

"EXPANSION" PILOT

by

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"EXPANSION" - PILOT

ACT I

OVER BLACK:

The sound of a baseball slapping against a leather glove.

FADE IN ON:

EXT. NEW YORK YANKEES TRAINING FACILITY - AFTERNOON

A red digital radar display, reading the number 91. We hear another slap, and the number changes to 90. A grunt, a third slap, and the number dips to 88.

ANGLE ON:

BUCK FOREMAN (38), handsome, tall, with an air of unquestioned superiority. At the moment, however, he looks frustrated. Very frustrated.

He hurls another pitch, and the radar gun registers 89.

BUCK
(under his breath)
Fuck you.

He throws another. 88 on the gun. He's laboring now, perspiring like a fountain.

ANGLE ON:

A throng of YANKEES TEAM SCOUTS standing at the fence on the edge of the small ballfield. Some look concerned--others shake their heads. Among them is magnetic, impeccably dressed MAX GILES (late 30's), Buck's agent.

Buck rears back and fires another pitch--88.

This time he's had enough. He hurls a ball at the radar gun, destroying it. Buck stalks off the mound.

Max leans over to a SCOUT.

MAX
He really is a sweet guy.

The Scout just looks scared.

INT. NEW YORK CITY - BUCK'S APARTMENT - LATER

It's a well-furnished, stylish modern interior--very, very expensive by the look of it. Buck stands at the island, drinking a vile-looking protein shake. Max sits at the kitchen table, tossing his expensive phone casually.

BUCK

Still no word from Cashman?

Max just shakes his head. Buck takes a sip of his shake, breathes deeply.

BUCK (CONT'D)

That goddamn radar gun.

MAX

It wasn't the gun.

BUCK

What does that mean?

MAX

It means you're mortal, Buck. I'm sorry to have to be the one to tell you that, but you are.

BUCK

I could feel it, Max. I was feeling good. That ball was going 95 at the very least.

MAX

I think it's time we started looking at our other options. Kansas city needs a fifth starter. So does Baltimore, and maybe Texas.

BUCK

What are you saying? You think the Yankees don't want Buck Foreman back?

MAX

The Yankees want 28-year-old Buck Foreman back. Not 38-year-old Buck Foreman.

Beat.

BUCK

Max, do me a favor and get the fuck out of my apartment.

Max only shakes his head. He heads to the door, opens it, then hesitates in the threshold.

MAX

When you're willing to talk, call me.

Max shuts the door, leaving Buck alone. Buck exhales, runs a hand through his thick hair.

INT. BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Buck lies alone in his bed. He glances out the window, then to the bedside table. His eyes rest on a picture of himself and a BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN. He blows a kiss to the picture, then rolls over for sleep.

INT. BUCK'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

Buck mixes up another protein shake, then downs the whole thing in three massive gulps. Next, he clicks on the TV and starts to do push-ups, right on his kitchen floor. Sportscenter is on.

ANCHOR

(on TV)

This just in to Sportscenter, say hello to the newest team in Major League baseball: the Portland Anglers.

Buck rolls over and does sit-ups.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

(on TV)

Commissioner Bud Selig finalized the deal with Anglers owner Sheila Ann Jones late last night. Jones is making history herself by becoming the first female owner in the MLB.

BUZZ.

Buck mutes the TV. His phone buzzes rhythmically on the island. Buck stands, hesitates for a moment. Everything has gone suddenly silent, aside from the buzzing of the phone. He takes a deep breath, then grabs it and answers.

BUCK

Hello?

VOICE (O.S.)
(through phone)
Buck? It's Brian Cashman.

BUCK
Hello.

BRIAN CASHMAN (O.S.)
How're you doing?

BUCK
Doing fine, I guess.

BRIAN CASHMAN (O.S.)
Good. That's good.
(beat)
Listen, Buck...there's no easy way
to say this.

BUCK
You're cutting me.

Beat.

BRIAN CASHMAN
That's not how I would describe it--

BUCK
But that's what this is. You're
cutting me.

BRIAN CASHMAN
It's just not in our budget to re-
sign you.

Buck stares off into the New York morning, out at the
pristine skyline.

BUCK
Goodbye Brian.

Buck hangs up. He slams his phone down, cracking it. He takes
a deep breath. Exhales.

INT. PORTLAND, OREGON - WAITING ROOM - DAY

A pale, almost sickly looking man, STEVEN MUMBER (50's),
enters the office and steps up to an ASSISTANT (30's) behind
a desk.

MUMBER
Steven Mumber here for the
Assistant GM job.

ASSISTANT

Very good. If you'll be so kind to wait just a moment.

MUMBER

Sure.

Mumber finds a seat in the waiting room. He takes a deep breath, but otherwise seems completely calm, completely natural. He reaches for a magazine and leafs through it.

VOICE (O.S.)

(from within the office)

I wanted ten names by Tuesday, Todd.

Mumber looks up. The Assistant smiles nervously.

ASSISTANT

It'll just be another minute.

VOICE (O.S.)

I don't care. Three days is three years to me. You're fired.

From within the office is the sound of a phone slammed down onto a receiver. A beat, and then there is a crash. Then thunderous stomping, and a plump, imperious woman in a bright purple business suit storms out of the office. This is SHEILA ANN JONES (late 40's).

SHEILA

(to Assistant)

Call Freddie, tell him I need a new phone.

ASSISTANT

Right away, Miss Jones. Your three o' clock is here.

Mumber rises. Sheila looks him over.

SHEILA

Send him in.

Sheila disappears into the office.

ASSISTANT

She's ready for you.

Steven follows.

INT. SHEILA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mumber enters the office. It's neat, orderly, aside from the ruin of a desk phone against the wall. Pictures line the walls, all of them featuring Sheila shaking hands with various celebrities. A picture of her and President Obama catches Mumber's eye in particular.

SHEILA
Please have a seat.

Mumber sits down across the desk from Sheila. She studies him for a moment.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
You want to be my Assistant General Manager.

MUMBER
That's correct.

SHEILA
Tell me why I should hire you.

Steven clears his throat.

MUMBER
Numbers. I'm better with numbers than anyone else you're ever going to find. I took the Tampa Bay Rays to the postseason on four separate occasions, and each time with a payroll less than 65 million. In 2008, we went to the World Series.

SHEILA
I'm aware. I'm also aware that you lost that World Series.

Beat.

MUMBER
Yes. We did.

SHEILA
I wanted to talk to you today, Mr. Mumber, because I am starting from nothing. You had moderate success with a \$60 million payroll. How would you do with 30?

The shadow of a smile crosses Mumber's lips.

MUMBER

Better. I lack many things, Miss Jones, but confidence is not one of them.

SHEILA

Sheila. Please.

Sheila stands and looks out the window.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

You impress me, Mr. Mumber.

She turns toward Mumber.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

And as of about five minutes ago, I'm in need of a GM. And, fortunately for me, you're too smart to be an assistant.

This takes even Mumber off guard.

MUMBER

You're offering me General Manager?

Sheila smiles.

SHEILA

Welcome to the Anglers, Mr. Mumber.

Mumber reaches across the table to shake Sheila's hand.

MUMBER

How do we proceed?

SHEILA

You proceed. And you do that by building me a winning team.

Mumber nods numbly.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Buck and Max stand yards away from each other, tossing a baseball back and forth.

MAX

At least he called you. Usually they just would've called me.

