

FOR LOVE OF THE GAME

By Dana Stevens

From the novel by Michael Shaara

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FADE IN

INT. AIRPORT - TWILIGHT

Evening sun pours through floor-to-ceiling windows, where the jets, like giant dinosaurs, taxi and take off and land. Families, boyfriends and girlfriends, flight attendants and pilots and clerks mill about...and then...

Something happens. They begin to turn their heads...everyone, away from the windows, toward the wide linoleum stretch in the center of the concourse, turning to look at...

TWENTY MEN striding down the walkway. Twenty clean, handsome, confident men, muscles straining through their smooth, fresh summer trousers, jackets flapping backward, carry-on bags swinging easily at their sides. They chat and laugh with an easy comradery. And, at the center of their group...

THEIR LEADER. Obviously. He is a little older, and all the more handsome for it. The guys try to hide it, but they vie for his attention and treat him with deference. He offers a nod or a half-smile, but there is something weary...a little melancholy in his intelligent eyes.

From the gate area, A LITTLE BOY breaks away from his father and runs across the carpet, after the men as they pass.

The father follows...

IN ANOTHER HALLWAY

The boy weaves his way through the forest of powerful legs, one thing on his mind...

AT THE GATE

Where the men file past a sign reading "Private Charter," the little boy finally skids to a stop...

HIS P.O.V. That man. Standing off to the side, looking out the window at the airplanes.

The little boy approaches slowly. Stops before the man who seems impossibly tall. Swallows.

LITTLE BOY
Are you Billy Chapel?

The man turns. Lays his blue eyes on the nervous kid.

CHAPEL
I think so.

LITTLE BOY
The pitcher?

CHAPEL
Let me check.

He opens his jacket, looks down at himself, pats his chest...

CHAPEL
Yep, that's me.

The little boy smiles.

THOMAS
My name's Thomas. I want to
play baseball, but my dad won't
let me...

CHAPEL
Why not?

THOMAS
He signed me up for soccer. He
says baseball players don't get
enough radio-vascular.

CHAPEL
Mmmm. But you still want to be
one when you grow up?

THOMAS
When I grow up, I have to get a
job.

CHAPEL
What kinda job?

THOMAS
Fireman. Doctor. Something in
computers.

CHAPEL
I see.

THOMAS
I wanna sign up for Little
League.

CHAPEL
You play what you want to play.
You can tell your dad I said so.

THOMAS
He won't believe me.

Like magic, Chapel produces a brand new white BASEBALL from his pocket. Just as he's signing it, the kid's father appears.

FATHER

Don't ever run away from me like
that...

Chapel stands, hands the father the baseball and walks off.
The man reads it.

FATHER

Tom wants to play baseball.
Best, Billy Chapel.

The father looks off, but sees only Chapel's back as he
disappears down the accordion tunnel.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

The aircraft seems bursting at the seams with these big,
athletic men. CHAPEL reaches up to the overhead to get a book
out of his bag. He WINCES. Then closes the door, ducking his
head to sit.

His best friend, GUS OSINSKI, starting catcher, is already
occupying the window seat. Ten years younger than Chapel,
hearty and muscular, Gus's tree-trunk thighs take up four legs
worth of space.

GUS

I saw that. You winced.

CHAPEL

I didn't wince.

GUS

...you grimaced. Your arm's
hurting. Your arm's hurting, or
you're taking a dump.

Billy ignores him. Turns on his little reading light. Opens
his paperback novel. After a moment:

GUS

Good book?

CHAPEL

(still reading)
My arm doesn't hurt, Gus.

GUS

How long's it been hurting?

Chapel has to admire his tenacity.

CHAPEL

Ten years.

GUS

Why don't you skip it tomorrow?

CHAPEL

No.

GUS

If you're injured...

CHAPEL

It's the end of the season...

GUS

Exactly. Why screw up your arm for next year? Whatever happens now don't make any difference. We're already in last place. Rest, why don't ya?

CHAPEL

Gus. It's the Yankees.

This gets his attention.

GUS

Cocky fuckers. Those assholes already got the champagne on ice.

CHAPEL

All we gotta win is one game. One game outta three and they wind up second. They're selling that Dom half-price to the Brewers.

GUS

Always liked the Brewers.

CHAPEL

Good guys, those Brewers.

GUS

...if I see you wince, even one time...

EXT. TRIBORO BRIDGE - NIGHT

The team bus bullies its way into Manhattan. Chapel looks out the window at the glowing skyline.

EXT. PLAZA HOTEL

The players debark. A hotel representative hands them their ROOM KEYS as they get off the bus. Chapel takes his.

CONCIERGE

Corner suite, sir. And may I say, I hope you win tomorrow. Steinbrenner can take 'em to Mars for all I care.

INT. LOBBY

Chapel walks through, waving at greetings from desk staff and doormen. He reaches the elevator, where a skinny, ancient BELLHOP awaits with his luggage.

ANCIENT BELLHOP

Evening, Mr. Chapel.

CHAPEL

How you doing, Fitch?

FITCH

You ain't gonna beat our boys, are you?

CHAPEL

I'm gonna try.

FITCH

We expecting Ms. Aubrey?

CHAPEL

We are.

Billy grins. Genuine. Warm. A rare, killer smile that reporters and women and little boys with baseballs have chased him across airports and parking lots and continents to see.

CUT TO:

INT. CHAPEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

A candlelit table for two. A single rose in a vase. White wine chilling in a bucket of ice.

The shower is going. Chapel can be heard whistling in the b.g.

INT. CHAPEL'S ROOM - LATER

He paces around. He looks at his watch. Picks the wine out of the bucket, reads the label, puts it back...

DISSOLVE TO:

The ice in the bucket has softened, rounded. Chapel lays on the bed. Flicks the channels on the TV.

DISSOLVE TO:

Chapel on the phone, looking out the window, the cord stretched around a lampshade.

CHAPEL

This is Mr. Chapel, have there been any messages or...? No, thank you.

Chapel presses the button, dials another number...it rings and rings. A machine recorded voice answers:

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hi, it's Jane. Beep.

Beep.

CHAPEL

It's Billy. Again. I'm worried now. Please call.

(he listens)

...are you there?

No one picks up.

DISSOLVE TO:

Chapel has eaten his portion of the food. He stares off. Pours himself another glass of wine, sets the bottle on the table. Slides over the BUCKET of half-melted ICE. Methodically rolls up his sleeve...

AND STICKS HIS ELBOW IN IT.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHAPEL'S ROOM - GRAY MORNING

He is sleeping on top of the bed, fully clothed. THE TELEPHONE sits near him on the mattress.

A LOUD KNOCK awakens him with a start. His hand reflexively grips the phone.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK...He looks at the door, and is OFF THE BED, moving fast toward it, his hand reaching for the knob...

CHAPEL

Jane?

He pulls it open...

IT IS A MAN. A distinguished, older man in youthful chinos and Italian loafers. Manicured hands and a rolex watch. He is D.B. ROSS, a television sportscaster we might recognize...if he was wearing his toupee.

CHAPEL

Jesus. Ross.

ROSS

Hello, Billy. I'm staying in the hotel here and...

CHAPEL

I don't talk to the press before a game.

ROSS

I'm not here as a member of the press. I'm here as a friend.

Chapel rubs his face. Yawns. Squints at him.

CHAPEL

You're bald.

