

SOUTH PAWS

Written by

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Based on an original story

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. TRAINING CAMP - DAY

A deep-orange baseball diamond, decorated with healthy young ball players, accented by vibrant green turf. Inaudible coaching calls can be heard from all around.

SERIES OF SHOTS - SPRING TRAINING

A) A player fields a ground ball at third base before tossing it to first.

B) Another player catches a fly ball in the outfield then tosses it infield.

C) A line of players perform running drills in unison, breaking into a friendly footrace competition.

D) A pitcher pitches one into home and we hear the crack of a bat.

It's early Spring, and SPENCER MARKS, 22, is keeping up on his skills. He stands poised and ready for the next pitch.

The pitch is thrown and Spencer crushes the ball deep into the outfield. He smiles proudly as he recomposes and cracks another one.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Inaudible chatter can be heard throughout the locker room, accompanied by the hiss of clatter of metal locker doors.

Spencer is all washed, dressed and in his street clothes. He closes his locker and slings his bag over his shoulder.

SPENCER

See you in the big leagues, boys.

He speaks to the other players and they respond with sarcasm.

PLAYER #1

Yeah, whatever.

PLAYER #2

In your dreams, south paw.

Spencer flips the bird over his shoulder as he exits.

INT. NEWS ROOM - EVENING

A SPORTS ANCHOR is talking about the latest deals a drops in major league baseball.

SPORTS ANCHOR

The latest news in sports, the Cincinnati Reds have gone under new management, with a transaction of more than 2.5 Billion to seal the deal.

Pictures are superimposed next to anchor of the new owner, JACK DOYLE, 56, hard looking, and previous owner, simply known in the sports world as TRACE, 71, welcoming grandfather type.

SPORTS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

With the prospect of a few good trades, and *finally* bringing up Spencer Marks to play shortstop, the ball club is expected to do quite well this season.

Spencer's picture is superimposed.

SPORTS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Spencer Marks being the key to the whole puzzle, at least in my opinion, as this team has not seen the likes of such a player since the glory days of the Big Red Machine.

(beat)

As we all know, Spencer was handpicked by former owner, Trace, right out of high school and has since been groomed to play shortstop for the Reds, for the last three years down in the minors.

(beat)

Now I know bringing this team out of its five season slump is a big task for new owner, Jack Doyle, new manager, Walter Diamond, and veteran head coach, Jerry Mack... but I think making the decision to play Spencer Marks at short, is a very good start.

The anchor smiles proudly.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

Spencer and his agent, KEN SHARP, 30, sit at one end of a large redwood table in an expansive meeting room.

At the other end sits owner, Jack Doyle, and manager, WALTER DIAMOND, 40, gruff but welcoming, and a few lawyers with paperwork in front of them.

The beautiful green and red baseball field and endless stadium seats are visible outside large windows behind them.

WALTER

We're not starting you at shortstop, kid.

Spencer looks shocked. His agent immediately speaks up.

KEN

You can't do that!

JACK

We can, and we will, Ken.

(beat)

I'm sure you're aware of my... attitude, towards agents. And I'd appreciate it if we kept this meeting civil.

(beat)

Unless of course you would like to see me demonstrate my ability to be... uncivilized.

Ken, silent now, slumps a little in his chair.

SPENCER

(frustrated)

We have a contract.

JACK

(motions)

Walter.

Walter starts to lay it out.

WALTER

(reluctantly)

We do have a contract that states you are to play a guaranteed eighty games this season, facilitated by Trace before he sold the team in order to, as I understand it, "prove your abilities as a shortstop."

(MORE)

WALTER (CONT'D)

(clears his throat)

However, your deal with Trace to actually play shortstop is not part of your contract.

Spencer shoots Ken a look. Ken shrugs.

JACK

It's called fine print, son. And the fine print says we can change your contract as we see fit concerning your position on the field.

(takes a long puff)

We're not going to play a lefty at shortstop.

Jack smiles arrogantly then stands and walks over to the window to look out over the field.

JACK (CONT'D)

We traded for Harry Foster, he's going to play short. He's a golden glove and has the experience to lead this team on the field.

(puffs his cigar)

We're putting you in center field. A position, we feel, is better suited for a lefty like yourself. And we're offering you a lot of playtime.

Spencer sits silently and stewes in his frustration. He follows Jack with his burning eyes as Jack retakes his seat.

JACK (CONT'D)

(calculated)

We just cannot warrant letting a statistical underdog take the helm of a team that has championship potential.

There is a long silence. Walter finally breaks it.

WALTER

(sincerely)

Look, Spence, we want you on this team, and we feel the ball club needs you and your talents to make this a championship franchise again.

(hesitantly)

But the bottom line is--

Walter pauses and Jack quickly takes the helm again.

JACK

The bottom line is, you're under contract. So you can either take the position at center, accompanied by a hefty two-hundred-and-fifty million dollar contract... or hang onto about five mil of that and sit the bench.

Jack takes a long satisfying puff from his cigar and smiles big.

EXT. REDS HEADQUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

Spencer is mobbed by the press as he tries to get to his car.

REPORTER #1

Spencer! Tell us how you feel about your upcoming season!

A quick hush and Spencer coldly responds.

SPENCER

Not much to tell.

The reporters all bark at the same time as Spencer opens his car door.

REPORTER #2

Wait! What does that mean?!

Spencer stops.

SPENCER

It means, I won't play ball if they won't play me at short where I belong.

Spencer places some sunglasses on and jumps into his shiny sports car then screeches off.

EXT. SPENCER'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Lush green plants of varying types surround the covered patio. Warm lighting is strategically placed around to create a soothing feel.

ALFONSE, 48, Spencer's stepfather, and Spencer are having a beer on the back patio.

ALFONSE

So, what are you going to do about the season?

SPENCER

(takes a swig)

I'm not worried about it.

Alfonse just listens and takes a swig of his beer. The sound of a sliding glass door in the background.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

If they don't play me at short, I won't play.

(beat)

And they'd be fools not to play me.

Spencer's mother, LORI, 45, exits with a dinner tray in her hand.

LORI

You should give Mick a call. I'm sure he could pull a few strings if you needed.

She sets the tray down and takes her seat.

Spencer's face drops and he stares at her in shocked silence.

LORI (CONT'D)

What? You really should give him a call.

SPENCER

(agitated)

Again with this?!

LORI

Alright. Alright.

(snidely)

I just thought baseball was very important to you.

SPENCER

That really helps, ma. Thanks.

Alfonse casts Lori a look to stop pushing then brings the conversation back to baseball.

ALFONSE

Spence, baseball is what you love.

(beat)

You're just going to give it all up over a position?

SPENCER

It's not like that and you know it.

ALFONSE

I know, I know. And I would never want you to give up on your dream. But players get bounced around the field all the time, which means you could play shortstop multiple times throughout your career.

(beat)

But not if you don't have a career.

(long beat)

Can you even walk away from the Reds? Don't you have a contract--

SPENCER

(frustrated)

Can we not talk about this right now? They're gonna play me.

Alfonse doesn't push the issue.

LORI

Of course they will, sweetheart. Lets have a nice dinner, shall we.

Alfonse half smiles and nods his agreement and Lori starts to serve the men some vegetables.

SPENCER

You think I could borrow the RV for a week or so, pop? I'm gonna escape the press while I train for the season.

ALFONSE

I don't see a problem with that.

Lori raises her glass.

LORI

Well, to baseball then.

She smiles and they all clink beers.

EXT. SPENCER'S RV - DAY

The RV passes an arch with a huge sign, which reads: "Thank You For Visiting Ohio"

EXT. RV PARK - NIGHT

Spencer pulls into what looks like a fairly well-kept RV park but lo-key enough to keep him out of the spotlight for a while. The sign reads: "Hitchin' Post RV & Motel".

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Average boys room. Sports posters on the walls. Model airplanes and cars rest on the dresser.

BRENDA ITO, 24, Japanese descent, enters to wake up her nephew, YUKI ITO, 12, who snores under the covers.

Brenda humphs and barks at him.

BRENDA
Wake up, Yuki.

Yuki doesn't budge.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
I'm serious.

Still nothing. She rolls her eyes then stops when she notices a picture of a young, beautiful Japanese woman open on Yuki's laptop. This was his mother, AKIMI ITO.

She sighs and goes to sit on the edge of Yuki's bed.

He's awake under the covers.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
I know you miss her. I do too.
(beat)
I can't believe it's already been a year.

Yuki stays silent under the covers.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
But you can't just lie around like this.

Still nothing.

Brenda's face lights up a little.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
How about, we go to the park and play catch?

Yuki rolls over and uncovers to find Brenda holding up a baseball. He offer a smile of approval.

INT. SPENCER'S RV - MORNING

Spencer sleeps peacefully under a mess of covers, his leg hangs off of the queen size bed. His alarm goes off and buzzes obnoxiously until he stirs and slaps it quiet. He lies still for only a moment then springs up.

EXT. SPENCER'S RV - LATER

Spencer exits in sweats and a matching hoodie. He breathes in the cool spring air and raises his hoodie up over his head before he runs off down the street.

EXT. PARK - LATER

Brenda and Yuki walk up onto a plush looking grass field. Yuki puts his glove on and runs out into the field a ways just as Brenda's cell phone rings.

She picks it up.

BRENDA

Hello?

(beat)

Oh, hey! What's up?

Yuki drops his arms to his side and humphs as he mopes over.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Yeah, I'm just hanging with my little bro.

(beat)

Yes, I have a brother, jeez.

YUKI

Brenda, come on.

She ignores him, clearly engrossed in her conversation.

BRENDA

No, we can meet up tonight.

(beat)

Oh my gosh, you're kidding?

Brenda laughs and Yuki tugs on her shirt.

YUKI
Come on. We're supposed to play
catch.

EDGE OF THE PARK - CONTINUOUS

Spencer is returning home from his run. He can here some commotion as he approaches a young lady and boy.

He sees Brenda throw a baseball over the head of Yuki, as she is clearly engaged in an intense conversation on her phone.

The young boy runs after the ball.

BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Brenda continues to blab on the phone while Yuki returns with the ball.

BRENDA
I know. I could not believe that.

Brenda laughs again.

Yuki tosses the ball at Brenda and hits her shoes.

She tosses him a look.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
(irritated; into phone)
Hold on.

Brenda grabs the ball and tosses it even further.

Spencer stops to watch the spectacle.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Just hang on a sec, you little
pest.

Brenda is about to engage in the conversation again when...

YUKI
(raising his voice)
I thought we were gonna play catch,
not fetch.

Brenda stands their with her mouth open, taking notice that Yuki is a little hurt as he walks off to fetch the ball.

BRENDA
I have to call you back.

She hangs the phone up.

Spencer enters the fence around the field and approaches.

SPENCER

Excuse me.

Brenda jumps a little.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Sorry,

(chuckles)

I didn't mean to scare you.

BRENDA

Yeah, well, you did.

Spencer doesn't have much else and there is an awkward silence.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Okay.

She starts to walk away.

SPENCER

Look, I was just going to say... I play a little baseball.

Yuki approaches as they converse. He looks at Spencer as he drops his hoodie and his face lights up.

YUKI

You're Spencer Marks!

Spencer looks at Yuki and chuckles as he continues to speak to Brenda.

SPENCER

(chuckles)

And I would love to play catch with the little guy... If you don't mind, that is?

Yuki beams.

YUKI

Please?!

Brenda looks at Yuki, then at Spencer, then at Yuki again.

BRENDA
I guess you can.
(reluctantly)
Just stay where I can see you.

YUKI
Alright!

Yuki and Spencer take a few steps out in to the field and start to play catch.

Brenda eyes them as she opens her phone and dials.

BRENDA
(still eyeing them)
Hey.
(beat)
Yeah, sorry about that.

LATER

Brenda and Spencer walk off the field together. Yuki trails behind.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Thank you... for playing with him.

SPENCER
No worries.

Awkward silence for a beat.

BRENDA
Ahem... I didn't catch your name.

SPENCER
It's Spencer. And you're Brenda.
(extends a hand)
It's nice to meet you.

She smiles slightly and shakes his hand.

BRENDA
Likewise.

SPENCER
He's a good kid.

BRENDA
You can tell that by one game of catch.

SPENCER

My dad always said you can learn a lot about someone over a round of catch.

BRENDA

Well I'll have to remember to run said technique by my psyche professor on Monday.

SPENCER

Psyche professor, huh?
(sarcastically)
And he didn't teach you about getting to know you're patient through a game of catch yet?

BRENDA

(giggles)
Not yet. In fact, *she* hasn't mentioned it at all yet.

SPENCER

Well... maybe it's a guy thing.

They share a laugh.

Yuki shakes his head and roles his eyes.

They reach the parking lot and more uncomfortable silence ensues.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Anyway. I, uh, I would love to play catch with the little man again if that's okay. I run by here every day.

Yuki beams.

BRENDA

Oh... I don't know.

She looks at Yuki, who pleads with her with his eyes.

Brenda rolls her eyes.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

I don't see the harm in you guys playing a little catch. You seem like a hot enough... I mean... you seem like a strong... agghh.

She covers her eyes.

Spencer smiles cockily.

Brenda composes herself and takes a frustrated breath before she speaks again, in a calculated manner.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
You seem like a nice man. We'll see
you tomorrow.

Spencer chuckles.

SPENCER
Same time?

She nods.

BRENDA
Mm hmm.

She tries to escape the situation asap.

SPENCER
Bye then.

She just throws him a quick head turn and embarrassed smile as she hastily walks away.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
See you tomorrow, Yuki.

YUKI
See ya, Spencer!

Spencer smiles and raises his hoodie before he starts his jog home.

INT. SPENCER'S RV - DAY

Spencer enters, plops down on the couch and flips the TV on to the sports network.

INSERT: TV

It's a feed of Spencer dropping the last line about not playing, just before his sports car screeches off from the Reds stadium.

The feed cuts to random shots of Cincinnati Ohio natives on the street being interviewed by an off camera reporter.

REPORTER (O.S.)
How do you feel about Spencer's
latest actions?

A large CONSTRUCTION WORKER in a hard hat.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

I think he sounds like a spoiled
brat! Give me a bat, I could use
the two-hundred million!

An OLDER WOMAN wearing a Reds ball cap.

OLDER WOMAN

I think it's noble. He's standing
up for what he believes in.

A BUSINESSMAN in a suit speaks calmly.

BUSINESSMAN

What? Does he think he's too good?

A YOUNG MALE FAN.

YOUNG FAN

He's walking out on his team! My
dad didn't bring me up like that!

BACK TO SCENE

Spencer smirks and gets up.

FRONT OF RV

Spencer sits in the front seat with his phone on the charger.
He listens to a voice mail from Ken.

KEN (O.S.)

(voice mail)

Hey, kid. Look, I wanted to tell
you this in person but I couldn't
get a hold of you. You fall off the
face of the earth?