BUCK

I wouldn't care if he came to my door and gave me a hug and a kiss. I've given sixteen years of my life to that team, and this is how they repay me.

MAX

The game's more business than baseball nowadays.

BUCK

Do we have any other bites?

Max holds the ball for a second, hesitates before he throws.

MAX

Not at present, no.

BUCK

What happened to Kansas City? What happened to Baltimore?

MAX

We're still waiting to hear back from Duquette.

Now Buck holds the ball.

BUCK

I thought they were interested.

Max can only shrug.

MAX

I don't know what to tell you, buddy. More business than baseball.

A FAN walks by and notices Buck.

FAN

Hey, Buck Foreman!

Buck waves to the Fan. The Fan comes over with a piece of paper, which he hands to Buck. Buck signs it.

FAN (CONT'D)

Hey man, is it true you're retiring?

Buck stops mid-signature, glares at the Fan.

BUCK

No.

FAN
Oh, cool. Good luck, man.

The Fan walks away.

MAX
(shrugging)
We just have to wait. It's that or--

BUCK
I'll wait, Max.

Buck throws the ball back.

INT. PORTLAND, OREGON - EDDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A simple little house. The only decoration is a White Sox jersey that reads "LARKMAN, number 34" on the back.

EDDY LARKMAN (mid 60's) sits at the head of his dinner table. He's black, a little on the heavy side, looks like the friendly old man who used to live in your neighborhood.

His son DEREK (early 40's, intelligent and intense), sits beside Eddy. Derek's wife MONA (early 40's, warm, artistic) sits beside Derek. Their twins, RILEY and ELLIE (10), giggle to each other.

The Larkmans hold hands in grace.

EDDY
Come lord Jesus, be our guest, and
let these gifts unto us be blessed.
Amen.

EVERYONE
Amen.

They dig in.

EDDY
So how's the ol' job search going,
Derek?

DEREK
I think the interview at NYU went
very well. We'll have to see about
Oregon.

EDDY
They'd be fools not to hire a smart
kid like you.

Eddy turns to the twins.

EDDY (CONT'D)
You kids know how much your daddy
used to read when he was your age?

ELLIE
A lot?

Eddy laughs.

EDDY
A whole lot.
(to Derek)
Who was that guy you always talked
about? Sterbensch or something?

DEREK
(slightly annoyed)
John Steinbeck.

MONA
Derek's already tried to get Riley
to read "Of Mice and Men." Twice.

Eddy laughs. Derek does not.

RILEY
Grampa, will you show me how to
throw a knuckler after dinner?

Derek stiffens.

DEREK
Grampa and I were going to discuss
something after dinner.

RILEY
But dad...

DEREK
Maybe tomorrow.

They continue to eat.

EXT. EDDY'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - LATER

Eddy and Derek sit in rocking chairs on the porch.

EDDY

I was thinking, Derek. If you get the job at Oregon, maybe you could bring Mona and the kids by every once in a while. You know. Make up for lost time and all.

DEREK

That'd be nice, dad.

EDDY

Sometimes...it's just hard not to feel like I don't mean anything anymore.

They stare at the stars for a beat.

DEREK

I saw your uniform is still up.

EDDY

I like it there.

Beat.

DEREK

I'd prefer if you didn't play baseball with Riley.

EDDY

Why not?

DEREK

I think you know why, dad. I don't want my son becoming...

EDDY

Like what? Like his grandfather?

Derek doesn't respond. They sit in silence, neither looking at the other.

INT. BUCK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Buck stares at a document on a table. It's header reads "PETITION FOR DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE." An envelope sits next to it, with an Oregon address on it.

He takes a deep breath, then scrolls through names until he gets to "Lucy." (The picture next to the name is the same woman in the picture by his bed). He takes another breath, then hits send.

A suspenseful beat while the phone rings. Then...

LUCY

Buck?

BUCK

Hey, uh, hi Luce. It's Buck.

LUCY

Listen, I'm kind of busy right now.
What is it?

BUCK

I kind of just called to say hi. I
wanted to catch up sometime.

Beat.

LUCY

Have you signed the papers yet?

Another beat.

BUCK

No.

LUCY

It's been an entire year.

BUCK

I know, I just...

LUCY

Please, Buck. I'm seeing someone,
and I have no idea how to tell him
that I'm still technically married
because my husband won't sign the
divorce papers.

BUCK

You're seeing someone? Who?

LUCY

It doesn't matter. I don't know
what else to say that hasn't
already been said.

(beat)

When you're ready to send the
papers, you have my address.
I'm sorry, Buck. Goodbye.

The line goes dead.

EXT. BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS - TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

CHARLIE COMBS (mid 30's, red hair, thickly built), limps toward the doors of the facility. He's immediately swarmed by REPORTERS. Charlie grins as they approach him.

REPORTER #1

Charlie! Charlie! How is the rehab going? Will you be starting on Opening Day?

CHARLIE

The rehab is going just fine, my friend. And as to your other question, you'll just have to be patient.

REPORTER #2

Are the rumors about you and Natalie Orlando true?

CHARLIE

(playfully)

Shame on you! Of course they are.

This gets a warm laugh from the reporters.

REPORTER #3

You've played for nine teams in ten seasons. Any concerns that the Red Sox might trade you for someone with less of an injury history?

CHARLIE

Please. The Red Sox front office would never do something so terrible to the city of Boston.

This gets an even bigger reaction from the reporters. They love Charlie, and Charlie loves them. He checks his watch.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

If you'll excuse me...

Charlie weaves through the Reporters.

INT. TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

Charlie gets his left leg stretched out by his trainer, PETE (40's).

PETE

How's it feeling?

CHARLIE
(through gritted teeth)
Like thorns up my ass.

PETE
(laughing)
Now that's an image.

Pete releases Charlie's leg. Charlie sits up and rubs at the muscle.

PETE (CONT'D)
I hate to say this.

CHARLIE
How long?

PETE
Another month at least. I'm sorry,
Charlie.

CHARLIE
Fucking knees...

Pete helps him up, then thinks for a moment. He walks toward a back door.

PETE
Come with me for a sec.

CHARLIE
What?

PETE
Come on. I wanna show you
something.

Pete disappears into an office. Charlie follows.

INT. PETE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Pete shuts the door. He grabs a sticky note and pen from his desk, then writes a name and number.

PETE
We've been friends for a while.

CHARLIE
Sure, Pete. About a year.

PETE
You're a good guy. Trustworthy.

Pete holds the sticky note up.

PETE (CONT'D)

This is a guy I know who could fix your leg. Now, if you want to talk to him, talk to him. If you don't, forget I ever said it. He works with supplements.

Pete hands the sticky to Charlie.

CHARLIE

Supplements.

Pete nods.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Are you saying what I think you're saying?

PETE

I never said that. I said supplements. Just talk to him.

Charlie looks at his leg, then at the sticky note.

CHARLIE

I'm not doing that.

But Charlie doesn't throw out the paper. He pockets it, and leaves the office.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Charlie enters his apartment. A plump little corgi runs up to him and barks.

CHARLIE

(to dog)

It's daddy, Pudge. Your daddy.

Pudge continues to bark until Charlie scoops him up and ruffles his fur.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(in a baby voice)

Who's a dumb wittle puppy, huh?

Charlie's phone buzzes in his pocket. He fishes around until he pulls it out.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hello?

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey, Charlie? It's Bob Allen. Your agent.

