. Maybe he can teach you something.

Brief beat.

PAUL

Do you want to hear more about the players I've identified?

Jimmy takes a second to think.

JIMMY

Nah, not now. I trust you. Go talk to Blue. I'm gonna jam, get all that out there off my mind. We'll talk later.

Paul gets up; Jimmy sets his glass down and glances to the wall where his guitars hang, thinking about which one he wants to play.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. BLUE'S OFFICE - JUST BEFORE NOON

CORNELIUS "BLUE" ROBINSON, 74, tall and still a potent presence despite his advancing years, is sitting at his desk, reading his own book. The office is smaller than Jimmy's but still comfortable, with decor that suggests Blue is mentally still in a wood-paneled basement in the 1970s listening to records and getting high. Paul knocks.

BLUE

Come in.

Paul opens the door.

PAUL

Hey, Blue.

Blue puts the book down.

BLUE

Our new general manager. To what do I owe the pleasure?

PAUL

I need your advice.

BLUE

Always happy to dispense a little of the Old Master's wisdom.

PAUL

Okay.

(beat)

So... You have a lot of experience managing personalities.

BLUE

Of course. You've got to keep your ego on the bench so that the All-Star within you can take the court.

Paul thinks for a second.

PAUL

Isn't that from one of your books?

BLUE
(affirmative)
*Not Enough Fingers: Lessons for
Success from an 11-Time Champion.*
Do you have a copy?

Blue hands him the copy he was just reading from.

PAUL
I don't, thanks. You sure you don't
need this?

BLUE
(pats his desk drawer)
No, I always keep a few copies
handy, any time someone seems like
they need a little daily Blue in
their lives.

Paul studies the cover. (The book jacket shows Blue about ten years younger, holding up his hands, with a championship ring on each finger, and an 11th ring floating in between his hands. Blue is giving that ring a "How did that happen? That's CRAZY!" look.)

PAUL
Well, thanks. But it's not about
keeping my ego on the bench, per
se. I need some advice about Cliff.

BLUE
I knew a Cliff once. Hell of a guy.
Fled to Nicaragua when he was
drafted to serve in Vietnam. I
think I saw him in a news report
about the Sandinistas once, but I
could never be sure.

Paul is taken aback for a second, having no idea if this is supposed to be relevant, if Blue is having a "senior moment," or if he just likes telling stories.

PAUL
Cliff Hawkins. Our coach?

BLUE
Hell of a guy, too.

PAUL
Well, you remember what it was like
to coach him, right?

Blue stares at him for a few seconds then gives him a small smile.

BLUE

Do you remember, is the question?

Paul's thoughts: *Is he testing me or does he really not remember? A beat; no indication either way. I guess it doesn't matter since he's going to wait for my answer anyway.*

PAUL

You had him for three years in Los Angeles, then you hired him as an assistant a couple of years after he retired. You might know him better than anyone.

BLUE

Knowledge is the key to success. "Before you take your first real shot, you must know the basketball as if it were one with your own body."

PAUL

That's... interesting.

BLUE

It's from my book, *Not Enough Fingers*. Do you have a copy?

Blue reaches into his desk drawer and produces another copy of the book. Paul waves him off.

PAUL

You just gave me one.

Blue frowns. Inscrutable-- not clear if he's upset with his own failing memory, with Paul not humoring him, or something else.

BLUE

I'm sorry, Paul. You know, my memory these days isn't what it used to be. I was pretty wild in my playing days. I ever tell you how I got the name "Blue"?

Paul grasps that this is a good way to get Blue back on side--

PAUL

No, sir.

BLUE

It was 1968. Or 1969. Hard to say. The Rockets were still playing in San Diego, though, I remember that.

(MORE)

BLUE (CONT'D)

So one road trip there, me and a few guys went across the border. Drank more tequila than I ever have in my life. Apparently I thought it would be a fun prank to steal a blue agave cactus. I won't tell you what I did with it...

(chuckles)

But, boy, let me tell you, the tequila farmers do not like that sort of thing. Neither did the Mexican police.

(beat)

The rest of the gang never let me forget it. Anyway, they're all dead now.

Paul stares with the look of someone who has no idea what to make of any of this.

