

1926

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FADE IN:

EXT. A SMALL TOWN CEMETERY -- DAY

A small knot of MOURNERS line an open grave. In the middle stands a 61 year old WOMAN IN A BLACK VEIL.

A line of SOLDIERS stand across the grave from the Mourners, rifles at their side.

A huge bouquet of red roses sits at the far end of the grave.

PICKLES, 61, stands some 40 yards away. He's a big man, well dressed in a black suit and dark overcoat.

He dabs at his eyes with a handkerchief.

PICKLES (V.O.)

I figured Hornsby'd be here. Can't say why.

Pickles watches PALLBEARERS remove a coffin from the back of a hearse.

PICKLES (V.O.)

The gods had blessed Alex and Rog with great gifts. A mere mortal like me--well, the rules are different.

The Pallbearers carry the coffin to the grave.

PICKLES (V.O.)

I met Alex in 1926. He was 39 then, his best years behind him.

The coffin is lowered into the grave.

PICKLES (V.O.)

He had a reputation as a hard drinker, and he knew his days in the game were numbered.

The Mourners toss handfuls of dirt in the grave.

PICKLES (V.O.)

Hoping to buy himself a little more time, he spent that winter drying out.

The Mourners walk by the red bouquet. On it is written:

IN ETERNAL APPRECIATION, THE ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

EXT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

A HUGE gothic building.

A sign over the front indicates this is the DWIGHT SANITARIUM.

A group of REPORTERS mill about on the front porch.

INT. HOSPITAL

Grover Cleveland Alexander (ALEX), 39, stands ill at ease in the lobby. He's tall and lanky with a weathered face.

AMY, 38--his wife--stands by his side, her arm wrapped through her husband's.

Alex looks anxiously at the jackals outside.

Amy sees the look. She smiles reassuringly and smooths his hair.

AMY

Just say a couple words and we can go home.

Alex smiles warmly at her.

The PHYSICIAN comes out and claps Alex on the back.

PHYSICIAN

Ready to go?

Alex nods. The three of them walk onto the porch.

EXT. HOSPITAL

They're met by a barrage of questions.

REPORTER #1

Alex, you taken the pledge?

REPORTER #2

How's the arm?

Alex silences them with an upraised hand.

ALEX

Thanks for comin', boys. Ain't got much to say. But I wanna thank the doctor here for helpin' me out. And mostly I wanna thank my wife Amy, whose always stuck by me .

Alex gets little choked up. He takes a moment.

ALEX

The arm's fine. Now I gotta go get ready to win a pennant for the Cubs.

The Reporters shout more questions, but Alex and Amy hustle for a waiting cab.

Reporter #1 collars the Physician.

FRANKIE  
Doc, what'dya think?

PHYSICIAN  
You have to admire the man. He faced  
his demons and he beat them.

The cab pulls away from the Sanitarium.

PICKLES (V.O.)  
'Course the problem with battling  
your demons--they tend to fight back.

The cab leaves the hospital ground.

EXT. CARDINAL OFFICES -- DAY

A young Pickles walks up to the office doors. He's 34, big and athletic, somewhat uncomfortable in an ill-fitting suit. He carries a sheaf of papers in his enormous hand.

PICKLES (V.O.)  
At the same time Alex left the  
sanitarium, I was heading for St.  
Louis--trying to hang on for one  
more season.

The office is built into the St. Louis ballpark. A 10 year old BOY blocks his way.

BOY  
Hey, mister, you a ballplayer?

PICKLES  
Sure am kid.

BOY  
Can I have your autograph?

PICKLES  
Sure thing.

Pickles quickly signs and walks inside.

INT. CARDINAL OFFICES -- CONTINUOUS

Pickles walks up to a cute young RECEPTIONIST. He gives her his most charming smile. She returns it.

RECEPTIONIST  
Can I help you?

PICKLES  
I have a 10 o'clock appointment with  
Mr. Rickey.

The Receptionist glances over at a closed door.

RECEPTIONIST  
He's in with Mr. Breadon. Why don't  
you have a seat?

Pickles nods and sits.

INT. BREADON'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

SAM BREADON, forty and fat, sits behind an enormous desk.

He's got a couple bourbons under his belt, another in his hand.

Before him stands BRANCH RICKEY, 45, wearing a white three piece suit, an ever-present cigar in his hand. He wears thin round glasses under bushy eyebrows.

RICKEY  
Bottomley, Hafey, Hallahan...the  
farm system is paying off. We're on  
our way...

He's interrupted by the intercom.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)  
Mr. Rickey, there is a Pickles here  
to see you.

Breadon leans over and flips the intercom button.

BREADON  
Tell him to cool his heels.

Breadon leans back in his chair and takes Rickey's measure.

BREADON  
We're not on our way, Branch.

RICKEY  
I never told you it would happen  
overnight...

BREADON  
Let's talk real life. The stands  
are empty. We can't get out of second  
division. I go to a cocktail party  
and have to listen to some twist  
tell me what a pile of crap we are...

RICKEY  
It'll just take a little more time...

BREADON  
Time is money. And I'm losing money.  
I've never lost money in my life.

Rickey takes off his glasses and wipes them with a handkerchief.

RICKEY

Sam, we're going to win. And we're going to get rich doing it.

This gets Breadon's attention. As Rickey knew it would.

RICKEY

We've got 300 players under contract. Far more than we can use. We sell the surplus and split the proceeds...

BREADON

Split?

Rickey nods sagely as he puts his glasses back on.

RICKEY

I negotiate the deals...

BREADON

Ten percent.

RICKEY

25.

Breadon looks at him with a slight smile--a fellow hustler.

BREADON

Win me something and we'll talk.

INT. CARDINAL OFFICES -- LATER

Rickey comes out of the office and walks over to Pickles.

Pickles stands. Rickey puts his arm around his shoulder.

RICKEY

Come in, son, come in.

Rickey leads him into his office.

INT. RICKEY'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Rickey guides Pickles to a seat.

RICKEY

Sit down, sit down.

Rickey sits behind his desk, leans forward and looks at Pickles with Christian charity.

Pickles starts reading from the papers in his hand.

PICKLES

I have given a lot of good years to baseball and I would be proud to be a Cardinal.

Pickles glances up to see how Rickey's taking this.

Rickey observes him with fatherly concern. He nods for Pickles to continue.

Pickles doesn't consult the paper as he talks.

PICKLES

I know with O'Farrell around I'm not gonna see many innings. But I've been around--I can be like another coach on the club.

Pickles takes a deep breath.

PICKLES

I think with my experience, another 700 a year...

Rickey reaches under his desk. A small black button has been installed there. He pushes the button.

As he does, his phone rings.

Rickey shoots an annoyed look at the phone, then smiles at Pickles.

RICKEY

Excuse me just a minute.

He picks up the phone.

RICKEY

Hello Jack. How are you?...The family?...Wonderful.

Rickey listens.

RICKEY

Jack, I'm sure he's got all the talent in the world, but I'm pretty well set at catcher. The kid wouldn't get many swings...

Rickey listens again. Pickles twists his papers in his gargantuan hands.

RICKEY

If that's the case, maybe he'd be worth a look. Let me sleep on it and I'll get back.

Rickey hangs up and looks at the ceiling as he ponders the conversation.

Then he notices Pickles. He offers a kind smile.

RICKEY

I'm sorry, where were we?

He thinks a minute, then leans over his desk once again to impart some ancient wisdom.

RICKEY

Pickles, let me tell you a story about spiritual courage....

INT. CARDINAL OFFICES -- LATER

Rickey emerges from his office with his arm around Pickles.

RICKEY

...a fine season, I'm sure.

He stops.

RICKEY

One more thing. I need you to pick up Hornsby on your way to spring training. My receptionist will give you the address.

Rickey turns abruptly and goes back in his office.

Pickles walks over to the Receptionist. She's already writing down the address.

RECEPTIONIST

How'd it go?

PICKLES

I got a million bucks worth of advice and a very small raise.

EXT. A RAMBLING FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Sheets of rain pound away as Pickles old jalopy drives down a muddy driveway.

Pickles gets out of the car and makes a mad dash to the front porch.

He rings the bell. The door opens.

PICKLES

I'm here for Rogers Hornsby.

INT. A RAMBLING FARMHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

A MAID escorts him into the front room.

Pickles glances into the next room. It's dominated by a huge bed. A very sick old lady lays there--Hornsby's MOTHER.

MAID

He's with a reporter--follow me.

The Maid climbs the stairs. Pickles follows.

INT. HORNSBY'S ROOM -- LATER

Pickles follows the Maid into the room.

ROGERS HORNSBY, 29, stands in front of a full length mirror. He's tall and powerfully built with cruel blue eyes. He holds a bat in his hands as he practices his stance.

A young REPORTER sits on the bed writing in a notebook. Two large suitcases sit by the door.

MAID

Mr. Hornsby, your driver is here.

PICKLES

I'm a catcher.

Hornsby never takes his eyes off the mirror.

HORNSBY

Just finishing up.

Hornsby nods to the Reporter to continue.

REPORTER

What do you think of your chances this season?

Hornsby strides into an imaginary pitch.

HORNSBY

We're awful young. And the pitching is kinda thin.

REPORTER

So you're not thinking pennant this year?

HORNSBY

I didn't say that.

Hornsby smiles.

HORNSBY

We got me.

REPORTER

To what do you attribute your great hitting?

HORNSBY

Don't smoke, don't drink, get my rest. Don't watch movies or read books--bad for the eyes.

REPORTER

Do you play golf?

Hornsby snorts.

HORNSBY

If I hit a ball, I want somebody to chase it.

REPORTER

Some say you're the greatest right handed hitter of all time...

Hornsby takes a powerful swing, then fixes the Reporter with his cold blue eyes.

HORNSBY

Right handed?

The Reporter stumbles...

REPORTER

Well, I mean...Cobb, and Ruth...

HORNSBY

How many times did Cobb hit .424?

REPORTER

Never.

Satisfied, Hornsby goes back to his practice.

REPORTER

Last year was a tough one for St. Louis. Do you think you it's possible to be a good player and a good manager at the same time?

Hornsby puts the bat on the floor. He leans at it as he fixes the Reporter with his eyes.

HORNSBY

To be a good manager you need good players and I don't have any say over that.

Hornsby picks the bat up again and studies his grip.

HORNSBY

Hell, all the boys gotta do is watch me and they'll figure out how to play the game. Now you got any more questions?

The Reporter consults his notebook--one thing seems to nag at him.

REPORTER

What do you do all winter?

HORNSBY

What do I do?

He looks out his window at the steady stream of rain.

HORNSBY

I stare out the window and wait for spring.

INT. HORNSBY HOUSE -- LATER

Pickles wrestles the suitcases down the stairs.

Hornsby follows him down, then turns into the next room.

He kneels next to his Mother's bed.

She's racked with pain. Her body twists against some unseen tormentor.

Until she sees her son.

Her eyes light up. She strokes his cheek and smiles. Hornsby fights tears.

HORNSBY

How you doin', Ma?

MOTHER

Still kickin'. But not too high.

She coughs, wincing in pain.

MOTHER

Remember when I used to make your uniforms...

HORNSBY

Course I do.

MOTHER

You were always the best, Rogers. Still are. Don't you forget.

HORNSBY

I won't Ma.

MOTHER

Now you gotta get going.

Hornsby nods, clearly torn about leaving.

HORNSBY

You take care 'til I get back.

MOTHER

You go win me something, son.

Hornsby kisses her forehead then returns to the front room.

He heads to the closet where he grabs a coat.

He walks to a nearby mirror and adjusts his coat then carefully combs his hair--he's a good looking man.

His WIFE watches this from the hall with a drink in her hand. She comes into the front room.

WIFE

And what the hell am I suppose to do?

Hornsby glances over at her.

HORNSBY

Have another drink.

Pickles has the suitcases outside now. Hornsby puts on his hat and walks towards the door.

HORNSBY

See ya in a month.

WIFE

Fuck you Rogers.

Hornsby walks out. His Wife goes to the door and calls out.

WIFE

How're you gonna manage a ballclub when you can't even manage your own marriage...

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Alex packs a suitcase. Amy sits on the bed and watches.

AMY

You need to be strong. I won't be there for you.

Alex smiles reassuringly at her.

ALEX

It's only a month. I'll be playing  
ball all day. Everything will be  
fine.

Amy gets up and kisses him on the cheek.

She walks over to the bureau and brushes her hair.

Something on the bureau catches her eye. She picks up a  
perfume bottle and holds it up to the light.

It's empty.

She looks over at Alex.

He smiles sheepishly but continues to pack.

EXT. A SMALL BALLPARK -- DAY

Spring training.

The CUBS take batting practice before a sparse crowd of  
retirees.

Hitters line up near the plate for their turn at bat.

A half dozen players--including Alex--spread the outfield  
shagging flies.