ROSS

Occasionally. Who's Jane?

Chapel sniffs. He's suddenly awake.

CHAPEL

What do you want, Ross?

ROSS

Game of the Week today. We're going on the air with some big news. About you.

CHAPEL

I'm 12 and 10 with a last place team. You got the wrong guy.

ROSS

I'm afraid not.

CHAPEL

I'll see you after the game.

He is about to close the door when...

ROSS

They're gonna trade you, Billy.

Ross has dropped a bomb. It hits Chapel. A cold blossom blooming in his chest. Ross watches the blood drain out of Chapel's face.

ROSS

I thought you should know.

CHAPEL

Who?

ROSS

The Giants.

Chapel clears his throat.

CHAPEL

Come in.

He turns away, leaving the door open for a tentative Ross to walk through.

Chapel gets a glass of water. Ross paces slowly, trying not to look at himself in various mirrors.

ROSS

They wouldn't have told you.
They can't face the big boys.
You would have heard it on the
news, in the sports page.

CHAPEL

On the Game of the Week.

Ross runs a hand over his smooth pate.

ROSS

But I'm telling you first.
That's why I came up here. Out
of respect.

CHAPEL

And friendship.

Ross misses the irony in Billy's voice.

CHAPEL

What'd they get for me?

ROSS
I don't know. Can't get
confirmation from San Francisco,
but the rumor is Matt Williams.

CHAPEL
Jeez...

ROSS
Guess they wanted to get a big
player for you before you...

His voice trails off. Chapel looks up.

CHAPEL
Before I what?

ROSS
Before you lose your stuff.

Silence. He doesn't show it, but this startles Chapel like the
knock at the door.

CHAPEL
They think I'm losing my stuff?

ROSS
You're twelve and ten.

CHAPEL
I'm having a bad year.

ROSS
I know you're not losing it, I
know it, but hey, they're in
last place, they have to do
something. These guys are
suits. They're bankers.

CHAPEL
...I never played for another
team.

ROSS
Why didn't you ever go free
agent? '83, '84, back-to-back
Series, MVP, Cy Young, you could
have asked for the moon.

CHAPEL
What would I do with the moon?

ROSS

You are the Hawks. That team was nothing. You handed them their franchise on a silver platter. And now they're throwing you away.

Chapel leans forward, elbows on his knees. Ross waits for him to say something, but he doesn't. Ross sits down across from him.

ROSS

Billy. Listen to me. You're the best I ever saw. No cameras here, no tributes cued up for the credit sequence. I'm talking to you as a man. As a lover of the game. I've watched you for nineteen years. You are the best. Last of the Gentleman Ballplayers. You're golden, like the old boys. DiMaggio, Koufax. I knew them. I was there. They had that special pride.

Chapel looks at him.

ROSS

When they were done, they were done. Nobody had to show them the door.

CHAPEL

What do you mean?

ROSS

You don't have to go. To the Giants.

CHAPEL

You mean quit?

ROSS

Retire. Billy, you're coming on twenty years in the majors. You can't tell me you haven't thought about it.

Chapel can't answer. BE-BE-BE-BEEEEEP...the telephone. Chapel picks it up.

CHAPEL

Yeah.

WOMAN'S VOICE

It's me.

Chapel's blood runs. He turns away from Ross.

CHAPEL

Are you alright? I couldn't sleep, I called hospitals...

WOMAN'S VOICE

I'm fine.

CHAPEL

Where are you?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Meet me in the park, you know, where the...

CHAPEL

I know. Jane. Have you been crying?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Just come, Billy.

Click. The phone is dead. Chapel hangs up. Grabs his coat.

CHAPEL

Gotta go.

ROSS

Wait a minute, tell me what you're gonna do...

CHAPEL

Isn't the trade a big enough story?

ROSS

You give me an interview after the game, I won't break the news til then...

CHAPEL

Don't you want to see if I win?

ROSS

You shouldn't even play. Shine those assholes. Just walk out.

Chapel doesn't like that idea.

CHAPEL

Close the door when you leave.

Ross may have blown it. He chases him into

THE HALLWAY

ROSS

...okay don't retire, come on the post-game wearing a Giants cap, but Jesus, Billy, say something. Don't let them buy and sell you like an old racehorse. Are you taking the trade? Or is this it?

Chapel looks at Ross one more time, then disappears into the elevator. Ross stands there, defeated.

A room door opens, and GUS sticks his head out.

GUS

Man's trying to sleep here!

ROSS

Hello Gus.

GUS

Woah. D.B. Bad haircut.

EXT. PLAZA HOTEL- MORNING

New York in October. A light rain has fallen, the sun is fighting to break through the clouds.

Chapel jogs out of the building, past a PAKISTANI CAB DRIVER who yells out his window.

PAKISTANI CABBIE

Hey, Mr. Chapel, you pitching today? I hope not.

Billy gracefully dodges cars, running across the street.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - SAME

Chapel splashes through shallow puddles on the black, paved walkway...he veers off, onto the grass, through some trees...

HIS P.O.V. There she is. Tucked into her gray raincoat. JANE. Sitting on a small set of bleachers near a softball field. Three or four KIDS are on the field, playing "Three Flies Up" with a bat and a softball.

Chapel jogs a little more...

JANE TURNS. She is thin and stylish. Elegant clothes, smooth, shiny hair. But she does not have the serenity of the rich, the creamy complexion of a life of ease. There are lines of hardship and determination in her face, a wry humor in her eyes. She tries to smile. Her long lashes are wet with tears. She stubs out a cigarette.

He slows. Walks toward her. Hands in his pockets. He stops at the foot of the bleachers.

JANE
Did I wake you up?

CHAPEL
No.

Chapel climbs the three rows of bleachers and sits beside her. He is calm, sober. There's something in her eyes that checks any anger he might have felt.

CHAPEL
What happened?

JANE
I tried to...

Emotion suddenly wells in her throat.

JANE
I swore I wasn't going to cry.

She pulls a whole roll of toilet paper out from under her coat and rips off a piece. Chapel gives her a look.

JANE
They didn't have any kleenex in the hotel bathroom.

CHAPEL
What hotel?

JANE
Your hotel. I've been sitting in the lobby since eight fifteen.

CHAPEL
Doing what?

JANE
Thinking. I had to get out of there. Everyone knows my name.

CHAPEL
They know you're my girl.

She glances sideways at him.

JANE

No one but you can talk like that.

CHAPEL

Why didn't you come up?

JANE

(takes a breath)

I have something to tell you, Billy. All last night, I tried to call, but I couldn't...think, I couldn't...imagine...how I was gonna...

She stops, swallowing.

JANE

I'm leaving. I took that job, in London.

Billy is very quiet.

CHAPEL

You got it.

JANE

Yeah.

CHAPEL

Well. Congratulations. That's a big deal.

JANE

Yeah.

She tries to sound happy.

CHAPEL

A real big deal. We should celebrate. Let's have dinner. After the game.

JANE

I'm leaving today. In a few hours.

CHAPEL

A few hours?

JANE

I'm keeping my apartment here.
I'll be living in a hotel for a
while, until I can get settled.

CHAPEL

You're leaving in a few hours?

JANE

I couldn't decide. I said yes
at the last minute.

CHAPEL

The last minute of what day?

She shifts under his gaze.

