Can't See A Thing

(a short)

Ву

Ed Beach

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INT. STABLER ARENA - NIGHT

We see a young pair of eyes on a face shiny with sweat. They belong to STEPHEN LENNS, 20. An elbow flies into view and strikes Lenns above his right eyes and droplets of sweat fly off his face.

He staggers as the nine other basketball players move quickly to the other side of the court. We hear a crowd of 3,000 yell in protest of their player being struck.

BILL BLACK, 36, wearing the black and white striped shirt of a game official runs up the floor following the players.

O.S. VOICE Billy! How did you not see that? My quy got slugged!

Bill sees from the corner of his eye Lehigh University head coach ROBERT MILTON, 58, and the source of the vocal protest take two steps from his bench and on to the court. They are two steps farther than he is allowed to take by rule.

> BILL Step back, coach!

ROBERT He got punched!

BILL I didn't see it!

ROBERT I didn't see it either but I could <u>hear</u> it! How could you miss that?

A whistle is heard and a crowd that was previously restless is now booing and jeering at a louder volume. Another official has Lenns by the arm and guides him across the floor to the team's bench as blood flows from a cut above Lenns' eye. Robert and a team trainer wearing surgical gloves meet their player as he gets to the bench.

> ROBERT (cont'd) (to Bill) Does that look self-inflicted to you?

FLASHBACK - INT. BLACK HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bill crouches at their home entertainment center while his wife, JANICE, 35, sips from a glass on the couch.

BILL I'm sorry we didn't see this when it came out.

JANICE That's okay. I'd rather watch movies at home anyway.

BILL Popcorn from a microwave isn't the same, though, y'know.

Bill sits on the couch next to Janice and points the remote in the direction of their television. Theme music from the DVD main menu is heard but the sound of a cell phone cuts through the musical score.

Janice looks at Bill who points the remote again, this time muting the sound.

Janice opens her mouth to speak into her phone but makes no sound. She closes her mouth and looks at her husband.

JANICE (into phone) Yes. Can you hold on a minute?

JANICE (CONT'D) (to Bill) I need to take this. It's...it's a work thing. I may be awhile. We can watch this some other night.

BILL We might as well later tonight, though. With Emma at Abby's house let's just stay up.

Janice walks out of the room, looks at Bill and shrugs her shoulders.

INT. STABLER ARENA - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Bill is under the basket and sees a Lehigh player jump to grab the ball on a missed shot. He stumbles as he lands committing a clear traveling violation. Bill blows his whistle. Instead of traveling, he points at a Bucknell player signaling a foul.

BILL (to the scorer's table) Foul on fourteen, green. One, four, green with a push. White's ball.

O.S. VOICE Was that a make-up call?

Bill looks toward the Bucknell University bench. The voice belongs to PAUL WORTHEN, 48. Worthen smirks but he is clearly irritated.

> PAUL That's a make-up call.

BILL You know we don't we do that.

PAUL Yes you do because you just called one! He didn't touch him. That was terrible!

FLASHBACK - INT. BLACK HOUSE KITCHEN - EVENING

EMMA, 9, wearing a t-shirt and shorts, runs into the kitchen from the door to the garage and picks ups speed toward the living room. A second later, Bill enters the kitchen carrying Emma's backpack and gym bag.

> BILL (loudly to Emma) Coach said you did a good job tonight!

O.S. EMMA Yeah! When do we eat?

BILL I thought your mom would be home. I'm gonna call her and see what we're doing.

Bill takes a cell phone from his pocket and dials. He hears it ring several times until her voice mail kicks in.

> BILL (into phone) Hey, it's me. We just got home and saw you weren't here. I can fix her (MORE)

BILL (cont'd) something to eat I guess but I didn't want to leave you out. So...give me a call back and tell me what you want to do, okay?

Bill walks into the living room where Emma is watching television.

BILL (cont'd) Well mom didn't answer so...we'll give her a few minutes and then get some dinner, okay?

Emma nods as she looks at the TV. Bill's cell rings.

BILL (cont'd) (into phone) Hey.

O.S. JANICE (on phone) Hey. I'm sorry. I was out shopping and I just lost track of time. Are you guys home already?

BILL Yeah, it's six-fifteen.

O.S. JANICE (on phone) Oh. I wasn't planning on going but some people at work said there were some good sales and I thought I'd look. I didn't even get anything. Sorry but I didn't see what time it was.

BILL Well I haven't started dinner yet.

O.S. JANICE (on phone) I'm still across town. Why don't you guys just order a pizza. Don't bother waiting on me. INT. STABLER ARENA - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

Bill is standing on the sideline near mid-court when the ball, heading to no one on either team, flies past him going out of bounds. He blows his whistle and then feels 3,000 pairs of eyes on him.