BLUE (CONT'D)

So what were you asking about?

PAUL

Our coach, Cliff Hawkins. I've got some ideas for players we should sign... and I don't think he respects me enough to listen.

Blue seemingly latches onto the word "ideas."

BLUE

Ideas. What I like about you, is that you have big ideas. Big dreams. Dreams are like the three-point line: It's scary to dream that far away from what you know, but when you do, the shots you take are worth fifty percent more.

PAUL

Is that from *Not Enough Fingers*?

BLUE

No, it's from my other book, *Fundamentals and Principles of the Motion Offense*.

PAUL

I see.

BLUE

My point is, when you dream big, people will think you're crazy.

(MORE)

BLUE (CONT'D)

"Oh, you can't build an offense with a forward as the primary ball-handler." "Oh, you can't leave a six-time championship team to go rebuild another one." "Oh, you can't fit a cactus up there." All things people have told me.

Beat as Paul realizes Blue's finished and tries to think of something to say.

PAUL

So what should I do?

BLUE

Well, Cliff's gruff. And he's stubborn. And you're young and inexperienced.

Paul's frustration starts to show, wondering if he's going to have to deal with Blue's disrespect too.

BLUE (CONT'D)

(con't)

But Cliff respects Jimmy's decisions and knows he hired you for a reason. Stand firm. He's testing you. He'll respect you more if you stick to your guns.

Paul nods with an appreciative smile, both surprised Blue had useful advice and surprised that Blue seemingly respects him.

PAUL

Thanks, Blue. I'm gonna schedule lunch with him.

Paul stands up.

BLUE

If you need any more advice, don't hesitate to reach out. Here's my card.

PAUL

I don't need it, we work together-

BLUE

Just in case.

Blue hands Paul a business card; Paul looks at it then looks up confused at Jimmy. Closeup on the card:

BLUE ROBINSON

No titles, no job description, no contact information. Paul senses the futility in pointing this out. While walking toward the door:

PAUL
Thanks. You want it open or closed?

BLUE
Closed. 10 to 1 is my Zen time.

PAUL
Three hours?

BLUE
Says so in my contract.

PAUL
Wow, nice work.

BLUE
Dare to dream big, right?

Paul chuckles. *Maybe Blue is smarter than I thought.* He heads out and shuts the door behind him.

EXT. SANDWICH SHOP - DOWNTOWN - OUTSIDE PATIO - NOON

Cliff and Paul are having lunch at a café near the offices. Cliff is looking over a piece of paper in his hand. After about five seconds:

CLIFF
No.

PAUL
You haven't even--

CLIFF
No.

PAUL
Why not?

CLIFF
This list. It's full of nobodies.
This is what you want? A team of
guys who would kill to play 20
minutes a game?

PAUL
They're all guys my statistical
model indicates--

CLIFF
(interrupting)
Ah, ah, ah. Spare me your voodoo.

PAUL
Research is literally the opposite
of voodoo.

CLIFF
The only statistics that matter are
wins and losses, and you get those
by scoring more points than the
other team.

PAUL
You've described the goal. The
what. I'm trying to figure out the
how.

CLIFF
You need scorers! Look at this guy.
Fourteen minutes a game, six points
a game? How will he help us win?

PAUL
The numbers say he's improved on
defense every year. He's only 23
and could turn into a lockdown guy.
You need-- [defense to win, right?]

CLIFF
(talks over him)
Coulda, woulda, shoulda won't help
us win.

Paul shakes his head in frustration, then remembers Blue's
advice.

PAUL
You know what my mandate is here.
"Get creative." We're going to have
to find guys like this, guys we can
get cheaply with the promise of a
bigger role, guys who could thrive
that way and be good value.

Cliff reins in his bluster for a second-- he's not
unreasonable and he does know what Jimmy wants from Paul,
even if he doesn't yet trust or respect Paul.

CLIFF
Okay, fair enough. Cheap supporting
guys. But you still need an alpha
dog. A leader.

Paul taps the top of the list in Cliff's hand.

PAUL
Right there.

Cliff scoffs.

CLIFF
You're kidding. Alonzo George?

