

GOING GOING GONE

By Ken Levine

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SYNOPSIS: Set in the press box of a major Los Angeles baseball stadium, a hilarious yet poignant new comedy from Emmy Award-winning writer (M*A*S*H*, Cheers, The Simpsons) and former 'Dodger Talk' host Ken Levine about four sports journalists whose lives are changed during the course of one game.

DURATION: 90 minutes.

SETTING: Press box of a baseball stadium.

TIME: Present.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 3 males)

MASON YOUNG (m)..... Early 30's, African-American, outgoing with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. *(281 lines)*

DENNIS MINISHIAN (m)..... Mid 30's, somewhat nerdish, carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. *(290 lines)*

BIG JIM TABLER (m)..... Overweight, in his 30's, a lovable curmudgeon, if there is such a thing. *(215 lines)*

SHANA SANDERS (f)..... Late 20's/early 30's, beautiful, smart, wearing a stylish blouse and skirt. (Pronounced: Shay-na.) *(218 lines)*

TECHNICAL NOTE: The Announcer and Randy (the P.R. Director) are always offstage and pre-recorded.

SCENE 1
PRESS BOX—NIGHT

AT START: *Lights up. A portion of the press box of a big league stadium in Los Angeles, Reporters' section. Two counters, the second on a small riser. The action will center on just our group. Everyone else is offstage.*

In the first row are reporters MASON YOUNG and DENNIS MINISHIAN.

MASON is early 30's, African-American, outgoing with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

DENNIS is mid 30's, somewhat nerdish, carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.

They both have laptops. Press credentials dangle from their necks. There is a small microphone on a stand near DENNIS, and Styrofoam cups, binoculars, media guides, and assorted statistic sheets clutter the counters.

SFX: crowd noise faintly in the background throughout that will swell during exciting moments.

As we open they are standing, suffering through the end of the National Anthem. SFX: a woman singer is mangling it.

DENNIS: Oh, Christ! Just sing the damn song!

The singer strangles a high note. They both GROAN in agony. As the anthem horribly concludes they both stagger back.

MASON: Jesus. This is what happens when they let Idina Menzel sing at inaugurations.

DENNIS: Who's Idina Menzel?

MASON: You know—from "Frozen."

DENNIS: What's "Frozen?"

MASON: You're kidding me? You've never heard of the Disney movie, "Frozen?"

DENNIS: Is that the one about the hockey team?

MASON: No, you idiot. It's about Elsa, the Snow Queen who flees her kingdom but her sister, Princess Anna sets out to save her and meets Kristoff who is handsome but... (*Realizing.*) Oh man, I spend waaaaay too much time alone on the road.

BIG JIM TABLER enters toting a laptop and hot dog. He takes a seat in the second row. BIG JIM is overweight, in his 30's, a lovable curmudgeon, if there is such a thing.

BIG JIM: Evening, losers. Welcome to beautiful "U.S. Bank-slash-Milk of Magnesia Field" for another glorious evening of dot races, wedding proposals, beach balls, Kiss-Cams, bloopers, and waves. We can only pray a baseball game doesn't get in the way.

MASON: Don't sit down. We've got a moment of silence.

BIG JIM: For who?

MASON: Pedro Cordova—the great pitcher of the '60s and '70s.

DENNIS: He still holds the modern record for least home runs allowed to lefthanders at night per nine innings.

BIG JIM: For that alone flags should be at half-mast. One minute is an insult.

SFX: the crowd silences. DENNIS checks his watch. They stand solemnly for a beat, then BIG JIM and MASON get out their iPhones and check for email or messages. DENNIS remains solemn. Eventually, they sit back down and the crowd ambience resumes.

DENNIS: (*Checks his watch.*) Not even a minute. Twenty-two seconds.

MASON: Utterly disgraceful. (*Then.*) PLAY BALL!

BIG JIM: Hey, where's that bimbo sideline reporter, Teresa? The one no one seems to notice has a lisp and can't even pronounce her own name.

DENNIS: She's off tonight.

MASON: I hear she's not interested, Jim. Something about you being nine hundred pounds. I dunno. Women.

BIG JIM: (To MASON.) I have one word for you. Token.

MASON: And I have one word for you. Atkins.

BIG JIM: This is the thanks we get for retiring Jackie Robinson's number. So who's filling in for (With lisp.) Teresa?

DENNIS: New Girl. Saw her for the first time tonight on the pre-game show. She's beautiful, sure. But there's something more—a glow, a radiance, an ethereal quality if you will. And when she was looking straight into the camera updating Harwell's ruptured blister, I could swear she was gazing straight into my soul.

BIG JIM: Can she talk?

MASON: Someone is smitten here.

DENNIS: Are you crazy? I'm happily married.

MASON: What color was her nail polish?

DENNIS: Aqua.

MASON: Yep. It's love. And really really creepy.

DENNIS talks into the microphone, which feeds the internal P.A. system for the press box.

DENNIS: Attention press box media: First pitch at 7:11. Game time temperature in Los Angeles: eighty-one degrees.

DENNIS sets the microphone aside.

MASON: Why are you doing that? That's the official scorer's job.

DENNIS: I am the official scorer. At least tonight.

MASON: You're kidding? Where's Gordon?

DENNIS: His mom died.

BIG JIM: There'll be a moment of silence during the next foul ball.

MASON: Have you ever done this before?

DENNIS: Well... no.

MASON: Quick! How many outs in an inning?

BIG JIM: If a pitcher is caught with "Astroglide," is it legal if he's a Astro?

DENNIS: Very funny. I'm nervous enough.

BIG JIM: You should be. It's a big responsibility. Is it a hit? Is it an error? Every at-bat is Sophie's Choice.

DENNIS: And you wonder why I'm on Xanax.

DENNIS pops a Xanax into his mouth.

BIG JIM: I'm warning ya—that stuff's not healthy. *(Takes a big bite of his hot dog.)*

SHANA SANDERS (pronounced: Shay-na) enters. She's in her late 20's/early 30's, beautiful, smart, wearing a stylish blouse and skirt. She totes a shoulder bag and holds a wireless microphone.

SHANA: Excuse me. Hi. I'm filling in for Teresa tonight. I don't know where to sit.

All three immediately say, "Here!" "Have a seat." "Join us." She sits next to DENNIS and extends her hand.

SHANA: *(Continued.)* Thanks. Shana Sanders from Sportsvision.

DENNIS: *(Shaking her hand a little vigorously.)* Dennis Minishian, "Sportsvision." I mean... "Daily News."

MASON: *(Offering his hand.)* Mason Young, "L.A. Times."

SHANA: *(To BIG JIM.)* And you...?

BIG JIM: Do you give a rat's ass?

SHANA: Oh. Okay. A hater.

MASON: That's Big Jim Tabler. He doesn't write for a real newspaper. He's with a website. What is it again—"Jock Sniffers dot com?"

BIG JIM: "Balls dot com," Arsenio, and we have more readers than both of your obsolete morning rags combined.

SHANA has had these encounters before. She decides to cut BIG JIM off at the pass.

SHANA: I have a B.A. in journalism from Northwestern, a masters in communication from UCLA. And I can drink you under the table.

MASON and DENNIS ad lib "whoa!" "Gotcha!" "Sweet!" and applaud.

BIG JIM: Oooh, a challenge. All right. Let's settle this right now.

SHANA: Bring it on.

BIG JIM: Only thing is, they don't allow alcohol in the press box. So we're going to have to do it with snow cones.

MASON and DENNIS groan and throw Styrofoam cups and debris at him.

BIG JIM: *(Feigning innocence.)* What? What?

SHANA: *(Looking around.)* There must be twenty/thirty empty chairs. Where are the rest of the reporters?

DENNIS: There used to be a lot more.

MASON: *(Ruefully.)* And now it's just us.

BIG JIM: A moment of silence for newspapers.

Lights dim:

SCENE 2
PRESS BOX—LATER

AT START: *Lights up as we hear:*

ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* LA nothing, San Francisco nothing as we head to the second inning.