(beat)

Anyway. You should have taken the
deal, Spencer... They've benched
you for the season. You're out...
and so am I.

(beat)

I have a family to feed, man.

(beat)

Let me know when you want to play
baseball again.

Spencer hangs the phone up and sits for a minute before he
throws it on the dash. The TV still sounds in the background.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

In other news, Mick Taylor's induction into the hall of fame, back in January, sparked him to use the glimmer of publicity to open up a baseball card shop in Las Vegas, Nevada, where he now resides.

INSERT: TV

An image of Spencer's real father, MICK TAYLOR, 62, all smiles, is superimposed next to the newscaster. The feed then cuts to a montage of footage of Mick in his prime.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

During his championship season with the St. Louis Cardinals in 1982, Mick was well on his way to breaking Ty Cobb's all-time hit record, later broken by Pete Rose.

(beat)

However, Mick's career ending injury during that fateful season...

The feed is of Mick colliding hard with the catcher at home plate, then rolling over and holding his leg in pain.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

... crushed any hopes of Mick chasing down the record, and was an overall sad day for St. Louis fans.

The feed cuts to the newscaster himself.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

But Mick's amazing career, up to that point, has earned him a spot in the hall of fame as one of the greatest hitters of all time.

(beat)

So go and visit Mick at his card shop, the Slugger's Corner, if you happened to be in Vegas for the grand opening this weekend, and get an autograph from one of the greats.

The newscaster smiles and straightens some papers in his hand.

BACK TO SCENE

Spencer clicks the TV off and tosses the remote.

INT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP - MORNING

A modest shop with some colorful displays of baseball cards, cutouts of baseball greats and random old baseball equipment.

Mick Taylor sits at a table with some memorabilia and self-authored books sitting around him. He just finishes signing an autograph for a YOUNG BOY and hands it over with a smile.

MICK

There you go, young man. Thanks for coming out, okay.

YOUNG BOY

Thank you, Mr. Taylor.

Mick nods and smiles.

MICK

Who's next?!

There is a pretty decent line of fans that await a meeting with Mick but next up is a face he did not expect.

Spencer steps up and stands in front of him with his hands in his pockets.

Mick is speechless for a beat. He finally speaks up.

MICK (CONT'D)

Spencer?

Spencer smirks and pulls something from his pocket and tosses it on the table.

Mick picks it up to inspect it, it's a baseball card of himself from his glory days.

SPENCER

Don't bother signing it.

(beat)

It was one of my favorites when I was a kid... then I found out you were a fraud.

Mick lowers his head for a second than raises it and speaks softly.

MICK
Why'd you keep it all these years?

SPENCER
I don't know. But I came to give it
to you. I don't want it anymore.

Spencer turns and walks away through the crowd.

EXT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Spencer walks away with his hands in his pocket as Mick exits
and stops him.

MICK
You come all this way to give me a
card?

SPENCER
Don't flatter yourself, Mick. I was
in the neighborhood.

MICK
So you just came to bust my chops
on opening day?

SPENCER
I didn't say that.

MICK
Then why--

SPENCER
I don't know!

Silence for a beat.

MICK
I've been following your story. I
think what you're doing--

SPENCER
I don't really care what you think
about it.
(shakes his head)
It was a mistake coming here.
(long beat)
But I can assure you it won't
happen again.

Spencer storms off and Mick looks as though he wants to stop
him, but he lets him go.

EXT. SPENCER'S RV - AFTERNOON

Brenda knocks at the door.

We can see Spencer walking through the RV as he approaches. He finally makes his way and opens the door.

BRENDA
Afternoon.

SPENCER
Hey.

Spencer takes a moment to focus and manages a smile.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
How did you find me?

She smiles.

BRENDA
Oh, I have my ways.
(beat)
You stood us up.

She smirks at him.

LATER

Spencer and Brenda are standing out by some picnic tables in the RV park while Yuki contentedly throws stones into a vacant lot next door.

Spencer can't seem to keep his attention off of Yuki.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
So what are you going to do?

They both laugh.

Spencer watches Yuki closely and quizzically as he throws stones with his left hand.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
So, what are you going to do now?

SPENCER
Not much I can do.
(beat)
They called my bluff.
(beat)
I'm benched.

BRENDA
I meant about your dad.

SPENCER
Oh.
(disgusted)
Nothing...
(beat)
I uh...

Spencer stops and stares at Yuki as he throws the stones. His face suddenly lights up.

BRENDA
What?

Spencer focuses in on Yuki's left hand as he throws another stone.

SPENCER
I...

BRENDA
Yooou?

Spencer snaps out of it.

SPENCER
I have to go back home. I have to call my agent.

BRENDA
Now?

SPENCER
Yeah. I'll be back in a few days.
(beat)
When I come back... you want to get a cup of coffee with me?

Brenda is kind of taken aback at this new forward approach.

BRENDA
Uh... I would love to.
(beat)
But where are you going?

Spencer smiles a Mona-Lisa smile.

SPENCER
Hey, Yuki?

Yuki stops and looks.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
You ever play club ball?

Spencer smiles as does Yuki.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

An commercial jet takes off from an airport in Las Vegas.

EXT. AIRPORT - EVENING

The same commercial jet lands at the airport in Cincinnati.

INT. SPENCER'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LATER

Spencer is packing for Vegas again while he speaks to his agent on the phone.

SPENCER
(into phone)
Kenny, just get me the coverage. I assure, the press alone will be worth it for you.
(beat)
Alright, thanks.

Spencer hangs the phone up just as Alfonse enters the room and rests in the doorway.

ALFONSE
You sure you know what you're doing?

SPENCER
Yeah, pop. I know it seems a little crazy, but this is something I have to do.

ALFONSE
You have to do?

SPENCER
Yeah, pop. Let me get the team together and I'll show you. I'll show everyone.

ALFONSE
You don't have to show anyone anything.

Spencer stops, probably sensing the talk that is coming on.

ALFONSE (CONT'D)

Look, son. These kids you're going to get together don't want the same thing you do, whatever that is. I'm not even sure anymore.

(beat)

Just try to remember that.

Alfonse leaves the room without another word or a response from Spencer.

Spencer stands for a moment with a handful of clothes. He tosses the clothes in his bag, visibly frustrated.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

An commercial jet takes off from an airport in Cincinnati.

EXT. AIRPORT - EVENING

The same commercial jet lands at the airport in Las Vegas.

INT. AIRPORT - LATER

Spencer exits the security zone of the airport, his carryon lugged over his shoulder. He's in the middle of a text conversation with Brenda.

INSERT: TEXT, which reads:

SPENCER

JUST LANDED. HOW ABOUT THAT COFFEE?

BRENDA

YEAH... ABOUT THAT...

BACK TO SCENE

Spencer looks at his phone quizzically.

INT. BRENDA'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - LATER

Brenda and her mother, JENNY ITO, 61, sit on the couch with a silent stare. Yuki sits between them, glancing up, back-and-forth between them, as he waits for someone to speak.

Jenny's face is a stone cold, imposing grimace.

Brenda has a comical, "I'm sorry" look.

Spencer waits opposite to the three of them, in the uncomfortable silence, on a chair that was apparently pulled out just for him.

SPENCER
(softly)
Ahem.

He shifts in his seat, slouches, then quickly sits up straight again.

Jenny's eyes probe and evaluate the young man for a long beat before she speaks in Japanese. After she speaks a stern, short question, Brenda translates.

BRENDA
She says, "What are your
intensions?"

Spencer is caught off guard.

SPENCER
I, uh... my intensions?

Jenny doesn't say anything, only probes him further with her eyes.

Brenda nods and smiles a little. She is clearly enjoying this.

Yuki simply casts a smart-alec smile in anticipation of his answer.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Uh... well.
(takes a breath)
My intensions with Yuki are to show him how to honor the game of baseball; to teach him discipline and hard work; and to teach him what it means to be on a team of boys just like himself.

Brenda translates and Spencer waits.

Jenny doesn't take her eyes off of Spencer the whole time. When Brenda is done translating she offers the slightest nod of approval, but her probing scowl remains.

After a short beat she speaks again and Brenda translates.

BRENDA
And she says now, "What about with my daughter?"

Brenda clearly hangs on the response of this question.

Jenny folds her arms now.

Yuki sees this and folds his arms and tries to mimic his grandmother's scowl.

SPENCER

With Brenda...

(smiles nervously)

Uh...

Spencer appears to search his own brain for an answer. He stops and smiles slightly.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Coffee.

Yuki and Brenda try not to laugh.

Jenny casts him a look that says, "Fine, smart-alec, but I'm watching you," then she gets up and leaves the room.

Spencer sighs.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - LATER

A charming little coffee house with an upper balcony area, where Brenda and Spencer chat over a couple cups of coffee.

BRENDA

I can't believe you said that to her.

Spencer smiles.

SPENCER

You know, I was just thinking the same thing.

She laughs then changes the subject.

BRENDA

So why the sudden interest in little league?

SPENCER

Well, the idea actually came to me the other day while I was watching Yuki throw stones.

Spencer chuckles.

BRENDA
So what about it?

Spencer takes his time.

SPENCER
Well, there's a tournament in Cooperstown, New York every year, that is played out on a world stage.

BRENDA
And?

SPENCER
And, well, the world will soon see... that a lefty can do anything a right-handed player can do.

Brenda looks to be a mixture of concern, happiness and intrigue.

INT. NEWS ROOM - NIGHT

A newscaster is speaking about the latest news off the field.

NEWSCASTER
Well, the question on everyone's mind as of late, off the field, was: "Where the heck is Spencer Marks?"
(beat)
And a couple days ago, we got our answer, when sports agent Ken Sparks, made a public announcement, that Marks, will be starting a private, little-league club team, in hopes of taking them to the annual Cooperstown Dreams Park tournament in upstate New York.
(smiles)
And I am sure the question now on everyone's mind is...
(snidely)
"Why?"

The newscaster simply holds his snide look as we cut.

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

It's the next day and time for tryouts. The line of parents with their kids to tryout is circled around the stadium.

The sign above the stadium reads: "Cashman Field."

INSIDE THE STADIUM

Spencer stands on the pitchers mound and addresses a mass crowd of parents and potential, youth club players.

SPENCER

Welcome, everyone. I want to thank you for coming out today. As you all probably know, we will need a minimum of eleven players, and a max of thirteen, which just so happens to be my favorite number.

(beat)

Today's tryouts will be nothing short of the hardest thing your sons have ever endured. This is to ensure that we form the best team possible to take on the exceptional talent that assembles every year, at Cooperstown.

The crowd cheers and claps.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

I know. I'm excited too. And I'm happy to announce that your local Area 51's, who just so happen to be friends of mine, have been nice enough to grant us usage of this very stadium while we train.

(smiles)

We only have a few short months, so... what do you say we get started?

More clapping and cheering.

SERIES OF SHOTS - TRYOUTS

A) Youth players run back and forth on drills.

B) Youth players lined up, take turns running and sliding into second base.

C) Spencer watches on as youth players lead off and execute base running drills. One in particular catches his eye, a young African-American kid, kind of wiry, wearing sport glasses, who can run like the wind. This is TEDDY CAMP, 11. Spencer smiles and marks his clipboard.

D) An Arab kid, SAM SINGH, 12, lefty, pitches fastballs from the mound while Spencer looks on and nods his approval, he marks his clipboard.

E) A Caucasian surfer-looking kid, KIP SMITH, 11, lefty with long blonde hair, fields balls at second base with lightning speed and accuracy, throwing to Yuki at first. Spencer nods and marks his clipboard.

F) A Spanish kid, MASON NEVARES, 12, lefty, fields grounder after grounder, scooping them up and dropping them to his side to get the next one. Spencer marks his clipboard with a smile.

G) Another player, ANDY JONES, 11, a lefty, cracks a ball from home.

H) Yuki hits a nice line drive up third.

I) Spencer smiles and marks his clipboard.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. SPENCER'S RV - NIGHT

Spencer works on his final roster at the table. He makes a last entry and sits back to admire it.

INSERT - the roster, which reads:

Twelve names from bottom to top,
some of which are: "Kip Smith --
Center Field; Mason Nevares --
Shortstop; Sam Singh -- Pitcher;
Teddy Camp -- Right Field; Andy
Jones -- Catcher; and Yuki Ito --
First Base" At the top of the list
is the team name, which reads:
"South Paws".

BACK TO SCENE

Spencer smiles and rests his hands on the back of his head.

INT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP - DAY

Mick sits in his card shop having a burger. A news report comes on the TV on the wall.

It's an ESPN reporter, female, on site at Cashman Field in Las Vegas.

INSERT - TV

SPORTS REPORTER

I am standing here with Spencer Marks, who, in his hiatus from Major League Baseball, has apparently taken it upon himself to form a little-league club team, which he intends to take to Cooperstown Dreams Park for the annual tournament.

(beat)

Behind me you can see that the young group of ballplayers has been assembled...

Spencer smiles and awaits his time to speak. His team stands together about ten feet behind them by home plate.

The reporter continues.

SPORTS REPORTER (CONT'D)

(to Spencer)

Which I am sure was hand picked by you, Spencer?

Spencer nods and smiles.

SPORTS REPORTER (CONT'D)

And I can tell by that smile that you are very proud of what you're putting together here. Why don't you tell us a little about... *why* you are doing this.

SPENCER

Well, I can tell you that it is the same thing that has always motivated me. The same dream that has driven me since I first put a glove on my hand.

SPORTS REPORTER

But why the sudden interest in little league? You were at the top of the list when it comes to desired rookies.

(beat)

The baseball world is, a little confused.

SPENCER

Well, not desirable enough. Not enough to give me a shot at my dream.

(cockily)

And that's *why* the sudden interest in little league. I'm going to show the world that a lefty can do anything a right-handed player can do.

Spencer turns and presents his team.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

I give you all, the South Paws.

Spencer steps out of the way.

BACK TO SCENE

Mick drops his burger, and his jaw, in disbelief and stares at the screen.

INSERT - TV

The cameraman zooms in on the team and we can see that every player has their glove on their right hand. All of the players are fairly silent but their parents stir behind them, they look shocked and confused.

Teddy Camp, the fast young black kid from tryouts, waves to the cameras and smiles.

PARENT #1 (O.C.)

Are you freaking kidding me?

The cameraman finds UPSET PARENT #1 in the crowd and zooms in. He looks furious, and his anger is aimed at Spencer.

The cameraman pans over to Spencer and focuses in. He looks a little shocked, his cocky smile starts to fade.

PARENT #1 (O.C.) (CONT'D)

You drag us all out here last week...

The cameraman quickly pans back to upset Parent #1.

PARENT #1 (CONT'D)

And our kids bust their butts, and for what?

(beat)

(MORE)

PARENT #1 (CONT'D)

So you can carry out some selfish plot to prove that you can play shortstop?

Teddy's father, GEORGE CAMP, speaks up next.

GEORGE

Seriously!