A BATTER stands at the plate.

McCarthy watches from the first base line, a COACH by his  
side.

MCCARTHY

The hitters look good anyway.

The Coach nods in agreement.

MCCARTHY

But the pitching...

McCarthy scans the outfield. He points to Alex.

MCCARTHY

What the hell is he doing out there?

The Coach shrugs.

Alex stands in leftfield. He watches indifferently as a few  
balls come his way--he let's his teammates handle them.

Then the Batter lines a shot down the third base line. Alex  
takes off in pursuit.

As he closes on the ball, he eases up just a bit and the ball flies past him and rolls to the wall.

Alex jogs after it.

Alex reaches the wall. There's a small gap in the fence. Alex reaches into the gap and pulls out a small flask. He takes a long quick pull, then replaces it.

He picks up the ball and fires it back to the infield.

McCarthy watches the whole proceedings. He can only shake his head.

INT. CUBS LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

Alex undresses at his locker.

McCarthy, followed by his Coach, comes by and pushes him out of the way.

MCCARTHY

Move over Alex.

McCarthy's got him now. He rifles through the locker but doesn't find what he's looking for.

He glares at Alex a moment. Alex responds with an angelic smile.

McCarthy turns and walks into his office, slamming the door behind him.

Alex saunters over to a nearby locker where a YOUNG PITCHER dresses.

ALEX

'Scuze me a minute, son. I left something.

Alex fishes through the locker and pulls out the flask.

He takes a long sip as he winks at the Young Pitcher.

EXT. A BATTING CAGE -- DAY

Hornsby stands at the plate during batting practice.

He hits one rope after another into left field. There's joy in his face, poetry in his swing.

Pickles catches--although with Hornsby hitting there isn't a lot to do.

Rickey stands nearby, watching and smoking a cigar. He likes what he sees.

A group of CARDINALS stand waiting to hit.

COACH RED is on the mound. Hornsby calls out to him.

HORNSBY

Give me some on the outside.

Hornsby strokes ball after ball into right field.

JIM BOTTOMLEY, 26, tall and handsome, stands behind the plate with a bat in his hands. He grows antsy.

BOTTOMLEY

Hey Rog, we all got to get our swings in.

Hornsby snorts.

HORNSBY

I doubt it'd do you ladies any good.

Hornsby finishes his swings and walks over to Rickey.

HORNSBY

Why's the driver catching batting practice?

Hornsby and Rickey turn towards Pickles.

A pitch bounces in the dirt, comes up and hits him in the throat. Pickles gags.

RICKEY

Our new bullpen catcher. You can use him to catch Haines' knuckleball.

Rickey takes a big puff off his cigar.

RICKEY

No use getting our regular catcher injured.

Rickey watches Bottomley crush some pitches over the wall. He smiles.

RICKEY

He's really something.

Hornsby glances over.

HORNSBY

He's all right.

RICKEY

We added an exhibition game May 2. On our way east. Columbus.

Hornsby glares at Rickey.

HORNSBY

Goddamn it Rickey, I ain't got enough arms for regular games.

RICKEY

We have bills to pay.

HORNSBY

Get me some minor leaguers--let me rest the regulars.

RICKEY

Mr. Breadon insisted you use your regulars. As a favor.

HORNSBY

Sam can kiss my ass. If he wants to come down here and manage this mountain of shit, he's welcome to it.

RICKEY

We'll discuss this later.

HORNSBY

What? Sam kissing my ass or this mountain of shit?

RICKEY

Rog, pitching is as rare as it is expensive. But I'm trying.

Rickey smiles reassuringly.

HORNSBY

You ain't trying hard enough.

Hornsby spits tobacco on Rickey's white shoes and walks away.

INT. TRAIN DINING CAR -- EVENING

The whole team is present and having a good time, smoking, drinking beer and horsing around.

Hornsby walks in and yells out.

HORNSBY

All right, listen up.

The team turns its attention to the manager.

HORNSBY

Come Tuesday the games are for real. We're gonna win the pennant this year, or die tryin'

This raises a cheer from the team.

Hornsby silences the players with an upraised hand.

HORNSBY

When the season's over, all that matters is how many you won and how many you lost. I'm not going to let any losers drag this team down. You'll know you're a loser if you find yourself on the end of the bench.

Hornsby looks around the room.

HORNSBY

My rules are real simple. Do exactly as I say and we'll have no trouble.

Hornsby walks out of the dining car as the players shake their heads.

PICKLES

What an asshole.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- DAY

The Cardinals are on the field.

PICKLES (V.O.)

In spite of Hornsby's pep talk, we started slow. A month into the season we had 12 losses against only six wins...

A ground ball. Third baseman LES BELL ranges over. The ball takes a bad hop and hits him in the leg. The ball caroms into left field.

HORNSBY

C'mon Bell, play the hop, don't let the hop play you. Okay, let's get two...

PICKLES (V.O.)

We established a firm hold on last place. We had lost four in a row by the time we faced the Giants...

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

On the mound, JESS HAINES, 35, throws a pitch. A ground ball to Hornsby at second base.

Hornsby scoops up the ball and tosses it underhand to shortstop TOMMY THEVENOW.

Thevenow tags second. He leaps to avoid the oncoming RUNNER and throws to first base.

Bottomley waits at first for the ball. He stretches for the throw, but it sails high over his head and into the stands.

Thevenow kicks the dirt at his error. Hornsby turns to him.

HORNSBY

Hey shit-for-brains, who you throwin'  
to?

Haines pitches again.

The GIANT at the plate lines a drive to right-center field.

CHICK HAFEY, a 23 year old bespectacled outfielder, races after it.

Hafey plays the ball off the outfield wall on one bounce. He spins and fires it back towards the infield.

Hornsby's run out to shallow centerfield for the relay.

Hafey's throw flies over his head, eventually rolling into the infield as the Runner from first base crosses the plate.

Hornsby stands in the outfield and glares at Hafey with murderous intent.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

A ground ball to Thevenow at short.

Hornsby's stationed at second, waiting for the throw as a GIANT RUNNER comes from first.

Thevenow bobbles the ball.

HORNSBY

Get me the ball!

Thevenow finally gets a grip on the ball and tosses it to Hornsby. The ball arrives at the same time the Giant Runner slides into second.

The Giant Runner arrives with his spikes high. He cuts a six inch long gash into Hornsby's wrist.

Hornsby hangs on to the ball, but he's bleeding profusely.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

The players dress in silence.

Hornsby walks in. He's got a white tape on his wrist, but the blood seeps through. He kicks a stool across the room.

HORNSBY

This is the sorriest excuse for a ballclub I ever saw.

He stops at Bell's locker.

HORNSBY

How hard is it to pick up a fucking ground ball?

His next stop is Hafey's locker. Hafey sits there, half undressed, his head down.

HORNSBY

You cost us the game with that boneheaded throw. You'll be back on the farm before you know it.

Hornsby walks past the rest of the team, glaring at his collection of losers.

Pickles stands next to FLINT RHEM, a 25 year old good old boy from South Carolina.

Hornsby fixes Pickles in his sites.

HORNSBY

What is it you do around here, you worthless cocksucker?

Hornsby walks into his office and slams the door.

Pickles turns to Rhem.

PICKLES

You suck one cock and you're labeled for life.

Rhem does a double take.

In the back of the room, Rickey watches.

INT. HORNSBY OFFICE -- LATER

Rickey walks in. Hornsby's dressing.

RICKEY

You ought to go easy on the boys...

HORNSBY

Yeah. Maybe I ought to hand out lollipops when they make a play.

RICKEY

You don't want to demoralize the team...

HORNSBY

Rickey, you were a shit manager.  
I'd be a fool to take your advice.

INT. CUBS LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

The team's PITCHING STAFF sits on stools surrounding McCarthy, who stands.

Alex sits nearby, his feet up on a bench, his cap pulled low over his face.

MCCARTHY

Now Maranville is a crafty one. If he gets to second, he'll relay the pitch to the batter, so let's change up the signs...

McCarthy's speech is interrupted by Alex's snoring.

The pitchers laugh.

McCarthy's face reddens. He walks over and kicks Alex's feet off the bench.

Alex wakes up. He stretches and looks at his manager.

ALEX

Mornin' skip.

MCCARTHY

What was I saying about Maranville?

Alex shrugs.

ALEX

Sorry skip. I don't hear so good since the war.

MCCARTHY

I was saying if Maranville gets on second, we change up our signals.

Alex laughs.

ALEX

Skip, you see that little piss ant on second, come and get me 'cause I ain't got it that day.

The pitchers laugh again.

McCarthy does a slow burn.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD -- LATER

SCOREBOARD: Cubs 3, Visitors 2, ninth inning, two outs.

Alex on the mound.

He looks over to first, where a DODGER leads off the base.  
He glances at third where ANOTHER DODGER dances off the bag.

The CATCHER stands and looks into the dugout.

THE DUGOUT

McCarthy flashes a signal.

THE FIELD

The Catcher nods and gets into his crouch. He flashes the  
signal to Alex.

Alex shakes him off.

The Catcher stands again and looks back into the dugout.

THE DUGOUT

McCarthy flashes the same signal.

THE FIELD

The Catcher crouches again and flashes the same signal.

Alex shakes his head.

The Catcher just shrugs.

Alex pitches.

He throws a fastball on the inside part of the plate. The  
DODGER BATTER watches it go by.

The UMPIRE calls strike three.

CUBS WIN.

The Cubs file off the field, clapping Alex on the back as  
they pass.

Alex strolls to the dugout. There he's met by McCarthy.

MCCARTHY

Hartnett called for a curve.

Alex shrugs as he passes.

ALEX

I don't pay no attention to him, he  
don't pay no attention to me.

McCarthy sputters angrily.

MCCARTHY  
I called that pitch.

Alex keeps walking.

ALEX  
That's all right skip. You never  
been in the big leagues before--you  
don't know no better.

Alex walks into the runway to the locker room.

McCarthy's face is beet red.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- DAY

Hornsby stands at the plate.

On the mound is JUMBO ELLIOT, a tall, powerfully built pitcher  
for the Dodgers.

Elliot pitches. The ball comes in slightly off the plate.  
Hornsby watches it pass.

UMPIRE  
Ball one!

The DODGER CATCHER throws the ball back to Elliot. Elliot--  
steamed about the call--catches it and glares at the umpire  
a moment before returning to the mound.

He throws again, this one a bit closer to the plate.

Again, Hornsby doesn't flinch.

UMPIRE  
Ball two!

An enraged Elliot walks halfway home to get the ball from  
his catcher.

ELLIOT  
Are you blind? That was right over  
the heart of the plate...

UMPIRE  
Elliot, get your ass back on the  
mound if you want to keep pitching.

Elliot mutters to himself as he walks back to the mound.

Elliot looks in then fires another fastball, this one an  
inch closer to the plate.

Hornsby swings. He smashes the ball over the left field  
wall.

As Hornsby rounds the bases, the Umpire walks out to the mound.

UMPIRE

You see, Mr. Elliot, Mr. Hornsby  
will tell you when it's a strike.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

THE SCOREBOARD: Cardinals 3, Visitors 2, no outs, sixth  
inning.

Hornsby walks up to the plate. Elliot is still on the mound.

Hornsby, digging in, calls out...

HORNSBY

What'dya got for me this time, Jumbo?

Elliot grins.

ELLIOT

This time you ain't seein' shit.

SEEN FROM BEHIND THE CATCHER

A succession of four straight pitches, each on further outside  
the strike zone than the last.

For ball four, the DODGER CATCHER has to leap to catch the  
pitch.

Hornsby trots to first base.

COACH RED waits for him by the bag.

HORNSBY

What're the chances one of these  
banjo hitters can get me to second?

Coach Red replies by spitting a huge burst of tobacco juice.

Hafey comes to the plate.

He hits the first pitch--a bullet to the DODGER THIRD BASEMAN.  
The Third Baseman knocks the ball down, scoops it back up  
then throws to second base.

The SECOND BASEMAN, the ball and Hornsby all arrive at the  
bag at the same time. A HUGE collision.

Hornsby lays on the ground, writhing in pain.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

Pickles and three teammates carry Hornsby from the field.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

Hornsby lies on the training table with his shirt off, his back covered in ugly sores. The TEAM DOCTOR examines his lower back.

Rickey walks up.

DOCTOR  
Looks like a displaced vertebrae.  
We need to get him to the hospital.

RICKEY  
How long will he be out?

TEAM DOCTOR  
He'd be wise to shut it down for the  
season.

Hornsby stirs on the table, a painful experience.

HORNSBY  
That ain't gonna happen, doc. How  
soon can I get back on the field?

The Doctor looks at Hornsby a moment, then starts to pack up his gear.

TEAM DOCTOR  
You'll be up and around again in a  
week or two, but you won't be healthy  
until you let it rest.