DENNIS is on his cellphone.

DENNIS: Look, Kathy, I want that house too, but not if it means a bidding war. *(Beat.)* Stop crying. *(Sighs.)* All right. Go over there. But I'm not buying unless I'm comfortable.... Huh? I think it's still no score. *(Hangs up.)*

MASON: You think? Our official scorer, ladies and gentlemen.

SHANA: *(To DENNIS.)* You're buying a house?

BIG JIM: With what? Your Delta Frequent Flier miles?

MASON: At least he can fit in a plane.

BIG JIM: Even the best rappers are white.

DENNIS: We saw this cute place in Mar Vista, but someone else is making a bid tonight. And you know Kathy when she gets her heart set on something. It's like trying to hold back the Pacific Ocean with a broom.

MASON: How much are they asking?

DENNIS: Isn't that a little personal?

BIG JIM: You tell us about your Xanax, but you won't tell us this?

SHANA: You're on Xanax?

DENNIS: I'm under a lot of stress. Everyone thinks being a baseball reporter is a dream job.

BIG JIM: They do?

DENNIS: We have constant deadlines, we're at the mercy of everyone for information, and the travel is grueling. We don't take the team charters. We fly commercial, coach, always with stops. Missed flights, delayed flights, O'Hare—which is Calcutta with a food court. And someday they'll discover those TSA body scanners aren't safe after all and because I'll have gone through them nine times a week for fifteen years I will glow in the dark and bleed out of my eyes. We stay in second rate hotels, editors tamper with our work, we're now forced to have a social media presence—what the hell is Pin-interest anyway? We eat nothing but hot dogs and funnel cakes. And all of that I could handle if I wasn't also married to “the Terminator!”

SHANA: Wow. And I thought TV was bad.

BIG JIM: Yeah, about that—how did you get your job, Shana Sanders of Sportsvision? What tipped it, the degree from Northwestern or UCLA?

DENNIS: You're an ass.

SHANA: It could be my looks. Or the fact that I was on the NCAA National Championship softball team in 2010. Have any of you played competitive sports professionally or even in college?

They sheepishly mumble “No.” “Not me.”

SHANA: *(Continued.)* Uh huh. And even then the best I can do is sideline reporter, telling a breathless fanbase just when Dogget's knee will be drained.

BIG JIM: Yeah, well, you could always marry some rich guy and be set for the rest of your life.

SHANA: I'm not about money. Like all girls, I'm looking for an honest relationship. One that will endure long after looks are gone.

BIG JIM: Well, hurry. Because once those looks do go your choices narrow from every guy in the world to someone who looks like us.

SHANA: I'll take my chances.

MASON: Pomerantz has retired his first six batters.

DENNIS: Stick to your guns, Shana. Don't just settle for some loser billionaire.

SHANA: Thank you, Dennis.

DENNIS: Even if it does mean someone like me *(Quickly correcting.)* Us. Someone like us. *(Changing the subject fast.)* So... when are they draining Dogget's knee?

SHANA: *(Simultaneously with MASON.)* Tuesday.

MASON: *(Simultaneously with SHANA.)* Tuesday.

BIG JIM: At least he suffered the injury during a baseball game. Unlike Mr. Joel Zamaya.

The guys chuckle.

SHANA: What happened to him?

MASON: True story. Joel Zamaya was a pitcher for the Tigers who went on the Injured List a few years ago with a sore wrist he sustained from playing "Guitar Hero."

BIG JIM: And then you had Pedro Guerrero who wrenched his back hauling his big screen TV into the yard. He was evacuating during an earthquake and that was his one irreplaceable keepsake.

DENNIS: Or the great Rickey Henderson who missed a couple of games because of frostbite.

BIG JIM: Yep. These are the rocket scientists you want to give fifteen million dollars a year to.

SHANA: Not photos? Not precious documents? His TV?

MASON: *(Checking his phone.)* Oh shit. My paper just laid off one of our movie critics.

DENNIS: You're kidding?

BIG JIM: You're next, my diversity-privileged friend.

MASON: (*Calling out to the field.*) Win, you sons of bitches! If you don't get to the World Series I'm going to be living in an empty Maytag box!

DENNIS: (*To SHANA.*) Yes, there used to be a lot more of us.

SHANA: Was Guerrero aware that here in America we have stores?

BIG JIM: No.

Lights slowly dim:

SCENE 3 PRESS BOX—LATER

AT START: *Lights up as we hear:*

ANNOUNCER: (*Voiceover.*) We go to the third, still no score.

SHANA is watching the game. The reporters' heads are all buried in their laptops as they type furiously. SFX: suddenly there's a big cheer from the crowd. They all look up ad libbing "What happened?" "Did anybody see that?"

SHANA: O'Neill made a nice diving catch. Don't any of you guys actually watch the game?

MASON: We're writing our stories.

SHANA: They've played two innings.

MASON: We don't like waiting till the last minute.

BIG JIM: Lazy journalism is what it is.

SHANA: So what are you writing?

BIG JIM: Nothing. I'm in "Virtual Worlds Land." I have my own farm.

SHANA: No wonder they kept women out of press boxes for so many years. We watch the game.

BIG JIM: Ah yes, the gender card. So "Hashtag MeToo," let me ask you—when you're in the clubhouse after the game and the lads are showering, do you ever y'know, sneak a quick peek at their "manhood?"

SHANA: What? No! God! That's disgusting! Do you guys?

They all shrug and matter of factly ad lib "Yes." "Sure." "Uh huh."

SHANA: *(Continued.)* Do you then draw them in your little notebooks?

BIG JIM: You're telling me you're not even curious?

SHANA: No. I'm a professional. Oh... and I've seen one before.

BIG JIM: Not like some of these guys.

SHANA: Okay. I am moving. And delousing.

DENNIS: Shana, he's just trying to get a rise out of you.

BIG JIM: No, let her go. Because this is the kind of stuff we talk about in the sacred press box.

SHANA: Other men's penises?

BIG JIM: Well, no. I mean, in general. We're a brotherhood, and as such this is a safe zone—a haven where anything can be discussed—openly, honestly, even if the topic is politically incorrect, even if the subject matter is sensitive, even if we have no fucking idea what we're talking about, which is most of the time. And if this offends you in any way, young lady, there are many empty seats. Go sit by the visiting media. They're from San Francisco so I'm sure they're all discussing opera and creme de menthes.

SHANA: No. I will not give you the satisfaction of leaving.

DENNIS: *(Relieved.)* Thank you.

SHANA: *(To BIG JIM.)* But the next time someone makes a truly mean-spirited joke about your weight I will laugh. Well, I'd laugh anyway, but now I won't feel guilty.

BIG JIM: Oooh, you sure put me in my place.

SHANA: Shut up, porky.

The guys laugh. MASON picks some playing cards out of a deck and stands.

MASON: Okay, no-hitter pool. Twenty dollars.

BIG JIM: *(Getting out his wallet.)* I'm in.

SHANA: What's a no-hitter pool?

MASON: Pick a card, ace to nine. Whoever in the batting order breaks up the no-no that's your winner.

DENNIS: *(A little nervous.)* A no-hitter? It's only the third inning.

MASON: Pomerantz looks sharp.

BIG JIM: Oh yeah. The nightmare of every official scorer. The potential no-hitter. A controversial call.

DENNIS: Jesus, I need this tonight.

SHANA: (*Rifles through her purse.*) Okay, I'll take one.

MASON takes their money and they each pick a card.

MASON: Thank you. Let's see if those Korean reporters want in. Is there a currency exchange booth in the stadium?

BIG JIM: Oh sure. Right next to the BevMo in General Admission.

MASON moves off. They watch the game for a beat, then:

BIG JIM: Hey, we forgot about Brian Anderson's little mishap.

DENNIS: The all-time classic.

SHANA: I'm afraid to ask.

DENNIS: Again, true story. He was ironing and wanted to see if the iron was hot enough. So he did what any rational human being would do—he pressed it against his face. It was hot.

SHANA: Oh Lord.