PAUL
Highly efficient, Sixth Man of the Year--

CLIFF
Sixth man! That's my point! He's a backup, a guy who feasts on other backups. That's not what a leader does.

PAUL
But he's so efficient doing it. Even if his numbers fall off a bit in the starting lineup, they'd still be great.

CLIFF
I'm not convinced. Give me Larry Gray any day.

PAUL
Come on. Larry Gray?

CLIFF
Automatic twenty-five points a game.

PAUL
Not anymore. And that's not even the point--

CLIFF
Of course scoring is the point!

PAUL
He's inefficient. Look at the numbers. He's been in the league nine years. Scored 20 points per game or more eight years. But how many times has he made the playoffs?

CLIFF
He just needs the right surrounding
cast.

PAUL
How many?

CLIFF
(begrudgingly)
He hasn't.

PAUL
That's my point. He's twenty-nine.
He's reached his ceiling. He's
never won more than thirty-four
games in a season. It's a bad
investment.

CLIFF
He has what it takes. Say what you
want, but I've had to coach against
him. He has *huevos*.

PAUL
I think you mean *cojones*.

CLIFF
I played in Los Angeles and San
Antonio. I think I know Spanish
better than a Boston boy.

PAUL
Either way, all this talk about
balls is just "voodoo."

Cliff chuckles.

CLIFF
I couldn't expect you to
understand. You're not the
competitive type. You're a thinker.

Cliff's emphasis on "thinker" indicates it's not a
compliment. Paul, however, stops to think all the same.

PAUL
Let me see if I can put it in your
terms.

CLIFF
This ought to be good.

PAUL

Look. An alpha dog wants to be a team leader, right? He wants the ball in his hands with the game on the line.

(Cliff nods)

If Alonzo George is the kind of player I think he can be, he's going to relish the opportunity to take on a bigger role and a bigger challenge. He'll have something to prove. Where better to do it than here? Bright lights, big city. His hometown. You follow me?

Gears turn in Cliff's head for a few seconds.

CLIFF

You think if he's not a real leader, he won't want to come here anyway.

PAUL

Precisely. So will you at least meet with him if I can bring him in?

Cliff mulls the question.

CLIFF

Sure, why not. Get the measure of the man in person. If I can look him in the eye and he stacks up, I just might see it your way.

PAUL

Great, thanks. I'll get to work setting it up.

Paul stands from the table.

CLIFF

Oh, and one more thing.

PAUL

What's that?

CLIFF

This falls on you if it doesn't work out. And I'll make sure everyone knows it.

PAUL

Are you coming for my job?

CLIFF

No.

(beat)

Not yet. But I want to win. I don't want to waste my prime coaching years on voodoo.

PAUL

Thanks for the vote of confidence.

CLIFF

(malevolent grin)

I just wanted to give you a fair shot. Let you know what you're up against.

Paul flashes a sarcastic smile before turning and leaving.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - 12:05 AM

Stacks of books-- basketball, statistics, academic journals-- everywhere. Paul is on the phone with Eduardo "Eddie" Maldonado, Alonzo George's agent, having called him as soon as the tampering window opened at 12:01. We're mid-conversation.

PAUL

Exactly. We believe he's capable of so much more. We really see Alonzo as a centerpiece player. ... No, I understand. Jimmy is trying to take a new approach to things. That's why I'm here. ... Hey, come on. It's just a meeting. And it's me.

(re: Jimmy)

... Yes, he'll be on his best behavior. Promise. Just come in and see what you think. ... Tomorrow? Great. ... I'll pick you up. ... You too, Eddie.

Paul hangs up, excitedly. He glances over to the framed *New York Post* front page on his wall. The headline reads:

CART-WRONG - NEW YORK SICKS - JIMMY SLIPS AGAIN - New General Manager Has No Basketball Experience

Paul's expression betrays a little satisfaction. He knows it's not set in stone yet, but he's already excited for the chance to prove them wrong.

INT. JIMMY'S OFFICE - 10 MINUTES LATER

End-of-day meeting. Jimmy is clearly under the influence but still in the stage where he's able to compose himself. (Nearly empty glass of whiskey on his desk.)

JIMMY

So you were able to score a meeting with your top target?