JANE

I got so depressed when the
weather changed. I never used
to care about summer. But the
past couple years, turning on
the TV, seeing you...It always
seems too short. Cold spell
comes, you know, and it feels
so...over.

CHAPEL

Summer comes every year, Jane.

JANE

But next summer I'll be another
year older...and you'll be
exactly the same. You never
change. And I wouldn't want you
to. You're a...a perfectly
beautiful thing. Like one of
those Greek statues. You and the
ball and the mound. You could
play every game and win it or
lose it all by yourself.

CHAPEL

I don't understand.

She meets his eyes.

JANE

You don't need me, Billy.

Chapel looks at her, his circuits jamming. He blinks.

CHAPEL

Did I miss something here?
Did...did something happen?

JANE
Let's just have a good time.
That was our deal. Right?

CHAPEL
...is it another guy?

Jane shakes her head.

JANE
I just...can't...keep my part of
the bargain anymore.

CHAPEL
Why?

She looks down. Suddenly vulnerable.

JANE
...don't make me say it.

They both stare at their hands.

JANE
Think you're gonna be rained
out?

CHAPEL
No. This'll clear.

JANE
I'm gonna miss you.

CHAPEL
They got telephones in England.

JANE
Goodbye, Billy.

She stands.

CHAPEL
Jane...

He reaches out to her, but she knows that will be the end of
her resolve.

JANE
Have a good game.

She starts off...begins to run, across the empty softball
field. He stands...but she's going. He watches till she's out
of sight.

The sun uncharitably chooses this moment to shine. It glares in his eyes. The SOFTBALL the kids are playing with suddenly fouls off in his direction and THUNKS him in the chest.

HIS P.O.V. A fat kid stands below...

FAT KID
Sorry mister...

Chapel picks up the big ball, gripping it tightly with all frustration inside him. Looks at the kid, looks at the ball. He rears back his arm...

FAT KID
(scared)
Mister...

Chapel HURLS the ball. The kid DUCKS, but the ball SAILS way over his head, far far out into the field...

SOFTBALL FIELD - LATER

Chapel playing with the kids. There's a lot more now, the outfield is overflowing with players. A girl pitcher tosses him an underhand strike...

Chapel, his face dark with determination, SMASHES a hit.

His team jumps and cheers as Chapel runs around the bases. The clumsy softball finally lands and rolls through the grass, a brigade of children tumbling over each other to chase it.

Chapel rounds third...an outfielder scoops up the ball and throws it...

Chapel SLIDES...SAFE. His twelve-year-old teammates rush out to him. He hi-fives one after the other.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIFTY-NINTH STREET

Chapel emerges from the park, disheveled and sweaty.

HIS P.O.V. In front of the Plaza, the TEAM BUS is pulling into traffic and heading away.

Chapel crosses the street, waving it down. But it's too late.

A taxi screeches to a stop in front of him. The driver calls.

DRIVER
Hey? Ain't you Billy Chapel?

EST. SHOT - YANKEE STADIUM - DAY

The storm has dissipated, leaving behind high, fluffy white clouds and fresh blue sky over the Bronx. The venerable old stadium looms out of the cityscape.

EXT. SIDE ENTRANCE

Chapel stands outside the cab, digging for his wallet. The Driver holds up a hand.

DRIVER

No way. On me, Mr. Chapel. I'm from M'Waukee. You just dump those bastards.

Chapel nods. Steps toward the door marked PLAYERS ENTRANCE...

He can't face it. He walks by.

EXT. MEMORIAL PARK

A tiny section behind the left field fence devoted to statues and frescoes of famous old Yankees. The landscaping may have looked pretty in April, but the flowers look tired by now.

Kids and their parents stop to read the plaques, study the likenesses of Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth, Thurman Munson, Whitey Ford, Reggie Jackson...

Chapel joins the line, still in his shades and street clothes, staring at the old ballplayers, immortalized in brass and stone. He moves slowly, absorbed.

INT. CLUBHOUSE

Chapel comes in the door...A blast of cool air and cacophony. A chubby young guy in glasses and a Hawks Cap, PETE, drops his clipboard on the table in front of him.

PETE

Thank god, thank god, I called your room, I held the bus for twenty minutes, Coach Harman physically threatened me with a bat...

CUT TO:

Pete hustling Chapel through the concrete catacombs. Chapel breathes, taking it all in, his head turning at every sight:

The dank batting cage where they hit during rain delays...
The open door of the weight room, where he sees within...FRANK
PERRY, the pitching coach, frowning at him...

FRANK
Chapel, glad you could join us.

CHAPEL
Sorry, Frank.

...the Guests' clubhouse, where several well-heeled people
shmooze and drink...

FAN
Go get 'em, Billy.

Chapel's smile fades as he sees...

THE MANAGER stomping quickly toward them; the hyper-motivated,
Napoleonic HECK HARMAN.

HARMAN
Oh, look, it's Billy Chapel! Oh
Billy, oh pleeeeeeze, could I ask
you a favor, I know you must be
busy but would you...could you
pitch for us today? It would
mean so much to the fellas.

CHAPEL
I apologize, Heck.

HARMAN
You know what your apology is
worth to me? This dog shit,
this piece a dog shit on my
cleat right here...

CHAPEL
And I thought that was your
natural odor.

HARMAN
Ha ha. I stink. Now listen. I
want to start Langrath at
catcher, we need an extra lefty.

Chapel freezes.

HARMAN
I'm not laying down. I won't be
no red carpet to the Series for
this preening bunch of Broadway
Buttlickers. We gotta hit 'em.

A new, hard voice comes out of easy-going Chapel.

CHAPEL

Gus catches. Only Gus. You hear me? I hope you hear me.

HARMAN

Gus's bat is a fuckin' stalagmite.

CHAPEL

Gus catches, or I don't pitch.

HARMAN

Jesus, Billy, what the hell's the matter?

CHAPEL

I never asked you any other time.

Harman hates to lose, but he knows he has.

HARMAN

If I need a pinch hitter...

CHAPEL

Fine.

Chapel moves on to the locker room. THE PRESS CORP undulates between him and the door. Billy steels himself...

REPORTER

Yankees see you as their last hurdle to the series, Billy...

ANOTHER REPORTER

Do you blame your record on the Hawks' lackluster offense?

Nothing about the trade. Pete pushes them aside and gets Billy through the locker room door...

INT. LOCKER ROOM

A long room, plushly carpeted, walls lined with stalls, each player's name listed on the top, two padded benches running through the middle.

CHAPEL'S P.O.V. HIS TEAM, getting into their uniforms. They all look up as the door shuts. A blank stare...and then...

GUYS
(various)
Tardy!

THEY PELT him with socks and towels and jock straps. They spray him with water.

HIS P.O.V. The guys...laughing, relaxed, ribbing him.

He smiles.

There's a BIG TELEVISION perched on a shelf in the corner, droning above them. Billy's heart stops...

ON THE TV, Ross, fully toupeed, is talking during the pre-game.

ROSS
The question is, will Chapel
play the spoiler in this, his
last outing of the season?

Chapel waits to hear some mention of the trade...but Ross begins to talk about other Hawks players.

Chapel walks down the length of the locker room. It feels like slow motion, as he scans every face for some clue, some hint that his teammates know what he knows...

ON THE TV...a picture of a handsome player, some stats listed below it...

ROSS'S VOICE
Brian Whitt, the rookie first
baseman, has been a welcome
addition to the Hawks line-up...