Rickey and the Doctor move out of hearing range.

RICKEY  
What about those sores on his back?

TEAM DOCTOR  
Stress. He gets them every year.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT -- BEDROOM--NIGHT

Alex bolts up in bed. He's bathed in sweat, his breath labored.

He looks over and sees Amy sleeping soundly beside him. He looks around, gets his bearings, calms his breathing.

He silently slips out of bed and walks out of the bedroom.

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Alex walks over to a radiator. He reaches behind it and pulls out a bottle of gin.

He grabs a glass and sits down at the kitchen table. He sits a long moment, staring at the bottle.

He picks it up. His hands shake badly--he has a hard time getting the liquor into the glass.

He lifts the glass with shaking hands and guides it to his lips, taking a long drink.

INT. CUBS LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

McCarthy talks to his Coach as the Cubs dress for the day's game.

Alex walks in, a bit unsteady.

McCarthy watches him walk to his locker. He meets him there.

He studies Alex's face.

MCCARTHY

You're drunk.

ALEX

I'm fine.

McCarthy turns to his coach.

MCCARTHY

Get someone else ready to pitch.

McCarthy turns to Alex.

MCCARTHY

This time you've gone too far.

INT. MCCARTHY'S OFFICE -- LATER

McCarthy sits behind his desk. Reporters circle around him.

MCCARTHY

We released Grover Cleveland Alexander today.

REPORTER #1

Was it 'cause he wouldn't follow the rules.

McCarthy smiles grimly.

MCCARTHY

Oh, Alex followed the rules. They were just Alex's rules.

REPORTER #2

Is his arm shot?

MCCARTHY

I don't know about that. But if you don't show up for work, how can you build up your arm strength?

REPORTER #3

Won't the team miss him?

MCCARTHY

Last year we finished last with him. I'd rather finish last without him.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD -- LATER

Alex walks out of the ballpark carrying a bag with his gear.

Amy waits in a car parked outside. Alex gets in.

INT. CAR

Amy drives off.

She looks over at Alex, afraid to ask what's wrong. Alex just looks out the window for a long moment.

ALEX

They released me.

Amy looks over, concerned.

AMY

It'll be all right. We've always gotten by.

Alex doesn't respond, or look at her.

AMY

You had a good run. You knew it had to end some time.

Alex just stares morosely out the window.

AMY

I'll call my brother. I'm sure he can get you something in his factory.

ALEX

Pitchin' is all I ever wanted to do. It's the only thing I ever been good at.

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

Hornsby sits in bed fidgeting.

His discomfort isn't helped by the arrival of Rickey. Rickey pulls a chair up to the bedside.

RICKEY  
How are you feeling?

HORNSBY  
We're in last place and my best  
player's hurt. How do you think I'm  
doing?

Rickey leans back in his chair and lights a cigar, furthering  
irritating Hornsby.

HORNSBY  
I'm walkin' out of here tomorrow.

RICKEY  
What do the doctor's say?

HORNSBY  
They're horse doctors. They don't  
know anything about people.

RICKEY  
What do you think about Grover  
Alexander?

HORNSBY  
Helluva pitcher.

RICKEY  
He has a drinking problem.

HORNSBY  
Drunk or sober, he's the best I've  
faced.

RICKEY  
The Cubs waived him.

This is something for Hornsby to consider.

HORNSBY  
Wow.

RICKEY  
He had some trouble with McCarthy.

HORNSBY  
So you're asking if I want McCarthy's  
headaches?

Rickey shrugs.

RICKEY  
It would be another arm.

HORNSBY  
And another pain in my ass.

RICKEY

True enough. But he just might put  
us over the top.

Rickey stands to go.

RICKEY

He says he through drinking.

Hornsby laughs.

HORNSBY

He can't stop drinking. He's a drunk.

RICKEY

So we're not interested?

Hornsby looks long and hard at Rickey.

HORNSBY

Sign him.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

The locker room is dark and deserted as Alex walks in. He carries a bag with his gear.

He finds his locker and starts to unpack.

Hornsby limps out of his office and comes over.

HORNSBY

Still throwing that low and away  
shit?

ALEX

Sure am. You still chasin' it?

The raises Hornsby's hackles.

HORNSBY

I hit you plenty.

ALEX

Not how I remember it.

The two men face each other--then break into smiles. A stand-off.

HORNSBY

If I can get eight--ten wins from  
you, we might be able to take this  
thing.

ALEX

Just give me the ball.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- BULLPEN -- DAY

Pickles sits on the bench wiping sweat from his eyes.

At the other end of the bullpen Rhem and Alex talk.

Breadon and Rickey walk by, Breadon studying his newest player.

BREADON

So you're Alexander the Great.

Alex nods.

BREADON

Still got it?

Alex looks at him.

ALEX

I can still get by.

Breadon looks less than convinced.

Alex smiles. There's an empty tomato can lying in the bullpen. The opening is 12" around.

Alex kicks the bottom out of the can. He tosses the can to Pickles.

ALEX

Get in your stance. Hold this over your head.

PICKLES

Alex, for godsakes, be careful...

Alex just nods and grins. Pickles get in his crouch and holds the can over his head.

Alex picks up three baseballs and steps on the bullpen rubber.

He throws three straight fastballs through the opening in the can.

Breadon whistles.

BREADON

Well, you convinced me.

EXT. THE STANDS -- LATER

Breadon sits next to Rickey in box seats, a huge grin on his face.

He looks around the ballpark--fans are packed to the rafters.

PICKLES (V.O.)

As it happened, Alex's first start  
came against his old team.

Breadon slaps Rickey on the back.

THE BALLFIELD

Wearing a Cardinal uniform, Alex steps on the mound.

PICKLES (V.O.)

It was the biggest crowd in St. Louis  
history.

Alex throws--a fluid, effortless motion.

A succession of Cubs go down swinging.

PICKLES (V.O.)

He pitched ten innings for the win.

The last Cub swings at a ball in the dirt.

The Cardinals run off the field, smacking Alex on the back  
as they pass.

Alex doesn't follow them--instead he walks over to the Cubs  
dugout.

CUB'S DUGOUT

From the bench, McCarthy watches him approach.

THE FIELD

Alex cruises past the dugout, tips his cap to McCarthy and  
keeps walking.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

SCENES FROM A HAPPY LOCKER ROOM

Thenow gets a piggy back ride from a naked Bottomley. He  
uses a towel as a whip.

Alex watches from his locker with an amused smile. He's the  
only player already dressed.

Haines belts out "Won't You Come Home, Bill Bailey" at the  
top of his lungs. Badly.

Alex reaches into his locker and discreetly sips from a flask.

PICKLES (V.O.)

We had Alex. Rhem was almost  
unhittable. We started winning.

(MORE)

PICKLES (V.O.)  
 We climbed out of the cellar and set  
 our sights on .500...

A Reporter approaches Rhem--the same Reporter that interviewed  
 Hornsby in the spring.

REPORTER  
 Mr. Rhem? I'm John Byrne with the  
 Sporting News.

As they talk, Alex silently slips out of the locker room.

Pickles steps between the Reporter and Rhem.

PICKLES  
 I handle all Mr. Rhem's business  
 affairs. You deal with me.

The Reporter takes a step back, unsure what's going on.

Pickles holds out his hand. The Reporter shakes it, but  
 quickly pulls back his hand.

Pickles laughs. His hands are huge and gnarled, with fingers  
 pointing in every direction.

PICKLES  
 Sort of like shaking hands with a  
 bag of peanuts, ain't it?

The Reporter laughs.

PICKLES  
 Now we have certain conditions that  
 must be met if we're to do this  
 interview.

REPORTER  
 What do you want?

Pickles looks at Rhem, figuring.

PICKLES  
 A beer. Apiece.

The Reporter considers the offer a moment.

REPORTER  
 Sure.

INT. BILLIARD ROOM -- LATER

The Reporter stands at the bar fulfilling his end of the  
 bargain.

Pickles and Rhem make a beeline for the pool table.

PICKLES

I'm telling ya, there's a fortune to be made in insurance.

Rhem laughs.

RHEM

You're thinkin' of leaving baseball for insurance?

Pickles racks.

PICKLES

Got to think of the future.

Rhem looks at cues.

RHEM

I never do that. Just confuses everything.

Rhem finds the perfect cue. He waves it in the air.

RHEM

You got the easiest job in the world-- warm up the starter and pray O'Farrell don't get hurt.

Pickles breaks.

PICKLES

I worked for my brother-in-law over the winter.

RHEM

How'd you do?

The balls scatter. Two go in.

PICKLES

He did well. I gave him a list of every friend I had and he sold 'em. I maybe cleared a grand.

Pickles lines up his next shot. The cue ball hits the bumper, then knocks a ball into pocket.

RHEM

You didn't call it off the bumper.

PICKLES

You don't have to call it off the bumper.

Pickles starts to look at his next shot.

RHEM

It's my shot--the bumper.

Pickles takes his next shot.

PICKLES

St. Louis rules--you don't have to call the bumper. Ask anyone.

The Reporter returns with their beer. He sets them down and takes out his notebook.

REPORTER

It must be an honor to play for the great Hornsby.

PICKLES

Hornsby's an asshole.

Rhem turns to the Reporter.

RHEM

Don't you have to call it off a bumper?

The Reporter--surprised at the answer--shrugs at Rhem's question--he hasn't a clue. But he's curious to know what Rhem thinks.

REPORTER

You played for Rickey last year. Was he a better manager than Hornsby?

Rhem laughs as Pickles misses an easy shot. Rhem lines up his next shot.

RHEM

With Rickey, we had more signals than a freight yard.

Rhem takes his shot.

RHEM

Not that it did us much good. Some of the boys thought they had to raise their hands to go to first base.

The Reporter turns to Pickles.

REPORTER

You don't like playing for Hornsby?

Pickles shrugs.

PICKLES

You may not agree with what he says,  
but there's no doubt about his  
thinkin' on the matter.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- DAY

Alex pitches--his motion effortless but the results far  
different than his last game.

A succession of Cincinnati REDS knock the ball all over the  
yard.

Hornsby signals to the bullpen as he walks to the mound from  
second base.

Hornsby holds his glove out. Alex drops the ball into it  
then slowly walks off the field. The two men never look at  
each other.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

Alex is alone in the room. He's nearly finished dressing as  
the other players filter in from the field.

Hornsby steams into the locker room and stops at Alex's  
locker.

HORNSBY

What the hell was that shit?

Alex shrugs.

ALEX

Bad day.

HORNSBY

Been having a lot of bad days lately.

Alex turns to face Hornsby.

ALEX

Didn't see you on base today.

Hornsby's face reddens. Alex turns back to his locker to  
finish dressing.

HORNSBY

Do you know who you're talking to?

ALEX

You're hittin' .265--just another  
easy out.

Hornsby's on the verge of hitting him, but he pulls back.  
But he can't help but get in a parting shot.

HORNSBY

You've always had a horseshit head.  
Now you got a horseshit arm to go  
with it.

Hornsby stalks away. Alex calls after him.

ALEX

You may be needin' this horseshit  
arm someday. And when you do, you  
better ask nice.

Hornsby goes into his office and slams the door behind him.

Bottomley, Rhem and Pickles come over to Alex's locker.

PICKLES

Nicely done.

RHEM

About time somebody put that shit in  
his place.

BOTTOMLEY

Yeah, thanks Alex...

Alex never acknowledges them. He finishes knotting his tie  
and walks out of the locker room.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- DAY

Hafey strikes out.

Returning to the dugout, he slumps past Hornsby, who's waiting  
to hit.

Hornsby comes to the plate.

Reds' pitcher CARL MAYS stands on the mound and glares in at  
Hornsby. He throws.

The pitch comes in high and inside. Hornsby falls backwards  
into the dirt.

Hornsby stands, dusts himself off and gets back in the  
batter's box.

Mays throws again. This pitch plunks Hornsby on the back.

THE DUGOUT

Pickles, Rhem and Alex sit together on the bench. Pickles  
and Rhem hoot when Hornsby gets hit.

RHEM

Shame he didn't cripple the bastard.

Rhem looks over to Alex. He's shaking his head.

ALEX  
That's disrespectful.

Rhem laughs.

RHEM  
Don't believe Mays much likes Hornsby.

ALEX  
Not disrespectful to Hornsby.  
Disrespectful to me.

THE FIELD

Hornsby hobbles down to first base. He signals to the dugout and he's replaced by a PINCH RUNNER.

BILLY SOUTHWORTH comes to the plate.

He immediately grounds into a double play, ending the inning.

THE DUGOUT

Alex watches the double play unfold.

He punches his glove, gets up and trots out to the mound.

THE MOUND

Alex throws two quick practice pitches then nods to the Umpire he's ready.

Mays is the first batter.

Mays steps into the batter's box. Alex walks slowly off the mound, stopping halfway to home.