(beat)

It's bad enough the way you been acting all over the TV, and now you're going to come out here and get my son's, and all these kids' hopes up?

All the parents join in an inaudible rant of anger and barking.

The cameraman pans back over to Spencer, who looks shocked. He glances at the camera and then back to the parents. He swallows hard.

SPORTS REPORTER (O.C.)

Jerry!

The cameraman hears his name and pans over to the reporter, she looks to end the broadcast. She tries her best to speak over the growing angry chatter of the parents.

SPORTS REPORTER (CONT'D)

Well there you have it, folks. Spencer Marks and his quest to prove that a righty is no better than a lefty. But it looks like he may be on this quest... alone.

Jerry the cameraman pans over to watch the parents storm out, arguing with their kids as they go, the young players not wanting to give up so easily.

BACK TO SCENE

Mick drops his head into his hands and wipes them downward.

MICK

(to himself)

Oh, kid, what were you thinking?

He chuckles to himself while he starts in on some french fries.

EXT. CASHMAN FIELD - LATER

The sun is setting and the sky is a warm orange.

Spencer stands on home plate all alone, he stares out into the outfield, still in shock from earlier events.

Brenda watches with a sympathetic look from the dugout, while Yuki approaches and stands by Spencer's side.

Yuki looks up at Spencer, Spencer eventually looks down at him, then turns without saying a word and walks off, leaving Yuki all alone on the mound.

Brenda frowns at what she sees.

The sun sets and disappears behind the mountains on the horizon.

INT. CASINO BAR - NIGHT

Spencer downs a cold beer at the same bar where Brenda works. It hardly looks like he has time to breathe.

Brenda walks up just as Spencer finishes and he lets out a tremendous carbonated belch.

BRENDA

Nice.

SPENCER

(winded)

Thank, you.

She starts to clean up his empties.

BRENDA

I was being sarcastic.

SPENCER

Yeah, well.

(beat)

Can I get another?

BRENDA

No.

SPENCER

What?

BRENDA

You just gonna drink your sorrows away now?

SPENCER
Look, don't start.

Brenda stays calm but speaks her peace.

BRENDA
I'm not starting anything, Spencer.
I'm not going to watch you get
plastered though, every night, just
because you can't play shortstop.

Spencer's face drops.

SPENCER
Now you too, huh.

Spencer gets up a leaves.

Brenda looks as though she feels bad and wants to stop him
but lets him leave.

INT. SPENCER'S RV - LATE MORNING

It's later in the afternoon and Spencer is still asleep. His
head hangs off the side of his bed, just above a spot of
drool.

A pounding on his front door snaps him awake.

EXT. SPENCER'S RV - MOMENTS LATER

Spencer exits, groggily, to find Alfonse standing outside
with some luggage at his side.

SPENCER
Oh my gosh! What are you doing
here?

They smile and Spencer steps down for a hug.

ALFONSE
Well. I realized after we last
spoke that I wasn't being very
supportive.
(beat)
And it looks like you're not
getting much support from anyone
else either.

SPENCER
That's an understatement.

They both share a small chuckle.

ALFONSE

Yeah, well. If this is important to you, well, then it's important to me too. And I believe you need two coaches to go to Cooperstown.

Spencer smiles.

SPENCER

You want to help me coach?

ALFONSE

Nah. I'm not much of a coach... but you need an umpire too.

Spencer looks confused.

SPENCER

So who's my second coach?

Alfonse smirks and shrugs his shoulders. He doesn't even have to say the words.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

No.

(shakes his head)

No way.

ALFONSE

Spencer, come on. Have you ever actually spoken to him?

SPENCER

I've spoken to him all I need to.

ALFONSE

Well, that's my condition for helping you out.

Spencer stops and throws his hands up.

SPENCER

Why?

ALFONSE

Because you kind of have the wrong idea about him.

SPENCER

The wrong idea? He left mom!

Spencer starts to walk off.

ALFONSE
Actually...

Spencer stops and slowly turns around.

ALFONSE (CONT'D)
He didn't.

Spencer turns around. He looks curious but still angry.

ALFONSE (CONT'D)
Look, I'm not asking you to go and hug the guy and tell him you love him.
(beat)
Just come to the stadium with me tomorrow, yeah?

Spencer can't wipe the scowl from his face.

SPENCER
Fine.

ALFONSE
Alright!

Alfonse smiles and picks up his bag.

SPENCER
This was mom's idea, wasn't it?

Alfonse shrugs.

Spencer shakes his head and folds his arms.

EXT. CASHMAN FILED - LATER

Mick hits balls as a pitching machine shoots them out at him.

Spencer and Alfonse walk up as he cracks a nice drive past second base.

ALFONSE
Nice hit, sir.

Mick turns and smiles, takes a remote from his pocket and turns the machine off from home.

MICK
Thank you, sir.
(to Spencer)
Hey, Spence.

SPENCER
Don't call me "Spence".

Mick puts his hands up in mock surrender.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
What the hell am I doing out here?

MICK
I don't know. What are you doing
out here?

Spencer gets frustrated.

Alfonse chuckles a little to himself.

ALFONSE
Well, it's like I said. We're going
to help you coach the South Paws.

MICK
Nice name, by the way.

Spencer just gives him a look.

SPENCER
(to Alfonse)
And why would I agree to work with
him?

Spencer points to Mick.

ALFONSE
Well, I think you guys would make a
great team... for starters.

Spencer goes to speak but Alfonse quickly cuts him off.

ALFONSE (CONT'D)
I know. I know. All I want you to
do is give it a try.

SPENCER
Yeah, I don't see it working.

ALFONSE
Spence...

Mick interrupts.

MICK
Play you for it?

SPENCER

What?

Mick smiles and tosses a ball up and catches it again.

MICK

Home run derby?

Spencer laughs.

SPENCER

Are you serious?

MICK

Oh yeah, I'm serious.

(smiles)

You and me, one game of home run
derby, if I win I get to help you
coach the South Paws.

Spencer laughs in disbelief and shakes his head.

Mick just nods, smirks and spits some seeds on the ground.

Spencer takes another moment to mull it over.

SPENCER

You know what, it doesn't even
matter, because there's no team. Do
you see any South Paws here?

Mick smiles as Spencer says that and his selected players
emerge from the entrances up in the stands and fill up the
seats down behind home plate.

Spencer can't help but smile a little at seeing them.

Some of the angry parents from before accompany them, arms
folded in front. Among them is Teddy Camp's father, George,
who stares hard at Spencer.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

How?

That's about all Spencer can get out at the moment.

MICK

Don't you worry about that. I
smoothed things over for now,
provided you can show some
potential with an all-lefty team in
our first three scrimmages.

Spencer snaps his gaze away from George to Mick.

SPENCER
Scrimmages?

MICK
Yeah. I already have them set up.

Spencer looks at him quizzically.

MICK (CONT'D)
I've coached quite a few little
league clubs myself.
(sarcastically)
Not much else for a washed up old
ball player to do in his downtime.

Alfonse smiles to himself at this last remark.

MICK (CONT'D)
Well. What do you say, kid?

Mick starts tossing the ball up and catching it again.

Spencer shakes his head.

SPENCER
Okay. You're on.

Spencer snatches the ball as Mick throws it up again and walks by.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
And don't call me "kid" either.

Mick holds his hands up in mock surrender again and smiles.

Spencer takes his position at home while Mick goes out to stand by the pitching machine behind a protective cage.

MICK
Say, about three rounds? Ten
pitches a piece?

SPENCER
Should only need one round, I
imagine, old man.

Mick sets the machine to manual and starts it up. It whirs as it awaits its first ball. Mick takes a ball from the basket and holds it at the ready to feed.

MICK
Don't get cocky, sport.

Mick drops the first ball and it shoots down home plate. Spencer intentionally drives it right at Mick and it hits the cage hard.

Mick doesn't even flinch. He spits seeds to his right then smiles and winks at Spencer.

MICK (CONT'D)

That's one.

IN THE STANDS

The kids, Alfonse and the parents look on.

Alfonse smiles and shakes his head.

Teddy riles the kids up in comedic style.

TEDDY

Ooooh!

George laughs.

AT HOME PLATE

Spencer tries to shake it off before he asks for another ball.

SPENCER

Enough screwing around.

He posts up for the next pitch.

MONTAGE - HOME RUN DERBY

-- Spencer crushes a ball deep and the kids cheer and "ooh"

-- Spencer cracks another pitch to "oohs" and awws"

-- the kids cheer and high five

-- George stands, arms folded, and shakes his head

-- the score board shows "4" for the home team(Spencer)

-- Spencer and Mick pass each other as they switch places; Spencer sarcastically bows and directs Mick to the plate

-- Mick steps up to the plate and hits his first pitch out of the park; the kids offer "oohs" and "awws" for him as well

-- Mick cracks another one

-- Mick cracks another; his swing is controlled and less aggressive

-- the score board shows "4" for the home team and "3" for the visitors(Mick)

-- Spencer cracks one

-- another

-- the kids go crazy in the stands; Alfonse watches and laughs at them

-- score board shows "8" for home team

-- Mick cracks one out

-- another

-- another; he's not even breaking a sweat

-- the score board shows tie at "8" to "8"

-- Mick offers a less dramatic direct and bow to home plate

-- Spencer, looking extremely frustrated, swings as hard as he can, crushing the first pitch over the fence, but barely

-- another wild swing for a grounder

-- Spencer swings hard, sweat flinging off his face, manages a double, maybe

-- the kids look a little worried and Teddy buries his head in his glove

-- Mick cracks the next one out of the park

-- Mick cracks the next one even farther

-- Spencer just cold-stares him at home

-- the kids clap halfheartedly but the game has turned from exciting to awkward

-- Mick hits another home run, then posts up for the next one

-- Spencer shakes his head and shoots daggers from his eyes, then turns and walks off the field

-- Mick drops his arms and lets the next few pitches fly by as he watches Spencer leave

END MONTAGE.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

The sun is down low in the sky now.

Spencer storms off towards his rental car as Mick catches up with him.

MICK
Where you going?

Spencer quickly turns on him. He's furious.

SPENCER
Why are you here?!

MICK
Whoa, easy.

SPENCER
Don't tell me to take it easy!

Mick doesn't say anything else. He just lets Spencer breathe.

Spencer composes himself.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
I bet you're pretty proud of
yourself, huh?

Mick lets him vent.

Spencer paces a little.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
You humiliated me in there. In
front of my team!

Spencer turns his back on him.

MICK
(calmly)
How did I beat you?

Spencer speaks over his shoulder.

SPENCER
What?

MICK
How did I beat you?

Spencer laughs in disbelief.

MICK (CONT'D)
You're younger, stronger,
definitely more skilled -- I've
watched you play since you were...

SPENCER
Don't.

Mick stops.

MICK
You can't let your anger get in the
way of your play, Spencer.
(beat)
And you've got a lot of anger.

Spencer doesn't answer and they both share a long silence.

MICK (CONT'D)
I'll just go.

Mick goes to leave. He takes quite a few steps before Spencer stops him.

SPENCER
(irritated but calm)
No.

Mick stops and turns back around, as does Spencer.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
You beat me.
(beat)
You can coach.

Mick smiles modestly and takes a moment before he speaks.

MICK
(softly)
Well, alright then.
(beat)
I'll go tell the team to be here
for practice on Saturday... If
that's okay with you.

Spencer nods, as does Mick before he leaves Spencer alone in the parking lot.

INT. BRENDA'S HOME - NIGHT

Brenda is just getting home from a late shift. She opens the door and momentarily illuminates the room with the hall light, then closes the door.

She flips a dim light on and goes to set her bag down to find a bouquet of flowers, with a baseball in the center, and a card. She takes the card out of the flowers and reads it.

INSERT - card, which reads:

"I still have two more strikes
before I'm out."

BACK TO SCENE

Brenda smiles and shakes her head.

EXT. CASHMAN FIELD - MORNING

Kip stands on the edge of the field by the stands between third and home. He speaks to Brenda in the stands, as though he might have a shot.

KIP
I'm glad you decided to come to
practice today. I think you'll like
what you see.

Kip casts a debonair smile.

Brenda rolls her eyes and smirks.

Spencer walks by and winks at Brenda, she smiles back. Spencer whacks Kip in the back of the head with his glove.

SPENCER
You warm already, Romeo?

Kip's hat is knocked forward. He quickly fixes it and sees if Brenda noticed.

Brenda chuckles as she looks out over the field.

DUGOUT

Spencer walks up and sets down a heavy bag of equipment. Mick and Alfonse stand around the entrance to the dugout.

MICK

You ready to play some ball?

Spencer takes his hat off and approaches Mick.

SPENCER

You know what, Mick. Why don't I just handle this, and if I need you I'll let you know.

Mick just smiles and chews some sunflower seeds around a little in his mouth. He turns and spits then looks back up.

MICK

You're the boss, kid.

He smiles bigger.

Spencer goes to say something but stops and walks away.

The rest of the team warms up with some catch around the field. Spencer steps out in front of home plate and speaks loud enough for them to hear.

SPENCER

Alright, everyone, listen up. Go to your respective positions and I'm going to hit you a few balls to see what you can do.

(pulls clipboard)

Yuki, first base. Sam, get on the mound. Mason, you're at short. Teddy, right field. Andy, join me at the plate. Kip, center field. Carry, left field. John, third base. Chance, second. The rest of you take a seat in the dugout and we'll rotate you in.

All of the kids do as they're told but with little enthusiasm.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Let's go, hustle!

They pick up their pace and get to their positions. All except for Kip.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Where's center?

Spencer looks over to see Kip still trying to romance Brenda by the stands.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Kip!

Kip snaps to.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Lets go!

Kip runs and takes his place in the outfield. Just as he does Spencer cracks a ball into the air, right at him.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Heads up, Mac Daddy!

Kip runs for the ball as it sails over his head. He is not fast enough and the ball drops to the grass in front of him. He picks it up and throws it in to CHANCE, 12, at second, who throws it home to Andy.

Andy hands Spencer the ball and he drives it hard to Mason at short, who skillfully tries to field the ball but is drilled in the chest with it.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Keep your glove up.

Mason rubs his chest as he scoops the ball up and eyes Spencer. He throws the ball to Andy.

Spencer cracks one down the line to JOHN, 11, at third, who tries to field the grounder and takes on in the left arm before it continues into left field.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

In front of the ball.

John rubs his arm and shakes his head.

CARRY, 13, fields the ball and throws it back to Andy.

Spencer shakes his head and drives the ball hard at Sam on the mound, who barely hits the dirt hard to avoid being beaned.

Chance manages to stop the ball and throws it back to Andy.

Spencer shakes his head.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Alright, bring it in, guys.

The players slowly shuffle at a jog.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Hustle, lets go!

They quickly pick up their pace and make their way to the plate.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Alright. Clearly we have some work to do. No worries, it's our first day.
(beat)
Why don't you guys give me two laps since you obviously need to learn how to hustle. Slack off and you'll run two more. Go!