IN THE LOCKER ROOM...Whitt himself nudges earphones from one ear as Chapel passes...

WHITT
Hit six doubles in practice,
Billy.

You can hear the tiny screams of a hard rock band. Whitt returns to his grooving. Next to him is MICKEY BELL, an older guy with a TUBE SOCK stretched onto his HEAD.

MICKEY
Guess who I am, Chapel.

CHAPEL
I don't know, Mick.

MICKEY
Guess.

Chapel shakes his head.

MICKEY

Sockhead.

Mickey finds this very amusing. Next to him, JESUS CABRILLOS, the short stop, mumbles something in Spanish and plucks the sock from Mickey's head.

ON THE TV, Jesus Cabrillos' picture appears, woeful stats below it.

ROSS'S VOICE

...rookie shortstop, Jesus
Cabrillos, leads the League in
errors...

IN THE LOCKER ROOM, a short, wiry black man MARCUS RANSOM admonishes Chapel.

RANSOM

Chapel, we should dock your
pay...Jesus is never late.

The beefy Italian next to him, LEE GIORDANO, pipes up...

GIORDANO

Except for line drives.

ON THE TELEVISION...pictures of Ransom and Giordano...

ROSS'S VOICE

Rounding out the infield is
veteran second baseman Marcus
Ransom, formerly of the Oakland
A's, and at third, Lee Giordano.

Ross and his "Color Man", young, popular broadcaster MARV ASBURG, appear on the screen...

ROSS

Batting clean-up is Eric Ursa.

ASBURG

Ursa Major.

We see a PICTURE of a gorgeous, muscular, rakish black man.

ROSS

The Big Dipper himself. You
seen those new ice cream stores?

ASBURG

Who hasn't, Ross?

IN THE LOCKER ROOM...Eric Ursa, a large presence, drops an arm around Chapel's shoulder as he passes.

URSA

Buddy, you hold 'em to three runs, me and Eric the Second'll do the rest.

A skinny rookie next to him, ERIC MATTHEWS, also black, rolls his eyes.

MATTHEWS

I'm Eric the First, Sucker.

URSA

Team's only big enough for one Eric, son. Me Big Dipper, you ...Little Dipper.

The other guys whistle and "ooh." Laughter. Chapel pats Matthews on the back and grins...until he sees...

GUS OSINSKI, in the back, at a locker next to his. Gus is not laughing. Gus can't even look at him.

Chapel puts down his bag and begins to undress.

GUS

(under)

Ross told me. Those fuckers.

Chapel glances behind him. Many of the guys are heading out to the field.

CHAPEL

Anyone else know?

GUS

Nobody. Harman don't even know.

Chapel pulls his pants on over his socks and styrrups.

GUS

It ain't right. You leaving.

CHAPEL

Maybe I won't go.

GUS

You're traded. You have to go.

CHAPEL

I don't have to do anything.

GUS
...You mean quit?

Chapel doesn't answer. He stretches his arm, cradling the elbow in one hand and pressing it, pulling it across his neck.

GUS
That's not you talking. Is it Jane? She want you to quit?

CHAPEL
Jane's moving to London.

GUS
Jeez. How you gonna manage that?

CHAPEL
We're not.

GUS
Oh man. Man.
(pause)
This ain't your day.

Chapel has to laugh. Gus distills things to their simplest form.

GUS
Pricks. Don't even give the fans a chance to say a proper goodbye. Give you a parade or something.

Gus picks up mask and shin guards and walks toward the door. He turns.

GUS
You're too good to quit. Okay Billy?
(no response)
Okay?

Chapel nods. Gus leaves. Chapel is alone.

He surveys the room, all littered with towels and discarded street clothes. He catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror on the far wall...

HIS P.O.V. There's gray hairs on his chest. He touches it...and the slightest layer of fat on his stomach...barely anything, but it didn't used to be like that.

He turns to his locker, puts on a white t-shirt. Now only his jersey hangs there.

CHAPEL...21. He takes it down. Slowly removes it from the hanger and pulls it onto his body.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Dark as night, concrete walls shining, sounds echoing inside...a cheering crowd, the low rumble of an announcer, loud, grainy music on the PA.

CHAPEL is silhouetted against the square opening that reveals a section of grass and sky. As he walks the slice of color gets bigger, the sounds louder, and sunlight hits his head. He steps into the dugout.

HIS P.O.V. THE STADIUM in all its glory. The great blue bowl full of fifty thousand people. The wide expanse of spongy, green grass, players in their uniforms out there throwing...that thwump of a hard ball in a good leather mitt...

Chapel takes a breath. He steps up onto the playing field. Someone throws him a ball, he CATCHES IT with one hand.

FRANK

Warm up in the pen, Chapel.

Chapel nods. Looks down at the familiar object he carries.

HIS P.O.V. A new leather ball, pristine and white, the red stitches he knows the feel of so well. It fits perfectly in his palm.

He cuddles it in his hand. Grips it. Holds onto it for dear life.

INT. BROADCASTING BOOTH - DAY

Ross and Asburg, their swivel chairs turned toward the camera, go to a commercial.

ROSS

The anthem on the PA says it all....."It's up to you, New York, New York." The Yankees try to clinch the Eastern Division Title, with a legend of the game standing in their way.

ASBURG

Three Cy Young awards, 2.23 lifetime E.R.A., he's still one of the greats.

ROSS
We'll be ready to play ball,
right after this.

They relax. Someone rushes in with a cigarette for Asburg. Make-up people buzz around him. He looks at his tired eyes in a handheld mirror.

ASBURG
See if you can do something
about these bags...

ROSS
You gotta get your beauty sleep,
Marv.

ROSS
I was stuck on the tarmac in
Denver til two a.m. Ice on the
runway in October. No wonder
the Broncos suck.

ROSS
What's the matter, the
stewardess wouldn't give you her
phone number?

ASBURG
No. But she gave me a hand job
during the movie.

Marv leafs through the cue sheet and a packet of stats.

ASBURG
You already scheduled Chapel for
the post-game? What for?

ROSS
He's gonna win.

The reporter in Asburg is curious.

ASBURG
How do you know?

ROSS
Intuition.

ASBURG
Isn't that a chick thing?

The AD begins a countdown in the background. Runners and primpers scurry away. Marv straightens his hair and tries a smile...

ROSS

You got something in your teeth.

Marv's hand FLIES to his mouth as the VIDEO CAMERA suddenly SWINGS AROUND in front of them, an arm signals a cue and they are ON THE AIR.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Jane checks in at British Airways.

ENGLISH WOMAN

We have you reserved in Business Class, Mrs. Aubrey.

JANE

Miss...

ENGLISH WOMAN

We're having a bit of a delay. It shouldn't be more than an hour. We're correcting a bit of a maintenance problem.

JANE

So we don't have a bit of a crash?

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT CONCOURSE

Jane walks, her computer over her shoulder, a backpack slung behind her. In her hand she strains to carry a heavy canvas bag crammed to the gills with newspapers and books.

She is about to push open the door to the PREMIER CLUB lounge when her eye is caught by...

THE AIRPORT BAR across the way. Smoky and dim. A TELEVISION suspended in the corner. Lots of people watching it. On the screen the familiar greens and blues of a baseball game. The voices of the Announcers can barely be heard...