ALEX  
Which eye?

Mays studies Alex's face a moment. Alex shrugs.

ALEX  
I'll pick one then.

Alex turns and heads back to the mound. Mays gets nervous.

MAYS  
Alex, the ball just got away from  
me.

Alex stops and turns back to Mays, a skeptical smile on his face.

MAYS

It was an accident.

ALEX

This'll be an accident too.

Mays grows desperate.

MAYS

Swear to God, Alex, I didn't mean to hit him.

Alex still look dubious.

MAYS

It wasn't intentional.

Alex tosses the ball up and down, lost in thought.

ALEX

Then it won't happen again?

MAYS

Swear to God!

Alex nods and returns to the mound.

He strikes Mays out on three inside fastballs. Mays never moves the bat from this shoulder.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY -- EVENING

Pickles, Rhem and Alex come down the hall dressed to the nines.

When they reach the entrance to the lobby, Pickles stops them. They can see Hornsby sitting in a big leather chair in the center of the lobby.

PICKLES

He's still there.

RHEM

His ass must be made of iron.

They look at each other, shrug, then face the gauntlet.

THE LOBBY

They file past Hornsby.

PICKLES

Evenin' skip.

RHEM

Rog.

Alex simply nods as he passes.

HORNSBY

Midnight.

They walk out the front door.

TIMMY, 10, shyly approaches Hornsby.

TIMMY

Mr Hornsby--can I have your autograph?

Timmy offers a pen and baseball.

HORNSBY

Sure kid.

Hornsby signs.

HORNSBY

You play ball?

TIMMY

I'm not very good.

Hornsby hands him the ball.

HORNSBY

Let's see you swing.

Timmy puts the ball on the floor then swings an imaginary bat.

Hornsby shakes his head and smiles. He stands up and gets in his batting stance.

A CROWD begins to gather to watch the lesson.

HORNSBY

First, you need a good stance. Try it again.

Timmy tries to imitate Hornsby's stance. Hornsby tinkers with it.

HORNSBY

Keep you elbow up--keep your weight on your back foot.

Hornsby steps back--not bad.

HORNSBY

See, you want to be balanced...

Hornsby spots a spectator, a MAN WITH A CANE. He grabs the cane.

HORNSBY  
Let me borrow this.

Hornsby wields the cane as a bat.

HORNSBY  
You want to swing hard, sure, but  
more important, you want to be quick  
with the bat.

Hornsby swings. The crowd oohs and aahhs.

Hornsby notices a cute 30 year old woman watching the boy  
with a smile on his face. Hornsby winks at TIMMY'S MOM.

HORNSBY  
Didn't your daddy teach you how to  
hit?

TIMMY  
The Germans killed him.

Hornsby smiles at the information.

HORNSBY  
Tough break, kid. Here, take this.

Hornsby hands him the cane.

HORNSBY  
Now get in your stance again.

Timmy does.

Hornsby smiles at Mom.

INT. SPEAKEASY -- NIGHT

Rhem and Pickles stand at a crowded bar, a cocktail in hand.  
A jazz combo plays nearby.

A loud, 40ish BLOND stands next to Rhem.

PICKLES  
Can't get in a goddamn game--not an  
inning, for chrissakes.

RHEM  
What'dya expect. O'Farrell never  
gets hurt.

PICKLES  
I know. The bastard.

The Blond turns and winks at Rhem. He smiles back.

PICKLES

And I'm so sick of the travel. These  
road trips go on forever.

Pickles takes a drink.

PICKLES

I'm thinking of retiring.

RHEM

How will we know?

Pickles shoots him a black look.

The Blond wedges her way between them. She takes Rhem's  
arm.

BLOND

You gonna buy me a drink honey?

RHEM

Sure babe.

Pickles looks around the room, searching for Alex.

He spots him sitting by himself at a back booth. A bottle  
of gin sits in the center of the table. It's nearly empty.

Alex looks at the bottle, his gaze far away.

Pickles watches as Alex picks up the bottle, pours some gin  
into his hand, then massages it into his arm.

The Bartender taps Pickles on the shoulder.

BARTENDER

He a friend of yours?

Pickles nods.

BARTENDER

Then get him out of here before we  
toss him.

Pickles nods again. He turns to Rhem, whose deep in  
conversation with the blond. Pickles taps his shoulder.

PICKLES

Ready to go?

RHEM

I'm in the middle of something.  
I'll meet you back at the hotel.

Pickles walks over to Alex's booth.

## PICKLES

Let's go home.

## INT. HORNSBY'S HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Hornsby lies fully clothed on the bed staring at the ceiling.

A fan in the window blows hot air around.

He hears a commotion in the hallway. He looks at the clock--  
11:52.

## THE HALLWAY

Pickles passes Hornsby's door. He carries Alex--unconscious--  
on his shoulder. He huffs and sweats profusely under the  
load.

## ALEX'S HOTEL ROOM

Pickles lays his burden down on the bed. He sits down and  
catches his breath, wiping a downpour of sweat from his  
forehead.

Then he removes Alex's shoes.

## HORNSBY'S HOTEL ROOM

He still lays on the bed.

There's a knock at his door. He gets up.

He opens the door. Timmy's Mom stands in the hallway with  
an embarrassed smile on her face.

Hornsby smiles and swings the door open for her.

## PICKLES ROOM

Pickles stands in the center of the room in his boxer shorts.  
He's still sweating up a storm.

A fan in the window does a poor job of cooling him. The  
sound of water comes from the bathroom.

## THE BATHROOM

Pickles walks in. The tub is nearly full. His pants lay on  
the floor.

He reaches over and turns off the faucet--only the cold water  
is on.

He slips off his boxers and sinks into the tub--blessed relief  
on his face.

He reaches over the tub's rim and grabs his pants. He pulls out his wallet and opens it.

There's a picture of a young woman and two young girl. Pickles sinks down in the tub and studies the photo.

INT. ALEX'S HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Alex sprawls across the bed--dead to the world.

Then his body begins to jerk.

FADE TO BLACK

A distant echo of explosions.

Growing closer.

EXT. A BATTLE FIELD -- DAY

A huge cannon is set in a bomb scarred field.

The cannon lobs bombs over a tree line into an unseen battle ground. Missiles return from the other side of the trees, sizzle through the sky and land with a huge BOOM.

Alex--now just 30 years old--kneels next to the cannon. A CAPTAIN stands on the other side of the weapon.

CAPTAIN

Adjust 2 degrees north...

The cannon's muzzle slowly moves.

Alex hands a large shell to the Captain. The Captain loads it in the muzzle, then hunches down. Alex puts his hands over his ears.

CAPTAIN

Fire!

The cannon bucks and roars, propelling a trail of fire into the air.

Alex watches it fly as he hands over another shell.

An incoming missile howls towards him. It lands nearby, showering Alex with mud and dirt. Alex ducks.

As he does, his own cannon explodes--and ungodly roar that turns into a loud ringing.

INT. ALEX'S HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Alex bolts up in bed, drenched in sweat, trying to catch his breath.

He huddles against the wall, shivering in fear.

Then he rips off the blankets and bolts out of bed. He runs to his luggage.

He rips through his suitcase until he reaches his flask. He opens it and dumps the contents down his throat.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

The Players put on their uniforms at their lockers.

Timmy is also in uniform--the new Cardinal bat boy.

Alex walks in, a bit unsteady. He promptly falls over a stool and hits the ground.

He rises with as much dignity as he can muster.

The Players turn back to their lockers, embarrassed for him. Except Hornsby.

He hold a baseball in his hand and looks ready to chuck it at his drunken hurler.

Alex makes his way to his locker. Hornsby meets him there. Hornsby looks at him with total disgust.

HORNSBY

Pitiful.

He calls out to the locker room.

HORNSBY

Rhem, you're going today.

No response. Hornsby looks around the room.

HORNSBY

Where the hell is Rhem?

He looks at his players--no one knows. He looks at Pickles.

PICKLES

Don't know skip.

Hornsby's ready to blow.

HORNSBY

We're playing the first place team  
and I ain't got a pitcher sober enough  
to start.

He appeals to his players.

HORNSBY

Goddamn it, doesn't anybody on this  
goddamn team wanna win the pennant?  
Doesn't anybody give a shit?

BILL HALLAHAN, a big strapping 24 year old, steps forward.

HALLAHAN

Let me pitch. I'm ready to go.

Hornsby looks at him a minute, unconvinced but without many options.

He hands Hallahan the ball.

Hallahan runs out of the locker room before Hornsby can change his mind.

Bottomley walks by Hornsby on his way to the field. He claps his manager on the shoulder.

BOTTOMLEY

Let's go get 'em Rog.

The other players pick up on the enthusiasm as they file out of the locker room.

HAFEY

Let's kick some ass...

HAINES

Let's show those Pirates what we're  
made of...

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

SCENES from a victory.

Hallahan strikes out a PIRATE.

Hafey makes a diving catch in center field.

Bottomley unloads on a pitch, sending it soaring into the left field bleachers.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

Hallahan is carried into the room on the shoulders of his teammates.

Alex sits at his locker, watching but not partaking in the celebration.

BOTTOMLEY

Way to go kid.

HAINES

Nice job rook.

O'FARRELL

Big win Bill.

BELL

Six games out and charging...

INT. HORNSBY'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Hornsby stews behind his desk.

Rickey walks in and takes a seat.

RICKEY

The kid pitched a whale of a ballgame.

Hornsby responds with a grunt.

Rickey lights a cigar.

RICKEY

What are you going to do about Alex?

HORNSBY

Release him.

Rickey takes a long puff.

RICKEY

Maybe we should think about that.

HORNSBY

Nothing to think about. He's a disgrace. We don't need him.

RICKEY

He certainly has a problem...

HORNSBY

We've got a shot here--I can't spend my time babysitting a worthless drunk.

RICKEY

I talked with him. He assured me it wouldn't happen again.

HORNSBY

Damn right it won't. Cause he won't pitch for me again.

Rickey stands.

RICKEY

In all honesty, I don't believe we can win the pennant without him.

Hornsby runs his hand over his face--there's some truth in that.

HORNSBY

That man's gonna send me to an early grave.

Rickey seizes the advantage.

RICKEY

But if you tell me to cut him loose, it's done...

The two men stare at each other as Hornsby decides.

RICKEY

Let me suggest something. We only have problems with Alex on the road. Maybe if Amy traveled with him--she seems to have some control.

Hornsby has a sour look on his face.

HORNSBY

Send him in.

Rickey nods.

RICKEY

This is the time for...

Hornsby holds up his hand--he doesn't want to hear it.

Rickey shrugs.

RICKEY

You're the manager.

Rickey walks out.

After a moment, Alex walks in. He slumps into a chair across from Hornsby's desk.

ALEX

Sorry 'bout that Rog. Won't happen again.

HORNSBY

Cut the happy horse shit.

Hornsby takes a deep breath.

HORNSBY

I told Rickey to release you.

This gets Alex's attention. He sits up in his chair and starts to say something, but Hornsby stops him.

HORNSBY

I can't win the pennant without you.  
But you're not too good at showing  
up.

Alex opens his mouth to respond, but Hornsby shakes his head.

HORNSBY

If I'm gonna keep you around, we  
need to have an understanding.

Alex's eyes narrow.

ALEX

What sort of "understanding?"

HORNSBY

No more speakeasies. You wanna drink,  
drink in your hotel room where I can  
find you.

Alex considers this.

ALEX

I can live with that.

HORNSBY

And no more gin. Drink all the beer  
you want, but no more hard stuff the  
rest of the way.

Alex doesn't like the sound of this.

HORNSBY

Once the season's over you can drink  
yourself to death for all I care.  
But break our bargain--just once--  
and I'll make sure you never pitch  
in the big leagues again.

Alex thinks for a minute.

ALEX

I guess beer ain't so bad.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

The room is empty.

Then the players start to filter in, wearing their street  
clothes.

Hornsby enters and breezes through the room, calling out to  
the players.

HORNSBY

Big game today boys. Don't fuck up.

Hornsby shuts himself into his office. The Players start to put on their uniforms.

Rickey walks in and works the room.

RICKEY

Fine job boys, keep it up.

He's interrupted by the arrival of Rhem.

Rhem's clothes are torn and dirty. He's got a three day beard. His eyes are red and wild.

He grabs Rickey by the lapels.

RHEM

Don't pay the ransom! I escaped!

Rickey recoils. The smell coming from Rhem is not so good.

RICKEY

Judas Priest man...

INT. HORNSBY'S OFFICE -- LATER

Hornsby is putting on his uniform as Rickey enters.

RICKEY

Rhem's back.

Hornsby grunts disdainfully.

HORNSBY

Where's he been?

RICKEY

He says he was kidnapped--taken to a remote cabin in New Jersey where he was forced to drink whisky for three days.

HORNSBY

You can't believe that.