Bill points to his officiating partner under the basket. His partner's eyes widen. Bill then gestures for both his partners to meet and conference at mid-court while the 3,000 in the stands start another loud chorus of boos.

On the Lehigh bench, Robert turns his back to the floor and yells something unintelligible but was likely profanity.

The three officials are huddled at half court.

BILL Did you guys see who touched it last?

PARTNER #1 Dammit Billy.

PARTNER #2 I had my eyes on the two guys underneath locked up.

PARTNER #1 I'm on the other side of the floor and watching twenty-four push through a screen and was about to blow my whistle.

PARTNER #2 Then we don't have it.

PARNTER #1 It's not <u>my</u> call. (to Bill) You're gonna have to signal it and you're gonna have to tell their bench. (gesturing to the Lehigh bench)

Bill steps toward the scorer's table and holds two thumbs in the air. The already unhappy crowd is now deafening in voicing their displeasure.

> BILL Held-ball!

Bill makes eye contact with an elderly man at the scorer's table in charge of the possession arrow. The man is shaking his head and frowning.

BILL (cont'd) Green has the arrow! Green ball. Out of bounds, right here.

On the Lehigh bench Robert frowns but doesn't protest. He knew what would happen the second Bill signaled his partners for help.

FLASHBACK - INT. BLACK HOUSE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Janice, dressed in an over-sized t-shirt and baggy shorts returns to the bedroom after brushing her teeth. She smiles as Bill takes her by the hand and leans in to kiss.

She turns slightly to one side.

BILL I missed you.

He moves in to kiss again. Janice takes a small step back.

JANICE I love you, too. Good night.

BILL Are you okay?

JANICE

Yeah.

BILL I just thought...I'd give you good-night kiss--

JANICE

My throat's actually a little...I don't know...it's probably just allergies or something. It's not a big deal, but y'know...just in case you better get some sleep. Can you get me some water? INT. STABLER ARENA - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

A Bucknell player dribbles the ball moving with high speed to the basket. He leaps in the air but collides with a Lehigh player and the two topple to the floor in a heap.

Bill blows his whistle. Before he calls a foul on one of the two players on the floor, he looks for one of his partners out of the corner of his eye. They both are signaling foul but neither is signaling for an offensive or defensive foul. The call is Bill's to make.

Bill thrusts his fist forward and the crowd roars.

BILL That's a charge! (to the scorer's table) Offensive foul. Three, three, green. White ball!

O.S. VOICE That's bullshit, ref!

Bill turns to the Bucknell bench, blows his whistle and signals a technical foul.

PAUL What was that for?

BILL You can't say what you said and--

PAUL I didn't say anything!

BILL I heard it from your bench!

PAUL I didn't say it!

BTTT

That doesn't matter! It's your bench it's your T!

PAUL If you're gonna make a call like that you think we're not going say anything? Can you get one call right before we're done tonight? Just one? BILL

Enough!

PAUL (pointing to the scoreboard) We've only got eight minutes left that doesn't give you much time--

BILL I said that's enough! One more and you're gone!

FLASHBACK - INT. BLACK HOUSE KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Bill, wearing a shirt and tie, has a gym bag and small cooler slung over his shoulder as he opens the refrigerator and reaches in.

Janice enters.

JANICE You're going <u>now</u>?

BILL In a few minutes. I'm at Lehigh tonight. It's about an hours drive. You need something?

JANICE No...I don't want you to rush.

BILL What is it?

JANICE Now may not be the best time. You have a game--

BILL Just tell me. It's gonna bother me if you don't.

Janice looks at the floor. She struggles to bring her head up to make eye contact with her husband.

INT. STABLER ARENA - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

A Lehigh player attempts a three-point shot and the ball misses the rim, deflects off a Bucknell player and goes out of bounds. Whistles stop play and players take positions as Lehigh prepares to in-bound the ball. Before the referee under the basket hands the ball to a Lehigh player to resume play, Bill, standing in front of the Lehigh bench, gives his whistle two quick blows.

> BILL (to his partners) Did that hit rim? Do we reset the shot-clock? Did that deflect off--

PARTNER #1 No-no. It missed the rim, we're good.

Bill nods steps back to his position on the sideline in front of the Lehigh bench. Robert stands from his chair and leans toward him.

ROBERT You okay Billy? It's like all of a sudden you can't see a thing.

Bill continues to watch play on the floor, doesn't turn around but takes the whistle from his mouth.

BILL You have no idea.

FADE OUT