BIG JIM: He got kicked out of Mensa for that.

SHANA laughs. It's the first time she's found him amusing.

BIG JIM: She laughs. (*He's not willing to admit it but he's tickled that he made her laugh.*)

SHANA: Well, there are some players who are very smart. Darryl Reed for one.

DENNIS: We love Darryl Reed. He's pretty much our go-to guy on the team. He once said a complete sentence without the word "like."

BIG JIM: He's the Noam Chomsky of outfielders.

SHANA: I also saw him doing a crossword puzzle.

BIG JIM: Lots of players do crossword puzzles. They like to color in the squares.

MASON returns.

MASON: Okay, the pool is on. The jackpot is one-hundred-and-sixty dollars and twelve pounds of Korean tea.

BIG JIM: Hey, guess who I saw when I was coming in tonight?
Matthew Perry.

SHANA: Really?

BIG JIM: (*Pointing.*) He's over there in the owner's box.

SHANA: Awesome. I'm going to grab my cameraman and try to get a quick interview. That means you guys'll have to actually watch the field for a few minutes. You okay with that?

They ad lib, "I guess." "It'll be tough." "Hurry back." SHANA moves off, then:

DENNIS: Who's Matthew Perry?

MASON: You're kidding, right?

DENNIS: I've heard the name of course, but no. Who is he?

BIG JIM: Unbelievable.

MASON: Do you spend your entire life sitting on the toilet with a stat book?

DENNIS: I'm really sorry. I don't know who Matthew Perry is.

MASON: (*Goofing with him.*) For crying out loud, Dennis, you should. He's the goddamn Secretary of State.

DENNIS: Oh bullshit.

BIG JIM: No no, he really is. Had secret service, the whole deal. Hey, you know what he showed me? The black box. He's got one just like the president.

MASON: Awesome. You should see that, Dennis.

DENNIS: Okay, well, even if that were true. I can't leave the game.

MASON: Between innings. He's right next door.

BIG JIM: Secretary of State Perry is a very cool dude. I'm telling ya.
It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

MASON: Pomerantz just struck out the side. Inning over.

DENNIS: (*Wavering.*) I shouldn't leave my post.

MASON: (*Shrugging.*) Okay. Whatever.

BIG JIM: Your loss.

MASON: You can get a selfie. Put it on Pinterest.

DENNIS: I'm duty bound.

MASON: You'll get a lot of "likes," which is now how we measure our worth.

A beat, then:

DENNIS: Aw hell. I'll be back in two minutes.

DENNIS moves off. Once he's out of earshot they both break up laughing.

BIG JIM: *(Simultaneously with MASON.)* Priceless.

MASON: *(Simultaneously with BIG JIM.)* What a dolt.

MASON: *(Continued.)* Didn't Perry do a new version of "The Odd Couple?"

BIG JIM: Yeah, he played Oscar Madison.

MASON: There must be fifteen guys on TV who play sportswriters, yet you never see any of them working. Oscar was the worst.

BIG JIM: No. Ray on that "Raymond" show.

MASON: How could Oscar cover the Mets and still host a weekly poker game?

BIG JIM: How could Ray cover the Yankees and never leave his house?

MASON: *(Beat, then.)* Y'know, it's been like fifty years since Neil Simon wrote "The Odd Couple."

BIG JIM: Yeah? So?

MASON: Well, imagine anyone reading anything we wrote in fifty years? Or fifty days?

BIG JIM: Who gives a crap? Just be happy they're letting you write something now. Especially you, since the once mighty "Los Angeles Times" is down to what, eleven subscribers?

MASON: At least my stuff will be in the archives. In case I have grandchildren someday and they want to read it.

BIG JIM: Yeah? Well, good luck. If they're anything like today's kids they'll be saying "If it happened before 2040 no one really cares."

A furious DENNIS returns.

DENNIS: YOU ASSHOLES!

They both break up.

MASON: Dennis, where is the love?

BIG JIM: Did he show you the black box?

This cracks them up even further.

DENNIS: It's not funny.

MASON has his binoculars trained on the Owner's Box.

MASON: Matthew Perry is still laughing.

DENNIS: Christ!

They're now practically peeing.

MASON: Come on, Dennis, we were just making a point. There's more to life than baseball.

DENNIS: Oh yeah. I'm really missing out. Let's see: Wars and terrorists. Global warming. A pandemic. Baseball is order. Baseball is beauty. In a chaotic hostile world, baseball is serenity.

BIG JIM: Bench clearing brawl!

DENNIS: What?

ALL scramble for their binoculars and turn to the field.

MASON: Holy Christ! This one is going to be ugly. They're throwing real punches down there.

BIG JIM: Which player will trip on his own helmet and be out for the season?

MASON: Schultz just swung at his own guy.

BIG JIM: It is ON, people!

SHANA runs in.

SHANA: What happened? What happened?

BIG JIM: Niehaus drilled Schultz with a hundred-mile-an-hour fastball and he charged the mound, the big baby.

SHANA: Boy, this takes me back to the Women's College World Series.

DENNIS: I'm guessing four, five ejections.

MASON: *(Gets out the deck of cards.)* Ejection pool! Who wants in?

SHANA: I can't find Darryl. *(Relieved.)* Oh, there he is.

BIG JIM: *(Getting up.)* Well, see you clowns.

MASON: You're leaving? In the middle of a brawl?

BIG JIM: They just put out spring rolls in the press dining room.

BIG JIM moves off. MASON just shakes his head.

DENNIS: Hey, Schultz is biting people now.

SHANA: Only in baseball.

MASON: What do you mean?

SHANA: In the real world who acts like this? Who gets mad and just slugs people?

MASON: You've obviously never been to the Nordstrom Rack.

As the crowd continues to BOO:

Lights dim:

SCENE 4 PRESS BOX—LATER

AT START: *Lights up as we hear:*

ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* We had an eleven minute altercation in the third inning. Let's see about the fourth—still scoreless.

BIG JIM is back. SHANA is watching. The guys are typing. SFX: there's a crack of the bat.

SHANA: Get it Darryl! *(Pumps fist in the air.)* YES!

MASON: Uh, there's no rooting in the press box.

SHANA: Oh. Sorry.

BIG JIM: Especially over a routine fly ball.

DENNIS: (*To SHANA.*) Is there something going on between you and Darryl Reed?

SHANA: What? No. Please. Not at all. I... just want to see Pomerantz get his no-hitter.

DENNIS: (*Not totally convinced.*) Uh huh.

MASON: Well, he could do it, ladies and gentleman. The man's flirting with baseball immortality.

BIG JIM: As if there was such a thing.

DENNIS: What do you mean by that?

BIG JIM: "Immortality?" Really? A big whoop—yes, but immortality suggests longer than two years. His name just goes in a record book and joins the hundreds of other immortals no one knows. Who can remember who pitched no-hitters in 1948?

DENNIS: Bob Lemon and Rex Barney.

MASON: And yet, you don't know who Matthew Perry is?

BIG JIM: (*To DENNIS.*) Seriously, man, get off the crapper. There's a big wide world out there. Start a virtual farm like me.

DENNIS: As long as one person remembers, they are immortal.

MASON: Until that one person discovers Google and realizes he can just look it up. Then he feels like a schmuck.

DENNIS: Don't you want to leave a mark somehow? Be an immortal?

MASON: Yeah, that would be nice...

BIG JIM: (*A la Dr. King.*) "I have a dreeeeeeam!"

MASON: Shut up, Jabba. I would like to leave a lasting impression, but that's not what motivates me.

SHANA: What does? Why'd you get into sportswriting?

MASON: (*Shrugging.*) I love the game. People pay good money to watch baseball. Someone pays me.

BIG JIM: At least for the moment.

MASON: Baseball is my first love. (*Beat.*) If only it didn't kill all my other loves. It's hard to have a social life when you get four days off in ten months.

BIG JIM: The problem is you shoot too high.

MASON: Meaning what?

BIG JIM: Women.

MASON: I am not gay!

BIG JIM: You saw “Wicked.”