RICKEY

Well, you couldn't disprove his story by the way he smelled.

HORNSBY

I got no use for him.

RICKEY

He's on his way to 20 wins. We've only got six weeks left.

HORNSBY

There's gotta be some sober pitchers  
out there somewhere.

EXT. BULLPEN -- DAY

Pickles, Rhem and Alex sit on the bench.

Pickles gets up and starts playing around with a bat.

RHEM

Sit down. You ain't goin' nowhere.

Pickles playfully turns as if to hit Rhem with the bat.

THE STANDS

Two 13 year old BOYS sneak down the aisle towards the bullpen.

One pulls out a string of firecrackers. The other lights  
it. They toss the firecrackers into the bullpen.

THE BULLPEN

The exploding firecrackers land at Pickles' feet.

A shocked Pickles dances comically away from the explosions  
until he figures out what's going on. He looks over to Rhem  
and they start to laugh.

Then they look over at Alex.

He sits on the bench, his fists clenched, his face white.

Alex notices them looking. He shrugs and gives them a sad  
smile.

SCOREBOARD: Reds 1, Visitors 1, seventh inning, one out.

THE FIELD

Bell singles.

Hornsby comes to the plate and ropes the first pitch into  
right field, scoring Bell.

Hornsby hobbles to first.

Thevenow is up next and promptly hits it to the THIRD BASEMAN.

The Third Baseman throws to second. The SECOND BASEMAN turns.  
Hornsby's coming in. He knows he's out, so he stays up,  
trying to stop the double play.

The Second Baseman throws to first, but instead hits Hornsby  
directly in the eye.

Hornsby falls to the ground.

EXT. THE FIELD -- LATER

SCOREBOARD: Reds 1, Visitors 2, ninth inning, one out.

THE DUGOUT

The phone rings. Hornsby, nursing a huge black eye, picks it up.

HORNSBY

Yeah.

Hornsby listens intently.

He looks down the dugout, spotting Timmy the batboy. He waves him over.

HORNSBY

Hey kid.

Timmy runs over.

TIMMY

Yes sir?

Hornsby kneels down and looks Timmy in the eye.

HORNSBY

I need ya to do something real important for me.

Timmy's eyes grow big--this is his chance to help the Cardinals.

HORNSBY

You know the drugstore across the street?

Timmy nods.

HORNSBY

Go over there and ask for Doc. Tell him to put five on Top Hat to win in the third race. Can you remember that?

Timmy nods again.

HORNSBY

And you gotta hustle. The race is ready to start.

Timmy turns to go.

HORNSBY

Hey kid.

Timmy turns back.

HORNSBY

Wait around. See how the race comes out.

THE FIELD

Rhem labors on the mound.

He's got a PLAYER on second he constantly checks on. Then he fires to the plate.

The HITTER dumps a single over Thevenow's head. The Player advances to third.

Hornsby limps from the dugout to the pitching mound.

THE MOUND

Hornsby signals to the bullpen for another arm.

THE BULLPEN

Alex gets up.

THE FIELD

RHEM

Let me stay, Rog--I can get this guy.

HORNSBY

Sure you can.

Hornsby holds his hand out.

HORNSBY

But I'm going with Alex.

Alex arrives. So does the catcher, O'Farrell.

Rhem grumbles, but hands Hornsby the ball and walks off. Hornsby hands the ball to Alex.

Alex turns to O'Farrell.

ALEX

Don't need no warm up.

O'Farrell nods and walks back behind the plate.

The HITTER lines the first pitch to third baseman Bell. The Runner at third has no chance to score.

Bell tosses the ball back to Alex. The Umpire calls time and leans over to clean the plate.

Then Alex drops the ball on the mound and starts to jog towards the dugout.

THE DUGOUT

Hornsby, sitting on the bench, sees Alex approaching. He gets up on the top step of the dugout and yells to his pitcher.

HORNSBY

Two outs! Get back out there!

THE FIELD

But Alex keeps coming. His gait grows increasingly unsteady. He stumbles.

THE DUGOUT

HORNSBY

Are you drunk, you miserable...

Alex hits the dugout steps and falls into Hornsby's arms.

Now Alex's whole body is twitching, his eyes rolled back in his head.

Hornsby catches him in horror and lays him on the dugout floor.

Pickles runs over and stuffs a towel in Alex's mouth. He holds Alex until he stops shaking.

HORNSBY

Oh for chrissakes, what next?

The TRAINER and Pickles help Alex to the bench. The Trainer puts smelling salts under his nose.

Alex head jerks back, his eyes start to clear.

The Umpire comes over to the dugout.

UMPIRE

Hey Rog, you gotta pitcher?

Hornsby looks down his bench.

HORNSBY

Hallahan, get out there.

ALEX

I can go.

Hornsby turns around and looks at him.

Alex stands, tests his legs, picks up his glove off the dugout floor then starts walking up the steps towards the field.

Hornsby watches him with something approaching admiration.

THE FIELD

Alex reaches the mound where O'Farrell waits for him.

O'FARRELL  
Need a couple warm ups?

Alex shakes his head. O'Farrell gets behind the plate.

The BATTER stands in. Alex looks glassy eyed as O'Farrell flashes his signs.

He throws. The Batter watches it cross the plate.

UMPIRE  
Strike one!

Alex doesn't hesitate before throwing another pitch. The Batter swings and misses. Before he knows it, Alex is throwing again.

The Batter takes a half hearted lunge at the ball.

UMPIRE  
Strike three!

At third, Bell throws his fist in the air and charges the mound, slapping Alex on the back. He's joined by O'Farrell and Bottomley, celebrating the win on the mound.

Alex has a confused look in his unfocused eyes.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

Alex sits at his locker, still in uniform, still in a fog.

Players walk by and congratulate him.

BOTTOMLEY  
Nice game Alex.

RHEM  
'Preciate the help out there.

Alex smiles and nods but says nothing.

Pickles and Rhem sit at their lockers, which are next to each other.

Pickles wears only his boxer shorts, an open briefcase at his feet, papers spread out everywhere.

PICKLES  
...an exciting opportunity.

RHEM  
Where's the opportunity?

PICKLES  
The opportunity for security.

RHEM  
So I die...

PICKLES  
And your loved ones are taken care of.

RHEM  
But I'm dead.

PICKLES  
Well yeah...sure.

RHEM  
Pickles, if I die, I want everybody to feel as bad about it as I do.

Timmy runs into the locker room. Hornsby's waiting for him.

HORNSBY  
How'd we do?

TIMMY  
Sorry Mr. Hornsby--he finished fucking sixth.

HORNSBY  
Son of a bitch.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- DAY

SCOREBOARD: Brooklyn 9, Visitors 11

Hornsby sits at one end of the dugout. Pickles, Rhem and Alex huddle on the far other end.

Pickles nudges Rhem and points to Hornsby's lonesome vigil.

PICKLES  
Look at him. Not a friend in the world.

RHEM  
And doesn't deserve one.

THE FIELD

Bell doubles. Bottomley walks to the plate.

THE DUGOUT

Hornsby gets up, grabs a bat and walks to the on-deck circle.

THE FIELD

Hornsby kneels, rubbing a pine tar rag on his bat handle as he watches Bottomley hit.

A FAN in the front row starts to heckle Hornsby.

FAN

Hey Hornsby, you're all washed up.

Hornsby ignores him.

FAN

On top of that, you're ugly. Your mother must've been one ugly beast.

This gets Hornsby's attention. He turns to the stands.

HORNSBY

If I were a drunk loser, I'd probably keep my mouth shut.

This only eggs on the Fan.

FAN

Come up here and get yours, you yella bastard.

Hornsby turns back to the game.

FAN

You're hitting .290--it's time to retire, old man...

That's all it takes. Hornsby drops his bat and charges into the stands.

THE DUGOUT

Rhem and Pickles hoot when they see Hornsby go into the stands. They hurry to the top step of the dugout to watch.

RHEM

Maybe they'll kill the miserable son of a bitch.

PICKLES

Hope they hit him once for me.

Pickles turns to say something to Alex, but he's not on the bench.

THE STANDS

Hornsby rains punches on the heckling Fan. Nearby FANS toss bottles at Hornsby and douse him with beer.

Then the Fans start to swarm over Hornsby.

THE DUGOUT

Pickles sees Alex now. He's on the field and running towards the stands.

PICKLES

Let's go.

Rhem and Pickles run towards the melee.

By the time they reach the stands, the rest of the Cardinals are already there.

A dozen COPS, wielding billy clubs, wade into the stands to rescue Hornsby.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

Breadon waddles through the locker room slapping backs and working the players, a huge cigar burning in his hand.

He hugs Bottomley.

BREADON

Big Jim, helluva season. Keep it up a little longer.

He grabs Haines' shoulder.

BREADON

Jess, just keep baffling 'em with the bullshit.

Breadon walks towards Hornsby's office. As he does, he calls out.

BREADON

Boys, we're real close.

INT. HORNSBY OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Hornsby sits behind his desk oiling his glove as Breadon walks in. His face is bruised from the earlier altercation. He still has the black eye. And the white wrap on his wrist.

He's not happy with the intrusion. Breadon doesn't notice-- or doesn't care.

He puffs his cigar and sits in front of the desk.

BREADON

A good old fashion pennant race.  
Shame we got all these games on the  
road--I could have made some money  
with this.

Hornsby grunts.

BREADON

Still, a few World Series games  
wouldn't hurt.

Breadon looks around the office.

BREADON

Got anything to drink around here?

Hornsby shakes his head.

HORNSBY

We got two days off after the Giants  
series. I was thinkin' of heading  
down to Texas to see my mother.  
She's not doin' so well.

Breadon shakes his head.

BREADON

I'm afraid that won't be possible.  
We booked exhibitions in Toledo and  
Akron for those days.

HORNSBY

You can play them without me. Or my  
starters.

Breadon smiles.

BREADON

Not possible. The fans pay to see  
the great Hornsby.

HORNSBY

Fuck the fans.

Breadon's smile fades.

BREADON

You're the second highest paid player  
in baseball. Where do you think all  
that money comes from?

HORNSBY

Sam, it's August.

(MORE)

HORNSBY

My players are tired. We're right in the middle of a pennant race--cancel the exhibitions.

BREADON

Can't be done.

Hornsby's face gets red.

HORNSBY

Well, I won't be there.

Breadon takes a long puff of his cigar.

BREADON

Oh, you'll be there. Or you'll find out how much you can earn outside of baseball.

HORNSBY

I'm trying to win you a pennant, you greedy pig.

Breadon, clearly upset, stands.

BREADON

You'll do as you're told.

HORNSBY

You can kiss my ass.

Breadon responds in a cold fury.

BREADON

I'm not used to being talked to that way by my employees.

Hornsby stands, leaning over his desk.

HORNSBY

And I'm not used to car salesmen telling me how to run my ballclub.

BREADON

That's where your mistaken. It ain't your ballclub. You're just the product I put on the field.

HORNSBY

You got lots of money--I'll give you that. So fucking what? What I got you can't buy. Now get out of my locker room before you get hurt. And don't come back.

Breadon takes a step back.

BREADON  
You'll regret this.

Hornsby picks a glass up off his desk and throws it against the wall, narrowly missing the owner.

Breadon turns and moves swiftly out of the room.

THE LOCKER ROOM

The players watch in amazement as Breadon storms out.

INT. BREADON'S HOTEL ROOM -- EVENING

Breadon lounges on the couch. Sitting around him are three REPORTERS jotting in notebooks.

BREADON  
...see boys, I started out poorer'n  
a church mouse, but I been successful  
at everything I ever done. I didn't  
figure baseball'd be any different.

REPORTER #1  
You got pretty lucky getting a genius  
like Rickey to run the club.

Breadon visibly bristles.

BREADON  
Branch is a valued employee.

Breadon takes out a cigar.

BREADON  
But don't forget it was me that wrote  
the check for his precious "farm  
system."

A knock at the door.

BREADON  
Come.

Rickey walks in.

BREADON  
Just talkin' 'bout you Branch.

Breadon looks to the Reporters.

BREADON  
Excuse us a minute boys.

The Reporters file out of the room.

Rickey walks in to the luxurious suite.

The minute the door shuts, Breadon turns on Rickey.

BREADON  
Get rid of him.

RICKEY  
Now Sam...

BREADON  
I want him gone.

RICKEY  
You can't fire the manager of a second  
place team. Not in August anyway.

Breadon turns on him.

BREADON  
It's my goddamn second place team--I  
can do whatever I want.

RICKEY  
Think of how it will look--the  
newspapers...

Breadon takes a long sip of whisky while he considers this.

BREADON  
Son of a bitch.

RICKEY  
We've got three weeks left in the  
season. Let's play it out, see how  
we finish.

BREADON  
I guess I got no choice.

RICKEY  
No.

Breadon mulls this.