CHARLIE
Yeah, Bob. How are you?

BOB ALLEN (O.S.)
Pretty busy, actually. I can't really talk too long.

CHARLIE
What's up?

BOB ALLEN (O.S.)
Well, I just got a call from Cherington, and he told me he traded you.

Beat.

CHARLIE
Huh.

BOB ALLEN (O.S.)
Now I'm not sure if it's a mistake or what here, but he said you've been traded for cash to some team called the Anglers..

CHARLIE
New team, I think. In Portland...or Maine?

BOB ALLEN (O.S.)
Okay, well thanks for that clarification. I'll have David send the paperwork over this afternoon. Gotta run.

CHARLIE
Alright. Thanks B--

--But Bob's already hung up. Charlie puts his phone down and exhales. He doesn't seem at all upset by the news.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Pudgster...we're moving.

Pudge licks Charlie's face.

EXT. CITY BALLPARK - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Buck sets up a radar gun beside home plate. He jogs out to the mound with a bag of balls, chooses one. He takes a deep breath, winds up, and fires.

BUCK
God dammit.

The gun blinks 90. Buck takes another ball, throws it over the plate, grunts loudly. 91 on the gun.

BUCK (CONT'D)
(at the radar gun)
Yeah, fuck you!

He punches the air victoriously, then stops himself.

BUCK (CONT'D)
(muttering to himself)
...celebrating about 91...

He shakes his head, then reaches for another ball. His phone buzzes, with Max's picture on the screen. He picks it up.

MAX
We got a bite.

Buck grins.

BUCK
Who?

MAX
Portland Anglers. The expansion team.

BUCK
Portland, you said?

MAX
That's right.

Buck nods to himself. He looks up at the buildings around him, exhales.

BUCK
I'll take it. Thank you, Max.

MAX
Will do. Night Buck.

BUCK
Night.

Buck hangs up. He picks up a baseball and throws another pitch.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - DAY

Buck is crammed into the middle seat of coach. He's trying--but failing--to get some sleep. Headphones are buried in his ears.

The woman in the Aisle seat pokes him. He removes the buds.

AISLE SEAT

Sorry, do you have the time?

Buck glances at his watch.

BUCK

12:34.

AISLE SEAT

Thanks.

(noticing watch)

Nice watch. Let me guess. You're a stock broker.

BUCK

Nope.

(beat)

I'm not trying to have an ego here, but...you don't recognize me?

AISLE SEAT

Nope. What are you, a movie star or something?

BUCK

Buck Foreman. I played for the Yankees.

Aisle Seat laughs.

AISLE SEAT

Then what the heck are you going to Portland for?

BUCK

I was traded.

AISLE SEAT

Is there a team here now? Huh.

(shrugging)

Well, welcome to Portland, Bill.

BUCK

It's Buck--

But Aisle Seat's already put her headphones back on. Buck stares ahead, visibly upset.

EXT. PORTLAND AIRPORT - DAY

Buck stands on the curb, searching the streets for a cab. He sees a STRANGER nearby.

BUCK

Aren't there any cabs coming by?

STRANGER

You gotta call ahead if you want one, buddy. Try taking the MAX Light downtown. From there you can find a Streetcar.

Buck heaves a sigh, hefts his bag over his shoulder.

INT. STREETCAR - DAY

Buck stands in the aisle, crammed between many other people. He doesn't look at all happy.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Buck steps off the Streetcar into pouring rain. He runs inside.

INT. BUCK'S NEW APARTMENT - DAY

Buck enters. His face falls as he looks around. It's certainly not awful--small, but cozy. However, it's also certainly not his New York apartment. Buck throws down his bags. His phone rings. He picks up.

BUCK

Yeah?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Guess what I just saw on TV?

BUCK
What? Who the hell...?

Buck checks the caller ID, sees the name.

BUCK (CONT'D)
Oh shit, Charlie! How the hell have
you been, man?

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

INT. CHARLIE'S NEW APARTMENT - DAY

Charlie lies on his bed with Pudge resting on his lap, his bad leg propped up on a mountain of pillows. He's eating a burger and drinking a beer.

CHARLIE
Fat and happy, brother. How close
are you to North Fargo Street?

BUCK
What? Where the hell is that?

CHARLIE
Portland, ya dumb jock!

BUCK
Wait. You're in Portland?

CHARLIE
Yup. I'm an Angler, my friend. And
so are you, according to the good
people at Sportscenter. Text me
your address, I'll come pick you
up.

BUCK
(laughing)
Alright man. See you.

CHARLIE
Cool. See you soon.

Charlie hangs up. He takes a big bite of his burger.

INT. BUCK'S APARTMENT - LATER

DING DONG. Buck walks to his door and opens it. He's immediately swallowed in a hug by Charlie.

CHARLIE

Buck Foreman. Teammates again, my friend!

Buck stands back, nods.

BUCK

Teammates again, Charlie. First time since, when? '08?

CHARLIE

Something like that. You remember my son, Pudge.

Pudge looks up at Buck and barks. Buck stoops to pet the dog.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Let's explore.

Buck grins.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eddy sits alone in a recliner that looks even older than he is. He flicks through the channels until he finds an old baseball game from the 70's.

A lean, muscular black pitcher stands on the mound. He throws a few practice pitches, his delivery so fluid that it's art. This is YOUNG EDDY LARKMAN (20's).

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)

(through TV)

Cool Eddy's already struck out seven through three. First pitch is in there for strike one.

Young Eddy looks calm. He shakes off a sign, then nods and readies up.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(through TV)

Another strike, and Larkman's ahead in the count, oh-and-two.

Larkman watches himself in the recliner, a slight grin playing across his face.

ON SCREEN:

Young Eddy readies up, then hurls strike three, blowing the batter away.

ANNOUNCER #1 (CONT'D)
And that's strikeout number eight
for Cool Eddy today. My gosh, he
might have twenty before the day's
done.

Eddy watches his young self prowl around the mound, cool as
you like. He smiles to himself.

Eddy's phone rings. He picks it up.

EDDY
Hello?

MUMBER (O.S.)
Eddy? It's Steven Mumber.

EDDY
Mumber? Get outta here!

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Mumber sits behind his desk and a sizable stack of papers.

MUMBER
How've you been?

EDDY
Oh, you know...

Eddy looks at his TV, his old trophies, his empty living
room.

EDDY (CONT'D)
...keeping busy.

MUMBER
I hope not too busy. I might have a
job for you.

Eddy sits up suddenly, shuts off his TV.

EDDY
A job?

MUMBER
Manager.

EDDY
Did you say manager?

MUMBER

I did.

Eddy is speechless. He opens his mouth, but nothing comes out.

MUMBER (CONT'D)

Eddy? Are you still there?

Eddy looks at a picture on the wall, of himself and Derek. He thinks. He makes a decision.

EDDY

I'll take it.

Mumber grins.

EXT. PORTLAND STREETS - DAY

Buck and Charlie wander the streets. Charlie studies each building. Buck barely looks at any.

CHARLIE

What do you think of this place?

Buck just shrugs.

BUCK

It's alright. It's--not home, though.

CHARLIE

Who needs a home? You stick with anyplace for too long, it gets boring.

They pass a few stores. Charlie sees a pastry shop called "THE ICING ON THE CAKE."

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

We're getting a donut.

BUCK

Come on, man. Fat, sugar, calories--

CHARLIE

We're getting. A donut.