PAUL

Yes sir. They arrive tomorrow. We should roll out the red carpet.

JIMMY
Of course. Anything you need. Good
first day, Paul.

Beat as Jimmy finishes his whiskey.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
(con't)
Well, second day, but that's not
your fault.

He gets up to refill his glass and grabs another.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Have a drink with me.

PAUL
(uncertain)
It's an early day tomorrow...

JIMMY
Just one.

Paul acquiesces. Jimmy pours him a small amount, refills his
own (with more than Paul's), hands Paul his drink, sits down.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
You know, this wasn't supposed to
be me.

PAUL
...sir?

Jimmy takes a big drink, waits a second for a little warmth
to hit, looks Paul in the eye. He grabs a photo from his desk
and hands it to Paul. Paul sips his while Jimmy talks.

JIMMY
I had an older brother. Charles Jr.
This was supposed to be his team.

We see the photo in Paul's hands-- it's about 15 years old--
shows Jimmy in his early thirties, with a man taller and more
handsome than him but clearly his brother, about five years
older, celebrating a special occasion.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
(con't)
Died in a sailing accident eleven
years ago. Broke Dad's heart. He
was the golden boy.

Paul takes this in as Jimmy takes another drink.

PAUL
I'm sorry, sir--

Jimmy cuts him off, less interested in sympathy than in telling his story--

JIMMY
Dad died two years later. Barely enough time to get me familiar with the family business. But there I am, not even forty, sole proprietor of Cartwright Cable Systems and the New York Knicks... and I have no idea what the fuck I'm doing. Media ate my ass alive.
(laughs)
Shit, my big dream in life was to open a blues bar.

A beat as they both process this, then suddenly--

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Hey! You want to hear some of my music?

Paul doesn't, but this seems like the worst possible time not to indulge Jimmy.

PAUL
Sure thing, sir.

Jimmy grabs the stereo remote from his desk and presses "Play." (Yes, Jimmy is the kind of guy who always has his own music ready to go on his stereo.)

JIMMY
I was going for sort of a Clapton thing here, of course. Maybe a bit of Stevie Ray.

It's mediocre blues-rock guitar with some noodling-- not totally incompetent, but totally uninspired. (For a Clapton reference, it's somewhat less musically interesting than "Cocaine.") Paul tries to get into it, taking a drink. Jimmy closes his eyes and sways along in his seat.

PAUL
I like it, sir.

Jimmy opens his eyes and turns it down.

JIMMY
You don't have to flatter me. But I appreciate it.
(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

And you don't have to call me "sir"
when we're hanging out.

Longer beat as Jimmy takes another sip, thinking of what to say--

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Charles made headlines. I make Page Six.

(beat)

We're both outsiders in this town.
In this league. Me and you. Only
thing's gonna change that is
winning. But you're my guy. You can
be the guy.

Paul's reaction is sincere appreciation. Then he decides to open up a little.

PAUL

I've been an outsider everywhere.
When I was 17 people didn't
understand why I passed on an
athletic scholarship to pursue
academia. At MIT they thought I was
wasting my time studying
basketball. They called me "Dr.
Jock."

(beat)

But this is what I've always wanted
to do. Not that--

(gesturing, indicating
academia)

--Those petty, pretentious people.

JIMMY

We have plenty of petty,
pretentious people in basketball.

PAUL

I don't fit in anywhere. I might as
well not fit in doing what I love.

A beat, then Jimmy nods with conviction.

JIMMY

My guy.

They both have a drink, seemingly on a new level of understanding.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

You can get out of here when you're finished. I know you got to plan tomorrow.

PAUL

Yes sir. Can we do a 10 AM meeting with Alonzo and his agent?

JIMMY

Hell no. I've been drinking all day. See if you can push it after lunch.

PAUL

I want to strike while the iron is hot--

JIMMY

Work with me here, okay?

After a beat--

PAUL

They're flying in from Dallas. They might be willing to meet a little later. I'll go reach out now to reschedule--

JIMMY

Stay. Finish your drink first.
(beat)
And welcome to the team.

The music on the soundtrack comes in a little louder as both men sip their whiskeys-- we slowly zoom out from above-- eventually fade out--

END OF EPISODE