ROSS'S VOICE

Chapel winds, and the pitch... fastball, he jams him inside, Robinson gets a piece of it, but Cabrillo is there...One out.

Jane wanders toward the bar.

ON THE SCREEN, Chapel appears. Standing on the mound. Intense. Leaning over toward Gus, the ball loose in his right hand, resting behind his hip.

Jane stops behind the bar stools, staring up...

ON THE SCREEN, Chapel stands. Stretches. He winds and delivers in that graceful dance of the Major League pitcher....

The ball hurtles past the Yankees' number two batter.

ROSS'S VOICE

Fast ball up the middle, strike
one called.

ASBURG'S VOICE

That ball was thrown hard. I
haven't seen heat like that from
Chapel since '89.

ROSS'S VOICE

They used to call Chapel's
fastball "Ole Smokie."

Some people get up to leave. Jane and her bulky carry-ons are in their way, but she doesn't even notice. She watches the ballgame, mesmerized, until the bartender startles her.

BARTENDER

Drink, Ma'am?

JANE

What? Yeah. Uh...yeah. Scotch.

She takes a seat...

ON THE TELEVISION, the batter hits a grounder to the gap between first and second, but it's a slow roller and Ransom is over to field it. Out number two.

The third Yankee batter steps up to the plate...

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - SAME

And now we are here, standing in the batter's box, close enough to see the rubber of homeplate, to see the whiskers of the batter, a muscle man named TUTTLE with a mane of long curly hair flowing out of his helmet.

Gus, set up slightly outside, wags a sign between his legs.

Billy shakes it off.

Gus hesitates. Shifts his weight a little toward center, flashes another sign.

Billy, on the mound, stands straight as a rail, the ball in his hand in the mitt at his belt buckle...then in a flash, he is moving; hands up, leg kicking, arm coming over, jerking hard like it will come right out of his shoulder...

In less than a second it is in Gus's mitt with incredible force. The umpire calls a strike. Tuttle's bat remains in the air, as if he were still waiting for the pitch.

Gus calls time and jogs out to the mound.

GUS

What, are you trying to kill me?

CHAPEL

Not you, him.

GUS

Pace it, pace it. What happened to the rest of your pitches?

CHAPEL

They got traded to San Francisco.

No self pity. Chapel is calm, determined. Gus sees he means business. He nods.

Gus hustles back to the plate. Hunkers, pulls his mask down, flashes a quick sign. Tuttle sets in the box, wagging his bat.

Billy delivers another fastball, this time Tuttle fouls it off to the left for strike two.

Tuttle wanders around by the plate, cursing to himself. A few Yankees cheer him from the dugout. Tuttle steps in. This is a power hitter, a strong guy with a big ego in a big game.

HIS P.O.V. Chapel stands out there, king of his little dirt mountain...

ON THE MOUND, Chapel sees Tuttle glare at him. He has no emotion. He just THROWS THE BALL.

Tuttle SWINGS HARD...as hard as the ball is thrown...and misses it completely. Strike three. The Umpire takes great pleasure in calling it. Tuttle is out.

He rips at the velcro strap of his batting glove and tosses it and his helmet off to the side, his head turning, his angry eyes never leaving...

BILLY CHAPEL, who is walking away.

The CAMERA PUSHES IN ON BILLY...the sound of the crowd becomes a hollow echo...Chapel looks down...

HIS P.O.V. His own feet...step, step, step, step. The crowd fades to silence. The only sounds are the CRUNCH CRUNCH of Chapel's cleats on the grass, his breathing, that intimate sound of your own voice when you plug your ears...inside his head, Chapel is SINGING. "Bobbie McGee."

CHAPEL'S VOICE

(not great)

"One day up near Salinas, I let her slip away. She's looking for that home and I hope she finds it."

He walks into the DUGOUT.

HIS P.O.V....still no sound but his own voice...Harman pats him on the back...the other guys looking at him, smiling at him.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"But I'd trade all of my tomorrows, for one single yesterday..."

He sits down in his spot at the end of the bench.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"To be holding Bobbie's body..."

We hear the hesitation, the memory in his voice.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"Next to mine..."

HIS P.O.V. The field, the game continuing in utter silence.

Chapel reaches up, PULLS HIS CAP DOWN OVER HIS EYES....covering the ballgame in BLACK.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. NEW YORK ADVERTISING AGENCY - DAY

A loft suite in Tribeca. An ultra-hip interior of glass-walled offices, natural wood and teal blue walls.

Chapel stands in the lobby with Eric Ursa. Chapel wears a cap and his ever-present leather jacket, but Ursa looks the elegant businessman in a long Burberry coat.

A slick man in a suit, WARNER SESSIONS, crosses to greet them.

WARNER
Eric, good to see you.

URSA
Warner Sessions, I'd like you to meet...

WARNER
No introductions necessary.
(shaking hands)
I have been after Eric for years
to get you in here...

INT. WARNER'S OFFICE

A young man and woman join the meeting.

WARNER
These are two of my colleagues,
Sidney and Troy.

MAN
I'm so honored. I grew up
watching you.

CHAPEL
Thanks, Troy.

WOMAN
I'm Troy.

Chapel nods. These hip "executives" look like they're still in high school.

WARNER
'83 World Series, Billy, nothing
like it.

SIDNEY
You were awesome.

TROY
It's about time you did some
endorsements.

CHAPEL
I don't want to do endorsements.

This drops like a lead weight.

SIDNEY
Then, pardon my asking but, why
are you here?

CHAPEL

Cause I lost a bet to Ursa.

URSA

Don't listen to him...

TROY

Mr. Chapel, would you
mind...taking off your hat?

Chapel thinks he's been rude...

CHAPEL

I'm sorry...

He removes it. Everyone stares at his head for a long moment.
Chapel is extremely uncomfortable. Then:

URSA

After a shower, Chapel's hair is
the fluffiest in the locker room

Chapel looks at Ursa like he's from another planet.

TROY

Mr. Chapel, can I call you
Billy? What we've pitched to
the client is not your average,
boring, spokesman campaign.
We don't want to gloss you up
and glamorize you. We want you.
The real man.

She drones on, but Billy's attention is drawn away, through the
glass wall behind the couch and into THE NEIGHBORING OFFICE.

HIS P.O.V. There is a woman there. Seated behind her desk,
typing furiously on a small laptop computer. She wears a
little pair of half-glasses, the kind old ladies buy at the
drugstore, her brows are intently knit...

IT IS JANE.

HIS P.O.V. The sleeves of her silk blouse rolled up, her
fingers are flying across the keyboard.

HER HAIR keeps falling across her face...type type type, flick
the hair back...type type type...flick it back...without
missing a beat, her right hand FLASHES OUT, grips an ugly
silver clothespin type thing and STICKS IT IN HER HAIR...type
type type.

She looks silly with that hairclip, but she's too intent to notice, and now...type type type...she begins to grin...and grinning, she begins to laugh...

Chapel is enchanted, but Troy keeps talking...

TROY

The marketing data indicated by
a wide margin that the
demographics we should target...

Jane is nodding and laughing...SUDDENLY she beats a little drum solo on the desk in front of her keyboard...grabs a pen turns her whole desk into a drumset, lamp, stapler, the top of her computer...

HER EYES CATCH CHAPEL'S...mid-drum. She stops.

INT. JANE'S OFFICE

She lowers her pen.