Charlie marches inside. Buck reluctantly follows.

INT. PASTRY SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Charlie marches right up to the counter. Buck looks at the pastries on the shelves, his back to the counter. A WOMAN emerges from the back and greets Charlie.

WOMAN

Hi, welcome to The Icing on the
Cake.

Buck hears her voice and turns around. Same moment, Charlie does a double take. They both stare at the Woman.

BUCK

Lucy?

CHARLIE

Lucy?

The Woman--LUCY TEAL (30's), Buck's ex-wife--stares back at them.

LUCY

Charlie...Buck. What are you doing
here?

CHARLIE

Just wanted a donut, and look who
we run into. Small world, isn't it?

Lucy isn't talking to Charlie though. She looks right at Buck.

BUCK

I didn't know you were here. I
mean, I knew you were here, I just
didn't know you had a shop--

LUCY

Buck, I'm seeing someone now. I
told you that.

BUCK

I remember.

An awkward beat.

CHARLIE

Maybe we should go. Nice seeing you
Lucy!

Charlie drags Buck out of the shop. Lucy looks after them, not sure what to think.

EXT. PORTLAND STREETS - DAY

Charlie and Buck emerge from the store.

CHARLIE
So the truth comes out.

BUCK
I didn't know she had a shop here.

CHARLIE
But you knew she was in Portland,
right?

Buck sighs.

BUCK
...I miss her Charlie. I miss her
so much.

Charlie puts a hand on Buck's shoulder.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Eddy and Derek sit on benches, while Mona playfully chases
Riley and Ellie around the playground.

DEREK
Ellie asked me what "fuck" is the
other day.

Eddy laughs.

EDDY
What'd you tell her?

DEREK
Same thing mom always told me. "You
get a boot to the butt if you say
it again."

Eddy laughs again.

EDDY
Good answer.

They watch the kids for a moment. Then...

EDDY (CONT'D)
I got a job, Derek.

DEREK
You did? Where?

EDDY

Right here in Portland.

(beat)

Manager of a baseball team.

Derek shakes his head slowly.

EDDY (CONT'D)

I can't just sit around by myself
all day, son. I need to feel like I
mean something.

DEREK

By watching grown men hit a ball
with a stick?

EDDY

It's a livelihood.

DEREK

No, dad. Not for you. It's an
obsession.

They look away from each other.

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Steven Mumber shuffles through papers on his desk. He picks
up a scouting report, scans it thoroughly. He picks up the
phone and dials.

MUMBER

(into phone)

Scott Boras, please.

A beat. Mumber reads through the papers, then...

MUMBER (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hi, Scott? It's Steven Mumber from
the Portland Anglers. I'm calling
about a client of yours. Travis
Hammett.

Sheila pokes her head into the office. She mouths: "Who's
that?" Steven mouths: "Scott Boras." Sheila, her interest
immediately piqued, steps into the office and sits down.

MUMBER (CONT'D)

(into phone)

We like Travis. Especially his bat.
What kind of money is he looking
for?

Sheila grabs the sheet Mumber was looking at. She reads it over, then vehemently shakes her head "no."

MUMBER (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Scott, could you hold on for a moment?

Mumber covers the receiver.

MUMBER (CONT'D)
We need a power hitter.

SHEILA
But not that one.

Sheila's face is stone. Mumber stares at her for a moment longer, then moves the phone back to his mouth.

MUMBER
(into)
Scott? I'll call you back.

He hangs up.

MUMBER (CONT'D)
(to Sheila)
Hammett's the best hitter on the market.

Sheila nods patiently. She then takes out her phone, presses the screen a few times. After another beat, she hands the phone to Steven. A news article is on the screen. The headline reads: "MLB PLAYER HAMMETT PLEADS GUILTY TO DWI."

SHEILA
This is from yesterday. It's not the first incident. It won't be the last.

MUMBER
All due respect, Sheila, I'm not at all concerned about what our players do off the field, so long as they show up and play.

Sheila sits back, takes a deep breath.

SHEILA
Mr. Mumber, I come from a world of advertising. I know how to make people want things. All you have to do is make your product look nice.
(MORE)

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Now, I don't know much about
baseball, but I know that having a
raging alcoholic on our team...

(beat)

...it just wouldn't look nice.

Mumber takes a moment to mull this over.

MUMBER

I can't say I've ever worked for an
owner who took such an...active
role in management.

SHEILA

Do you have a problem with that?

Sheila's look could freeze a fire.

MUMBER

None.

She smiles, then rises.

SHEILA

Keep up the good work, Mr. Mumber.
And smile! Spring training is right
around the corner.

Sheila exits. Mumber exhales. He does not smile.

EXT. SPRING TRAINING FACILITY - FIELD - DAY

The Anglers jog out onto the field. The sun is warm and
inviting, the grass green as an emerald. The wind is soft and
perfect. Buck grins from ear to ear.

Charlie jogs out gingerly. He and Buck pick a spot on the
field and throw around.

Eddy Larkman emerges from the dugout, shakes hands with a few
of the PLAYERS. He sees Charlie and walks straight to him.
Charlie grins.

CHARLIE

Cool Eddy! How the hell are ya,
skip?

They hug.

EDDY

It's good to be back. Feels like
2000 all over again, doesn't it?

CHARLIE

We're all just a little older.

Eddy notices Buck. He extends a hand.

EDDY

And you must be Buck Foreman.

Buck takes Eddy's hand.

EDDY (CONT'D)

Eddy Larkman. A pleasure.

BUCK

Likewise. I gotta say, I was a big fan of yours when I was a kid.

EDDY

Thanks, Buck. How's the arm these days?

BUCK

Good as it gets.

EDDY

Hope so. We'll need you.

Eddy moves on to other players. Buck and Charlie continue to throw.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - SCENES OF SPRING TRAINING

--Buck throws his not-so-fast fastball. CRACK! He watches it sail into the bleachers.

--Charlie's at the plate. He looks good when he swings, hitting a ball to short. But he can barely run, and he's easily thrown out at first.

--A young, handsome hitter named ANDY YOUNG (30's) stands at bat, swatting home run after home run.

--The third baseman, TY WATKINS, fields a ball cleanly at third, but airmails the throw into the stands. He curses.

--Young, Puerto Rican speedster FELIX IGLESIAS (20's) stands on first. He takes off for second and steals it with ease. He stands at second for a beat. On the next pitch, he takes off for third. This time he's thrown out by a mile.

--Eddy watches all this from the sidelines. He does not look happy.

--We see flashes of final scores: "ANGLERS 1, ASTROS 6."
"ANGLERS 0, ATHLETICS 8." "GIANTS 7, ANGLERS 0."

--We see one final shot of Eddy shaking his head on the bench
before we...

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Buck throws off the mound to a BATTER. The batter pounds the
pitch over the wall in center field.

BATTER #2 comes up and does the same. Buck curses. Eddy jogs
up to him.

EDDY

They clocked you at 90 on that last
one.

BUCK

That's my fucking fastball now.

Buck spits.

EDDY

That's not your out pitch anymore.
You've got the slider still, and
the curve. Use them.

BUCK

I'll give it a shot, skip.

Eddy jogs off. Buck tries the slider against BATTER #3. This
time the ball is slower, but curves down and away from the
hitter. Batter #3 strikes out on three pitches.

Eddy nods.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The Anglers pile into the room. They all look miserable.
Everyone falls silent to listen to Eddy.