They players drop their gloves and sprint off around the field.

Spencer goes to grab a drink in the dugout.

DUGOUT

Spencer takes a swig form his sports bottle.

MICK
So what do you think?

SPENCER
I think I don't know what I was thinking.

Mick chuckles and spits some seeds.

MICK
Just try to remember they're kids, yeah?
(beat)
This ain't college ball.

Spencer shoots him a look and walks off.

SERIES OF SHOTS - HARDBALL

A) Spencer has the boys lined up in the outfield. He repeatedly hits long shots and has the players take turns trying to catch running fly balls. The players performances are catch-n-miss.

B) Spencer has the boys lined up at shortstop, having them rotate out as he hits hard grounders at them.

They field the balls but they look exhausted as they throw them back home. Spencer barks at them.

SPENCER
Hustle! Lets go!

C) Kips stands by Brenda again, sipping water.

Spencer notices Kip.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Kip!

Kip is startled to attention. He looks at Brenda and points at Spencer over his shoulder.

KIP
What do you see in this guy?

Brenda laughs.

D) Spencer has the boys running laps again.

E) Spencer has the boys lined up around the infield, on their knees. He hits hard grounders to them. They field the balls for the most part but dodge a few that catch them off guard Spencer barks.

SPENCER
In front of the ball!

F) The boys run laps again.

G) More long fly ball drills.

H) More laps. The players are practically falling over in the field they are so exhausted.

SPENCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Come on! Lets move!

The boys all come back around from their last lap and fall over in the grass by third base.

Spencer shakes his head and folds his arms. He smiles.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Pack it in and we'll get out of here.
(beat)
We only have one more practice before our first game.

Spencer walks off and leaves the exhausted players panting on their backs.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

Spencer tosses his bag of equipment in the back seat of his car as Mick approaches.

MICK

You're gonna run these kids ragged before their first game.

SPENCER

Yeah, well, their first game is in a few days, thanks to you.

Mick doesn't press any harder. He lets Spencer get in the car and speed off.

EXT. RANDOM BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

A deep fly ball heads out to center field. A young player catches the ball with ease and throws it back in to second base, the second baseman throws it to the pitcher.

The pitcher drops the ball and the players head in to their dugout.

SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

Andy walks toward the dugout from first, as he just popped out. He takes his helmet off and punts it over the fence and in to the stands.

IN THE STANDS

The helmet hits a big fat guy's super-size drink out of his hand, spilling it all over him.

SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

Alfonse cringes.

ALFONSE

Sorry.

The man grumbles in the background as he walks off.

Alfonse confronts Andy.

ALFONSE (CONT'D)
Really?

ANDY
What?!

ALFONSE
Just get in the dugout.

Alfonse turns his attention to Spencer, who stares out in to the field.

ALFONSE (CONT'D)
Ahem.

Spencer snaps out of it and catches a look from Alfonse.

SPENCER
Alright.

Spencer turns to the boys.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Gloves and hats, gentleman. Lets go.

Teddy drops his head back.

TEDDY
Ahh, do we have to? They're killing us out there.

KIP
Seriously. Don't they have, like, a mercy rule or something?

Spencer looks over his team, they look exhausted. He then looks to Mick at the end of the bench.

Mick smiles, spits and looks out over the field.

Spencer shakes his head.

SPENCER
You guys wanna quit?

TEDDY
(dramatically)
Yes.

SPENCER
Well too bad!
(beat)
(MORE)

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Now get out there and finish the
game.

The team shuffles to their feet and makes their way out onto
the field.

Spencer watches them all leave without a word then looks to
Mick, who tips his hat and smiles.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Spencer sits and stews over a drink.

Mick approaches and sits next to him. The bar tender
approaches.

MICK
(to bartender)
Beer, please?

The bartender cracks open a bottle and places it on the bar.

MICK (CONT'D)
(to bartender)
Thank you, much.
(to Spencer)
So, you wanted to see me?

Spencer takes a sip before he speaks.

SPENCER
Wanted is a strong word.

Mick chuckles.

MICK
You want me to go?

SPENCER
No.
(takes a swig)
I want you to help me coach.

Mick doesn't tease or rub it in.

MICK
Okay.

SPENCER
(frustrated)
"Okay"? That's all you have to say?

MICK
(chuckles)
Well what do you want me to say,
Spencer?

Spencer takes a drink.

SPENCER
I don't know.
(beat)
What do we need to do first? Lets
start there.

Mick takes a swig of his beer and says one word.

MICK
Fundamentals.

Spencer looks at Mick, who smiles and takes another swig.

INT. SPENCER'S RV - LATER

Spencer searches for a movie on the internet on his laptop.

MICK (V.O.)
You ever heard of the "59 Minute
Practice"?

SPENCER (V.O.)
No.

MICK (V.O.)
Well look it up. Google it, or
whatever you kids do these days.
(beat)
It'll teach you all you need to
know to get these kids playing some
good, little-league ball out there.

Spencer finds the "59 Minute Practice" and clicks on it.

MICK (V.O.)(CONT'D)
Watch it over and we'll start on
Monday with a few drills.
(beat)
They're kids, son, not minor
leaguers.

Spencer watches the video intently.

EXT. CASHMAN FIELD - DAY

The same female sports reporter as before speaks into a camera at the edge of the stands over by first base.

SPORTS REPORTER

Spencer Marks still struggles to bring his little league team together, coming off of a tough first loss in a series of three scrimmages.

(beat)

And the public still wants to know: "What's this all about?"

Spencer walks by in the background.

DUGOUT

Spencer joins the team and sets his bag down.

SPENCER

Alright team, gather round.

The team half-heartedly gathers round, and rightfully so.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

I know. I know. I don't deserve to even be your coach after our first game...

TEDDY

Not to mention the practices.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Mm, hmm.

Spencer looks up to see George, folded arms and all, in the stands. He turns his attention back to the team.

SPENCER

Not to mention the practices leading up to it.

(beat)

But, with the help of Mick here, we have managed to put together a series of drills that should help get you all ready to play for your next game... If you'll all give me another chance?

The team looks around at each other.

ANDY

So what are we gonna learn?

Spencer looks to Mick, who nods his head for the go ahead.

SPENCER

Fundamentals.

The team looks around at each other again.

Mick spits and smiles.

Alfonse smiles.

SERIES OF SHOTS - FUNDAMENTALS

A) The team is lined up at arms length apart.

SPENCER (V.O.)

We are going to learn to play
efficiently.

(beat)

Starting with the basics.

Sam stands in front of them and at Mick's command he throws a ball to the second in line while the first throws a ball to him. The two balls make their way down the line like this, alternating from Sam to the next guy and so on.

B) Alfonse tapes up a rag with white tape to make a ball and throws it to Teddy.

TEDDY

What's this?

Alfonse smiles and they go into a drill where the rag balls are simply tossed in front of a batter, who repeatedly hits them into the fence in front of him.

Next to him a player sets up rag balls on a tee while Yuki repeatedly hits them off.

C) John, Chance, Carry, Andy and Mason are on their knees, in a line at third base.

SPENCER (V.O.)

You will learn the importance of
your legs in terms of throwing.

They are fed soft grounders by Spencer then they throw them to Yuki at first, while staying on their knees.

D) The players all line up at the edge of the outfield, with Teddy in front. Mick stands with a bucket of rag balls.

SPENCER (V.O.)
You will learn the basics of
catching the ball on the fly.

MICK
Go!

Teddy starts his run and Mick tosses a rag ball for him to catch over his head while running.

MICK (CONT'D)
Go!

Kip takes off next and Mick tosses the ball, he catches it.

E) Andy takes his batting position at home plate.

SPENCER (V.O.)
You will learn to hit the ball,
with calculation and precision.

Mick repeatedly pitches to Andy on a steady beat. Andy swings like a maniac at every one.

MICK
This drill isn't about crushing it,
Andy.

Another pitch and Andy swings like crazy and misses. He beats the ground with his bat.

F) Kip hits on Brenda, who sits on the edge of the stands with a big hat and sunglasses.

KIP
When you gonna ditch the possum and
get with the awesome?

She rolls her eyes.

BRENDA
(under her breath)
Wow.

ALFONSE (O.S.)
KIP!!

G) Mick stands behind Sam at the pitcher's mound with a bucket of balls.

SPENCER (V.O.)
You will learn balance.

Sam winds up and is forced to stand in the middle of his windup, with his hand held back as he awaits a ball from Mick. He falls over.

Mick smiles.

H) The kids are all at their positions around the infield.

SPENCER (V.O.)
But most of all, you will learn to
play as a team. As a unit.

They throw the ball around, starting with Andy at catcher, who throws to Chance at second, who throws to Yuki at first, and around the bases until it gets back home.

Spencer stands next to Andy at home clapping his hands.

SPENCER
Good job, gentlemen. Lets wrap it
up, we have a game tomorrow.

He walks off towards the dugout.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

It's another scrimmage. The south Paws, in the outfield, await the next pitch.

There's a boy at first, he leads off.

Sam winds up and pitches. The batter strikes the ball and sends it on the ground towards Mason.

Mason bends down to scoop the ball up, turns to his left and throws the ball to Chance at second. The turn is too slow and the runner is safe, but Chance fires it to Yuki and gets that runner out.

Mason looks distraught.

IN THE STANDS

Brenda looks on with the rest of the parents, and a large number of fans.

BRENDA
Good job! Keep it up, guys!

George, Teddy's father, who sits next to her, smirks.

GEORGE
You know we're losing right?

BRENDA
Oh, take it easy, George.

He smirks and humphs.

SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

Spencer looks on but stays silent.

MICK
Shake it off, Mason!

Spencer speaks up without taking his eyes off the next play.
The ball is cracked in the background.

SPENCER
He can't turn fast enough.

MICK
Yeah, I know.
(spits)
Why don't you work with him?

Spencer looks at him.

UMPIRE (O.S.)
You're out! That's the ball game!

Spencer nods his head.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Alfonse watches the sports network in his hotel. It's a
flashback program about a world series from the seventies.

Spencer comes out of the bathroom and joins Alfonse on the
couch.

SPENCER
We almost pulled that one out.

ALFONSE
Yep.

Spencer sits and notices the TV.

SPENCER

Oh boy. The 1975 World Series, game six. What I would have given to see that live.

ALFONSE

Yeah. It was quite a sight.

SPENCER

Quite a day for lefties.

(beat)

Almost every run made that game was by a left-handed batter.

Alfonse looks over at Spencer quizzically.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

The Big Red Machine, huh.

ALFONSE

Why is this so important to you?

He looks at Alfonse now.

SPENCER

What?

ALFONSE

You know what.

(with emphasis)

You could be playing major league ball on the Cincinnati Reds, Spence.

Spencer takes a moment before he answers.

SPENCER

You remember that summer when I was ten, when I went to stay with grandma and grandpa?

ALFONSE

Yeah.

SPENCER

Did you know that grandpa was born a lefty?

Alfonse looks shocked.

ALFONSE

No I didn't... How?

SPENCER

That's what I said.

(beat)

And you know what he told me?

Alfonse awaits an answer.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

He told me a little story about when he was a kid, and how lefties were treated. He said, that his father was so against him being a lefty, that he broke his hand, forcing him to learn to do everything with his right hand.

(long beat)

Said that's just the way it was back then.

Alfonse is silent for a long beat.

ALFONSE

So, that...?

SPENCER

No, no. Well not really. I mean, that just stuck with me for a long while. In fact, I thought I forgot all about it.

(beat)

It wasn't till my first year of college ball, when a teammate of mine had said to me that I wouldn't get to play shortstop once I got to the big leagues, that I thought about it again.

(beat)

Truthfully, I had no idea what he was talking about. So, he laid it out there for me. And naturally I thought it was a load of crap, but sure enough when I started in the minors... it was like I was being oppressed. All throughout my negotiations it all kept coming back to what hand my glove goes on.

(long beat)

I know I'm not being held back from playing baseball as a career... but I'm being held back from playing the game that *I* want to play.

Alfonse sits and marines on Spencer's last words.

Spencer goes silent and watches some more highlights from the flashback sports program.

EXT. CASHMAN FIELD - DAY

It's the next day and the boys are conversing in the dugout.

TEDDY

What? You haven't seen *Major League*?

Andy throws his arms up.

ANDY

What?
(frustrated)
No, I haven't seen it.

Teddy quickly backs up and throws his hands up in surrender.

TEDDY

Whoa! Not a lover of film, I get it.

The other players stand to stop Andy.

SPENCER (O.S.)

Take it easy, guys.

Spencer walks up and sets down the equipment bag.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

What the hell is going on here?

TEDDY

Nothing, coach. Just a little critic's corner before practice.

SPENCER

What's the topic?

TEDDY

Major League.

Spencer looks confused.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

The movie?

Still nothing.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
 (gruff voice)
 "Forget about the curve ball,
 Ricky. Give 'em the heater."

Silence.

SPENCER
 Yeah, never heard of it. Let's get
 to work.

Teddy throws his hands up, drops his head back and sighs.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
 Mick's already on the mound. Sam,
 you'll join him.
 (beat)
 Andy, you're with Brenda today.

ANDY
 What?

SPENCER
 Mason, you're coming with me.
 Teddy, take those quick feet and
 the rest of the guys and start on
 some base running drills: sliding
 and tag-up. Let's go.

The team breaks up to their respective drill sections.

SHORTSTOP

Mason awaits some instruction.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
 Alright, Mason, I need you to tell
 me what hand your glove is on.

MASON
 Uh, my right.

SPENCER
 That's right, so that means you
 can't play shortstop, right?

MASON
 Uhhh...

SPENCER
 Wrong. You can absolutely play
 shortstop. What do you think we're
 doing out here?
 (MORE)

SPENCER (CONT'D)

(beat)

But I do need you to realize that you have to play the position a little differently.

MASON

Okay.

SPENCER

Alright. We're going to work on some turn and throw drills, scoop and toss, and some field and hop drills. All geared on you making the double play.

(beat)

These are some advanced drills, but I think you can handle 'em. Yeah?

MASON

Yeah. Let's do it.

SPENCER

(smiles)

Alright.

Spencer claps.

HOME PLATE

Andy reluctantly awaits instruction from Brenda, who knows nothing about baseball. She smiles at him.

BRENDA

How are you today, Andy?

ANDY

(sarcastically)

Super.

She smiles bigger.

PITCHERS MOUND

Mick stands behind Sam on the mound. Sam winds up and stops halfway through. He does better at balancing this time but eventually stumbles.

Mick looks down at him and laughs.

MICK

You alright there, Becky?

Sam shakes his head. He speaks with some flamboyance.

SAM
This is stupid. What exactly am I
supposed to be learning here?

Mick smiles and spits to the side.

MICK
Balance.

SAM
Gross.

Mick laughs.