HER P.O.V. She can see the back of Troy's head bobbing, and beyond that...Billy Chapel, staring back at her.

Their eyes hold for a moment.

INT. WARNER'S OFFICE

URSA

Billy...

Chapel is absorbed in Jane, watching her through the glass.

CHAPEL

What? I'm sorry.

HIS P.O.V. Jane is embarrassed. She nonchalantly slides the goofy clip out of her hair and slumps down in her chair, hiding her face behind the computer screen.

WARNER

Troy was explaining the
campaign.

TROY

It's identifying you with
everyman. Even Billy Chapel's
scalp is dry and itching.

CHAPEL

What?

WARNER
It's a shampoo commercial.

CHAPEL
Shampoo? Me? Oh no...

TROY
Hey, Michael Jordan does
McDonald's. Nolan Ryan, Jimmy
Connors do painkillers...

URSA
Jim Palmer did it in his
underwear.

INT. JANE'S OFFICE

She peeks back up over the screen.

HER P.O.V. Chapel is trying to listen to Troy. Jane can hear her colleague's muffled voice through the glass...

TROY'S VOICE
It can be a lucrative post-
retirement career.

Jane smiles, gets up from her chair.

INT. WARNER'S OFFICE

Chapel watches Jane saunter toward the glass, her long, slender legs slow and purposeful, her arms crossed in front of her, she never stops looking at him.

TROY
Beer ads, soft drinks, shoes...
(a great idea)
Billy Chapstick. You could be
Billy Chapstick.

They all look at Troy, who leans in, warming to her subject.

TROY
You have something very special.
Something our client needs...

CHAPEL'S P.O.V. Jane, in her office, now stands directly behind Troy...and MOUTHS HER WORDS EXACTLY.

TROY

Sex appeal. Women want to sleep with you, men want to be like you. You're the guy we need. We haven't taken this to any other people. We've conceived this entire campaign around you.

Jane shrugs. Chapel smiles. The others in the meeting finally turn around to see what he's looking at...

BUT JANE IS already gone, slipping out of the office.

CUT TO:

OUTER OFFICE - LATER

The meeting has ended. Sidney and Troy and Eric and Warner are milling and talking, Chapel wanders to the secretary outside Jane's office...

CHAPEL

Uh...is uh...where'd she go?

The secretary looks up.

SECRETARY

She's gone for the day.

Chapel nods.

EXT. BUILDING - WINTER EVENING

Dark sky. Dirty slush on the ground. Chapel and Ursa leave the office building.

URSA

You could have been a little more polite.

CHAPEL

I was perfectly polite, I just don't want to do it.

URSA

When I retire I'm gonna have a restaurant and a boat and my own celebrity golf tournament. What are you gonna do?

CHAPEL

I'm not gonna retire.

URSA

Uh-huh. I told them you'd think about it.

Chapel rests his hands on his hips. A couple snowflakes hit the brim of his cap.

CHAPEL

Why are you doing this?

URSA

The only good thing about being drafted by the Hawks was getting to play on a team with Billy Chapel. I don't want to see you coaching single A in Bakersfield and living in a dump cause you refused to face reality.

The limo driver opens the passenger door as the snow really begins to fall.

URSA

Got plans tonight? Cause I'm having dinner with my agent...

CHAPEL

No. No thanks. I'm meeting some people.

URSA

Okay then. See you at the Fort, Chappie.

He disappears behind the smoky glass windows of the white limousine. The car pulls away.

Chapel watches it go. Stands there with his hands in his pockets. A stiff wind whips at his face.

HIS P.O.V. There's a little eatery across the street.

He crosses toward it.

CUT TO:

INT. EATERY - NIGHT

The bar is crowded with corporate types and the food is greasy and overpriced...a businessman's luncheon restaurant that charges twelve bucks for a burger.

Chapel takes a seat at a table in the corner. He has bought a newspaper and starts to open it when he hears...

JANE'S VOICE

Nobody eats here.

Chapel looks up. Jane is standing there, holding her soft-back briefcase and her coat.

JANE

Nobody eats here but workaholics
and divorcees.

CHAPEL

Which are you?

JANE

Both.

She holds out her hand.

JANE

Jane Aubrey. Senior copywriter.

CHAPEL

I'm Bi...

JANE

I know who you are.

She contemplates him.

JANE

Shouldn't you have an entourage
or something?

CHAPEL

Oh. They don't eat with me.
They're hovering in the
helicopter.

THE MANAGER approaches.

MANAGER

Excuse me, Mr. Chapel, I'm the
manager here, I just wanted to
say it's a pleasure to serve
you. Dinner's on the house.

CHAPEL

Thank you.

MANAGER

If you have a minute, my kids
would love an autograph...

Chapel takes a baseball out of the pocket of his leather jacket. He signs it and gives it to the Manager.

Jane watches him go. Turns to Chapel with a kid's grin.

JANE
Can I have one?

He takes out another baseball. Jane is impressed.

JANE
(peering down)
How many balls have you got in
there?

He gives her a look. She flushes scarlet.

JANE
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Enjoy
your dinner.

She starts to leave.

CHAPEL
Wait! Wait. What...what music
were you listening to? In your
office...when you were doing
that drumming?

JANE
I wasn't listening to anything.
I just kind of...play songs in
my head. When I'm working.

CHAPEL
Me too.

JANE
Really?

CHAPEL
All the time.

They look at each other.

JANE
"Radar Love."

CHAPEL
What?

JANE
That was the song. In my head.
This afternoon.

CHAPEL
Would you like to sit down?

Jane sits down across from him. Holds her briefcase in her lap. She doesn't say anything. Just looks at him. He tries to make conversation.

CHAPEL

Do they give that speech to everyone?

JANE

Troy does. Her eyes sort of glaze over. Did you notice? We think she might be an android.

Pause. Jane has an ease with herself, with silence, that is most disconcerting. After a moment:

JANE

Are you going to do the commercial?

CHAPEL

I don't...do hair. I barely even see my hair. I never take off my hat.

JANE

Well. You won't be the first one to turn it down.

CHAPEL

Who did they ask? Before me?

JANE

(avoiding)

Oh, a few. Where do you go for Spring Training?

CHAPEL

Fort Lauderdale. Who'd they ask?

Jane gives in.

JANE

Pete Sampras.

CHAPEL

Okay.

JANE

Wayne Gretzky.

CHAPEL

Uh-huh.

JANE
Nancy Kerrigan.

CHAPEL
Jesus.

JANE
Nick Faldo.

CHAPEL
Who's he?

JANE
British golfer.

CHAPEL
Wow.

JANE
The United States Synchronized
Swimming team.

Chapel starts laughing. Jane too.

JANE
Who cares who they asked? I'm
glad they asked you.

The comment hangs between them.

JANE
What's it like to be famous?

CHAPEL
It's weird.

JANE
Good weird or bad weird?

CHAPEL
Both. You get to meet people...

JANE
Other famous people?

CHAPEL
No. Average people. I
mean...normal...I mean...real
people. Who come up to you and
say hello and tell you stories.

Jane nods. Takes out a silver cigarette case. Lights her
cigarette with the candle from the table.

CHAPEL

But then...sometimes you just
want to be left alone.

JANE

Like tonight?

CHAPEL

No.

Pause.

CHAPEL

You haven't told me anything
about you.

JANE

I'm boring.

CHAPEL

I doubt it. Where are you from?