EDDY

I don't know what to say, fellas.
You're going through the motions,
but you're not there, not really. I
know it's Spring Training, I know
you're enjoying the weather--
doesn't matter.

(MORE)

EDDY (CONT'D)

A five win Spring Training does not
bode well for our season.

A beat of pindrop silence.

EDDY (CONT'D)

Right now, I see 40 baseball
players. But I don't see a team.
(another beat)
Final 25-man rosters will be
announced tomorrow. Good night,
gentleman.

Eddy leaves. The players start to dress, and a dull murmur
begins.

BUCK

He's right.

CHARLIE

He's usually is.

Andy's locker is next to Buck's. He overhears their
conversation and turns.

ANDY

I'm not worried.

Buck and Charlie turn to him.

CHARLIE

No?

ANDY

It's only Spring Training. We'll
pull it together when the games
actually mean something.

BUCK

We can hope. The way you're
swinging, we might get 50 homers
out of you.

ANDY

(smiling)
60. At least.

Buck grins.

BUCK

I'd like to see that.

Andy puts out a hand.

ANDY

Andy Young.

Buck takes his hand.

BUCK

Buck Foreman.

ANDY

Hey man, we should--

Before he can finish, REPORTERS appear.

REPORTER

Buck! Buck!

Buck gathers his things.

BUCK

See you tomorrow, fellas.

Buck dashes away from the reporters.

CHARLIE

(laughing)

Sixteen years in the league, and
he's still afraid of an interview.

Charlie packs up his things. The sticky note with Doug
Spelling's name on it falls onto the bench. Andy notices it.

ANDY

You know Doug?

Charlie hesitates, peers at Andy.

CHARLIE

Not really.

ANDY

He's a good guy.

(beat)

You should give him a call
sometime. Might be able to help
your knee.

Charlie stares back at Andy.

CHARLIE

See you.

He gets his things together and leaves.

INT. SPRING TRAINING FACILITY - NIGHT

Buck stretches out his arms. A bag of balls sits next to an artificial mound. He takes the mound, takes a ball from the bag, and hurls it at the target. A radar gun on the wall reads 90. Buck steps off the mound and shuts the display off. Then he returns and throws another pitch.

EDDY (O.S.)
You do anything else besides play
baseball?

Buck turns and sees Eddy, goes back to his workout.

BUCK
Yeah. Sometimes I watch it on TV.

Eddy laughs a little.

EDDY
What are you gonna do with yourself
when you retire?

Buck says nothing.

EDDY (CONT'D)
I used to be like that too. Heck,
maybe I still am. 66 ain't exactly
a spring chicken, 'specially not in
sports.

BUCK
I'll play baseball 'til the day I
die.

EDDY
And you'll be a poorer man for it.

Buck stops throwing and looks at Eddy.

EDDY (CONT'D)
Take it from a man who knows. It's
just a game, Buck. It's a damn good
one, but don't mistake it for
anything more than that. There are
bigger things in life.

Eddy starts to walk away. Buck reaches for another ball.

EDDY (CONT'D)
You'd better rest your arm, son.

Buck hesitates.

BUCK
Why's that?

EDDY
You're my Opening Day starter.

Eddy walks away. Buck can't stop a little smile from spreading across his face.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III

OVER BLACK:

The roar of the crowd. Excited, energetic, hungry.

FADE IN:

INT. PORTLAND - ANGLER STADIUM - DAY

The seats aren't quite as full as one might hope, but there are still a good 30,000 fans in attendance. A TEENAGE GIRL sings a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem.

The Anglers stand on the field, each player with a hat to his chest. Charlie, Buck, and Eddy stand in a line. The visiting SEATTLE MARINERS stand on the other side of the field.

The Teenage Girl finishes the song, and the crowd erupts in appreciation.

The UMPIRE utters the famous lines:

UMPIRE
Play ball!

Eddy leans over to Buck.

EDDY
Use the slider, use the curve. I
wanna see offspeed stuff out there,
Foreman. You got this.

Buck nods. Eddy slaps him on the rear, and the Anglers jog out onto the field. Buck takes the mound and gazes in wonder at the crowd, just taking it all in.

It may not be New York, but it's baseball.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
Hello and welcome to history folks.
My name is Creed Schilling, and if
you're tuned in right now, then you
already know why we're here. It's
Portland Anglers baseball.

Buck fires a warm up pitch to Charlie, who crouches behind
the plate.

CUT TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH - SAME TIME

CREED SCHILLING (50's, fat) grins, sitting beside AL GARBLING
(also 50's, a little less fat). Both of them look simply
ecstatic.

CREED SCHILLING
I'm joined by my good friend and
partner Al Garbling. How are ya,
Al?

AL GARBLING
I tell you one thing, Creed, I am
ready for baseball. People say
Portland isn't a sports town, but
after they get a taste, they very
well might become one.

CREED SCHILLING
It all starts today, and with the
man on the mound.

BACK TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

ANGLE ON:

BUCK, throwing another warm-up pitch.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
If you don't know who this guy is,
then you don't know baseball.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
Only question is, does Big Buck
still have it in him?

ANGLE ON:

CHARLIE, who throws the ball back to Buck.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
Journeyman Charlie Combs will be
behind the plate this afternoon.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
Kudos to that man's trainer, Creed.
He's struggled with injuries all
off-season, but he's looking good
now.

Buck nods, ready for the last warm-up. He throws it in, and
Charlie throws to the SECOND BASEMAN. The Anglers toss it
around the horn, and the game is under way.

The FIRST BATTER steps in. Buck fires the first pitch.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
First pitch in Anglers history is a
fastball, in there for strike one.

CUT TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - SUITE - DAY

Sheila and Mumber watch the game from a suite, along with
other TEAM EXECUTIVES. Sheila holds up a glass of champagne,
clinks it with Mumber's.

SHEILA
Here's to the Anglers.

MUMBER
Long may we reign.

They sip their glasses. Sheila looks around the stands.

SHEILA
Not as many fans as I had hoped.

MUMBER
About 31,000.

SHEILA
Winning should change that.

But Mumber looks doubtful.

ANGLE ON:

The field, where Buck throws strike two.

BACK TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

Buck peers in at Charlie for the sign.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
If I'm Eddy Larkman I'm gonna be
watching the radar gun today.
Foreman has notoriously struggled
with velocity throughout Spring
Training.

Charlie holds down three fingers--Buck shakes it off. Charlie
tries two fingers pointing away--again, Buck says no.
Finally, Charlie calls time.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
Well it seems we have a little
miscommunication already for the
good guys.

Charlie jogs up to the mound.

CHARLIE
I'm not throwing the fastball
again.

BUCK
No, you aren't throwing it. I'm
throwing it. Fastball down and in.

CHARLIE
We're gonna get fuckin' shelled.

BUCK
If I get shelled, it's on me, not
you. Come on, Charlie. Play ball.

Charlie shakes his head and jogs back to the batter's box.
First Batter readies up. Buck throws, and--

UMPIRE
Strike three!

The crowd roars as First Batter walks back to the visiting
dugout. Buck glances to the home dugout and locks eyes with
Eddy. Buck shrugs a little as if to say, "I told you so."
Eddy spits a stream of tobacco.

CUT TO:

INT. PASTRY SHOP - DAY

Lucy puts the finishing touches on a cake. She checks the time, then turns on the TV and finds the Anglers game. A CUSTOMER enters.