SHORTSTOP

Spencer stands on second while Mason repeatedly runs, scoops and tosses balls, fed to him by Alfonse, to second base, using only his glove hand. He does quite well.

HOME PLATE

Brenda has sat down against the backboard behind home plate now.

BRENDA
Come and join me.

She pats the clay beside her.

Andy rolls his eyes and starts to walk towards her.

PITCHERS MOUND

Sam winds up again and stops as instructed. He does much better but still falls.

SAM
Aaghh! I don't want to do this.

MICK
What do you want to do then, cream
puff?

Sam looks at him for a beat.

SAM
I want to sing!

Mick looks shocked.

HOME PLATE

Brenda gently drills Andy on his past.

ANDY

Why don't you tell me about your family?

ANDY (CONT'D)

Do we have to do this?

She smiles.

SHORTSTOP

Alfonse feeds balls while Spencer demonstrates.

SPENCER

Another one that might be a little easier is tagging the runner yourself then throwing to first.

(to Yuki at first)

You ready?!

Yuki nods and gets his glove ready.

Spencer nods to Alfonse and he tosses a quick grounder. Spencer approaches, scoops it up, hops onto second then throws to Yuki, all in one fluid motion. He turns to Mason.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Now you try.

Mason gets ready.

HOME PLATE

Therapy continues.

ANDY

(angrily)

There is nothing wrong with my relationship with my parents. Can't I just be what I am without some underlying reason?

BRENDA

Hmm, what about your brother?

Andy looks up at her and gets serious.

SHORTSTOP

Mason has all but perfected scooping and hopping onto second, followed by the throw to first.

Spencer smiles.

SPENCER

Alright. This next one will be your biggest challenge.

(beat)

When you are further from the base, halfway between second and third, I need you to field the ball then turn to your gloved hand and throw. In that last game you tried to turn to your bare hand and it took way too long.

(beat)

And I need you to start your turn while going down to field the ball.

Mason looks a little confused.

Spencer demonstrates. Alfonse rolls a fast grounder, Spencer bends and scoops the ball while already starting his turn, turns fast on his glove hand and throws the ball at second.

Mason is visibly impressed.

HOME PLATE

Andy is all out bawling.

Brenda half smiles and pats his back.

BRENDA

There you go. Let it all out.

He continues to sob like a baby, causing Brenda to actually look around as if she might be a little embarrassed.

SHORTSTOP

Mason tries to field the ball and turn to throw but he trips. He tries again but misses the ball and trips. Again and again he tries but fails.

PITCHERS MOUND

Mick tries to relate to Sam.

MICK

Alright, Nancy. Don't they have some dance number during these big productions that you like?

SAM

Sometimes.

MICK

Well there you go. Pretend like this is your big night.

(beat)

You and all the other *divas* are putting on the show of your life.

(sweeps his hand)

Your audience is out there watching. And this move is crucial to you not looking like a complete jackass.

Mick smiles and Sam rolls his eyes.

SAM

Is that supposed to help me?

MICK

Supposed to. It's all I got, Betty. Now post up.

Sam sighs and gets ready to try it again. He looks to be in thought. He closes his eyes and faint applause can be heard.

He starts his windup and stops where he is supposed to. His wind up is a little more dance-like this time. He balances there until Mick, rolling his eyes, places a rag ball in his hand, then he finishes the wind up and throws.

Sam immediately begins to jump and scream.

SAM

I did it! I did it!

MICK

Alright, easy there, Sue. Let's see you do it again.

Sam proudly takes his position again.

SHORTSTOP

Mason continues to try and makes visible improvement but fails. He starts to get frustrated and throws his glove down.

HOME PLATE

Andy still sobs while Brenda checks her watch and blows her hair out of her eyes.

SHORTSTOP

Spencer coaches Mason.

SPENCER

Don't worry about it. You'll get it. Let's try again.

MASON

I don't want to try again. I'm done.

Mason walks off.

HOME PLATE

Andy finally quits sobbing and listens to some words from Brenda.

BRENDA

There, now don't you feel better?

He nods.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Good. Now you have the potential to be a good leader out there, and a great ball player.

(beat)

Your team needs you, yeah?

He nods again and they hug just as Kip walks up.

Kip throws his glove down and his hands up.

KIP

Dude!

They break their embrace.

KIP (CONT'D)
Get off my kool-aid!

Brenda rolls her eyes and Andy laughs.

ANDY
You wish, hippie.

Brenda and Andy get up and leave Kip standing there.

Kip eyes Andy.

KIP
Were you crying, dude?

Andy quickly turns on Kip and motions like he's going to hit him, making Kip flinch, then walks away laughing.

PITCHERS MOUND

Mick watches for a beat while Sam all out dances on the mound with his eyes closed.

Mick shakes his head and leaves him to his fantasies.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Lori watches the end of the recorded broadcast of the last South Paws scrimmage.

INSERT - TV:

The reporter speaks over a replay of the final play of the game.

Replay - The South Paws are in the outfield. The pitch is hit to Mason at short and he scoops the ball and tosses it to Chance, who throws to first for the double play.

SPORTS REPORTER (O.S.)
That wraps up the third scrimmage test for Spencer Marks and his South Paws. We actually saw some improvement, and they pulled out the win.

The feed cuts to live shot of the South Paws jumping and celebrating on the mound behind the reporter.

SPORTS REPORTER (CONT'D)
 Maybe a lefty really can do all
 that a right-handed player can on
 the field. But it's just one win,
 and this reporter, has her doubts.

BACK TO SCENE

Lori clicks the TV off and her phone rings, she picks it up.

LORI
 Hi, honey.
 (beat)
 Yeah, I just saw. They looked good
 out there.
 (listens)
 Are you boys coming through town on
 your way up to the tournament?
 (listens)
 Okay.
 (listens)
 I love you too.

She hangs the phone up and ponders with a proud smile.

EXT. SPENCER'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

It's a nice summer day out in Ohio. The South Paws are having
 a little barbecue send off before they head to Cooperstown.

Alfonse mans the grill, while Brenda, Mick and Lori hang
 around and reminisce with beers and smiles.

Some of the kids play football in the grass.

Andy, Kip, Chance, Mason and Teddy sit around a table with
 their bottled root beers and talk "guy stuff."

AT THE ADULTS TABLE

Yuki watches everyone hanging out.

SPENCER (O.S.)
 What are you doing over here all by
 yourself?

Yuki looks up as Spencer sits down.

YUKI
 I don't think the other kids like
 me.

Spencer is taken aback.

SPENCER
Why do you say that?

YUKI
I don't know.

SPENCER
Well... Odds are they just don't know what to say.

YUKI
You think so?

SPENCER
Yeah.
(beat)
Look, if there's anything I've learned throughout my years of school, it's that most kids are thinking the exact same thing but trying to hide it, cause they don't want to feel silly, or look stupid.

Yuki looks unsure.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
I'm serious.
(beat)
Just go up and join 'em. Odds are you have something to say that will get you in just fine.

YUKI
(unsure)
Okay.

Yuki stands and heads over.

Just then Spencer's cell phone rings. He checks it and the screen reads: "Kenny". He looks around then walks off and answers.

AT THE KIDS TABLE

Yuki approaches to find the conversation is about kissing girls.

MASON
None of you have ever even kissed a girl.
(beat)
(MORE)

MASON (CONT'D)

You're all as big a liars as Kip
and Andy.

Yuki walks up and stands next to the table quietly.

The guys all go silent and look up at him.

It takes him a few beats to find something to say. Then he
blurts it out with his thick Asian accent.

YUKI

Once, I walked in on my cousin
taking a shower and I saw her
booby.

The guys all sit in shocked silence for a few beats then
burst into laughter.

Yuki looks a little uncomfortable and maybe even a little
embarrassed.

Mason speaks through his own laughter.

TEDDY

You're alright, Chan.

Yuki half smiles.

YUKI

My name is Yuki.

The guys stop at this remark then laugh again.

MASON

(laughing)

Yeah, we know, Yuki. Sit down, man.

(to Teddy)

Get this guy a drink.

Yuki is welcomed with shoulder pats and continued laughter as
he pulls up a chair.

Teddy grabs a root beer from an ice chest to his side, pops
the top and hands it to Yuki.

FRONT YARD

Spencer speaks with his agent on the phone.

SPENCER

That's great!

(listens)

Kenny, please.

(MORE)

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Playing major league ball, or
teaching kids? It's a no-brainer.

KEN (O.S.)
(from phone)
That's my man. I'll talk to you
soon.

Spencer hangs the phone up and turns around to find Mick
behind him.

SPENCER
Whoa!

MICK
Who was that?

Spencer is speechless for a beat but quickly jumps to the
defense.

SPENCER
That's not really any of your
business, Mick.

Spencer walks on towards the back yard.

MICK
Maybe not.
(beat)
But try to remember that those
"kids" just might be under the
impression by now... that you
actually give a damn.

Spencer turns and talks while walking backwards away from the
conversation.

SPENCER
You're lecturing me on abandonment?
(beat)
That's rich.

Spencer scoffs then turns and walks off.

INT. TEAM BUS - EVENING

The sun is low in the sky, casting an orange glow over the
park in front of the bus.

The South Paws just arrive at Cooperstown Dreams Park in
upstate New York. The atmosphere on board the bus is excited
and chaotic.

A jumble of inaudible remarks from the kids as they point and squawk at the "Cooperstown Dreams Park" ahead.

ALL THE BOYS

Whoa...

They all "ooh" and "aww" as they see the championship stadium beyond the main entrance.

OUTSIDE THE BUS

Teams of all sorts arrive and walk about around the complex.

The boys are stuck to the windows of their bus, grins ear-to-ear.

EXT. COOPERSTOWN BARRACKS - LATER

The boys are still full of chatter as the team makes their way through the barracks.

SPENCER

(to Alfonse)

Why don't you take the boys and look around while Mick and I go and get us checked in.

(beat)

I think there's some early arrival pin trading going on right now.

The kids get all bright-eyed about the pin trade.

YUKI

Yes, I have good pins to trade!

ALL THE BOYS

Yeah. Lets go! Lets go!

ALFONSE

Alright. Alright. Take it easy.

Alfonse and the boys run off.

INT. REGISTRATION TENT - MOMENTS LATER

The booth is an organized frenzy. A young BOOTH ATTENDANT motions the next in line.

Mick and Spencer approach and get signed in.

BOOTH ATTENDANT
What team are you with?

SPENCER
South Paws.

BOOTH ATTENDANT
Oh, man! You're Spencer Marks!
You've been all over the news
lately.

SPENCER
Uh, yeah.

BOOTH ATTENDANT
Well, sign in here!
(motions to clipboard)
And, I assume you've already
forwarded all the necessary
documents, so you can get your
team's assigned barracks in that
next tent down there, you're
jerseys will be in the barracks.

The attendant motions to the next tent.

Spencer finishes signing in and he and Mick walk off.

BOOTH ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
Good luck, Mr. Marks!

Spencer waves over his back.

EXT. COOPERSTOWN VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

The boys and Alfonse walk up to a decent sized crowd of youth
baseball players like themselves.

Teddy feels the need to announce their presence.

TEDDY
Gather round, folks. The South Paws
have arrived, coached by the one
and only, Spencer Marks.

The crowd goes quiet for only a moment to see what is being
announced, then go back to their trading and bartering.

Teddy is taken aback.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
(to himself)
No fans.

BOY (O.S.)

Hey!

A young boy, COREY, 12, approaches followed by his team. They stop and stand in front of the South Paws with folded arms.

COREY

We know who you are. And we know
who your chump coach is.

Andy advances and the rest of them hold him back.

ALFONSE

(to Corey)

Easy, son.

Corey looks up at Alfonse.

ALFONSE (CONT'D)

Where I come from it's customary to
introduce yourself when you first
meet someone.

COREY

I'm Corey and this is my team, the
Reelfoot Eagles.

(smiles)

You've probably already heard our
names--

TEDDY

Nope.

Teddy and the boys smile.

COREY

(smiles back)

You will.

(beat)

Good luck. You'll need it with a
lefty shortstop.

Mason now tries to advance but the team holds him back.

Corey laughs and motions for his team to follow him off into
the crowd.

ANDY

I can't wait to face that guy on
the field.

SPENCER (O.S.)

Hey!

The South Paws turn around to see Spencer and Mick.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

We have our barracks. Lets go get you guys some jerseys.

The team gets excited and shuffles off.

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

The door flies open and rowdy South Paws pile in and rush to find their assigned bunks, marked by their jerseys and hats hanging from the beds.

Yuki follows calmly behind and looks around, followed by the coaches and umpire.

TEDDY

Chan! Over here.

Yuki spots Teddy toward the end of the bunks, he pats the lower one.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

You're bunking with me.

Yuki smiles and makes his way over.

MICK

Alright, boys. You have foot lockers at the end of your beds.

(motions to some boxes)

And as you can see, you have jerseys and hats.

(beat)

The red hats are for wearing around the camp, the navy blues are for the games. I want all your jerseys and belongings organized in your lockers before supper.

The boys start to try on their jerseys and hats.

SPENCER

Dinner's in thirty, guys, then it's lights out -- you have a big day tomorrow. We're going to park the bus and talk to some of the officials.

(to Alfonse)

You wanna stay with the team?

Alfonse nods and Mick and Spencer leave.

EXT. COOPERSTOWN BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Spencer and Mick head for the bus when they walk by an office and Mick overhears one of the camp directors complaining.

CAMP DIRECTOR #1

What do you mean Carol is sick?
Where the heck are we going to get
a replacement to sing the national
anthem?!

Mick stops, sighs and drops his head back.

Spencer notices he is alone and stops and turns.

SPENCER

What?

Mick shakes his head.

MICK

Just go on ahead. I have something
I need to take care of.

Spencer leaves with a questioned expression.

Mick turns around and enters the camp director's office.

MICK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You guys in need of a singer?

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - NIGHT

Sam scoffs and rolls over to go to sleep while Teddy, Mason and the boys finish the film *Major League*.

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - MORNING

Sam sleeps with his hands together under his head, a silly smile on his face. He is suddenly startled awake by some strong hands.

SAM

(groggily)
What?!

He sees Mick hunched over him.

MICK

Hey, Mary.
(smiles)
Get up, I have a surprise for you.

Sam looks dazed and confused. He rubs his eyes.

EXT. CHAMPIONSHIP STADIUM - LATER

The stadium is packed with fans and family and decorated in red, white and blue banners.

Brenda cheers the South Paws on from the stands in a sea of thronging fans.

The announcer introduces them as they enter, in turn, and crowd into the stadium field.

ANNOUNCER

And next, the Las Vegas South Paws!

The crowd cheers as the South Paws enter with their banner in front. They wear their red, home team jerseys. They all look around with ear-to-ear grins.

The South Paws are one of the last teams to enter. They take their place just as the last two teams are announced. The boys look amongst each other.

KIP

Where the heck is Sam?

ANDY

I was gonna ask the same thing.