MASON: I saw “The Wiz.”

BIG JIM: Same thing only black.

MASON: Jesus! You’re like... if Sarah Palin ate a blimp. (*To SHANA.*)

My work gives me all the satisfaction I need. (*Then.*) But if you know anybody...

SHANA: I’ll keep a lookout. (*To BIG JIM.*) And you?

BIG JIM: You’re going to find me a date?

SHANA: Not if it would solve Global Warming! Why’d you become a sportswriter? Besides all the free food you can stuff in your pockets?

BIG JIM: Gee, the chance to participate in all these scintillating conversations every night. This is what TED talks are supposed to be. (*Takes a bite.*) And when they’re out of Kettle Corn later you’ll thank God I have a stash.

MASON: Ground ball to short. Four no-hit innings.

SHANA: Dennis? Especially since you don’t seem to enjoy it.

DENNIS: I dunno, to someday be in the sportswriters’ wing of the baseball Hall of Fame. To be forever remembered like Red Smith, Jim Murray, Jerome Holtzman, and Dick Young.

MASON: Who?

BIG JIM: I’ve never heard of any of those guys.

DENNIS: Well, they’re very famous... to sportswriters.

MASON: We’re sportswriters.

DENNIS: Sportswriters over sixty.

MASON: That’s like ten people.

DENNIS: Like I said, it just takes one.

SHANA: You want to be famous? Press a hot iron against your face.

DENNIS: I don’t want to be famous that way.

BIG JIM: So where do you draw the line? Everyone knows Bill Buckner because he let that ground ball get through his legs and blew the World Series. No one recalls who hit the ball.

MASON: Mookie Wilson.

DENNIS: Yeah, but Buckner is hated.

BIG JIM: Not in New York. There he’s as popular as Aaron Judge, Billy Joel, and Idina Menzel, not that you’d know who that is.

DENNIS: (*Indignant.*) I do so. From that “Frozen” movie. He’s a singer.

SHANA: Seriously, do you live in a cave?

DENNIS: Look, I don't want to be known for a mistake. I don't want my legacy to be that I'm the only man in history who ever over-paid for a house in fucking Mar Vista!

SHANA'S wristwatch pings. She rises.

SHANA: Time to stand.

MASON: Why?

SHANA: For your health. You should stand every hour. My watch signals when it's time.

BIG JIM: Well, sit down. It looks like you're trying to start a wave.

SHANA: It wouldn't hurt you to stand once an hour. Or every nine seconds.

MASON: Ooooh, serious burn there, Michelin Man.

BIG JIM: Hey, "Fat Lives" matter too.

SHANA begins to stretch, closing her eyes, extending her arms, pushing out her chest. The three guys watch transfixed. SFX: there's the crack of the bat and a huge cheer from the crowd. The three guys still stare at SHANA.

SHANA: *(Opening her eyes.)* Oh my God! Wow!

SFX: the crowd explodes in applause. The guys turn to the field, ad libbing "What? What?" "Who saw that?"

SHANA: *(Continued.)* O'Neill just hit an inside-the-park home run for us!

DENNIS: He did? I've got to see that.

SHANA: Why don't you guys just stay home and watch the game on television?

BIG JIM: I tend to over-eat.

They look up to the overhead monitor and watch the replay.

DENNIS: Yep. Inside-the-parker.

SHANA: Unless you think Gomez bobbled that ball in which case it's a triple and an error.

DENNIS: *(Deflated.)* Oh. Right.

Long beat. DENNIS is frozen. Finally:

MASON: Well?

DENNIS: Give me another second.

BIG JIM: Everyone is staring over here. The pressure is on. This is it.
Crunch time. You've got to make the call.

DENNIS: You're not helping.

BIG JIM: I'm not trying to help.

DENNIS takes a beat then grabs the microphone.

DENNIS: *(On P.A.)* Attention media in the press box: That was a home run. No error. For O'Neill that was home run number seven. He hit it on a one-two pitch.

DENNIS falls back in his chair spent. SHANA grabs her microphone.

SHANA: Okay. Off to do my "This day in baseball" minute. "On this date in 1993 outfielder Jose Canseco had a fly ball bounce off his head over the wall for a home run."

SHANA moves off.

DENNIS: Do you think I looked weak in her eyes?

MASON: Dennis, you and Shana ain't gonna happen.

DENNIS: Oh no? If baseball has taught us one thing it's that anything can happen.

MASON: Except that.

DENNIS: *(Sighs, then.)* Eh, you're probably right. Besides, I'm happy married.

MASON: Absolutely. *(Then.)* Hey look, on the Jumbotron board—another wedding proposal.

DENNIS and BIG JIM: *(Calling out.)* Don't do it!

Lights dim:

SCENE 5
PRESS BOX—LATER

AT START: *Lights up as we hear:*

ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* On to the fifth. L.A. two, San Fran nothing.

MASON, BIG JIM, and DENNIS are present. SHANA is still away.

RANDY: *(Voiceover. On P.A.)* Attention press box media: That inside-the-park home run by O'Neill was the team's first since Brian DeLeroy hit one on September 16, 2018. It was the seventeenth inside-the-park...

MASON: *(Calling out.)* Oh Christ, Randy, who gives a shit?! We've got a very important discussion going on here. *(To BIG JIM.)* So anyway, you're wrong. Men long for romance too. That same deep emotional attachment. We're just not honest enough to admit it.

BIG JIM: Jeez, didn't know it was "Ladies Night" here at the old ball yard.

MASON: At a certain age we outgrow the need to just get laid. Or at least those of us who have gotten laid do.

BIG JIM: You open yourself up to romance; you open yourself up to vulnerability. It's like going out in the sun without sunscreen. You're all happy—"Ooh, what a glorious sunny day. Look how bright the colors are, breathe in the sweetness of that fresh air. Feel the warmth. All is right with the world." Three hours later you're in the Emergency Room, your body is lobster red, you're crippled, there's no relief, and you might end up with cancer. Think about that the next time you want to send her flowers for no reason. Cancer!

DENNIS: Hey, could you keep it down? We got a Goddamn no-hitter going here. And your sunscreen analogy was idiotic.

BIG JIM: Suit yourself. But all I know is hot dogs won't leave you for someone else. Garlic fries won't cry when you come home late. Crackerjacks will never withhold sex. And now if you'll excuse me, I must go visit these loves of my life before they get stale.

BIG JIM moves off. MASON turns to his computer.

MASON: Hey, let's sign him up for eHarmony.

SFX: DENNIS' cellphone RINGS.

DENNIS: Hello, Kathy.... You're at the house? So is the other buyer? Look, I'll get with the agent tomorrow and work this out. (*Exasperated.*) Stop shrieking. (*Hangs up.*) Do you ever wish a foul ball would hit you in the head and kill you?

MASON: Wow. Did she cry and wail like that before you got married?

DENNIS: Every day until I agreed to get married.

MASON: Yikes.

DENNIS: I just had to make it stop.

MASON: Even if it meant a lifelong commitment?

DENNIS: (*You didn't hear me.*) I just had to make it stop.

MASON: Right. (*Looking at the screen.*) Oh my God!

DENNIS: What?

MASON: Big Jim is already on eHarmony.

DENNIS: You're kidding?

MASON: Nope. There he is. Smiling and holding a kitten.

They laugh.

DENNIS: Holy shit! What does his profile say?

MASON: He's a writer, a farmer, likes to cuddle, and oh, get this—His preference: Black women.

They're both hysterical. BIG JIM returns with more food.

BIG JIM: What's so funny?

They recover quickly. MASON clicks off of that site.

DENNIS: (*Simultaneously with MASON.*) Nothing.

MASON: (*Simultaneously with DENNIS.*) Just a stupid video.

BIG JIM: You idiots will laugh at anything.

MASON: Meow.

SFX: there's a crack of the bat. A second later BIG JIM glances up in horror.

BIG JIM: INCOMING!

They scream and scramble. In a flash a foul ball knocks MASON'S computer off the counter. MASON retrieves his computer. The screen is smashed. The guys are hysterical.