JANE

Oh, God...

CHAPEL

Give me five questions.

JANE

No way. If I keep my mouth shut
I can pass for elegant and
mysterious.

CHAPEL

Three questions.

JANE

Medford, Oregon. That's one.

Chapel eyeballs her.

CHAPEL

What's your favorite food?

JANE

Banana split.

CHAPEL

How do you like to be kissed?

A smile teases at the corner of her mouth. But she never
lowers her gaze. She bites her lip, thinking...then answers
utterly truthfully.

JANE

On my ass.

She can hear him swallow.

CHAPEL

I'm not joking.

JANE

I'm not either.

Her eyes sparkle in the light.

CHAPEL

Check, please.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

They ride in silence. Staring ahead, careful not to let any body parts touch.

INT. PLAZA HOTEL

Jane and Chapel walk through the lobby. Chapel is hailed by the desk staff and the bellhops, as we have seen before. Jane notes this with amusement.

They wait for the elevator. The numbers climb down. The doors open. IT IS EMPTY. Chapel steps in, leans against the wall. Jane follows. The doors close...

INT. ELEVATOR

Chapel takes her hand, pulls her to him gracefully. She surrenders, melting into his chest...he kisses her. Slowly at first, then exploring her mouth...The elevator jerks and rises and the floor drops out beneath them.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The sheets are a tangled mess. He is moving above her, his broad back covering her slender body...they roll over, her hair falls over his face...

ON HER BACK, we see a square hotel pillow mint, still in its green rapper, sticking tenaciously to her damp, hot skin.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Chapel asleep in bed. Alone. Jane is not there.

GUS'S VOICE
Hey Chappie...

Chapel SITS UP in bed, confused, looking for her...

CUT TO:

INT. DUGOUT - PRESENT

Chapel lifts his cap. Turns to Gus.

GUS
You're on, bud.

Chapel rises, walks down the length of the dugout, but the sounds of the memory are still in his head...

FLASHBACK - INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Chapel walks out of the bedroom and into the front room of the suite...looking, looking...no one is there. He frowns.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - PRESENT

Chapel walks out to the mound, utter silence in his ears.

FLASHBACK - HOTEL ROOM

He walks into the bathroom. A NOTE is taped to the mirror.

JANE'S VOICE
I woke up singing Barry Manilow,
so I thought I'd better leave.

EXT. PITCHER'S MOUND - PRESENT

Chapel hears Jane's voice in his head as he readies to throw a warm-up toss...he cuts off her voice with his own.

CHAPEL'S VOICE
Stop.

He throws the warm-up pitch, an easy swooping curve. GUS catches it. Behind him...

The STADIUM is completely EMPTY. In Chapel's mind, the fans are gone. There's just two teams. It could be a Sunday pickup game. Gus throws the ball back to him. Chapel sings a snippet. "She's Not There."

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"Well let me tell you 'bout the way she looked, the way she acts and the color of her hair..."

Chapel watches JOE BIRCH, aptly named for a tree, stalk up to the plate. The Yankees clean-up man. Billy gives him an almost imperceptible nod. We HEAR his thoughts in his head.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

Joe Birch. How's that new baby?

AT THE PLATE, Birch nods back. Sets in the box. He is a LEFT-HANDED BATTER.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

How's that bone spur in your elbow? How's that short porch in right?

ON THE MOUND, Chapel turns.

HIS P.O.V. The right field fence is short in Yankee Stadium, easy to hit home runs over.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

Don't let him pull that inside pitch.

(leaning in)

Ever have one of those days, Joe? Like life has some hidden booby trap, some land mine or something and you finally step on it? Kaboom.

GUS at the plate, is flashing fingers between his legs.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

Fastball, uh-huh.

Chapel stands, delivers a screamer over the plate. Ump yells STEE-RIKE. The ball comes back to Billy.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

They're trading me, Joe. To the National League.

Chapel leans in.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

At least I won't be battling your big lefty ass...curve, curve, outside...

Chapel winds and stretches his legs FULL OUT, like Koufax used to do, snapping his upper arm like a crazy ostrich with a broken wing.

The ball takes a big arc, in toward Birch then, cuts away, across the outside corner of the plate. Gus sticks his mitt way out and catches it. Umpire calls it a ball.

AT THE PLATE, Birch smiles. Backs out of the box.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

You better smile, that was a strike...outside corner, Morty.

Birch sets up again...Gus takes note...HE'S STANDING CLOSER TO THE PLATE. Crowding it to better hit that outside pitch.

ON THE MOUND, Chapel sees it too.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

You crowdin' the plate, Joe?
Want to chase that outside ball?
I don't blame you. Whatever it takes to stay in the game, right Joe? Keep the numbers up, keep from ...slider, slider, Gus, get with the program...

Chapel makes the pitch, this time the ball appears to be coming straight over the plate, slow and fat and big as the moon.

Birch starts to SWING...but it suddenly curves INSIDE...right toward him. His eyes show surprise as he fights off the ball, fouling it back, off his hands. STRIKE TWO.

Chapel's eyes glint with a small victory. He sings again.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"Her voice was soft and cool,
her eyes were clear and bright,
but she's not there..."

He takes off his cap, wipes his forehead. Wipes the sweat on his pants. Ump throws him a new ball.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

Ever met a girl that won't leave you alone, Joe? Two strikes on a three-fifty hitter and that girl just won't leave you alone.
(to Gus)

No. No curve. Scroogie ...yes scroogie, I don't give a shit if it hurts, Gus, give me the... thank you.

Chapel's screwball breaks down and away from the left-handed Birch, who MAKES CONTACT...but he's reached too far...the ball hits the tip of his bat and not the meaty middle barrel... It's an easy grounder to Giordy at third, who makes the put out.

Chapel sighs as Birch walks off. He hears a PHONE RING in his head...a grainy voice pick up.

SECRETARIAL VOICE

Ms. Aubrey's office.

CUT TO:

Chapel pitching the next batter a slow, circle-change that the guy knocks down for a high chopper to short. Jesus has to leap up for the bounce, but he gets it.

Chapel gives Jesus a wag of the mitt.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

It's Billy Chapel calling.

SECRETARIAL VOICE

She's...she's in a meeting.

CUT TO:

Batter number three. Chapel leans in for the sign.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

She's been in a meeting all day.

He goes into his stretch, delivers...the hitter POPS UP...

SECRETARIAL VOICE

This is a different meeting.
But you can be sure I'll give
her the message.

Gus weaves, wanders, heads toward the dugout and...CATCHES THE BALL. Chapel turns and walks off the mound.

SMASH CUT:

FLASHBACK - INT. PLAZA HOTEL - DAY

Chapel looks at the disconnected phone, then to his HAND...

He holds JANE'S NOTE.

He crumples it up. Tosses it.

After a moment he picks it up again.

FLASHBACK CONT.

EST. SHOT - FLORIDA COASTLINE - SUNSET

INT. TROPICAL-THEMED RESTAURANT

Chapel sits at the dinner table with a young, tan blonde who's chatting and picking at a salad.

He looks bored.

CUT TO:

INT. JANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Jane walks in, shuffling through her message slips.

INSERT. There are four that clearly say BILLY CHAPEL on them.

She sighs. Separates them out. Sticks them on one of those spike holders.

INT. CHAPEL'S FLORIDA CONDO - DAY

Chapel comes in. Alone.