BREADON  
But I got a long memory.

Rickey turns to go. Breadon stops him.

BREADON  
You hate that son of a bitch as much  
as I do. Why are you standing up  
for him?

Rickey smiles.

RICKEY  
When he picks up a bat, he's perfect.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- DAY

SCENES FROM A HOT BALLCLUB

Alex throwing with his smooth easy motion.

Bottomley slamming a ball out of the ballpark.

A ground ball to Hornsby. He tosses it to Thevenow who throws to first for a perfect double play.

PICKLES (V.O.)

We were a team riding a hot streak.  
Less than a month to go and we were  
in a three way race with Pittsburgh  
and Cincinnati for the pennant.

Alex walks in from the bullpen. There are MEN at every base.

PICKLES (V.O.)

It seemed Alex was on the field about  
every game.

Alex coaxes the Batter into a double play and walks off the field.

PICKLES (V.O.)

He threw in relief both games of a  
double header, then the next day  
pitched seven innings in relief for  
the win.

Alex takes the field against Cincinnati.

PICKLES (V.O.)

On September 5, Alex beat the Reds  
and for the first time all season we  
were in first place.

Rhem strikes out a PHILLIE.

PICKLES (V.O.)

With a week to go in the season, we  
had a shaky hold on first place...

Cardinal outfielder Southworth comes to the plate.

PICKLES (V.O.)

We also had six straight games against  
the last place Phillies.

Southworth connects on a fastball. The ball sails out of the park.

Southworth circles the bases.

PICKLES (V.O.)

We won five. Rhem got his 20th win.  
And with one game to go in the season,  
we had ourselves a pennant.

Southworth's met by his teammates at home. He's soon mobbed by them.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

The Cardinals celebrate their pennant. Beer sprays everywhere.

Reporters hover around, getting quotes and waiting to talk to Hornsby.

INT. HORNSBY'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Reporters surround Hornsby's desk.

REPORTER #1

Nice season Rog. Too bad you gotta face the Yankees in the Series.

HORNSBY

We got a pretty good ballclub ourselves.

REPORTER #2

C'mon Rog, you're facing Murderer's Row--Meusel, Gehrig, Ruth...

REPORTER #3

Maybe the best team ever assembled...

REPORTER #1

They're playing their fourth Series in six years...

Hornsby shrugs.

HORNSBY

I'll take my chances with my guys any day.

REPORTER #1

How you gonna handle Ruth?

Hornsby permits himself a small smile.

HORNSBY

Real careful.

Rickey walks in.

HORNSBY

That's it for now boys.

The Reporters file out. Rickey sits across from Hornsby.

RICKEY

The series starts in three days. I  
see no use in returning to St. Louis.

Hornsby stands and stretches--he looks old and tired.

HORNSBY

We haven't been home in a month.

RICKEY

I'm afraid it can't be helped.

A knock at the door. Timmy comes in.

TIMMY

Ya gotta telegram Mr. Hornsby.

Timmy hands Hornsby the telegram and walks out. Hornsby's  
hands shake as he opens it.

Hornsby reads the telegram. He chokes back a sob and falls  
into his chair. He spins his chair around so his back is to  
Rickey.

Rickey leans over the desk and reads the telegram.

MA PASSED LAST NIGHT. FUNERAL SUNDAY. YOUR BROTHER EVERETT.

Rickey says sympathetically.

RICKEY

The team needs you.

Hornsby replies flatly.

HORNSBY

My mother just died.

RICKEY

You'd miss the first two games.

Hornsby doesn't respond.

RICKEY

As the Bible says...

Hornsby spins around in his chair and faces Rickey with a  
cold stare.

HORNSBY

Save your preachin'. I'll stick  
around. Not for you and not for  
that fat ass that owns the team.

EXT. A BATTLE FIELD -- DAY

Alex kneels next to the big cannon watching the incoming missiles.

But the nearby explosions sound strangely muted, as if heard with a single eardrum.

MEDICS run back from the unseen front, hauling the dead and WOUNDED. They dump the bodies like sacks of cement near the cannon, then return for more.

A SOLDIER runs out of the forest. He waves his hands over his head and shouts, but his voice is lost in the sounds of war.

A Medic dumps an 18 year old Soldier (RICO) a couple feet away from Alex. His legs are gone. Alex looks over.

ALEX  
Rico, is that you?

RICO  
What's left of me.

CAPTAIN  
Shell!

Alex hands a shell over.

RICO  
Alex, don't let 'em save me. I can't  
live like this, half a man. Let me  
die.

The Captain loads the shell.

The Soldier gets closer, still waving his hands in the air, still inaudible over the explosions.

The cannon ROARS.

In the ensuing silence, Alex can hear the Soldier.

SOLDIER  
Stop firing! You're shelling your  
own troops!

INT. ALEX'S HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

The sound of his screams wakes Alex.

Amy turns on the light.

She hugs his head, rocking him.

AMY

It's all right baby, I'm here...It's okay.

Alex, shaking, nods towards the dresser.

Amy gets up and walks over to the dresser. She pours half a glass of whisky and takes it back to the bed.

She feeds it to Alex.

ALEX

More.

Amy shakes her head.

AMY

That's enough.

She curls up next to him.

AMY

Now close your eyes.

INT. ALEX'S HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

Amy wakes up.

Alex is gone. Her eyes widen in panic.

INT. HORNSBY'S HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

A knock at the door.

Hornsby gets up, grabs his robe and mutters as he walks to the door.

He opens the door.

HORNSBY

What the fuuu...

He stops. Amy, wearing her bathrobe, stands in the hall. Through the open door Amy can see a female lying in Hornsby's bed.

AMY

Alex is gone.

INT. PICKLES' HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

A knock at the door.

Pickles switches on the light. In the next bed Rhem rouses himself.

RHEM

Who the fuck is that?

Pickles shrugs. Another knock.

Pickles gets up, puts on his bathrobe and walks to the door.

He looks through the peephole and sees Hornsby, fully dressed now, standing in the hall.

PICKLES

Shit!

Rhem is out of bed looking at Pickles.

RHEM

What?

PICKLES

It's Hornsby. He's probably here to release me.

Rhem shakes his head.

RHEM

That's too bad, friend...

Pickles glances again through the peephole.

PICKLES

What am I going to do?

The start of an idea in Rhem's head.

RHEM

Wait a minute. It's 2 o'clock in the morning. You're nobody. If he was going to release you, he'd wait 'til morning.

Pickles considers this, then breaks into a huge smile--it's true.

Another knock--this one impatient.

Pickles swings the door open.

HORNSBY

Get your clothes on. We're gonna find Alex.

EXT. A MANHATTAN STREET -- NIGHT

Pickles and Hornsby walk down a rain drenched street.

They come to a drugstore. Hornsby follows Pickles inside.

INT. DRUGSTORE -- CONTINUOUS

The place is open, but deserted. A small BALDING MAN sits behind the counter and looks bored by the new arrivals.

Pickles walks to a door leading to the back of the shop. He turns to the Balding Man.

PICKLES

I'm looking for a blind pig.

The Balding Man nods and pushes a button. The door buzzes. Pickles opens it.

A DARK HALLWAY

At the end of the hall is a steel door.

Pickles knocks. A peephole slides open. A pair of EYES stares out.

PICKLES

Hey Wilson, seen Alex tonight?

EYES

Sorry, Pickles, he ain't been in.

EXT. AN ALLEY -- LATER

They come to another steel door.

Pickles knocks. The door opens.

A jazz BAND blares. FLAPPERS dance on tables. MEN IN TUXEDOS drink champagne and smoke big cigars.

A plate of oysters passes the door, taking Pickles' eyes with it.

RAY, a big beefy man with slicked back hair, slaps Pickles on the shoulder.

RAY

Pickles my friend. Come in, come in.

PICKLES

Just wondering if Alex was here.

RAY

No. But someone said they saw him at Sully's.

PICKLES

Thanks Ray.

RAY

You gotta come in for one drink. On the house.

An enthused Pickles turns to Hornsby, but Hornsby's grim look shuts him down.

PICKLES

Can't tonight Ray, but thanks anyway.

INT. SULLY'S -- NIGHT

It's a dark, dingy place for getting drunk, free of any ambiance.

Alex sits at the bar, a glass of gin in front of him, his eyes red and faraway.

Hornsby stalks to the bar.

HORNSBY

Let's go.

ALEX

Get lost.

HORNSBY

We had a deal.

ALEX

Fuck your deal. Fuck you.

Hornsby looks disgustedly at his hurler.

HORNSBY

We're getting ready to play for the championship...

ALEX

Don't mean nothin' to me. Just a paycheck.

HORNSBY

That's why you'll always be a loser.

ALEX

Yeah Rog? You think people are gonna applaud when you walk down the street in 20 years? You think anybody'll give a shit about your World Series when you're 60?

Alex takes a long drink.

ALEX

You're so good, win the series by yourself.

HORNSBY  
I got us this far...

ALEX  
You got us no where. You can barely hit anymore. Everybody in the clubhouse hates your guts. Players--good players--win pennant. Not half assed managers.

The BARMAID comes over to Hornsby.

BARMAID  
Can I get you something?

Hornsby pulls a \$100 bill out of his wallet and slaps it on the bar. He points to Alex.

HORNSBY  
Yeah, let him drink 'til he's dead.

Hornsby turns and walks out. Pickles follows.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Pickles dresses at his locker. Rhem does the same next to him.

Hornsby comes by. Pickles looks at him, waiting for some word. But Hornsby is looking at Alex, who sits by himself at his locker.

PICKLES  
Uh Rog, you need something?

Then Hornsby remembers Pickles exists.

HORNSBY  
I'm giving O'Farrell the day off. Get with Haines and get the signs straight.

PICKLES  
Hey, Rog, I appreciate the opportunity...

But Hornsby is already walking away.

Rhem laughs.

RHEM  
Now that the games don't matter, they're letting you play.

PICKLES  
I'll take what I can get.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- BATTING CAGE -- DAY

Pickles stands at the plate taking batting practice.

Bottomley, a bat in his hands, stands outside the cage next to Coach Red.

PICKLES (V.O.)

I knew there was a good chance this  
might be my last game...

He hits a couple of hard grounders, then a couple balls that would be singles.

COACH RED

One more and move on.

PICKLES (V.O.)

If so, I had a grand run.

Pickles hits a ball on the sweet spot. It soars into the outfield. Pickles stands at the plate and admires it.

The ball flies to the outfield wall before dying at the warning track.

Bottomley is already in the batting cage.

BOTTOMLEY

A couple more corn flakes for  
breakfast and that's out of here.

Pickles stands outside the cage. Bottomley effortlessly drills one ball after another deep into the stands.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

Pickles stands behind the plate, the Umpire behind him. His catcher's mask and cap in his hand, his catcher's mitt under his arm as the National Anthem plays.

PICKLES (V.O.)

I feel like an old man. My hands  
hurt all the time, my knees are  
shot...

The song ends.

UMPIRE

Play ball!

PICKLES (V.O.)

And I'm sick to death of living out  
of a suitcase.

Pickles takes a look around the ballpark as the FANS cheer.

PICKLES (V.O.)

And still I can't even tell ya how  
much I'll miss it.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

Pickles behind the plate. Haines throws. The ball is way  
inside.

The HITTER gets out of the way. Pickles dives, catching the  
ball.

He stands and turns to the Umpire.

PICKLES

Time.

The Umpire nods. Pickles trots out to the mound to consult  
with Haines.

PICKLES

Let's stay outside on this guy.

HAINES

Pickles, it's a knuckleball. I don't  
know where the hell it's going.

PICKLES

Oh yeah.

Pickles returns behind the plate.

PICKLES (V.O.)

It was strange. During the game all  
I could think about was my old man.  
Which is funny, 'cause my old man  
never saw me play.

Haines throws. The pitch sails wide. Pickles stretches out--  
the only way he can catch it is barehanded, which he does.

The flashing pain registers in his eyes, but he doesn't show  
anything else as he throws it back to Haines.

PICKLES (V.O.)

12 hours a day he worked in a factory.  
Never missed a day until the morning  
he woke up dead.

Haines throws again. The ball darts around like a butterfly.  
The Hitter swings and misses.

UMPIRE

Strike three!

On creaky knees, Pickles gets up out of stance. He limps  
towards the dugout.

PICKLES (V.O.)

I didn't want to end up like that.

On his way off the field, he looks into the stands and sees Rickey. Rickey's watching him. He jogs energetically the rest of the way to the dugout.

EXT. DUGOUT -- LATER

Pickles sits on the bench, slowly unstrapping his catcher's gear.

The Players file off the field, through the dugout and into the locker room.

Bottomley pats Haines on the back as they come off the field.

Haines looks at Pickles, his fingers like a gun, shooting at his catcher with a grin.

Pickles smiles and nods.

The Players are gone. The sun sinks behind the left field wall, casting a golden glow over the ballpark. The last of the fans file out.

A BUXOM BLOND wearing high heels teeters up to the edge of the dugout and flashes Pickles a big smile.

BUXOM BLOND

Hey there, can I get an autograph?

Pickles smiles and walks over. She hands him a piece of paper and a pen.

BUXOM BLOND

I think ballplayers are cute.

He starts to sign.

PICKLES (V.O.)

Women are everywhere on the road.  
Maybe they're payback for the endless  
road trips or the shitty pay or those  
afternoons you're 0-4.

He finishes, hands her the paper and pen.

BUXOM BLOND

Like to meet for a drink later?

Pickles holds up his left hand. On a gnarled finger is a wedding ring.

PICKLES (V.O.)

'Course if they're hangin' around the ballpark, you can bet Ruth got there first. And he may have left somethin' behind. Never met a man could fuck like the Babe.

Pickles tips his hat and walks back to the bench. He watches the shadows grow against the field. The horizon explodes in color.

PICKLES (V.O.)

What I'll miss is the guys in the locker room. The smell when you walk into the ballpark. The first cold beer after a three hit afternoon.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

The Cardinal pitchers sit around Coach Red. Except Alex. He sits by himself at his locker.

Hornsby stands nearby, but he's looking at Alex.

COACH RED

Lazzeri's their number two RBI man, but this Gehrig kid can smack the shit out of the ball.

Coach Red shakes his head.

COACH RED

I ain't gonna lie to you boys--these fellas can hit.

Coach Red looks over at Hornsby, whose only half paying attention.

COACH RED

Rog, you got anything to add?

HORNSBY

The Babe's the one to watch. Anybody else beats us, well that's okay. Walk him, hit him, I don't care, but that big monkey sees nothin' but shit. Understand?

They all nod.

Hornsby glances over at Alex, who hasn't stirred from his stool. Hornsby looks back at his pitchers.

HORNSBY

And Sherdel...

BILL SHERDEL looks up.

HORNSBY

You'll be startin' game one.

Sherdel looks very surprised.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

BABE RUTH leads off third base. He shouts at Sherdel on the mound.

RUTH

I'm going home, Billy, ain't nuthin' you can do.

PICKLES (V.O.)

We didn't let Ruth beat us...

Yankee LOU GEHRIG stands at the plate. Sherdel pitches.

PICKLES (V.O.)

Gehrig did. We lost the opener 2-1.

Gehrig belts the pitch into right field.

Ruth trots home.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

The players change in silence.

Hornsby steams into the locker room.

HORNSBY

You losers are pissing away the World Series!

Hornsby stalks into his office and slams the door.

At his locker, Alex watches Hornsby's tirade. He looks around at his teammates.

ALEX

Don't worry boys. We'll get 'em tomorrow.

INT. HORNSBY'S OFFICE -- LATER

Hornsby sits behind his desk. He's got a large cow bone and rubs it against his bat.

Rickey watches him a long moment before venturing--

RICKEY

Who will you start tomorrow?

Hornsby never looks up.

HORNSBY  
Ain't decided.

Rickey nods.

RICKEY  
It's something you may want to  
consider very carefully. You may  
never be this close again.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

The Players dress for game two.

Hornsby walks out of his office and gestures for Coach Red.

HORNSBY  
Tell Alex he's on the mound today.

Hornsby watches Coach Red walk over to Alex's locker. Alex  
shows no emotion at the news.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

Alex throws off the mound, his same smooth effortless motion.

A succession of YANKEES go down swinging.

PICKLES (V.O.)  
Alex was magnificent that day,  
retiring 21 straight Yankees. The  
Series was tied.

Alex strikes out the LAST YANKEE. He slowly walks off the  
mound.

PICKLES (V.O.)  
Best of all, after a month on the  
road we were going home.

EXT. A TRAIN STATION -- NIGHT

A HUGE CROWD jams the station as the train pulls in. The  
fans are equipped with signs, posters and pennants to welcome  
their pennant winners.

The train door opens. The crowd surges forward.

Pickles, carrying a large suitcase, steps out on the platform.  
No one notices.

FAN  
I think I see Bottomley!

Pickles passes unrecognized through the crowd.

The Cardinal stars exit the train. The Fans quickly engulf them.

Pickles lugs his suitcase a little ways down the platform. He turns back and watches the crowd adore their heroes.

He sighs and moves on.

Until he sees a six year old GIRL tearing down the platform, a huge smile on her face. His eyes light up.

GIRL  
Daddy! You're home!

The Girl leaps into his arms. He hugs her tightly.

EXT. BULLPEN -- DAY

Pickles catches Haines as he warms up. Rhem sits on the bench and watches.

The CROWD starts to fill the stands.

The Yankees walk out of their dugout, ready to take batting practice.

Ruth walks by the bullpen, carrying his bat.

PICKLES  
Hey Babe.

RUTH  
How's it going Pickles? Hey Jess.

Haines just nods and keeps pitching.

RUTH  
Is that all the harder you throw?

HAINES  
It's hard enough.

RUTH  
Don't believe you boys will be coming back to New York. We're figurin' on endin' it here in St. Louis.

PICKLES  
We may give you a tougher fight than you think.

RUTH  
I'm having a little party this evening at the hotel. Why don't you come on by and have a drink on the Babe?

PICKLES

Sure thing.

The Babe walks away. Rhem comes over to Pickles.

RHEM

Take me with you.

PICKLES

Okay.

RHEM

I've heard stuff about his parties.

Pickles smiles as he watches Ruth get ready to hit.

PICKLES

All the lies about him are true.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

The stands are packed.

Haines stands at the plate.

PICKLES (V.O.)

Home cooking agreed with ol' Jess.

Haines smashes a ball out of the park.

PICKLES (V.O.)

Not only did he shut out the mighty Yankees, he also homered to help his cause.

Haines trots around the bases.

PICKLES (V.O.)

We had the lead. But everybody in the clubhouse knew that--sooner or later--we'd see the those famous Yankee bats.

INT. HOTEL SUITE -- NIGHT

Pickles and Rhem walk into the spacious but crowded room.

The suite is populated by gangsters, politicians, ballplayers, hangers-on.

But mostly beautiful WOMEN.

Rhem's eyes widen.

Ruth comes by. He wears a red robe and Moroccan slippers. He has his arms around TWO WOMEN.

RUTH

Welcome boys. Looks like you earned yourselves a trip back to New York.

PICKLES

I told you we'd give you a game.

RUTH

Well, forget baseball. Grab a broad and get a drink.

PICKLES

A drink sounds good.

They move to the bar.

Rhem starts to talk to one of the Women on Ruth's arm.

RUTH

Alex surprised me. The old man still on the wagon?

PICKLES

Best that can be expected.

Ruth looks around the room.

RUTH

God I love St. Louis--best whore houses in the country.

Ruth notices Rhem making time. He pushes him away from the Woman.

RUTH

Get your own, bush.

Rhem slinks off like a whipped puppy. Ruth lays a wet kiss on the woman, then bellows to the room:

RUTH

Anybody don't wanna fuck can leave now!

EXT. BULLPEN -- DAY

Rhem warms up. Pickles catches.

Rhem stops throwing, nodding to Pickles that he's ready.

Pickles and Rhem lean on the bullpen railing, watching the Yankees take batting practice.

Ruth is up--he's hitting one moon shot after another.

RHEM

How can he still be standing? He damn near drunk the town dry last night.

PICKLES

The Babe can sure put 'em down.

Rhem watches the Babe's exhibition.

RHEM

He ain't so great.

PICKLES

Yeah he is.

RHEM

I can strike him out.

PICKLES

You won't get the chance.

Rhem mutters to himself.

RHEM

We'll see about that.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

SCOREBOARD: Cardinals 0, Visitors 0, first inning, two outs.

Rhem's on the mound. Ruth's at bat. Hornsby calls over from second base.

HORNSBY

Give him nuthin'!

Rhem winds and fires, a fastball over the heart of the plate.

Ruth quickly deposits the ball in the right field bleachers. He starts his pigeon-toed trot around the base paths.

Hornsby screams towards the mound.

HORNSBY

What the fuck are you doing?

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

SCOREBOARD: Cardinals 1, Visitors 2, third inning, one out.

Rhem's still on the mound. Ruth's back at the plate.

Hornsby's still screaming from second.

HORNSBY

He sees nothin' but shit here, Rhem.

Rhem's grimly determined on the mound.

RHEM

Let's see you do it again, fat boy.

Rhem heaves a fast ball. Ruth belts it into the left field bleachers.

Hornsby melts down at second.

HORNSBY

Rhem you're dead from the neck up,  
you miserable piss ant...

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

SCOREBOARD: Cardinals 4, Visitors 7, sixth inning, no outs.

Rhem against Ruth.

This time Hornsby walks over to the mound.

HORNSBY

You're going to walk him. Four  
pitches nowhere near the plate.

Hornsby looks at him with pure malevolence.

HORNSBY

Understand?

Rhem nods, never looking at his manager.

Hornsby returns to second.

Ruth steps in.

Rhem throws a fastball.

Ruth crushes it. It flies over the right field bleachers. It clears the ballpark, soars over Dodier Avenue and crashes through the plate glass window of a car dealership.

INT. CAR DEALERSHIP -- CONTINUOUS

SALESMEN and CUSTOMERS loiter in the showroom.

They JUMP when the front glass shatters and the ball bounces around the cars.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- CONTINUOUS

Rhem doesn't watch. He doesn't even stick around on the mound long enough for Ruth's bomb to come down.

He just starts walking towards the dugout.

Hornsby's yelling something, but he can't be heard.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- DAY

Yankee EARL COMBES leads off third base.

PICKLES (V.O.)  
Game five, all even.

Combes yells in to the batter, TONY LAZZERI, a tall lanky kid.

COMBES  
Bring me home, Tony boy.

PICKLES (V.O.)  
Bill Sherdel pitched his heart out,  
but we just couldn't score...

On the mound, Sherdel checks Combes at third, then Lazzeri at the plate.

PICKLES (V.O.)  
Then the Yankees loaded the bases in  
the tenth inning.

Lazzeri lofts a lazy fly ball to centerfield.

Sherdel watches it fly with heartbreak in his eyes.

In centerfield, Southworth catches the ball and flings it towards home, but can't come close to catching Combes.

EXT. BALLFIELD -- LATER

Lazzeri catches a pop fly at second base. He holds up his mitt in victory.

The stands are hushed as the fans get up to go.

The light of day fades.

The Cards sit on the bench, dejected, watching the Yankees celebrate.

The fans file out, silent and grim, all hope sapped from the soul of St. Louis.

INT. HORNSBY'S OFFICE -- LATER

Reporters crowd around Hornsby, who sits behind his desk.

REPORTER #1  
Well Rog, you guys had a fine run...

HORNSBY  
We ain't done yet.

REPORTER #2

C'mon Rog, you just lost two in a row, now you gotta go into Yankee stadium and win both.

HORNSBY

We're still alive until the last out is made.

REPORTER #3

Will Alex pitch game six?

A grim smile appears on Hornsby's face.

HORNSBY

If he wants to.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

The Players run out on the field for infield practice.

Hornsby and Alex come up the dugout steps at the same time.

HORNSBY

Just get us to game seven.

Alex responds with an almost imperceptible nod.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

Alex strikes out Lazzeri.

PICKLES (V.O.)

Alex was overwhelming...

Alex strikes out Meusel.

PICKLES (V.O.)

He won 10-2 in a laughter...

Alex strikes out Ruth.

PICKLES (V.O.)

We were heading to game seven.

Alex walks off the field. The other players pound his back as they walk off.

Hornsby jogs up next to Alex as they leave the field.

HORNSBY

Nice win.

Alex nods.

HORNSBY

I suppose you'll be celebrating  
tonight.

Alex looks at him.

HORNSBY

I suppose you're entitled.

Alex stops. The two men face each other.

HORNSBY

I may need you tomorrow.

Alex nods again and resumes walking.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY -- EVENING

Pickles and Rhem come out of their room, dressed for a night  
on the town.

They pass an open door. Alex walks out of it. He's got a  
beer in his hand.

ALEX

Where you boys headin'?

RHEM

Gonna go hit the town. Do you wanna  
come?

Pickles elbows Rhem in the ribs. Alex looks sorely tempted.

From inside his hotel room comes a voice.

AMY (O.S.)

Alex, who is it?

Alex yells back into the room.

ALEX

Nobody.

Alex turns to the boys.

ALEX

You know, I think I'll stick around  
here tonight.

Rhem and Pickles continue on their way.

Alex takes a long sip of beer and watches them leave. Then  
he turns and walks back in his room.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

FANS file into the ballpark on a cold, gloomy, foggy afternoon.

PICKLES (V.O.)

It was a miserable day for baseball...