MASON: Oh shit! My computer's destroyed!

BIG JIM: Can I have the ball?

DENNIS: Oh man. That sucks.

MASON: It's trashed. Fuck! How am I going to file my story?

DENNIS: Guess you'll have to write it on your iPhone.

MASON: Are you kidding me?

BIG JIM: But here's the good news: If someone breaks up the no-hitter you can now include a frowny face.

MASON: *(Calling out.)* Hey, Randy. You guys owe me for this destroyed computer.

RANDY: *(Voiceover. On P.A.)* You assume all risks for personal or property damages.

MASON: C'mon, dude. This is my livelihood.

DENNIS: He's not buying it.

BIG JIM: Sue 'em. I sued Jenny Craig.

MASON: Well, I have to tell you, Randy, I have loved this organization my whole life. And you know why? Because it stands for something. It stands for class. Character. Setting an example. Doing what's right. And when you deny me this nothing little two thousand dollars you are denigrating decades of proud tradition.

DENNIS and BIG JIM applaud this rousing speech. Then:

DENNIS: He's still not buying it.

MASON reaches into his bag and puts on a San Francisco cap.

MASON: *(Calling out.)* BEAT LA! BEAT LA! BEAT LA!

Lights dim:

SCENE 6
PRESS BOX—LATER

AT START: *Lights up as we hear:*

ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* Jeff Pomerantz has allowed only one walk and no hits through five innings. We go to the sixth, still two-nothing L.A.

DENNIS and BIG JIM type on their computers. MASON is trying to type on his iPhone.

MASON: This will take forever.

BIG JIM: Watch out for auto correct.

MASON: Yeah, it already changed a sentence to: "The crowd loved watching Pomerantz piss."

They all laugh. SFX: the organist plays some crazy frenetic boogie woogie. They all look up.

DENNIS: What the hell?

SHANA arrives.

SHANA: Has your organist lost her mind?

MASON: She's in the no-hitter pool. This must be her spot in the batting order. Her way of rattling Pomerantz.

RANDY: *(Voiceover. On P.A.)* Knock it off, Evelyn!

SFX: the organ music becomes somber.

SHANA: Is this place always this crazy?

DENNIS: No, it's usually very dull around here.

MASON: Hey, a fan just ran out onto the field.

SHANA: No way.

ALL grab their binoculars. SFX: the crowd starts applauding.

BIG JIM: At least he's wearing clothes.

SHANA: Darn because like every woman I'm dying to see his "manhood."

BIG JIM: Y'know, there's a reason they don't let male reporters in female locker rooms.

SHANA: Yes. You!

DENNIS: He's handing out religious pamphlets to the infielders.

MASON: I told them not to do "Jehovah's Witness Night."

BIG JIM: Here comes security. Oooh. Good take down.

SFX: The crowd boo's.

DENNIS: I hope you enjoyed your one minute of fame, moron.

MASON: You're the one always saying we need to be remembered.

DENNIS: I'm saying you distinguish yourself by doing something... distinguished, and for that you leave a lasting legacy.

BIG JIM: What about Arnold Palmer?

DENNIS: What about him?

BIG JIM: God bless him, he was once the greatest golfer in the world. But people are only going to remember him for the drink.

DENNIS: I hope that's not true.

BIG JIM: Or George Foreman. Yeah, he was a boxer, but his name is on the greatest invention of the Twentieth Century.

MASON: The George Foreman Grill is the greatest invention of the Twentieth Century?

BIG JIM: Hey, it can cook hamburgers on both sides at once. Name me a smart phone or app that can do that. Checkmate.

DENNIS: Arnold Palmer was in the World Golf Hall of Fame. George Foreman was the heavyweight champion of the world.

BIG JIM: What about Andy Gump?

DENNIS: Huh?

BIG JIM: Best known for those portable shitters you see at construction sites. His family must be proud.

MASON: Andy Gump was a cartoon character!

BIG JIM: He was? So that was a merchandising decision? Like Mickey Mouse watches—Andy Gump toilets?

SHANA: This is what it must be like when Nobel Prize winners get together.

DENNIS: *(To BIG JIM.)* You're not taking this seriously.

BIG JIM: I am too. *(Then.)* Abe Lincoln. Will he be known for being a U.S. President or a vampire hunter?

DENNIS rolls his eyes.

Lights dim:

SCENE 7
PRESS BOX—LATER

AT START: *Lights up as we hear:*

ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* Seventh inning stretch time. Los Angeles up two-nothing and Pomerantz still hasn't allowed a hit.

ALL are standing. SFX: the same singer that mangled the National Anthem is now pulverizing "God Bless America." ALL are in pain.

SHANA: Oh, just sing the friggin' song!

DENNIS: Don't go for the high note!

SFX: she does. They cry out in agony and stagger as if an ooga horn just went off. When it's mercifully over:

MASON: Jesus! In a town where Charles Manson got a record deal they couldn't find better?

SFX: DENNIS' cellphone rings. He sighs and answers.

DENNIS: Hi Kathy.... How much did they bid? Yikes. All right, let me think about it.... Kathy, the owner is not going to take their offer without hearing ours. Goodbye.

DENNIS hangs up and pops another Xanax in his mouth.

BIG JIM: How does any beat reporter afford a house that's not on wheels?

DENNIS: It's getting harder and harder to make her happy.

SHANA: What would make you happy?

DENNIS: Me? Who cares about me?

SHANA: Seriously. Put aside all your obligations to others, just look me in the eye, and tell me what would make you happy.

DENNIS locks eyes with SHANA. Almost involuntarily, he softly answers:

DENNIS: You.

SHANA: *(Not getting it.)* Me what?

DENNIS: *(Recovering.)* Oh. Uh... you really want to know?

SHANA: Yes.

DENNIS: *(Takes a breath, then.)* I'd like to be a historian at the Hall of Fame.

SHANA: Awesome.

BIG JIM: This balloon juice again?

DENNIS: Their deeds must never be forgotten.

BIG JIM: Oh, come on, this isn't raising the flag at Iwo Jima. These are bozos who run around with a stick.

DENNIS: Yeah, well, what have you ever accomplished?

BIG JIM: Hey, my virtual farm turns out more corn than anyone in the valley.

SHANA: *(To DENNIS.)* Have you ever contacted them to see if you could do that?

DENNIS: I was offered a job.

SHANA: Excellent. So why didn't you...?

DENNIS: Why didn't I take it? Because it would disturb someone's lifestyle. Because on my gravestone it's going to read "I did it their way."

Lights slowly dim:

SCENE 8
PRESS BOX—LATER

AT START: *Lights up as we hear:*

ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* On to the eighth inning. L.A. two runs on eight hits. San Francisco no runs on no hits. And all eyes on Jeff Pomerantz.

MASON and SHANA are watching the game more intently now. BIG JIM is on his computer. MASON is still trying to type on his iPhone. DENNIS has his eye on the game but is noodling on a pad.

MASON: Damn this auto-correct! "Pomerantz had a great assortment of bitches."

Everyone laughs.

MASON: *(Continued.)* Not funny. And it takes ten minutes to type every friggin' sentence. I hate this thing!

DENNIS: Hey, chill out there, dude.

The Xanax is starting to take effect. DENNIS is much looser, in a mellow happy mood.

MASON: Excuse me?

DENNIS: Yeah, it's all goood.

SHANA: It is?

DENNIS: Abso-tively. If I sell my car, ghost write three books a year, only eat one meal a day on the road and pocket my per diem I could easily afford that house. Suddenly I have a great feeling about this.

MASON: You sure it's not the drugs just kicking in?

DENNIS: Of course it's the drugs. Without the drugs I'm diving into the lower deck.

DENNIS grabs his cellphone and dials.

DENNIS: Kathy? Hi. Offer seven-fifty. Not a cent more, but let's get this house.... Love you too. Bye. (*Hangs up.*) She still won't let me take banjo lessons.

MASON: (*Calling down to the field.*) Steeee-rike three! Grab some pine, buddy. (*Then.*) He needs just four outs.

BIG JIM: What about Tommy John?

MASON: What about him?

BIG JIM: Will people know him for pitching or the Tommy John surgery? And if it is the surgery, will they think he's the surgeon?

SHANA: Would Tommy John mind if people equated him with being an innovative doctor and... I can't believe I've joined this stupid conversation.

MASON: And yet the real doctor is largely unknown.

DENNIS: Frank Jobe.

SHANA: (*Re conversation.*) Aw, what the hell? I'm in it. (*Then.*) Seems to me it's unfair that baseball players get more recognition than people who save lives.

DENNIS: (*Still a little loopy.*) I know. You rarely see first responder trading cards.

MASON: Doctors don't go into it for the glory; lots of ballplayers do.

BIG JIM: Dennis went into sportswriting for the glory.

DENNIS: Yes, I did. And now that I have to keep doing it for seventy-five more years I think I got a shot. I'm telling you, it's all goooooood.

BIG JIM: You know what? It would make way more sense if those portable toilets were called Tommy "Johns" instead of Andy Gumps.

DENNIS: You're right.

SHANA: And they call us bimbos.

MASON: (*Watching the field.*) Comebacker. Easy play. Side retired. Pomerantz needs just three more outs.

BIG JIM: Okay. Story's written. I can take the rest of the night off. (*Looking up.*) Oooh, Kiss-Cam. Let's see which warthogs they feature tonight.

SHANA: What do you mean your story's written? The game isn't over.

BIG JIM: I have two endings. (*Re Kiss-Cam.*) Okay, the obligatory old couple that look like two wizened fungo bats.

SHANA: That's insane.

DENNIS: We all do it.

SHANA: What?

MASON: I wish I could do it. Goddamn phone. (*Reading.*) “This was O’Neill’s first inside-the-porker.”

BIG JIM: (*Re Kiss Cam.*) Awww, the mommy and the baby. How precious. (*Calling.*) The kid should be asleep! You’re an unfit parent!

DENNIS: We all face constant deadlines. There’s no time after the game to start a full story. So we compose as we go along and often have two or three endings at the ready.

BIG JIM: (*Re Kiss Cam.*) There’s Ken and Barbie. Two beautiful people who have somehow found each other. (*Calling out.*) He’s banging Skipper on the side!

SHANA: Well Dennis, I have a new appreciation for what you all do. There certainly is an art to accurately reporting a baseball game you make up based on not watching it.

DENNIS: (*Simultaneously with MASON.*) Thank you.

MASON: (*Simultaneously with DENNIS.*) Appreciate it.

BIG JIM: Hey look! Dennis and Shana—you’re on Kiss-Cam.

DENNIS: (*Simultaneously with SHANA.*) Holy shit!

SHANA: (*Simultaneously with DENNIS.*) We are?

DENNIS takes her in his arms and gives her a long, deep kiss. SFX: the crowd roars its approval. When it’s over, a confused SHANA doesn’t know whether to be embarrassed, horrified, or flattered.

MASON: (*Simultaneously with BIG JIM.*) What the hell?

BIG JIM: (*Simultaneously with MASON.*) What was that?

DENNIS is intoxicated by the kiss and in the grips of the Xanax.

DENNIS: Shana, before you say anything, I just want to tell you—you are so beautiful.

MASON: Don’t do this.

DENNIS: Why not? I really mean it. Y’know, you joined us here tonight and we all try to act cool and nonchalant, but the truth is none of us can take our eyes off of you.

MASON: This is not Dennis speaking. This is Ozzie Osbourne.

DENNIS: So what? Someone should say this. And why not me? I'm the official scorer. Shana, we were having a discussion earlier about whether men craved romance over sex. Not that any one of us wouldn't sleep with you, even if it meant doing it front of our families and parents while in church...

MASON: Oh God.

DENNIS: But I was quiet during that discussion, and do you want to know why?

MASON: NO!!!

DENNIS: Because I was afraid. Afraid that if I shared my true inner feelings I would be the subject of laughter and ridicule.

BIG JIM: From us? I'm hurt.

DENNIS: But I'll admit it—I for one long for intimacy, affection, just the warmth of a tender hug. And I don't care who knows it.

DENNIS reaches for the microphone. SHANA quickly grabs it and pulls it away.

SHANA: No no, that's okay. I believe you.

DENNIS: And in return I would do anything to make that person happy. I'm buying a house for a wife I'm not even sure about anymore so imagine what I would do for you.

SHANA: Dennis, I.... *(This isn't going to be easy.)* Oh boy—

DENNIS: Now you may be involved with Darryl Reed. You say you're not, and that's fine. Rumors of steroids, but who knows? Still, the next time you hug him ask yourself: "Does he really appreciate this? Is his life complete just by being in your arms?" And if the answer is no, just remember the one who really does care is here in the press box. *(Then.)* Did I kiss okay?

SHANA: Uh... I don't know what to say.

DENNIS: You can be honest. My lips were a little chapped.

SHANA: No, not about the kiss.

DENNIS: Oh. Right.

MASON: We don't know what to say either, but we certainly apologize.

SHANA: No, no. That was very sweet. And now I'm aware of how you guys all feel, which is flattering... although I do carry pepper spray and have a black belt. But Dennis—you're a sensitive soul who deserves way more happiness and affection than you've received.

I'm a symbol of your desires and even though you know it's unrealistic between us—you do know that, right?

DENNIS begrudgingly nods yes.

SHANA: Good. *(Then.)* You can use that to finally go after what you can achieve. So I'm glad you said it because for you it's the first step.

SFX: SHANA'S cellphone chirps. She has a text. She quickly scans it.

SHANA: Live cut-in to start the ninth. You go for it, Dennis.

SHANA gives him a quick peck on the cheek and moves off. Once she's gone:

MASON: *(Impressed.)* Wow. That was the greatest brush-off I've ever heard.

BIG JIM: I know. A highlight-play rejection.

DENNIS: Personally, I'm encouraged.

They pelt him with cups and paper plates.

DENNIS: Ow! Easy! What'd I do?

MASON: You don't just say those things to a woman. My God.

DENNIS: Yeah, well that only shows how little you both know. If you really want romance in your life you must have the courage to open your heart, to disclose your innermost feelings. *(Then.)* I'm going to be sued, aren't I?

BIG JIM: You've made this a hostile workplace even for me.

DENNIS: *(Still composed.)* Uh huh. Uh huh. Y'know, I'm really not good at decisions. Never have been. *(Turns to the game.)* So... what's goin' on out here?

Lights dim:

SCENE 9
PRESS BOX—LATER

AT START: *Lights up as we hear:*

ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* We've come to the ninth. Two-nothing L.A., and Jeff Pomerantz from Hatboro, Pennsylvania is three precious outs away from hurling a no-hitter.

MASON is on the edge of his seat. BIG JIM and DENNIS watch. DENNIS remains calm. SFX: we hear cheers and groans with every pitch.

MASON: Here we go, ladies and gentlemen. He's still got a good late break on that cutter.

SFX: the organist starts playing a ridiculously frenetic boogie woogie.

RANDY: *(Voiceover. On P.A.)* Knock it off, Evelyn!

SFX: the music stops. BIG JIM rises.

BIG JIM: Okay. Time to get something to eat.

MASON: What? In the ninth inning of a no-hitter?

BIG JIM: Hey, when the churros are gone they're gone.

BIG JIM crosses off. MASON places a call on his cellphone.

MASON: *(On phone.)* Sports desk? This is Mason. Listen, my computer got trashed. Can I just dictate my story to the copy boy? *(Beat.)* What?... When? They fired all the copy boys? Jesus. Who's left—you, me, and "Calvin and Hobbes?" *(Hangs up still a little shook.)* Hobbes is probably next. Shit.

MASON snaps out of it when there's a SFX: loud groan from the crowd.

MASON: *(Calling out.)* Bad call, blue!!! You gave Pearson a strike on that same pitch in the fourth. I want to see a replay.

DENNIS: Mason, Mason... it's just one pitch. Chill, mi amigo.

MASON smacks him with the game notes.

DENNIS: Ow!

SFX: DENNIS' cellphone rings. He answers:

DENNIS: Hey, Kathy.... *(Suddenly ashen.)* No?!! You can't be serious.
GODDAMN IT!!!

DENNIS pounds the counter in frustration.

MASON: Define "chill."

BIG JIM returns.

DENNIS: We don't have seven-hundred and sixty grand.

BIG JIM: Churros will never force you into the housing market.

DENNIS: *(On phone.)* Stop crying! I can't make a major life decision in two seconds.... For godsakes, half the time I'm on the road and won't even be in the house!

BIG JIM: That's another thing. When did these TV sportswriters ever go on the road? Ray was always home.

MASON: So was Oscar.

BIG JIM: Which wife do you think was the bigger nag? Debra or Felix?

DENNIS: Will you guys hold it down? *(On phone, resigned.)* Alright, fine. Go seven-sixty. But Kathy, I want to play the banjo!

SFX: cheer from the crowd. He hangs up. Crack of the bat. The crowd holds its collective breath, then a huge cheer.

MASON: Elconin popped up. One away.

BIG JIM: God, this is taking forever.

MASON: Where do you have to be? Does Popeye's stop serving fried shrimp boats after eleven?

BIG JIM: The Olsen Twins are on Kimmel.

MASON: You are a piece of work.

BIG JIM: Hey, they rarely appear together. It's a big night.

MASON: For Chrissakes, we got a no-hitter going here!

BIG JIM: Yeah. I know. The tension is palpable. (*Then.*) Hey, there's this photo-shop video where you see them doing girl-on-girl action. Let me bring it up.

MASON has had enough. He pops up and confronts BIG JIM.

MASON: Okay, that's it. Get out of here. Right now. Give six other people a chance to sit down.

BIG JIM: Hey, what's your problem?

MASON: You! I'm sick of you! Forget that you're no journalist. You're not even a baseball fan! I can take your bullshit, the fact that you don't bathe, even your idiotic racist jokes, but the one thing I can't take is that. Moments like this are what we live for. From baseball comes human drama in its purest form. No hokey Hollywood Kevin Costner crap. You have men out there trying to achieve nearly impossible feats under the most humbling of conditions. It's a true test of one's character, with no second chances and no consolation for failure. Baseball is a treasure because like life it's wildly unpredictable and endlessly fascinating, but with the added benefit that the heroes are real and the concept of fairness really does exist.

DENNIS: Wow. Very poetic.

MASON: (*Sheepish.*) It's a column I wrote a couple of years ago.

DENNIS: Comparing baseball to life was a little pedestrian, but otherwise, nice.

BIG JIM: Did you ever think that maybe my problem with baseball is that I am one of those boys that didn't make it? For the few heroes you so eloquently praised there are thousands of disappointed individuals like myself, who didn't have the skill, or the heart, or were just too "chubby" to make those close plays. And that maybe that left a scar, put a huge dent in our self-esteems, which in time led to massive self-loathing and acting out in horribly self-destructive ways?

MASON: Oh horseshit! You can't blame baseball for you being fat and disgusting.

BIG JIM: Okay, well... baseball is just dull.

SFX: crack of the bat. Everyone in the stadium holds their collective breath. Then a thunderous cheer.

DENNIS: That's two.

MASON: Who has the number five hitter?

BIG JIM: Me. And I'm still bored.

DENNIS: *(To MASON.)* Excuse me, but I thought you were the guy who said, "there was more to life than baseball."

MASON: It ends in October, man. You gotta know who either Matthew Perry or the Secretary of State is.

SHANA returns.

SHANA: Never go to the upper deck after the seventh inning. It's "Monte Carlo Night" in the drunk tank.

DENNIS: Shana, listen, I owe you an apology. I'm not in the habit of creeping women out and I just want to assure you that from this point on I will conduct myself with dignity and be the consummate professional.

SHANA: Look, Dennis, I'm used to getting hit on by men. And in a lot of cases, yes, *(Shudders.)* uggcch. But I also know I'm very lucky. So I try to be as understanding as I can because I realize I'm disappointing people and hate the fact that I'm hurting them.

DENNIS: *(Blurting.)* God, I love you so much. *(Catching himself.)* Wait. Sorry. That was a hold-over. Starting now—professional colleagues only.

SHANA: Perfect.

SFX: another cheer from the crowd.

MASON: Oh-and-two. He's one tantalizing strike away.

SFX: DENNIS' cellphone rings. Exasperated, he snatches it.

DENNIS: What Kathy?... We can have it for seven-ninety? Jesus, that's a lot.

SHANA: He has him set up for a slider in the dirt.

DENNIS: He's taking the other offer in five minutes? Kathy, I, I don't know...

SFX: crack of the bat. A gasp from the crowd.

DENNIS: Hold on. Ohhhh shit!

SHANA: Get there! Get there!

MASON: Come on! Come on!

SFX: a giant groan from the crowd and everyone in the press box. Disgusted ad libs of "Damn!" "Shit!" "So close!" Now the big crowd boos. DENNIS turns white as a ghost.

DENNIS: *(On phone, shellshocked.)* Huh?... Oh, fly ball to left. Reed went for it and dropped it. I'm going to kill myself now.

MASON: What do you think? Hit or error? If you call error he still has his no-hitter.

BIG JIM: It's a hit, no question. Where's my money, Denzel?

MASON: You gotta call error just so he loses.

RANDY: *(Voiceover. On P.A.)* Well, Dennis? We need a decision. The world is waiting.

SHANA: Please don't give Darryl an error. This town is going to hate him.

DENNIS: I, I need to see the replay. *(On phone.)* Fuck the real estate agent! Hang on. *(To MASON.)* What do you think?

MASON: *(Shaking his head.)* Whatever you choose you're going to be second guessed... for years. He did drop the ball.

SHANA: But you could also rule valiant effort and give him a hit.

BIG JIM: Good point.

MASON: Most fans don't know about valiant effort. They're going to see Reed drop the ball and assume it's an error.

BIG JIM: Either way your life is ruined. Decide already. I'm missing Mary-Kate & Ashley.

SHANA hugs DENNIS. It's the hug he's been longing for forever.

SHANA: Please. For me.

DENNIS: *(To himself.)* This is not the time to have an erection.

RANDY: (*Voiceover. On P.A.*) Come on, Dennis. We need a ruling already.

MASON: (*Simultaneously with SHANA.*) The smart call is error. Gotta call error.

SHANA: (*Simultaneously with MASON.*) Valiant effort.

MASON: (*Simultaneously with BIG JIM.*) He dropped it.

BIG JIM: (*Simultaneously with MASON.*) It's a hit. You know it.

They're all talking at once. SFX: from the phone—crying. Finally:

DENNIS: SHUT UP! All of you!

They do. DENNIS grabs the mic.

DENNIS: (*On P.A.*) Attention media: Valiant effort. Hit. Suck it up.

SHANA jumps for joy. BIG JIM applauds. MASON shakes his head.

DENNIS: (*On phone.*) Kathy, we're not buying that house. It's too much. That's it. End of discussion. Cry all you want! (*Defiantly hangs up.*) I'm sleeping here tonight.

BIG JIM: (*To MASON.*) Pay up, Tupac.

MASON begrudgingly gives him the money. The offstage Scoreboard flashes "HIT." SFX: the booing crowd is almost mutinous.

DENNIS: Yeah, fine. Boo your guts out. I made the right call and I'm standing by it. I don't give a shit what any of you think. (*Then, brittle.*) Shana, hug me again. Now. Please.

She does.

DENNIS: My last happy memory. (*Then.*) I know you don't feel as I do, but I'm shaking just being in your arms.

SHANA: No. I'm getting a text.

DENNIS: Oh.

SHANA: (*Reading.*) "Interview enraged fans."

DENNIS: Swell.

SHANA: Half the people in the upper deck think they're at a Rams' game.