LUCY

Hi, welcome to The Icing on the Cake!

CUSTOMER

Hi there.

(re:TV)

Oh, is that the Anglers game?

LUCY

Yup! You a fan?

CUSTOMER

Sorta. I just wanna see Buck Foreman get destroyed. Guy can't throw anything faster than 90 anymore, am I right?

The Customer laughs. Lucy says nothing.

BACK TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - TOP OF THE 2ND INNING - DAY

Buck throws another fastball--and gets another strikeout. He pumps his fist and walks back to the dugout.

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Eddy meets Buck at the stairs.

BUCK

Fastball's working.

EDDY

The fastball's not fast enough.

BUCK

What's the score, skip?

EDDY

It ain't gonna stay that way much longer. You're just getting lucky right now. They've got Opening Day jitters.

BUCK
(shrugging)
As long as the fastball's working,
I'm gonna keep throwing it.

Buck sits down and puts ice on his shoulder.

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Charlie takes practice cuts in the on-deck circle. The inning begins, and he approaches the batter's box. He winks at a PRETTY WOMAN in the front row. She waves back playfully.

CHARLIE
(singing quietly to
himself)
Billie Jean is not my lover, she
just a girl who claims that I am
the one...

Charlie steps into the box. The Mariners' PITCHER hurls a fastball in for strike one. Charlie barely seems to notice. Instead, he steps out.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
How's the wife, Gary?

Gary, the Umpire, doesn't seem amused.

UMPIRE
I'm calling a game, Charlie.

Charlie shrugs, moves on to the catcher.

CHARLIE
What about you, Jorge? You married
yet?

JORGE
Have been for six months.

CHARLIE
Well, that's a shame, isn't it?

Charlie takes strike two.

JORGE
You gonna swing anytime soon?

CHARLIE
Patience, my good man. Patience.

The Pitcher readies up. He throws a third pitch, and this time Charlie's ready. His hands move like lightning, and he swats a neat liner into center.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
That's down for a base hit. One on,
one out, and here comes the right
fielder, Andy Young.

Young steps in. He takes strike one.

JORGE
You better not talk as much as
Combs.

ANDY
(grinning)
Nobody does.

The next pitch comes inside, and Andy turns on it. There is a pleasant CRACK.

CUT TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - SUITE - SAME TIME

Sheila and Steven watch as the ball sails into the stands. Sheila claps vigorously.

SHEILA
They're making it look easy!

Mumber's face remains emotionless. His phone buzzes, and he reads a text.

CUT TO:

INT. PASTRY SHOP

Lucy pumps her fist behind the counter.

LUCY
Let's go Anglers!

BACK TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - TOP 3RD

Buck stands on the mound. The first hitter of the inning--
BATTER #2--steps in.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
Buck's looked pretty good so far.
But that diminished velocity is
still a concern.

Buck hurls the first pitch of the inning. Batter #2 sees it
and jumps on it.

CRACK.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
That one has a chance. Deep right
field, to the track, to the wall,
and...

The ball just makes it over the short porch in right field.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
...sayonara! That one got out of
here in a hurry off the bat of
Jesus Ojeda, and it's tied two to
two. I think you jinxed him, Al.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
Are you kidding me? My granny
could've hit that! You leave a ball
nice and slow over the plate like
that, and bad things are gonna
happen.

Batter #2 jogs around the bases. Buck spits angrily. Charlie
jogs out to the mound.

CHARLIE
Hey man, Eddy said it himself. The
fastball's not your out pitch
anymore.

BUCK
Fine. Let's just go.

Charlie jogs back. BATTER #3 steps in. Buck readies up,
pitches, and...

CRACK.

A groan ripples through the crowd.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
And sayonara! That's two home runs
on two consecutive pitches, and the
Anglers have surrendered the lead.

Buck stands with his hands on his hips, staring at the spot where the ball went out. He glances at Charlie, who motions with his hands: "calm down."

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - BOTTOM 5TH

Andy stands in the batter's box. The pitch comes inside, and Andy turns on it. The ball flies deep to right field--very deep, all the way into the upper deck.

The scoreboard flashes: VISITORS 2, ANGLERS 4.

Andy rounds the bases, this time given an even louder ovation by the fans.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Derek, Mona, Ellie and Riley sit in their living room quietly. Derek, Mona, and Ellie read books, but Riley's book lies next to him, closed. Instead of reading, he flips through channels on the TV. He stops at the Anglers game.

RILEY
Mommy, daddy! It's grampa!

Derek looks up and scowls.

DEREK
Why don't you read your book,
Riley?

RILEY
I want to watch grampa's game.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
(through TV)
3-2 count, bases loaded. Expect a
fastball or a curve on the way.

Riley stares at the TV. Derek tries to go back to his book for a beat, then stands and leaves in frustration.

MONA
Derek.

But he's already left.

BACK TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - TOP 6TH

Buck breathes deeply, about to throw.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
One swing of the bat could blow
this game wide open.

Buck throws. It's hit, flies into center, past a diving Felix
Iglesias and rolls to the wall.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
Young is on his horse after that
ball. Marshall will score, Jackson
will score, Izaka rounds third.
Here's the throw by Young!

Andy fires home, it's close but--

UMPIRE
SAFE!

Buck takes a walk around the mound, his jaw flexing and
unflexing.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
A three-run triple by Albert
Phillips, and the Mariners retake
the lead, 5-4.

CUT TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - DUGOUT - SAME TIME

Eddy spits a stream of tobacco. He thinks, then steps out
onto the field.

BACK TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Eddy starts his gradual walk out to the mound. Charlie jogs
out to meet there, along with the rest of the INFIELERS.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
And it looks like that's gonna be
all for Buck Foreman.

Eddy arrives on the mound.

EDDY
Alright, Buck.

BUCK
I'm staying in, skip.

EDDY
Don't do this to me right now.

BUCK
I'm feeling good. I can stay in.

EDDY
You're not even trying to mix your speeds.

BUCK
Fine. I will. I'm finishing this game.

Eddy gives him a long look.

EDDY
Don't make me look bad.

A beat.

BUCK
(genuinely)
Thank you, Eddy.

Eddy walks back to the dugout.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
You don't see that everyday.
Correct me if I'm wrong, Al, but it looks like Foreman just convinced his manager not to take him out of the game.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
Looks that way to me.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
With two outs, we'll see if he can finish the inning.

Buck readies up. He throws three straight pitches, each a drastically different speed, each with unpredictable movement. BATTER #4 strikes out.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
Wow, and after surrendering the triple, Buck makes the Mariners best hitter just look silly.

Buck jogs back to the dugout. Eddy is waiting on the steps, wearing an "I told you so" sort of look.

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - BOTTOM 8TH

Charlie steps in for the third time. He takes a strike, glances back at Jorge, but decides not to say anything this time. He swings at the next pitch, and it rolls to the gap in right center. Charlie chugs around first.

He winces, then comes up lame. He limps into second, where he's easily thrown out by the RIGHT FIELDER.

Charlie hops back to the dugout, not even able to put weight on his leg.

CHARLIE
God damn it...

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Buck stands at the top of the steps.

BUCK
Charlie, you good man?

CHARLIE
It's my fucking leg again...

Charlie tries to walk it off, but he's in obvious and severe pain.

BUCK
We need a trainer over here!

CHARLIE
I'm fine.