ALL THE BOYS

Yeah, yeah. Where the heck is Sam?

ANDY

Coach!

Spencer quickly drops his phone and looks to Andy, the boys hush down for an answer.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Where the heck is Sam?

Spencer shrugs just as an announcement blares over the PA.

ANNOUNCER

And now, singing our national anthem, one of our own youth here at Cooperstown, Sam Singh!

ALL THE BOYS/SPENCER/ALFONSE

What?

They are all a chatter as Sam approaches the mound. Mick, Alfonse and Spencer have to calm them down for the anthem.

ON THE MOUND

All is quiet as Sam looks around nervously at the thousands of players and fans around him. He starts to panic and sweat, he scans the crowd for a familiar face and finds Mick.

Mick gestures with his hand as to say "Well, get on with it, Nancy."

Sam smiles and calms down. He then starts to sing and the crowd is immediately moved by the sound that comes out of this young man. He sings like a seasoned performer, with a voice that carries like an infectious wave throughout the stadium.

BEHIND THE SOUTH PAWS BANNER

Sam's teammates stand in awe, hats off and held over their hearts in respect for the anthem. Their faces are filled with amazement and a new found respect for their teammate.

Towards the end of the song, when Sam's voice rises to a crescendo, Andy tries to fight back some tears.

Kip stifles a laugh and Andy immediately reacts with an elbow to the chest just as Sam finishes singing. Kip coughs and tries to catch his breath while Andy and the rest of the teams and crowd erupt into raucous applause.

Sam bows again and again to the crowd.

Mick shakes his head and rolls his eyes as he claps.

ANNOUNCER

Let's play ball!

More raucous applause and the teams start to make their way off the field.

EXT. COOPERSTOWN COMMON GROUNDS - LATER

Sam walks up to his team, who wait for him in the walkways between a group of fields. They stand for a beat and stare at him.

Sam looks as nervous as he did before he sang on the mound.

Teddy breaks the silence.

TEDDY

That was amazing, man!

The rest of the team joins in an inaudible barrage of comments and praise.

Sam holds his hand over his heart in a feminine manner then is welcomed into the team huddle with praise, pats to the shoulders and ruffles of his hat.

Mick looks at Spencer, who checks his phone. Mick shakes his head and plays the role of coach.

MICK

Alright, girls, listen up.

The boys calm down and look to their coaches.

MICK (CONT'D)

Our games aren't scheduled till later this afternoon, so lets go and watch a few games and size up the competition.

The team gets serious.

MONTAGE - THE COMPETITION

-- A youth player from another team crushes a ball from home plate

-- Another player crushes a ball

-- Another hit

-- Another home run

-- A youth player slides into second with skill precision

-- A youth player dives for a ball and catches it in the outfield

-- A youth player runs for home plate as the ball is thrown to the catcher. The runner plows through the catcher and is safe at home

-- The South Paws cringe and make noises of sympathy pain for the clobbered catcher. Teddy swallows a lump in his throat

END MONTAGE.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - EVENING

It's time for the South Paws to play their first game. The players and their coaches are in their dugout mentally preparing for the game -- they wear their home team jerseys so they're up first to bat.

Mick looks to Spencer, who actually checks his phone again. Mick clears his throat loudly.

Spencer looks up and quickly sticks his phone in his pocket.

SPENCER

Okay.

The kids look at him, in need of a pep talk.

Spencer looks at their faces for a beat.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Hey. Snap out of it, guys. You're going to be fine. Just go out there and have some fun, yeah.

(claps hands together)

Lets go.

The speech was weak, to say the least, and there is an uncomfortable silence amongst the players and coaches.

Mick shakes his head.

MICK

Alright, boys. You know what to do, yeah! Now lets play some ball!

The boys clap as Spencer turns to face the field.

SPENCER

You're up Sam, lets go.

The team claps more enthusiastically for their fellow teammate and Sam gets up and grabs a bat.

SERIES OF SHOTS - SOUTH PAWS VS ALLIGATORS

A) The opposing umpire calls strike three and out, and Sam returns to the dugout. Spencer just keeps his eyes on the field and says nothing.

Mick offers some support and so does the team.

B) Andy gets up to bat and leaves the dugout.

C) Andy gets a base hit and his team applauds their support.

Spencer checks his phone.

D) Chance gets up to bat and Andy gets thrown out at second, and Chance at first for a double play.

The boys enter the dugout and Andy is furious.

Mick calms Andy down with a sympathetic shoulder rub while shaking his head at Spencer.

Spencer pretends to play coach, while he checks his phone again.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Alright, get your gloves and get out there, guys.

The boys cast him some looks as they grab their gloves and exit the dugout.

Spencer doesn't even notice.

E) Sam pitches the ball and it is driven right back at him. He ducks and the ball flies past Chance's glove at second. A player from the Alligators runs by on his way to third.

F) An Alligator player is at bat. The pitch comes and he drives it at the hole between short and third.

At short, Mason tries to field it like he was taught but cannot turn on the ball fast enough and the player is safe at second, all the while Andy screams for the ball at home to get the scoring run out.

Chance throws the ball home but it's too late.

G) Spencer checks his phone in the dugout as Mick watches and shakes his head.

H) The scoreboard racks up point after point for the visitors team, and minimal points for the South Paws until the score is 5 - 15.

I) The South Paws walk away from the field demoralized.

SOUTH PAWS VS JETS

J) The South Paws walk away from another field with heads down the next day, wearing visitor jerseys, as another scoreboard is superimposed over the scene, racking up more points for the home team until it reaches 17 - 7.

SOUTH PAWS VS THE HEATERS

K) The South Paws walk away from another field with heads down, wearing home team jerseys, as another scoreboard is superimposed over the scene, racking up more points for the visitor team until it reaches 1 - 10.

L) Lori watches a sports broadcast.

SPORTS NEWSCASTER

If anyone is watching the Cooperstown tournament to follow the South Paws, don't bother. Spencer is making a fool out of his all lefty team, and I can't say that I am surprised.

The TV clicks off and Lori walks away saddened.

M) Brenda watches from the stands with a sad look.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - DAY

The South Paws enter and mope their way to their respective bunks. Andy tosses his hat and glove against the wall in anger.

SPENCER

Don't sweat it guys. These teams are good.

ANDY

Oh yeah! And how would you know?! You haven't looked up from your phone for the last three games!
(scoffs)
Some coach.

Andy storms out and leaves Spencer and the team in silence but not before knocking over a table with some clutter on it.

All eyes are on Spencer as he scans the room then looks down at his hand to find his phone still there. He looks back up as if he wants to say something then swallows hard and walks out of the barracks.

Alfonse goes to catch him but Mick stops him.

MICK

Can I talk to him?

Alfonse nods, backs off and Mick exits the barracks.

EXT. COOPERSTOWN VILLAGE - LATER

Mick catches up with Spencer, who was just checking his messages. Just as Spencer hangs his phone up he spots Mick.

SPENCER

Don't bother. There's nothing that you can say to me.

MICK

You have a problem with me, Spencer?

Spencer mock laughs.

SPENCER

"Do I have a *problem* with you."

MICK

Yeah. Do you have a problem with me? Or do you have a problem with those kids in there?

SPENCER

You were never there for me, Mick! And now you want to play like you give a damn!

Mick lets him calm down for a beat before speaking again.

MICK

You're right, kid. I was never there for you, physically.

(beat)

But I was there for you more than you know. More than your mother, Alfonse and I let you know.

Spencer gets in his face.

SPENCER

Don't you dare bring her into this!

Mick stands still until Spencer backs off and tries to walk away.

MICK

You're mother left me.

Spencer stops and listens with his back turned.

MICK (CONT'D)

Your mother left me... and didn't even tell me she was pregnant.

(long beat)

She eventually told me, and we both agreed that what she had done was for the best.

(beat)

Hell, I was a wreck when we first met.

(beat)

And I know that's no excuse for me not seeing you but its what we worked out together, and I agreed to not come around till Alfonse and Lori were ready to tell you.

Spencer softens and relaxes but keeps his back turned.

MICK (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna stand here and tell you about all the good stuff I did behind the scenes. But what I will tell you is this...

(beat)

I love baseball... and I knew you would too, being my son and all.

Spencer lowers his head and closes his eyes.

MICK (CONT'D)

So I made your mom promise me just one thing... that she and Alfonse would keep baseball a part of your life.

(beat)

Hell, I knew that after your first time holding a bat... or throwing a ball... that instinct, and the sheer love of the game running through your veins, would do the rest.

(long beat)

And then I would get to watch you play.

Spencer opens his eyes but stays turned.

MICK (CONT'D)

And I could see your love for the game.

(beat)

(MORE)

MICK (CONT'D)

I could see it clear as I could see
it in myself, all the way from your
high school career, on up to the
majors.

(long beat)

But then something happened...

A long silence ensues.

Mick finally speaks up, simply and purely.

MICK (CONT'D)

We're ball players, son.

(beat)

It's not supposed to matter what
position you play...

(long beat)

We're ball players...

(long beat, spits)

And so are them boys in there.

Mick holds for a beat then walks away without another word,
leaving Spencer to his thoughts.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - LATER

Yuki sits at the edge of the field watching one of the
competitors games. He rests on his hands on the fence.

Spencer slowly approaches and sits in the empty seat next to
him. He takes some time before he speaks.

SPENCER

I really screwed this up big time,
didn't I?

Yuki doesn't answer, just glances up at him then back at the
game.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Yeah, you said it.

(leans forward)

I don't know what happened, Yuki. I
don't even know when it happened.

Yuki turns his head in his hands to pay attention.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Well, I don't blame you guys if you
want to fire me as your coach.

(beat)

But if you'll forgive me, Yuki...

(MORE)

SPENCER (CONT'D)

then I can show you what kind of
coach I am.

(beat)

And I would give anything just to
be able to go out there and play
ball with you again.

Yuki sits back and smiles.

YUKI

Not a bad start.

Spencer smirks.

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - LATER

Yuki bursts in on the guys, who lay around their bunks.

YUKI

Coach is back!

Not much of a reaction.

YUKI (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? Coach is back!

Andy sits up.

ANDY

Big whoop! Nobody cares.

Spencer walks in humbly.

SPENCER

I deserved that.

Andy lays back down and turns his back as do the rest of the
team.

Yuki looks around for a beat, then...

YUKI

(in Japanese)

Stop crying and listen up!

Yuki sounded like a Japanese general speaking in his native
tongue with such force.

The team slowly sits up and listens.

YUKI (CONT'D)

Your coach has something to say. I think we should at least give him a chance.

No opposition this time.

Yuki nods to Spencer and gets out of the way.

Spencer clears his throat and takes his hat off.

SPENCER

Well... I'm not really good at this kind of thing.

Mick smiles to himself.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

And I know that any apologies I have will sound pretty hollow. So I won't do that to you guys.

(beat)

Instead I just want to let you guys know, that I've been an ass.

Alfonse chuckles under his breath.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

I failed you guys... and it was all because of my own selfish hang-ups about what I thought this game was supposed to be about.

Spencer looks to Mick, who offers a comforting look back.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

And I was reminded recently, about what it means to be a real ball player.

(clears his throat)

And if you'll have me... I'd love to play a few more games with you guys.

There's a long silence and some exchanges of looks around the room.

Both Alfonse and Mick have looks of pride on their faces.

Andy breaks the silence.

ANDY

What do you say, boys?

Another beat of silence before Mason speaks up.

MASON

I say we play some ball!

The boys clap and cheer a welcome back for Spencer.

Spencer smiles and puts his hat back on but is interrupted before he even has a chance to speak again.

CHANCE

But what the heck are we supposed to do? We're the laughing stock of the tournament.

SAM

Yeah, everyone expects us to finish dead last. And we've already been humiliated enough, don't you think?

Silence for a long beat until Mason breaks it.

MASON

Well I guess there's only one thing left to do then...

They all look to Mason for his next words of advice.

Teddy smiles behind him as he recognizes the quote from *Major League*.

MASON (CONT'D)

Win the whole... freaking... thing.

More silence as the quote did not have quite the impact as it did in the movie.

Teddy lightens the mood.

TEDDY

Or at least stick around long enough to give them all a great big shit-burger to eat!

The team erupts with laughter and cheers.

Alfonse looks shocked at the remark. Mick notices and laughs.

MICK

It's from *Major League*.

Alfonse still doesn't quite get it. Mick laughs and puts his arm around him and they join the team, as does Spencer.

SPENCER

Alright, boys, lets show 'em what
left-handed baseball is all about!

Spencer joins in the ruckus as the crack of a baseball sounds over the scene.

SERIES OF SHOTS - SOUTH PAWS: HOME AND VISITOR GAMES

A) Andy, in a home team jersey, smiles from home plate at his hit then drops the bat and runs.

SPENCER (V.O.)

Remember all that we learned back
home. Mick gave us a solid
foundation, lets stand on it.

B) Mason, in a visitors jersey, crouches down in position at shortstop. Sam pitches and the ball is driven right at Mason, who quickly fields the ball with a scoop and toss to Chance, who then throws it to first.

ALFONSE (O.S.)

You're out!

Mason fist pumps and he and Chance bump knuckles.

C) Teddy, in a home jersey, stands on third. He kisses his hands then puts the kisses on his shoes. He gets ready to run and the ball is hit. Teddy runs with lightning speed and slides into home just before the catcher can tag him out.

UMPIRE

Safe!

Teddy stands and claps as he heads back to his dugout.

D) Yuki swings and hits a grounder.

E) Sam pitches and the ball is driven right at him, the ball tips his glove as he tries to catch it.

F) The players from both teams are lined up and walk toward each other, offering high fives as they pass.

G) The boys mope into the barracks, tossing their gloves and hats.

Spencer follows behind, followed by Mick and Alfonse.

SPENCER

Easy guys. You did good the last
couple games.

(MORE)

SPENCER (CONT'D)

(beat)

I saw much improvement! I'm proud
of you guys.

(beat)

Now get some rest. We have pictures
tomorrow... and... the Hall of
Fame!

The boys immediately perk up and start to chatter noisily.

MONTAGE - PICTURES

Each player, and coach, is frozen and immortalized one after
the other, framed in their own baseball card, finished by a
group photo of the team, coaches and umpire.

EXT. BASEBALL HALL OF FAME - MORNING

The South Paws enter the hall of fame building, with Mick
picking up the rear and following them in, the door closes.

INT. BASEBALL HALL OF FAME - CONTINUOUS

Spencer and Alfonse lead the way as the team walks in.
Everyone stops and stands in awe for a long beat before
dispersing in excitement to go and see the sites.

SERIES OF SHOTS - SEEING THE SITES

A) Andy and Chance stand silently, their mouths agape, in
front of the Babe Ruth display. Old black&white pictures and
signed memorabilia adorn the wall in front of them.

B) Yuki walks along a line of wax figure baseball players
from history past. He lets his hands gently glide over the
gloves of the players.

C) Teddy stands in front of the Jackie Robinson display. He
smiles big with admiration.

D) Alfonse, Mick and Spencer stand in the middle of a full
room display of the Cincinatti Reds "Big Red Machine" team.
Mick shakes his head as he stares at a jersey display of Pete
Rose.

MICK

It's a damn shame.

ALFONSE

You said it, sir.

Spencer smirks at the interaction between his stepfather and real dad.

E) Mason stands in front of a display of Cal Ripken, Jr. He was a shortstop. Mason smiles and touches the glass that separates him from the valuable memorabilia.

SPENCER (O.S.)
Come over here, guys.

The team all gathers around Spencer at a very small display in comparison to the others.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Do you guys know who this is?

TEDDY
(wise cracking)
Not a clue, coach.

Spencer smiles.

SPENCER
This, is Wee Willie Keeler.

Nothing from the audience but shoulder shrugs.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Keeler was known as one of the
greatest batsmen of all time.
(beat)
He was a pioneer of what we call
"place hitting".

The boys start to listen more intently.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Willie would always have his eye on
the holes in the infield. He's even
famous for a few quotes, such as:
"Keep your eye open and hit 'em
where they ain't," and "Learn what
pitch you hit good; and wait for
that pitch."

The boys hang on his words.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
But I guess what I liked about
Keeler the most, but didn't realize
it till now, is that he could play
any position there was, infield or
out, and play it well.
(beat)
(MORE)

SPENCER (CONT'D)

It was even said about him once,
that "Wee Willie Keeler was one of
the smallest men ever to play major
league baseball, but he was often
the most important man on the
field."

Spencer smiles and admires the plaque of Keeler for a moment.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

I think that's the way I want to be
remembered.

The boys stand in silent reverence while Spencer has his
revelation, then he quickly turns and speaks.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Oh...
(smiles)
And he's a lefty.

They all share a laugh.

SERIES OF SHOTS - SOUTH PAWS VS BEARS

A) Yuki steps up to the plate and swings and misses at three
pitches. He lowers his head and walks back to the dugout.

B) Chance steps up and strikes out too.

C) Mason steps up and swings three times and misses as well.
He walks back to the dugout.

MASON

That pitcher is insane.

SPENCER

That's alright. We have a good
pitcher too, and you guys are
holding 'em.

TEDDY

Yeah, or they're holding us.

SPENCER

Either way, lets keep it up.

SUPER: Scoreboard, which reads: 0 - 0

E) A ball is popped up to center field and Kip easily catches
it then throws it in.

F) Yuki catches a ball at first and the runner is called out.

G) A Bears player strikes out at home.

SUPER: Scoreboard, which reads: 0 - 0

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

Yuki gets his bat in the dugout. Spencer stops him and crouches down.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
You feeling okay?

Yuki nods.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
The score is zip, zip. Two outs and no one on. Top of the sixth. This is it.
(beat)
I want you to look out there and tell me where they ain't.

Yuki looks out over the field and sees that all the outfielders are playing in close. He smiles.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Yeah. You see it don't you?

Yuki nods.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
They've been playing like that all day. Now go catch 'em off guard.

Yuki smiles confidently and exits the dugout.

TEDDY (O.S.)
Get 'em, Chan!

SPENCER
Let's go, Yuki!

Yuki steps up to the plate and swings and misses. The catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher.

Yuki posts up again and hits a foul ball for strike two.

IN THE STANDS

Brenda watches intently. She folds her hands in a praying position.

HOME PLATE

Yuki watches as the pitcher nods to the catcher, stands, then winds up.

Yuki tenses in anticipation and the pitch is released. Yuki has a moment of clarity and his eyes are fixed to the ball. He connects hard and the ball is crushed long into the outfield.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Run!

Yuki snaps to and runs as hard as he can around the bases.

OUTFIELD

The ball falls far over the center fielder's head. He runs to the ball and finally throws it back infield.

INFIELD

Yuki has rounded second and is well on his way to third by the time the ball is thrown to the cutoff man behind shortstop. Yuki rounds third at the signal of his base coach and runs as hard as he can.

HOME PLATE

Yuki sees the catcher crouch down to catch the low throw and he starts his slide. A lot of dust is stirred and it's too close to call.

All is quiet for a long moment while the dust settles.

UMPIRE

Safe!

IN THE STANDS

Jenny stands and cheers and the crowd goes nuts around her.

HOME PLATE

The South Paws rush home plate to celebrate. They jump and cheer and roughhouse with Yuki to congratulate him.

Spencer and Mick clap as they walk up, smiling ear-to-ear.

SUPER: Scoreboard, which reads: 0 - 1

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - LATER

The South Paws barrel into the barracks in a raucous celebration at their first win. Cheers, high fives and hugs are thrown around.

Spencer, Alfonse and Mick enter after them and admire their team as they celebrate.

SPENCER

Alright. Alright, guys, settle down.

The commotion dies down but the excitement remains as they pay attention to their coach.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

I, could not be more proud of you guys. You did amazing out there!

More cheers and clapping.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

But there's something we have to do now.

Everyone gets serious as they wonder what Spencer is going to say. He pulls a ball from behind his back and holds it up.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

We have to award the game ball.

He smiles and tosses the ball to Yuki, who fumbles a little but catches it. Yuki looks up and smiles ear-to-ear.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

You earned it, buddy.

TEDDY

JACKIE CHAN!

The whole team bursts into a mixture of laughter and cheers as they start the celebration again.

Spencer tries to yell over the noise.

SPENCER

Now have your celebration then get changed! We have dinner in an hour!

He smiles and shakes his head, then turns around to shakes hands with Mick and hugs Alfonse.

INT. DINING TENT - EVENING

Thousands of players sit with their teammates and enjoy dinner. A cacophony of voices fills the tent.

The South Paws eat and continue to bond with each other. They mind their own business when a player from another team comes and interrupts them.

PLAYER #4

Excuse me.

The South Paws all stop and look skeptically at the player.

PLAYER #4 (CONT'D)

My teammates and I would like to trade for some South Paws pins.

Teddy and the bunch all look at each other and smile before they pull out pins and barter in an inaudible commotion.

Spencer smiles and enjoys his meal when something starts to ring from his pocket. He doesn't even notice.

MICK

You're pocket's ringing.

Spencer naps to. He sets his fork down to retrieve his phone.

SPENCER

Hello?

Spencer's face drops and he looks at Mick and Alfonse.

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - LATER

The boys all sit on their footlockers silently as Spencer stands in the center of the room. Alfonse and Mick lean against the wall behind Spencer.

SPENCER

Apparently, Foster went down for the season...

(beat)

They want me to fly out to St. Louis immediately so I can play in the next game.

The team is silent. No one knows what to say.

A long beat goes by before someone breaks the silence.

MASON
You should go.

Mick lowers his head.

TEDDY
What?!

The other kids join in protest.

SPENCER
Hey. Hey. Guys, I'm not going.

TEDDY
What?!

SPENCER
What?

Everyone, confused, quiets down and waits for Teddy's response.

TEDDY
I was just trippin' cause that's
what we was all thinking.
(shrugs)
That's what you're supposed to do
when you hear bad news.

Mick chuckles to himself.

Spencer half smiles.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
(gets serious)
Look, this sucks... but we can't
stand in your way, coach.

MASON
It's your dream.

Yuki just watches on, nothing to say.

Another beat of silence.

MICK
The kids are right.

Spencer whips around.

MICK (CONT'D)

It's what you've been playing for
your whole life.

(beat)

We won't stand in your way.

(beat)

I've already spoken with the
officials and they said we can sub
a coach for you.

Spencer looks shocked, speechless. He looks to Alfonse, who
nods and offers a comforting approval.

Spencer looks around at his young team before him and he
doesn't utter a word.

EXT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - LATER

Spencer exits the barracks with his bag in hand. He sets his
bag down and ponders for a moment.

Yuki exits and stands beside him. He looks up and Spencer
meets his gaze.

SPENCER

I'm so sorry, Yuki.

Yuki has no words. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a
baseball card then hands it to Spencer.

Spencer finds himself looking into a mirror, as he holds a
Cooperstown baseball card of himself.

Yuki runs back in to the barracks and Mick exits.

MICK

Good kid.

Spencer smirks.

MICK (CONT'D)

He'll be fine.

(beat)

He understands.

SPENCER

Like I understood when I thought
you cared more about baseball than
you did me?

Mick is left speechless at this remark.

Spencer picks his bag up and leaves him standing there as some thunder rolls in the background.

INT. SPENCER'S PARENTS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lori watches the latest sports broadcast from the couch.

SPORTS NEWSCASTER

And so, with Foster out for the season, the Reds were left with no choice but to bring Spencer off the bench to play out the rest of the season, starting with the game against the Cardinals tomorrow morning.

Lori clicks the TV off and sighs.

INT. BRENDA'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brenda watch an update broadcast of the tournament from the hotel in the village.

SPORTS REPORTER

You heard it right, folks. The South Paws are finally showing some real improvement, winning their final guaranteed game before heading into elimination rounds, and Spencer Marks has been called up to the majors.

(beat)

Talk about bad timing.

Concern and sadness wash over her face.

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - NIGHT

It's lights out and heavy rain falls on the tin roof of the barracks. The players are down to sleep, but not really.

A look around the room reveals that most of the players are awake in their beds and staring at the ceiling or the bunk above them.

INT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Spencer sits in the connecting airport in Ohio and watches a Cooperstown game on his smart phone.

It's not the South Paws but he smiles anyway. Just then his phone rings and he picks it up.

KEN (O.S.)
 (from phone)
 Hey, big guy. You in route or what?

SPENCER
 Just waiting to board my second flight now.

KEN (O.S.)
 (from phone)
 My man! I have a rental car waiting for you in St. Louis. Fly safe, buddy.

Spencer hangs the phone up and pulls out the baseball card that Yuki gave him when he hears his call to board. He takes a long look at the card before he places it in his pocket then stands and walks away from his seat.

INT. RENTAL CAR - MORNING

Spencer drives a rental car from the airport. He looks determined.

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS

The South Paws quietly get suited up for their first elimination game. Mick tries to deliver a pep talk but the kids are not very enthused.

I/E. RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Spencer drives on as his phone rings. He picks it up.

SPENCER
 Kenny!

KEN (O.S.)
 (from phone)
 Spence! You get the rental okay?

Spencer smiles a Mona Lisa smile.

SPENCER
 I have a rental car alright. Been driving all night. You're gonna have to play some damage control for me, my friend.

KEN (O.S.)
(from phone)
Wait, what? Spencer, what--

Spencer hangs the phone up and speeds on.

Outside, Spencer's car speeds by a sign that reads: "Welcome to Cooperstown!"

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - LATER

The South Paws, wearing their home team jerseys, play the Devils, and the scoreboard already reads: 0 - 1.

SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

The mood is a little sad and quiet.

Yuki grabs a bat then heads for the plate. He makes his way, so deep in thought, that he doesn't not even the commotion that starts up behind him in the dugout.

He steps up to the plate and is pitched three straight pitches, and swings and misses at all of them.

With his head lowered he walks back to the dugout and past the coach at the entrance. He goes to sit down when he hears a familiar voice.

SPENCER (O.S.)
I hope that's not how you're gonna
play the whole game.

Yuki's face lights up and he turns to see Spencer standing there in uniform and smiling. He runs to embrace Spencer and Spencer crouches down to return the embrace.

The team claps.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Did you really think I'd miss a
chance to play ball with my
favorite player?

Spencer pulls out a baseball card and hands it to Yuki. Yuki finds himself staring at his own Cooperstown baseball card.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
I expect an autograph after we win
this thing.

Yuki is speechless with excitement. He simply smiles and Spencer ruffles his hat and stands up.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
(to whole team)
Now lets show everyone how to play!

They all cheer and clap and Spencer offers a nod to Mick. Mick returns the nod with a wink.

MONTAGE - CLIMBING THE LEADER BOARD

-- Sam, in a home jersey, gets a base hit
-- Mason, in a visitor jersey, gets a double
-- Yuki, home jersey, gets a double
-- South Paws name climbs the leader board
-- Spencer cheers from the dugout at the sound of a hit
-- Teddy, in visitor jersey, runs at the sound of a hit and slides into home, safe
-- South Paws climb the leader board
-- Chance, visitor, gets a hit
-- Andy, home, crushes one
-- John, visitor, gets a hit
-- Chance slides into home
-- Andy slides into home
-- John slides into home
-- The South Paws celebrate on home plate as we superimpose their name climbing the leader board until it shows them in the championship game against the "Reelfoot Eagles"

END MONTAGE.

EXT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - LATER

Spencer's on the phone outside. The South Paws' muffled celebration can be heard inside.

SPENCER
I know, I know.

INT. BRENDA'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brenda is on the other line.

BRENDA
Well, just don't ever do it again.
That's two strikes, you know?

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Spencer laughs.

SPENCER
Yeah, I know. I'll keep my eye on
the ball.

Brenda smiles.

BRENDA
How's Yuki doing?

SPENCER
He's doing great. He got the game
ball for our first win and
everything.

BRENDA
Aww, that's good. Give him a hug
for me.

SPENCER
Will do.

Silence on both ends. Brenda finally breaks it.

BRENDA
Okay... I'll see you at the
championship game!

SPENCER
Yes you will!

She laughs.

BRENDA
Bye.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
and, well, to put it short, I just
couldn't abandon my boys here in
Cooperstown.

Jack grunts.

JACK
Well, I can certainly appreciate
that.

SPENCER
And I want you to know that I won't
let you and the rest of the team
down either, sir.
(beat)
If you'll have me, I will come to
Cincinnati straight away after the
tournament... at whatever position
you want me to, sir!

Jack is quiet for a beat while he thinks it over. He puffs
his cigar.

JACK
Well, I can't promise you anything,
son.
(beat)
Good luck in tomorrow's game.

SPENCER
Fair enough. Thank you, sir.

END INTERCUT

Spencer hangs the phone up just as Kip walks up to go into
the barracks.

KIP
Was that my lady?

Spencer smirks and shakes his head before he leaves Kip
outside.

KIP (CONT'D)
Oh, come on. Don't be jealous.
(shrugs)
Chicks love me, man.

Kip follows him into the barracks.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - THE NEXT DAY

It's time for the championship game and the South Paws are facing, none other than, the Eagles. The atmosphere is electric. Packed stands and screaming fans.

Brenda is a mixture of nerves and excitement.

BRENDA

Lets go South Paws!

She claps and cheers.

INT. SPENCER'S PARENTS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lori logs on to the live stream on her TV.

BACK IN COOPERSTOWN - SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

Mason peers across the infield at the home team dugout where Corey and the Eagles anxiously await the game.

EAGLES DUGOUT

Corey also peers back at the visitors dugout. He smiles and scoffs then turns around.

SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

Mason holds his stare.

SPENCER (O.S.)

Mason.