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -- LATER

The stands are now filled.

Haines stands on the mound. He induces Lazzeri to pop up to Thevenow at shortstop.

PICKLES (V.O.)

But the weather didn't seem to bother Jess any.

Haines gets Meusel to ground the ball to Bell at third. Bell makes an easy toss to Bottomley at first base for the out.

PICKLES (V.O.)

Through six innings, he held tight to a 3-2 lead.

Ruth strikes out, and he looks bad doing it, flailing at the ball and falling to his knee.

He gets up and turns to the catcher, O'Farrell.

RUTH

How's he getting me on that shit?

O'Farrell grins and shrugs as he jogs towards the dugout.

THE DUGOUT

Hornsby stands on the top step watching the game. Bottomley walks past him on the way to the plate.

Hornsby glances down and sees a spot of blood. He looks a little farther and sees a second spot.

Hornsby follows the trail of blood spots until he reaches Haines.

Haines sits on the bench, his hand covered in a towel.

Hornsby grabs the towel. It's red with blood. Hornsby looks at Haines.

HAINES

Just a blister.

Hornsby nods and returns to his roost on the top step.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -- LATER

Haines throws a pitch which sails over O'Farrell's head.

UMPIRE

Ball four!

O'Farrell trots to the backstop to pick the ball up as Combs jogs to first base.

O'Farrell fires the ball back to Haines.

O'FARRELL

Okay Jess, just worry about the batter.

PICKLES (V.O.)

After two quick outs in the seventh, Jess ran into trouble...

FROM O'FARRELL'S PERSPECTIVE

He blocks a pitch in the dirt.

He jumps to catch a ball over his head.

He slides to his right to stop a ball outside.

He slides to his left to stop a ball.

UMPIRE

Ball four!

Yankee HANK SEVEREID heads for first.

O'Farrell comes halfway to home.

O'FARRELL

Bear down now Jess--we just need one.

BACK TO O'FARRELL'S PERSPECTIVE

Four more balls have O'Farrell scrambling to keep the ball in front of him.

UMPIRE

Ball four! Take your base.

Yankee HERB PENNOCK runs to first, filling the bases.

Hornsby walks over to Haines. He grabs his hand.

Blood streams down his arm from his finger.

HAINES

Can't get a grip on the son-of-a-bitch.

Hornsby looks out to his bullpen, squinting to see through the heavy fog.

THE BULLPEN

Alex, Rhem and Pickles sit on the bench.

Alex dozes.

THE FIELD

Hornsby signals to the bullpen.

Haines hands Hornsby the ball and walks off the mound.

THE BULLPEN

Rhem nudges Alex, waking him. Alex opens his eyes and blinks. He stands and stretches.

He pulls a flask out of his back pocket and hands it to Rhem.

Pickles gets up, but Alex waves him off.

ALEX

Take a load off. I don't need no warm up.

Alex starts walking slowly onto the field.

THE FIELD

Hornsby stands on the mound, waiting.

Through the mist, Alex appears, leisurely making his way through the outfield.

At the plate, Lazzeri fidgets.

Finally Alex reaches the mound. Hornsby hands him the ball.

HORNSBY

Bases loaded. Two outs. Lazzeri up.

Alex nods sagely.

ALEX

Bases loaded, eh?

He looks in at Lazzeri.

ALEX

I'll have to give him nothin' but  
hell then.

Alex tosses the ball up in the air. Lazzeri takes a couple  
of practice swings to stay loose.

ALEX

I'll start him with a fast one inside.

HORNSBY

No, no, keep it away...

Alex smiles indulgently.

ALEX

That's just what he's expectin'.

He glances back to Lazzeri, who is very anxious to bat by  
now.

ALEX

Nah, I'll come inside. He'll either  
foul it off or break his bat. Then  
I'll go away.

Hornsby opens his mouth to say something, then stops.

HORNSBY

You're the expert.

Hornsby returns to second base.

Alex takes two lazy warm up pitches--he's in no hurry.  
Lazzeri's going crazy waiting to hit.

Alex nods to O'Farrell behind the plate, indicating he's  
ready.

Lazzeri steps into the batter's box.

Alex throws--an inside fastball. Lazzeri lets it go by.

UMPIRE

Ball one!

Alex looks in again. He winds and throws. Another fastball,  
this one an inch closer to the plate. Lazzeri watches it  
pass.

UMPIRE

Strike!

Alex looks in at Lazzeri, a smile playing on his lips.  
Lazzeri is focused.

Alex throws another inside fastball.

Lazzeri turns on the ball and SMASHES it down the left field line.

Alex--an impassive look on his face--watches the ball soar high into the outfield.

At second, Hornsby stares at the blast with a mixture of horror and dread.

THE STANDS

The crowd is on it's feet to watch the flight of the ball in a hushed awe.

THE FIELD

Southworth stands on the foul line, watching the ball, although there isn't much he can do about it.

The ball flies over his head and deep into the stands, but at the last minute it tails just a bit, curling just outside the foul pole.

THE STANDS

The crowd groans and sits back down.

THE FIELD

UMPIRE

Strike two!

Lazzeri shakes his head--so close. He takes a couple more practice swings.

He steps back in the batter's box.

Alex looks in--his smile is a little wider now.

Alex throws a slow moving, back-breaking curve ball on the outside corner.

Lazzeri lunges at it. He misses it by a mile.

UMPIRE

Steerike three!

Alex slowly walks off the mound.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -- LATER

Alex strikes out a YANKEE.

PICKLES (V.O.)

Alex kept cruising through the ninth inning.

Ruth comes out of the dugout and walks to the on-deck circle.

PICKLES (V.O.)

He got two quick outs.

Ruth picks up three bats. There's menace in his swing.

The crowd comes alive.

Hornsby calls over to Alex.

HORNSBY

Give him nuthin'...

Alex turns to Hornsby, smiling. Hornsby smiles back.

HORNSBY

Throw whatever you want.

Ruth steps up. Alex winds and fires.

A curveball, low and away. Ruth declines to chase it.

UMPIRE

Ball one!

RUTH

C'mon Alex, give me somethin' to hit.

Alex throws again, a fastball inside. Ruth unleashes a powerful swing.

He misses.

UMPIRE

Strike one!

Ruth steps out. Smiling, he tips his cap to Alex. Alex smiles back.

Alex throws again. Another curve low and away. Ruth watches it go by.

UMPIRE

Ball two!

RUTH

Bring it, Alex.

Alex throws a high fastball. Ruth watches it.

UMPIRE

Strike two!

Ruth looks at the ump, none too pleased with the call. He steps back in.

Another low and away curve ball which draws no interest from Ruth.

UMPIRE

Ball three!

RUTH

Here we go....

Alex winds and fires. A fastball on the black part of the plate. Ruth lets it go. He turns to the Umpire for his verdict.

UMPIRE

Ball four! Take your base.

Ruth trots to first.

Alex walks halfway to home to retrieve the ball. He calls out to the Ump.

ALEX

How close?

The Ump holds up his fingers, showing about the size of a shotglass.

Alex grunts.

ALEX

If it were that close, you'd think you could give it to an old guy.

Alex goes back to the mound. Meusel steps to the plate. Gehrig walks to the on-deck circle and picks up a bat.

Ruth digs around the bag at first.

RUTH

I'm going home, Alex.

ALEX

Not if I can help it.

Alex steps on the mound. He throws, a fastball down the heart of the plate.

Ruth takes off from first.

Meusel swings and misses.

O'Farrell catches the ball, springs to his feet and guns the ball down to second base.

Hornsby waits.

The throw is perfect. Hornsby puts his glove down. Ruth slides into it.

UMPIRE

You're out!

A stunned Hornsby just stares at the ball in his glove.

Ruth gets up, dusts himself off.

RUTH

Nice win, Rog.

Ruth jogs off.

The Cardinals mob Alex on the mound. They hoist him on their shoulders and carry him from the field.

Hornsby still kneels at second, the ball still in his glove, watching the celebration in disbelief.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

The Players are in mid-celebration, showering each other with champagne.

Alex sits at his locker half undressed, surrounded by Reporters.

REPORTER #1

Were you worried about that ball  
Lazzeri hit?

Alex smiles and shrugs.

ALEX

Less than a foot made the difference  
between a hero and a bum.

Hornsby walks in and looks over at the crowd at Alex's locker. Alex sees him. Their eyes meet.

Hornsby smiles and tips his cap.

Alex smiles and tips his cap back.

REPORTER #2

Alex, how do you rank this with your  
career highlights?

Hornsby turns and walks into his office. He shuts the door behind him.

Bottomley hands Alex a bottle of champagne. He takes a too-long drink.

LEGEND: December, 1926

INT. CARDINAL OFFICES -- DAY

The office is decorated for Christmas.

Pickles enters in the same suit as last year, but the fit is snugger now.

He walks up to the Receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST

Hi Pickles. Mr. Rickey is waiting  
for you.

INT. RICKEY'S OFFICE -- LATER

The door opens and Pickles walks in.

Rickey sits behind his desk immersed in paperwork. He looks up.

RICKEY

Pickles, come in, come in. Sit down,  
sit down.

Pickles sits. Rickey looks at him with Christian concern.

RICKEY

I'm sorry Pickles. We're going in a  
different direction next year...

PICKLES

Mr. Rickey, I know I'm not a kid any  
more, but I've got a lot of time in  
the game and I got something left...

Rickey nods reassuringly.

RICKEY

I don't doubt it. But we're going  
young. Unless you can be 19 again...

Rickey smiles.

Rickey stands and shrugs.

RICKEY

Time for new blood.

He offers his hand over the desk.

A stunned Pickles takes it.

RICKEY

And good luck.

Rickey sits back down to his paperwork.

Pickles walks to the door. He stops and turns back.

PICKLES

Mr. Rickey--how are you set for insurance?

INT. CARDINAL OFFICES -- LATER

Rickey walks out of his office with his arm around Pickles' shoulder.

RICKEY

...well that's fine. Come by around 7:30. The secretary will give you directions.

As they talk, Hornsby walks in.

He ignores Pickles as he heads for Breadon's office. Rickey intercepts him.

Pickles walks over to the Receptionist.

RICKEY

Now Rogers, stay calm in there. He hasn't forgotten...

Hornsby smiles at Rickey.

HORNSBY

Rickey, I finally got that cheap cocksucker by the balls.

He breezes past Rickey into Breadon's office and shuts the door behind him.

The Receptionist gives Pickles directions. Rickey watches Breadon's door.

RECEPTIONIST

The best way is to take Skinker to Olive...

Indistinct voices come from inside the office.

RECEPTIONIST

Then you can run Olive up to Lindbergh...

The voices inside grow louder. The Receptionist loses interest in the directions. Everyone looks at Breadon's door.

Now the two voices inside are screaming at each other.

HORNSBY (O.S.)  
You cheap bastard, I just handed you  
a championship...

BREADON (O.S.)  
You think you can't be replaced?

HORNSBY (O.S.)  
By who, you ignorant prick...

BREADON (O.S.)  
Get the fuck out of my office.

Hornsby storms out. He hustles through the office and out  
the door without a word.

In his office, Breadon yells out.

BREADON  
Rickey, get in here...

INT. BREADON'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Breadon's at his bar, mixing himself a drink as Rickey enters.

BREADON  
Who can we get for him?

RICKEY  
The fans won't look...

Breadon turns to Rickey, his face red.

BREADON  
Trade him today or I'll have someone  
else in your job tomorrow and he'll  
trade the son of a bitch.

Rickey ponders it for a moment.

RICKEY  
I could probably get Frisch from the  
Giants...

BREADON  
Do it. Now.

EXT. CARDINAL OFFICES -- LATER

Pickles walks out of the office. A light snow falls.

A 10 year old Kid stops him.

KID  
Hey mister, are you a ballplayer?

PICKLES

Nah, kid, I sell insurance.

The Kid gets a sour look on his face and turns away.

Pickles smiles, somewhat sadly, pulls up the collar of his jacket and walks away.

EXT. A SMALL TOWN CEMETERY -- DAY

A light snow falls. Pickles watches the gravediggers cover up Alex's coffin.

Only the Woman in the Black Veil (Amy) remains. She doesn't cry.

PICKLES (V.O.)

That was it for Rog and Alex. Neither made it back to the Series. But Hornsby never forgot.

The wind picks up. Pickles pulls the collar of his coat up.

PICKLES (V.O.)

When Rog managed the Cubs and Alex was on hard times, he hired Alex to pitch batting practice. Paid him a \$100 a week.

Pickles walks away. The Woman in the Black Veil remains.

Close up on the huge floral display.

A ribbon in the center reads "Eternally Grateful, The St. Louis Cardinals."

PICKLES (V.O.)

Maybe Rog didn't need to be here.  
'Cause maybe the rules are different for those blessed by the gods.

FADE TO BLACK