The HEAD TRAINER jogs over. He takes a look at the knee.

HEAD TRAINER
Damn, Charlie. We gotta get some ice on that.

Charlie throws an arm around Head Trainer, and together they head for the locker room.

CHARLIE
How bad does it look?

The Head Trainer says nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - SUITE - BOTTOM 8TH - DAY

Mumber reads another message on his phone, then pockets it. He approaches Sheila, who holds a fresh glass of champagne.

MUMBER

Just got a text from Boras. Hammett will take five years at 70 million, as long as we can guarantee him a starting job.

SHEILA

You never stop working, do you?

MUMBER

We need a hitter.

No sooner has he said the words than the crowd stands. Creed Schilling's voice buzzes over the radio.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)

That ball is high, it's got distance. I don't believe it, this might be...

From the suite, we see the ball make it over the center field wall, just over the outstretched glove of the CENTER FIELDER.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)

...GONE! A two-run home run off the bat of Andy Young! Three homers on the day, folks. You will see that man on Sportscenter tomorrow.

Sheila turns back to Mumber.

SHEILA

I think we have our hitter.

BACK TO:

EXT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

Andy practically walks around the bases, basking in the raucous applause. He touches home plate, then points up to the sky.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - TOP 9TH

Buck jogs out onto the mound for the last inning.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
I don't believe this, Al. Foreman's
coming back out for the complete
game.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
Yeah, I'm not too sure about this
move by Cool Eddy here. This guy's
38 years old, already thrown 109
pitches on the day. The Anglers are
playing with fire right now.

BATTER #5 steps in. He hits the first pitch into the gap,
slides in at second with a double.

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
Definitely not a good way to start
the inning.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
Vernon Willis will step in now with
a chance to put Seattle ahead.

BATTER #6 steps in. He takes the first pitch for strike one.

Buck gets ready, throws a second pitch. Another strike.

Buck throws a nasty curve for strike three. The crowd roars.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
Two outs from victory.

BATTER #7 steps in. He swings at the first pitch, grounds it
to Watkins at third. This guy is fast, booking down the line.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
It'll be a close play at first, but
he is...

The throw reaches the FIRST BASEMAN, and Batter #7 touches
the base. It's hard to tell which happens first, but the
FIRST BASE UMP signals...

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
OUT at first! Just barely got him,
and it'll all come down to this.

BATTER #8 looks poised, perfectly concentrated. The crowd
holds its collective breath.

Buck's first pitch is a...strike! They cheer.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Riley, Ellie, and Mona stare at the TV screen.

CUT TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - SUITE - SAME TIME

Mumber and Sheila hold their breath, waiting for the pitch.

CUT TO:

INT. PASTRY SHOP - SAME TIME

Lucy stands behind the counter, watching the game intently.

BACK TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - SAME TIME

Buck readies up. The new CATCHER calls for the curve, and Buck nods. He throws, and the ball is launched.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
That could be trouble!

The ball sails toward the left field pole. It has the distance, but will it stay fair?

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
Back, back, back...

Buck can barely watch.

The ball soars, then lands in the stands--

UMPIRE
Foul! Foul ball!

AL GARBLING (V.O.)
I hope there's an EMT in the stands, Creed, because Foreman almost had a heart attack there.

Creed chuckles good-naturedly.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
And we'll have one pitch to decide
it.

The crowd rises to its feet. They're screaming, roaring,
begging Buck for a strikeout. He looks in at Catcher. Catcher
holds down one finger--the fastball. Buck looks at it and
thinks about it, really thinks.

Catcher flashes fastball again. Finally, Buck shakes it off.
They pick a new pitch, and Buck straightens up.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
And the pitch...

Buck winds up, throws...

BATTER #8 swings through it, a curveball down and away.

CREED SCHILLING (V.O.)
Strike three! The Anglers win! The
Anglers win!

The crowd goes wild.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Mona and the kids roar with delight. Derek is nowhere to be
found.

CUT TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - SUITE - SAME TIME

Sheila claps and shakes hands with a few of the Executives.
Mumber looks on, and even he can't suppress a slight smile.

CUT TO:

INT. PASTRY SHOP - SAME TIME

Lucy whoops. CUSTOMER #3 gives her a look, and she grins
sheepishly.

LUCY
Sorry. Anglers game.

CUSTOMER #3

Who?

BACK TO:

INT. ANGLER STADIUM - FIELD - SAME TIME

Buck joins his teammates. They exchange high-fives, grins, and slaps. In the chaos, Buck finds Eddy.

EDDY

Nice curveball.

Buck grins.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The Anglers celebrate, and celebrate loudly. Lots of shouting, laughing, singing. Everybody's drunk...

...except for Buck. He's still having a good time, though, in the middle of the throng with Charlie.

BUCK

Gotta love baseball, my friend.

CHARLIE

Only when we win. TO WINNING!

The rest of the Anglers hear this.

ANGLERS

TO WINNING!

They all drink. Buck and Charlie settle back into their seats.

BUCK

How's the leg?

CHARLIE

Not much better.

BUCK

Good enough for Saturday?

Charlie just shrugs doubtfully.

CHARLIE

God damn thing's been giving me
hell for five years. Every time I
think I've got it beat, there's
something else wrong with it.

BUCK

Welcome to your thirties.

Charlie laughs bitterly.

CHARLIE

I need to get back on the field,
Buck. I'm not riding the bench for
another season.

Andy stumbles up to them. His eyes are red and unfocused.

ANDY

Foreman! Combs!

BUCK

How you doing, Andy?

Andy falls into Buck, enveloping him in a drunken hug.

CHARLIE

I think he's doing pretty well.

Andy stands back up.

ANDY

You looked good out there, you know
that? That curve was freezing
everybody.

BUCK

I just held it at the end. You put
us ahead.

Andy drains the rest of his drink.

ANDY

The baseball gods...
(he belches)
...have smiled upon me.

Andy turns to Charlie.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Hey, Combs. That's tough about the
knee and all.

CHARLIE

It's fine, it's cool. It's part of the game.

ANDY

Get better soon, man. We need you.

CHARLIE

Doing my best.

Andy squints at the clock on the wall.

ANDY

What time does that say?

BUCK

10:20.

ANDY

Shit. Gotta meet with my girl in five. See ya, boys!

Without waiting for a response, Andy dashes away. Buck finishes the rest of his water.

BUCK

Ready to head out?

Buck glances over to see Charlie passed out on the bar.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Buck drives the car. Charlie snores violently in the passenger seat. Buck nudges him.

BUCK

Yo. Charlie.

More snores.

EXT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charlie's car pulls up front of the apartment.

INT./EXT. CHARLIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Buck nudges Charlie again.

BUCK

Come on, big boy. Wake up.

Charlie stirs, sits up, and rubs his eyes.

CHARLIE

Is it time for school, mommy?

Buck chuckles. He pats the dashboard.

BUCK

Can I bring her back tomorrow?

Charlie stumbles out of the car, slams the door shut, and sticks his head through the open window.

CHARLIE

If you hurt her, Buck Foreman, I
will feed you to my dog.

(beat)

Happy New Year.

With that, he drunkenly stumbles to his front door.

BUCK

Need a hand?

Charlie waves his hands around.

CHARLIE

I got two, thanks.

Charlie opens the front door and teeters through. Buck shakes his head, laughs, and drives away.