Mason snaps to attention.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Come on over here, bud.

Mason joins his team on the bench.

Spencer stands at their front and Mick and Alfonse stand off to the side -- Alfonse is not umpiring due to it being the championship game.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Alright, guys. I'm going to try to keep this short.

(beat)

(MORE)

SPENCER (CONT'D)

You guys have done some amazing things this past week. And you have nothing to prove to anyone anymore. In fact, you never did. That was my own selfish ambitions, and I came into this thing for all the wrong reasons.

(beat)

But you guys helped me to remember the reason I play this game in the first place. And I thank you for that.

(beat)

Now go out there and have fun.

(beat)

Play baseball.

(beat)

And remember this day as the day that you all went out with your brothers and played the greatest game ever played, here at Cooperstown Dreams Park.

The kids all sit with inspired looks on their faces, silently, peacefully.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Now lets go play some baseball!

Cheers go up all around.

EAGLES DUGOUT

Corey looks over to see what all the commotion is about just as the South Paws take the field.

The crowd cheers and the announcer sets things in motion.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(over PA)

Lets play ball!

The crowd goes crazy and Corey smirks.

The Eagles coach riles the team up.

EAGLES COACH

Alright! Lets show these guys why we're here at Cooperstown!

The Eagles cheer.

EAGLES COACH (CONT'D)
You're up Jerry. Lets go.

A young youth player grabs a bat and heads to home plate.

IN THE INFIELD

Sam leans forward, focused and ready for the call.

Andy sticks out a single finger.

Sam nods and smiles. He stands, winds up with perfect poise and releases a rocket of a ball toward home plate.

The batter connects and sends it towards shortstop.

Mason easily fields the ball and throws it to first to get the runner out. The crowd cheers.

EAGLES DUGOUT

Corey smiles as the next Eagles batter comes up to the plate.

ON THE FIELD

Sam pitches another fastball down the pipe and the batter whiffs hard.

The batter resets and so does Sam. The pitch is thrown and driven hard over Chance's head and fielded by Kip, the runner makes it to first. The crowd cheers, as do the teammates in the Eagles dugout.

Corey bats next. He steps to the plate and gets ready.

Sam winds up and pitches and it is driven deep to left field. There is almost a hush over the crowd as everyone waits till the ball is over the fence then explodes in applause.

FLASH INSERT: Scoreboard, which reads: 2 - 0

Sam watches as Corey runs into home and points at Sam then runs to his dugout. Sam goes cold and simply resets and gets ready along with he next batter. He shakes his head twice at Andy's suggestions.

At the plate, Andy gives him a number 1 signal and Sam nods his head.

ANDY
 (to himself)
 Hope you know what you're doing,
 man.

Sam winds up and pitches it right down the pipe. The batter connects and drives it right at Sam.

He doesn't even flinch, or even move from his crouched position after the pitch, as he snatches the ball right out of the air and stares down the plate waiting for the next batter.

"Ooohs" and "Awwws" sound from the crowd, while Sam and his fellow teammates are stone cold and ready for the next batter.

EAGLES DUGOUT

Corey speaks to himself.

COREY
 So they came to play.
 (smiles at his team)
 Then lets play.

They cheer and whoop and holler.

SERIES OF SHOTS - SOUTH PAWS VS EAGLES

A) Sam pitches three straight strikes.

UMPIRE
 You're out!

Sam smiles and he and the others run to their dugout.

B) Mason leads off the batting order. He steps up and gets ready. The pitch comes and he belts one right at Corey at shortstop.

Corey fields the ball and throws to first, getting Mason out.

Mason looks over to Corey as he jogs back to the dugout, Corey shrugs and smiles cockily.

E) Teddy is up next. He grabs a bat and goes to exit the dugout but is stopped by Spencer.

SPENCER

Alright Teddy, we need you on base here, and the holes are pretty tight. Lets try something silly.

(beat)

You feeling fast?

Teddy looks at Spencer and he and Teddy share a devious smile. Teddy runs out of the dugout.

At the plate, Teddy gets ready. The pitch comes and he quickly changes his stance to bunt and the ball only *TINKS* off the bat a few feet in front of the plate.

The Eagles pitcher didn't see it coming and has to hustle to the ball. He gets it and throws to first.

At first base, Teddy flies by the base and just beats the throw.

UMPIRE

Safe!

The crowd cheers.

SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

The team goes nuts and Spencer, Mick and Alfonse are all smiles.

SPENCER

Alright, boys. Lets play some Wee Willie baseball. Find those holes.

F) John steps up and strikes out.

G) Andy steps up and connects.

H) Chance steps up and connects. Teddy runs in to home.

Player after player, from either team, swings and misses, swings and connects, catches and throws, slides and runs, gets thrown out at first, second or third base, three South Paws manage to run in to home, as the two teams battle it out, keeping the score tight all the way through to the top of the sixth inning.

FLASH INSERT: Scoreboard, which reads: 2 - 3

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

IN OHIO

Lori watches anxiously.

SPORTS NEWSCASTER

It has been a grueling game thus far, folks, and the score is now two to three in favor of the South Paws here in the top of the sixth. The Eagles have one out and a man on first.

(beat)

If the South Paws can turn a double play here they can end this game.

Lori bites her nails.

COOPERSTOWN

Sam stands ready and poised. He checks his runner at first, who only takes a small lead. He pitches and the batter connects and drives it towards the hole between Mason and third base.

Mason fields the ball as he turns and stands. He turns as fast as he can to throw to second then Chance throws it to first and beats the runner.

UMPIRE

Safe!

SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

Mick and Alfonse stand in unison and Spencer goes nuts.

SPENCER

What?! You've gotta be kidding me!

IN OHIO

Lori stands and curses the TV

LORI

That's bullshit!

She quickly covers her mouth and looks around but she is alone.

COOPERSTOWN - SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

Alfonse quickly calms Spencer down with a shoulder rub.

ALFONSE

Alright. Alright. Nothing we can do
about it now.

SPENCER

That's freaking ridiculous!

ALFONSE

I know. We all saw it.

Spencer tries to regain his composure.

OUT IN THE FIELD

Corey steps up to bat and the South Paws shake it off and get ready to play again.

Sam pitches the ball and Corey connects hard, sending the ball over the fence and repeating what he did in the first inning to put the Eagles up by one.

FLASH INSERT: Scoreboard, which reads: 4 - 3

Sam once again has to watch the runner that was at first, and Corey, run in to home.

SPENCER (O.S.)

Focus, Sam! Just recover and get
this next guy out.

Sam can barely hear Spencer over the crowd but he nods to the dugout and sets up for the next batter.

The next batter comes to the plate and Andy gives a number 1.

Sam nods and winds up and pitches as hard and fast as he can.

The batter pops it up high and far into center field.

Kip waves off his teammates and makes the catch for the second out then throws the ball in.

Sam gets the ball from Chance and sets up for the next batter.

IN OHIO

Lori watches as Sam throws a final strike.

UMPIRE
(from TV)
Strike three! You're out!

Lori stands and yells at the TV.

LORI
That's right!
(claps)
Good job, boys!

The boys run in to their dugout on screen as the crowd cheers.

COOPERSTOWN - SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

Spencer paces in the dugout for a beat then calms and kneels down in front of his team.

SPENCER
Alright. We all know that was a bad call but we can't let that get in the way of our play.
(beat)
You guys are killing it out there. I'm proud of you.
(beat)
All we need is two runs and this thing is over. Just focus, find the holes, and play steady. Lets go.
(stands)
You're up, Kip.

The team claps and cheers Kip on as he grabs a bat and heads out of the dugout.

Kip steps up to bat and focuses hard in on Corey.

Corey smiles and gets low and ready for a hard grounder.

Kip focuses in on the pitcher and gets ready. The pitch comes and Kip hits it high at Corey, over his head, and earns himself a base hit. The crowd cheers.

Next up to the plate is Mason. He too steps up and focuses in on Corey. He winks at him and blows him a kiss.

Corey stews and settles in low once again.

The pitch is thrown and Mason connects, sends it right between second and first, getting him on base and Kip on second. The crowd cheers.

Corey shows his frustrations as he pulls his hat and wipes his brow. He places his hat back on, takes a deep breath, then gets back at the ready, looking more focused than ever.

Next up to bat is Teddy.

He steps up to the plate and calls his shot, just like in *Major League*. The crowd goes absolutely nuts and the Eagles all seem to stir in their positions and back up a little. All except for Corey, who stays stone cold at the ready.

Teddy is so caught up in his own silly moment that he doesn't even see Corey. He drops his finger, steps into the batters box and gets ready.

The crowd is on their feet and chanting for the home run that will surely end the game.

The pitch is released, and naturally, Teddy was faking it and hits the ball hard towards the hole between third and short.

Kip and Mason take off.

Corey is there within seconds to field the ball, scoops it up and tosses it to third in one smooth movement then ducks. The third baseman then throws to second and the second baseman throws to first for a triple play.

The crowd goes silent for a beat and the runners stop dead in their tracks.

ANNOUNCER

A triple play!! Oh my gosh, a
triple play!!

The crowd suddenly goes nuts with deafening applause and the Eagles rush the field for a victory celebration.

SOUTH PAWS DUGOUT

Mick, Alfonse and Spencer are stunned and speechless at what they just witnessed.

ON THE FIELD

Kip, Mason and Teddy walk back to their dugout dejected, and just like that, the South Paws' championship is over.

The Eagles continue to celebrate on the field.

FADE OUT.

INT. SOUTH PAWS BARRACKS - LATER

The South Paws sit in their barracks feeling pretty down.

Even Mick, Alfonse and Spencer have nothing to say for a long while. Spencer finally speaks up.

SPENCER

You guys know, when you're watching a game on TV, and you see the most amazing game so far to date?

Everyone starts to listen.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Not only that, but the game ends on such an amazing play that you can't help but think, "Man, I wish I could have played in that game."

Spencer smiles, astonished, and shakes his head.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

A triple play.

Mick and Alfonse smiles too and the kids start to come alive.

MASON

It was a great play.

TEDDY

Right?

KIP

You see how fast that third baseman got that to second?

MASON

Third! You see how fast Corey snatched that ball up!

The team gets all excited and caught up in a jumbled conversation of astonishment over the triple play.

The excitement dies down to some smiles of admiration.

SPENCER

Yeah.

(beat)

Bottom line, guys. You left your hearts out on that field. Both teams did.

(looks around the room)

(MORE)

SPENCER (CONT'D)

You don't have a single thing to be
down about.

A long shared silence to reminisce on the week's events.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Now what do you guys say, we get
some grub and go to the ball game?

TEDDY

(smiles)

Alright.

The team joins in with yeses and excited exclamations of
agreement.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - LATER

It's closing ceremonies and all the teams are packed into the
field again. Smiling young faces are everywhere, as there is
nothing for anyone to be sad about.

Brenda watches from the stands, all smiles.

The winning team is about to be announced. The president of
the Cooperstown Dreams Park Tournament, LOUIS A PRESUTTI III,
73, approaches the pitchers mound and is handed a mic.

PRESUTTI

It is my great honor, every year,
to announce the winners of the
Cooperstown tournament.

(beat)

Not only that, but to thank each
and every one of you for an amazing
experience, that I swear, can never
get old to me.

(beat)

My grandfather, Louis A Presutti,
had a love for baseball that no one
else could even come close to...
except for the youth.

(beat)

He knew that the love of the game
is never more strong, than when we
are young, and nothing else matters
in this world as much as suiting up
and getting out on that field.

(beat)

(MORE)

PRESUTTI (CONT'D)

And that's why he said to my father, and to me, one day while we stood in the Baseball Hall of Fame, "every kid in America should have the opportunity to play baseball in Cooperstown!"

(beat)

It is my pleasure to say, that "The Dream" is still alive.

The crowd and teams cheer and clap for a long shared moment of admiration. The clapping dies down.

PRESUTTI (CONT'D)

(addressing the teams)

You all played hard.

(beat)

You all played well.

(beat)

And most of all, you all had fun out there.

(beat)

So even though you are all winners here today, it is my distinct pleasure to give you the Champions of the 2014, Week 3, Cooperstown Dreams Park Tournament... The Reelfoot Eagles!

The crowd goes nuts as the Eagles approach the mound to claim their trophy.

The South Paws smile and clap for the better team.

After a mini celebration and some handshakes with Presutti, Corey takes the mic.

COREY

No words can describe how exciting... how awesome this is!

He laughs and everyone laughs with him.

COREY (CONT'D)

But we just want to take this time, to honor a team that we feel was the team to beat, to get us to this trophy today.

(beat)

A team that pushed us harder and farther than we ever thought we would have to go.

(MORE)

COREY (CONT'D)
(scans the teams then
smiles)
The South Paws!

The South Paws are pleasantly shocked and all smiles.

Corey and Mason exchange looks of respect.

COREY (CONT'D)
We share this trophy with you guys!

The crowd cheers and starts to chant "South Paws" and "Eagles" over and over.

Brenda is all teared up and big cheesy smiles.

Mick and Spencer exchange their own looks of respect and go to shake hands but end up in a hug. Alfonse looks on with a big smile on his face then gets his own hug from his stepson.

The South Paws raise their hands to the audience in thanks and celebrate a victory.

FADE OUT.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

A baseball player's cleats click and echo on the cement floor beneath him as he approaches the light at the end of the tunnel.

SPORTS REPORTER (V.O.)
Spencer! Spencer! Do you feel like
you proved what you set out to with
the South Paws?

Deafening cheers and rumbling are muffled by the concrete walls of the tunnel, but grow louder as he approaches the end.

SPENCER (V.O.)
No.
(beat)
No, I didn't prove anything.

The player walks steadily and confidently.

He suddenly pulls something from his pocket and admires it -- it's a baseball card.

INSERT CARD - IT'S A SIGNED PLAYERS CARD OF YUKI ITO AT
COOPERSTOWN

SPENCER (V.O.)
No, I take that back... I did prove
something...

BACK TO SCENE

Spencer smiles and places the card in his back pocket as he
nears the end of the tunnel.

SPENCER (V.O.)
Or rather... those kids proved
something to me.

The Sound of the crowd echos louder through the tunnel now.

SPORTS REPORTER (V.O.)
And what is that?

Spencer can see the vibrant green and orange of the field
outside the tunnel now.

SPENCER (V.O.)
That the *love* of this game... is
far more important than the game
itself.

Spencer smiles big.

The sound of an announcer roars from the PA.

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentleman, it is my
distinct pleasure... to present to
you... your shortstop for your very
own, Cincinnati Reds, number 13,
Spencer Marks!!

The crowd goes absolutely berserk as Spencer emerges onto the
field from the tunnel. Confetti flies everywhere and red
palms wave throughout the packed stadium stands.

Spencer takes a moment and simply turns to take in the
moment. He breathes it all in, then takes his hat off and
holds it high above his head in thanks to the crowd.

FADE TO BLACK.