SHANA grabs her mic and moves off.

BIG JIM: Hey Dennis, go online. The hate has begun.

DENNIS checks his computer.

DENNIS: Yikes!

MASON leans over to see his screen.

MASON: Wow. That is brutal. And scary.

DENNIS: That's it. I don't care what my damn editor says. I am unfriending anyone who makes a death threat!

SFX: there's a loud crack of a bat. Everyone looks up.

BIG JIM: Oh baby, that ball is crushed. Going, going, gone!

SFX: the crowd groans. DENNIS cheers.

DENNIS: Yes! I'm off the hook.

BIG JIM: Forget the no-hitter. We're now tied folks.

DENNIS: Oh shit, that's right.

BIG JIM: We can throw out our stories.

MASON: *(Re iPhone.)* Are you kidding? I have to start over? The Jetsons will be alive before I finish this fucking story.

BIG JIM: Well, boys and girls, our night has just begun.

They settle in.

Lights dim:

SCENE 10
PRESS BOX—LATER

AT START: *Lights up as we hear:*

ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* We go to the sixteenth inning, still tied two-to-two.

SHANA is back. All four can hardly keep their eyes open. NOTE: From now on we hear very little crowd noise no matter what happens.

RANDY: *(Voiceover. On P.A.)* Attention media. The game just passed the six hour mark. This is the longest game between these two teams since August 15, 1961. That game went...

BIG JIM: Aw shut up! No one cares! There's maybe thirty people here.

SHANA: These are the true baseball fans, that's for sure.

BIG JIM: Uh... no. These are the ones who are unemployed, not married, maybe homeless, too shit-faced to move, or have no life. They're not fans; they're squatters.

SFX: the organist hits one note and keeps her finger on that note. It continues and continues.

DENNIS: What the hell?

MASON: *(Calling out.)* Evelyn! WAKE UP!

SFX: the note stops. SHANA'S watch pings. She rises.

SHANA: Time to stand. Come on, guys. This is good for you.

ALL pop right up. And just as quickly sit back down.

MASON: You know she's right.

BIG JIM: I do feel healthier.

DENNIS: It's like I'm eighteen again.

SHANA: *(Sitting.)* Very funny.

BIG JIM: We've stood five times now. We're not training to be Navy Seals.

MASON: Larry Anderson of the Phillies once strained a rib cage muscle standing up in the dugout.

SHANA: Oh come on.

DENNIS: No, that's true. And Chris Brown, an infielder for San Diego missed a game because "he slept on his eye funny."

SHANA: You have got to be kidding.

DENNIS: Google 'em. And then check out Mr. Clarence Blethen of Boston, who had false teeth that he took out during games but kept in his pocket. While sliding hard into second base one time he was bitten in the ass by his own teeth.

ALL laugh.

MASON: It all goes back to how badly you want to be remembered.

BIG JIM: I'll tell you who doesn't want to be remembered. Umpires. The only time those goofballs get famous is when they screw up a epic play.

MASON, DENNIS, BIG JIM, and SHANA: Don Denkinger.

DENNIS: Yeah, when you think about it, these guys work harder than anybody. As grueling as tonight has been at least the players get to sit in the dugout every half inning. Umpires never get to sit. They never leave the field. And the highest praise they can receive is if people don't know they're there.

MASON: Well, there's a lot to be said for personal pride. The world doesn't have to know. You just have to know.

BIG JIM: I'd still prefer that to being a player. Every at bat, every pitch is recorded forever. Every strikeout, every error, every home run you ever give up—it never leaves you.

DENNIS: But isn't it good that someone cares enough to keep track? That what you do is deemed important?

SHANA: It's very much like "the Book of Life."

BIG JIM: Well yeah, if you want to get all Judaic.

SHANA: Many faiths have a similar belief, but yes, I do.

DENNIS: (*To SHANA.*) You're Jewish?

BIG JIM: "Shana" is Yiddish for "beautiful."

SHANA: How did you know that?

BIG JIM: I know a lot about the Jewish religion—its culture, its teachings, traditions.

MASON: You've studied Judaism?

BIG JIM: No, I spend a lot of time in delis.

MASON: So what's "the Book of Life?"

SHANA: I'm going to have to paraphrase.

BIG JIM: Imagine it's an in-game report. (*A la an announcer.*) Let's go down to Shana Sanders for tonight's "Jewish Minute."

SHANA laughs.

BIG JIM: I made her laugh again.

SHANA: Okay.... Everything a person does is supposedly written in "the Book of Life" to be reviewed by God. And this includes our failings and weaknesses along with our strengths and any noble deeds. The goal of course is to tip the scale and be admitted through the "Gates of Heaven."

DENNIS: Which lead to where?

SHANA: I dunno. I guess that depends on the person and what his vision of heaven would be.

DENNIS: (*Dreamy.*) Kathy lost at sea.

MASON: At least for ballplayers the recording stops when they retire. They're still alive so they're around to enjoy it if they had a good career. They get to interact with fans, sign autographs, still feel the love.

BIG JIM: Be righteous, O' Baseball Player for someday you may pass through "the Gates of Heaven" to a blessed eternity of card shows and supermarket openings.

They laugh.

SHANA: Obviously, you're not concerned.

BIG JIM: About the "great beyond?" No. Once I'm gone, who gives a shit? All I want is a moment of silence at the ballpark, and not when they're playing Seattle. No one comes when they're playing Seattle. I'll get my twenty-two seconds...

MASON: In your case more like twelve.

BIG JIM: And then people will go on about their lives. That's what they do anyway.

SHANA: How did we even get on this morbid subject? We're at a ballgame.

MASON: We usually discuss which actresses we'd like to sleep with, but when there's a woman present we tackle existential dilemmas instead.

SHANA: Go back to the actresses.

BIG JIM: Megan Fox, Mila Kunis, Margo Robbie, NBC correspondent Hallie Jackson, Sofia Vergara, Betty Rubble—

SHANA: Betty Rubble?

MASON: (*To BIG JIM.*) It wouldn't be Halle Berry, or Beyonce, or Kerry Washington?

BIG JIM: Why would you say that?

MASON: Oh, you know—Once you have black, you never go back.

BIG JIM: Yeah, well, once you have white, you've seen the light.

SHANA: You guys would be lucky to sleep with Betty Rubble.

DENNIS: (*Eyes on field.*) Now that's an error for sure. Sorry, Shana.

SHANA: What? What happened?

DENNIS: Bad throw in by Reed, the runner took an extra base. Gotta charge him.

SHANA: Aw, come on. He's exhausted out there. He gives a hundred percent, signs every autograph, and he hasn't slept well in a week.

MASON: Uh... how would you know that?

SHANA: What?

DENNIS: That he hasn't slept. He never said anything to us.

MASON: And that's the kind of stuff we keep track of—which is sad on so many levels.

SHANA: Oh. Uh...

They're all looking at her. A beat. She knows she's busted.

SHANA: (*Continued.*) Oh hell. I hog all the covers.

BIG JIM: A ha!

DENNIS: So you are seeing Darryl Reed.

BIG JIM: You owe me ten dollars, Kanye.

SHANA: Yes, but please don't tell anyone. I could lose my job in a heartbeat over this.

MASON: No one's going to tell. Don't worry.

DENNIS speaks into his microphone.

DENNIS: *(On P.A.)* Attention media: E-7. Runner takes third on the error. *(To SHANA.)* So is this...? *(Realizes he's still on mic. Turns it off.)* Sorry. So is this serious? How long have you two been going out? How does he kiss?

SHANA: We've been going together since spring training. And I guess you could say we're serious. The word "marriage" did once enter our conversation.

DENNIS: Wow.

MASON: Congratulations.

BIG JIM: Will he convert?

SHANA: Yes, but he'll still wear a cross when facing lefties.

BIG JIM: Today's reform Jew.

SHANA: *(Laughs, then.)* Y'know, you can be funny when you're not crude and obnoxious.

BIG JIM: Believe it or not, that is the nicest thing a woman has ever said to me.

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