INT. BUCK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Buck steps into his apartment. He throws his keys down. He takes a deep breath and takes out his phone. He looks at it for a second, thinking. Then he dials. It rings a few times, then goes to voice mail.

BUCK

Hey Lucy. It's Buck.

CUT TO:

INT. LUCY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Lucy stands by her message machine. She listens to Buck's voice with her arms crossed. From the other room, we hear the drone of a TV.

BUCK (V.O.)
Listen. I uh, I know it's been
awhile. I know things are a little
awkward, I know it's late, I know
we haven't had a real conversation
in months.

A beat. Lucy reaches for the phone, then hesitates.

BACK TO:

INT. BUCK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Buck continues to stand and talk.

BUCK
Can I meet you for coffee or
something? Just a quick bite, if
you're still up. Or tomorrow, if
that's better.

CUT TO:

INT. LUCY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucy stands by the phone. A MAN'S VOICE calls from the other
room...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Babe! You're missing the chase
scene!

BUCK (V.O.)
Alright. Call me back. Please. If
you want to. Bye.

CLICK. Lucy releases a long breath, then goes back into the
other room.

INT. BUCK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Buck angrily hangs up and shakes his head.

INT. SHEILA'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheila Ann Jones types away at her computer. She pulls out
her phone, reads, sends a text. She goes back to her
computer, and her desk phone rings. Without taking her eyes
from the screen, she reaches to the desk phone and clicks a
button.

SHEILA

Talk.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

(through intercom)

Mr. Mumber here to see you.

SHEILA

Send him.

Again without looking, she clicks the button to end the conversation. A beat, and then Mumber enters. Sheila glances at the clock, then goes back to typing.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

You're early.

MUMBER

Old habit of mine.

This gets a grin out of Sheila.

MUMBER (CONT'D)

Congratulations on your first win.

Sheila bangs "enter," then finally stops typing.

SHEILA

Same to you. Everyone loves an underdog, don't they?

MUMBER

Sure. But nobody likes a loser. That win is going to be one of very few.

SHEILA

And you have a five year, 70 million dollar solution.

Mumber nods.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

How many times do I have to say no?

MUMBER

Equality in baseball is an anachronism. Hammett still hasn't signed yet. Just got word that negotiations with Texas fell through.

Sheila just shakes her head.

SHEILA

Travis Hammett is never going to be
an Angler.

Mumber takes a breath.

MUMBER

This is not advertising. This is
baseball. The guy could be bad for
PR, yes. He could get a few nasty
headlines, make the occasional
parent think twice about buying a
Hammett jersey for his kid. But he
can hit. And that's what we need
right now.

Sheila stares across the desk at Mumber, studying him.

SHEILA

How did you do it in 2008? You went
from worst in the league to third
best. How?

MUMBER

You want the truth, Miss Jones?

SHEILA

Nothing but.

Mumber can't help but smile a bit to himself.

MUMBER

Nobody ever said "no" to me.

Sheila thinks about this for a moment. Really thinks.
Finally, she picks up the phone and holds it out to Steven.

SHEILA

Make the call, then.

Mumber smiles.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie awakens to Pudge licking him on the face. He pushes
the dog away gently, then sits up and rubs at his forehead.
He glances at the bedside clock, which reads 12:31 p.m. He
sweeps the sheets aside, then stands.

As soon as Charlie puts weight on his leg, he goes down. He
catches himself on the side of the bed, but just barely.
Winching, he stands again and hops across the room.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie makes his slow way to the island. He leans against it, panting. Gingerly, he pulls up the leg of his pants, revealing inflammation and swelling on his knee.

CHARLIE
Son of a bitch.

He lets go of the pant leg and slams the counter angrily. He notices a sticky note on the counter, one he put there before but forgot about. It has a single name on it: DOUG SPELLING.

INT. EDDY'S HOUSE - DAY

Eddy sits in his old recliner with a stack of scouting reports in his hands. He flips through them with his right hand, takes notes with his left. Every once in a while, he looks up at a baseball game on his TV.

KNOCK KNOCK.

EDDY
It's open!

The door swings open, revealing Eddy's son Derek. Eddy sees him and jumps to his feet, spilling papers everywhere.

EDDY (CONT'D)
Derek.

DEREK
Hi dad.

EDDY
Come in, come in.

Derek steps inside. Eddy goes to hug him, but Derek evades and just shakes his hand.

EDDY (CONT'D)
Did you get my calls?

DEREK
Yeah, sorry. I've just been busy. I have to run actually, but I just wanted to stop by once more before we leave.

EDDY
Leave? Leave where?

DEREK
New York. I'm officially an adjunct
lecturer at NYU.

Eddy smiles weakly. He pats Derek on the shoulder.

EDDY
That's great, son. I'm so proud.
(beat)
But I thought you were staying.
What happened to getting back lost
time?

Derek takes a deep breath.

DEREK
Do you remember where you were on
May 18th, 1994?

Eddy smiles.

EDDY
Sure I do. On the mound against the
Tigers. I threw my first no-hitter
that day.

DEREK
And do you remember where I was?

Eddy is taken aback by this. He doesn't know.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Graduating from Northwestern. Mom
took the whole weekend off. Uncle
Tim flew in from L.A. Grandma got
out of bed just to see me graduate.

Beat.

DEREK (CONT'D)
I don't know what you want me to
say, dad. That time was lost
because you were too busy playing a
game.

EDDY
Derek--

DEREK
And now you're going back to it.
You'll be on the road more than
you'll be here.

EDDY

I'll have time this time. I'll make it.

Derek just shakes his head.

DEREK

I've been waiting for you to have time for my whole life.

Derek turns and steps through the door, back out into the rain.

DEREK (CONT'D)

I'll call you when we get there.

Derek walks away, and out of sight.

EDDY

I love you, son.

But there's no answer. Eddy stands by himself in the kitchen.

EXT. ATHLETIC CLINIC - DAY

Charlie limps through the rain and up to the front door.

INT. ATHLETIC CLINIC - CONTINUOUS

Charlie hobbles up to the counter. A RECEPTIONIST sits at the ready.

RECEPTIONIST

Can I help you?

CHARLIE

Doug Spelling.

INT. ATHLETIC CLINIC - OFFICE - DAY

DOUG SPELLING (50's, friendly-looking) sits at a desk, scribbling out a prescription. The door opens, and Charlie enters.

SPELLING

Can I help you?

CHARLIE

I'm Charlie Combs. I was referred to you by Pete French.

SPELLING

He told me about that. Lemme see
what I can do for you...

CHARLIE

Whatever it is...I'm in.

Spelling nods.

INT. PASTRY SHOP - DAY

Lucy busies herself with a batch of cupcakes. The bell to the
door chimes.

LUCY

Welcome! I'll be with you in just a
moment.

She looks up. Her face falls.

Buck stands at the door.

BUCK

Sorry.

LUCY

Buck. Why are you here?

BUCK

I'm sorry. But I can't just stay
away.

LUCY

Why the hell not? Why can't you
listen to someone else besides
yourself for once?

BUCK

Because I...

They stare at each other.

LUCY

Buck, please. You need to leave. I
don't want you to get hurt.

This takes him off-guard.

BUCK

What?

The door bell chimes. Buck and Lucy turn to the sound.

Andy Young steps through, holding a bouquet of flowers. His magnetic smile melts away when he sees Buck.

ANDY

Buck?

BUCK

Andy?

Buck turns to Lucy. None of them know what to say.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE.