



Byron Scott is a three-time NBA Champion, and he's coached in two NBA Finals. I did not make my high school basketball team. On the surface, this would appear to make me wholly unqualified to criticize the man's performance during the Miami Heat's 48-minute roto-rootering of the Cavaliers' emaciated, maggot-ridden corpse last night. Then again, if we're just talking about "performance" in the theatrical sense—the presentation, delivery, and believability of one's words and emotions—I feel pretty confident in saying that Coach Scott's halftime speech was severely in need of a dramatic rewrite. And I think I've seen *Hoosiers* enough times to take on the job.

In case you missed it, the real Byron Scott calmly greeted his troops at the midway point of the Heat game with a simple request. "Make 'em feel you." If they were going to lose, so be it. Just make them feel you. Impede their movement a bit. Occupy some of their space. Engage in some direct human interaction—a little petting perhaps. "Just make them feel you, and I'm good."

By contrast, here is the Hollywood rewrite of Byron Scott's halftime speech, as developed for the greenlit Universal Studios adaptation of the Heat-Cavaliers game tentatively titled "Tall

Fockers,” and starring Terrance Howard as Coach Scott, Stringer Bell as He Who Shall Not Be Named, and Will Smith’s son as Boobie Gibson.

**Interior: Cavalier Locker Room.** Despite trailing Miami 59-40 in the most anticipated game of the year, the Cleveland players are milling about, cracking jokes, and listening to their iPods with seemingly little to no concern for the their staggeringly poor performance.

Suddenly, the locker room goes pitch black.

“What the hell? Somebody turned the lights out!” says Jawad Williams.

“Thanks, Captain Obvious!” chimes Ramon Sessions.

You get the general idea. These guys are a hilarious, light-hearted bunch.

Then, *thwack!* A clipboard slams on the floor and a single light bulb flickers on, dangling by a string. It's swinging ominously in the darkness, reflecting its yellow core in the startled irises of the huddled Cavs players, sending them into a hypnotic trance of sorts.

Finally, a deep, commanding voice breaks the silence.

“Where is your pride?” the voice asks sternly. “Where is your dignity? Where, gentlemen, is your fire?!”

Out of the shadows, Coach Byron Scott's face appears, grizzled and underlit by the lightbulb; glaring out at his men with a strangely stoic ferocity. He begins slowly stalking the room, pacing like a panther and speaking with a hard emphasis on each and every syllable.

“You have all been given a rare gift. ... An opportunity most men only dream of. ...The chance to do what you love every day. To be the ambassadors for an entire community. To carry the hopes and dreams of thousands of people with you in your own pursuits. To give a city something to be proud of. ...Basketball—the X's and O's, the various sets and schemes we work on everyday—those things only make up the language of this life. The meaning... the real MEANING is something far greater. ... Why do you think I had us wear the road uniforms tonight, Men?”

“Because they’re pretty?” Anderson Varejao is from Brazil and thus sometimes doesn’t pick up on rhetorical questions.

“No, Andy. That is incorrect,” Coach Scott continues. “It’s because the home whites say *Cavaliers* while these jerseys say *Cleveland*. That’s who we’re playing for tonight. That’s who we represent. It doesn’t matter if you’ve played here for years (Scott stares down at Varejao) or just got off the bus (Ryan Hollins nods). It doesn’t matter if you hate LeBron James or still text him love notes five times a day (a fiery glance at Daniel Gibson, drawing some chuckles from the other players). This is not a goddamn laughing matter, Men!

(cue the dramatic orchestral music’s slow build)

“When I was with the Lakers, we won a lot more games than we made friends. Friendships have their time and place. Jokes are all well and good. On the basketball court, however, there is a different code we live by. Magic, Kareem, Worthy, myself—we knew who paid our salary. And it wasn’t Jerry Buss. We were representatives of the people in the seats—warriors for their cause. Our job—and it was an honorable one at that—was to win for them, and to win for each other, and to play with pride. And when someone stood in the way of that goal, or if someone threatened the sanctity of our mission or the good spirits of our supporters, we would show no

ounce of mercy, no degree of sympathy, no shred of brotherhood with such a man. Friend or foe outside the arena, that man would be our sworn enemy out there on that hardwood. Bird, Jordan, Drexler... I'll go golfing and get a beer with any of them tomorrow. But today.... Today, if it's basketball, I will cut their balls off and stuff them down their gullets without a second's thought."

(Leon Powe grimaces)

The coach pauses for dramatic effect. "When you walk back through that tunnel in a minute, I want you all to take a look around this arena. I want you to listen—really listen—to these people that make our line of work possible. This isn't a movie [*well it is, but you now how in movies they always say how it's not a movie?* ]. This isn't a cheap drama for you to go tweet tweet chirping about on your little phone computer things later on. Those boos and jeers we've heard tonight have real pain behind them, Men. The pain of betrayal, the pain of lost hopes, discouragement, uncertainty. And it's a pain that goes beyond one man. These people just want to believe that somebody is still willing to fight for them. That somebody understands them. That their hard earned money isn't just fueling another pack of self-absorbed, ignorant, spineless manchildren. They can't seek out justice or retribution from where they sit. But we can! We can show a former savior that we have survived and grown stronger without him, because gentlemen, that man had never really been our savior in the first place. He was never really the reason I ended up coming here to coach. The GAME was the reason. Basketball is our salvation! Play the game. Serve these good people. And win or lose, Make 'em Feel You! ... And by that, I mean put LeBron James on his ass and rebound the f\*%\$ing ball! Cavs on 3!"

Re-energized and ready for blood, the Cavs rally together... until they suddenly realize that guard Anthony Parker has mysteriously vanished.

“Oh no, Anthony Parker has mysteriously vanished!” says Jawad Williams.

It’s at this point that either Mark Price, Austin Carr, or Delonte West appears in the doorway and says, “Hey, I heard you guys needed a 12<sup>th</sup> man,” or something like that. Whatever, it’s a work in progress.