He tosses his keys on a glass-topped table. Flips through some envelopes before flinging them onto a HUGE PILE of unopened MAIL in a chair in the corner.

His condo is functional. Like a hotel. He goes into the kitchen and opens the fridge...

Nothing but a giant jug of GATORADE and a couple packs of Blue Ice.

He stares at that for a minute.

He walks into the living room. Sits on the couch. Turns on the television, a large-screen unit built into the wall.

A COMMERCIAL PLAYS. Some thing with Charles Barkley singing opera...

Chapel picks up the phone. Dials. Hears it ringing.

SECRETARIAL VOICE

Ms. Aubrey's office.

He's almost embarrassed to say it.

CHAPEL

It's Billy Chapel.

SECRETARIAL VOICE
Hi, Billy. How was practice?

CHAPEL
Fine. Listen, Maggie, I don't care if she's on the moon, get her on this phone.

MILLY'S VOICE
She's not here, Billy, I swear.

Chapel's jaw pulses.

CHAPEL
Transfer me over to Warner's office.

He waits, his eyes steely.

CHAPEL
Warner. Billy Chapel. Yeah. Sorry it took me so long to get back to you...I'm thinking I might. I might.
(takes a breath)
But I have a condition.

CUT TO:

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Hustling crew and stagehands everywhere, flowing in and out of several small sets...a bedroom, a bathroom...a locker room shower...

BILLY CHAPEL walks through the chaos with a skinny, handsome Englishman, IAN.

IAN
I don't want you to feel nervous, Billy. You have the pages?

CHAPEL
Yeah, yeah...

IAN
Funny, huh? It was Jane's idea, she's the writer...Jane!

JANE AUBREY turns around.

HER P.O.V. Chapel and Ian walking toward her. Chapel has his jacket over his shoulder and his other hand hooked in the pocket of his jeans. His face is tanned from Spring Training...he looks drop dead gorgeous.

IAN
Jane, this is Billy Chapel.

JANE
Hi.

CHAPEL
Hi.

He shakes her hand, feels her cool skin slide across his.

CHAPEL
How have you been?

JANE
Okay. Well.

There is a way a man and a woman stand when they are drawn to each other. The energy in the space between them fairly glows.

IAN
You two know each other?

CUT TO:

BILLY IN A MAKE-UP CHAIR

They're applying base and powder, they're blow-drying his hair. He looks MISERABLE.

CUT TO:

BILLY WITH WARDROBE

He's being shown his costumes...a silk robe, a rubber WET SUIT, a striped smock like you where at the barber's...

CHAPEL
What do I wear in the first scene?

COSTUMER
Your hat.

INT. SHOWER SET

Ian shows Chapel his blocking.

IAN
You stand under the spiggit...

CHAPEL
Naked?

IAN
Just on the top...we'll be tight
on your face, we won't know
where you are and then you say
your lines, blah blah blah, the
shower sprays on, shot widens,
you soap up.

CHAPEL
With my hat on.

IAN
Yeah.

INT. CHAPEL'S DRESSING ROOM - LATER

He paces around, looking at the script, nervously practicing his lines. He catches sight of himself in the mirror. He tries to wipe off some of the make-up.

He stops. Stares at his reflection. He sinks into a chair.

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

Everything seems ready. Jane and Ian, Troy and several Product Reps stand around near a monitor...

Ian looks at his watch. A young AD approaches.

IAN
What's the problem?

AD
He won't come out.

IAN
What?

AD
He won't come out of his
dressing room. He says he's
injured.

Ian looks at his watch. Turns to Jane.

IAN
Go talk to him.

JANE
What? Me?

IAN
You know him, right?

Troy turns to Jane.

TROY
You know him?

JANE
I don't...

PRODUCT REP
How do you know him?

Jane is cornered.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chapel still sits in the chair, frozen. There's a knock on the door.

JANE'S VOICE
It's Jane.

CHAPEL
Okay.

Jane comes in. Closes the door with a soft click behind her. Leans against it.

JANE
You pull a muscle putting your pants on?

CHAPEL
Yeah. My brain. I can't do it.

JANE
Are you nervous?

Chapel nods.

JANE
Sick nervous?

CHAPEL
I can't do it.

JANE

You go out and pitch in front of fifty thousand people and you're fine...

CHAPEL

They're not there. Those people. When I'm...when I'm out there I...can't hear anything. Not a sound. It's just me and Gus and the batter...It's like whistling. You know? Like taking a stroll. When the sound comes in...the crowd...then you know you're in trouble.

JANE

Haven't you had to give a talk or, speak at a dinner or something?

CHAPEL

I've only ever been good at one thing in my life. Baseball.

JANE

Or is that just the only thing you ever tried?

He shifts. Rubs his face. She sits down across from him.

JANE

Just...pretend the camera is a person. You're just talking to a person. Pretend it's me. Look at me...

CHAPEL

Oh Jeez...

JANE

Look at me, Chapel, and say the first line.

He says rapidly, in a loud monotone:

CHAPEL

I'm Billy Chapel. I live by three rules in life. Never think about the last game, never throw inside to a left-handed batter, and never, ever, take off your hat.

Jane leans forward. Says conversationally, softly.

JANE
...who are you?

CHAPEL
Billy Chapel. I'm Billy Chapel.

JANE
How do you live?

CHAPEL
I live by three rules...in
life...

Chapel seems to be getting it. He leans forward too.

JANE
What are they?

CHAPEL
Never think about the last game.
Never throw inside to a left-
handed batter...

They are close. Her eyes have...gold flecks he's never seen before. She smells vaguely of soap and honey...Chapel clears his throat.

CHAPEL
...and never, ever, take off
your hat. Jane...

He reaches out a hand to touch hers.

JANE
Don't.

She sits up. Awkward pause.

CHAPEL
Why can't we...

JANE
I won't ever do that again.

CHAPEL
What?

JANE
Fuck.

CHAPEL
Is that what you think it was?

JANE

I'm sure Heidi and Sabrina or
whoever you sleep with...

CHAPEL

I don't know any Heidis...

JANE

...drop everything when you ride
back to town but I am too old to
be a groupie...

CHAPEL

You're not old.

JANE

I'm thirty-five. What's the
average age of the women you
date?

CHAPEL

Oh, thirteen. And they're
usually my cousins, who do you
think I am?

JANE

You're a star. People collect
cards with your picture on them.
Everybody wants to shake your
hand or get your autograph or
see you naked. I can't compete
with every man and woman in
America.

CHAPEL

Is that why you haven't returned
my phone calls?

Jane stands up.

JANE

We'd better get out there.
Every minute in production costs
thousands of dollars.

CHAPEL

What are you afraid of? That if
you're nice to me it'll wreck
your tough chick act?

JANE

It's not an act, Chapel.

CHAPEL

I think you know me well enough
to call me Billy.

JANE

Billy is a kid's name.

Pause. He doesn't like that.

JANE

You coming or not?

CHAPEL

I can't do it.

JANE

Then why did you say you would?

CHAPEL

To see you.

(pause)

I wanted to see you.

Jane is taken aback.

JANE

How did you know they would
assign me to write it?

CHAPEL

I asked them to.

She doesn't know what to say. He looks right at her.

CHAPEL

I still have that note you
wrote. I carry it around with
me in my wallet.

Jane swallows.

JANE

Can't you just be an asshole?
How come you're talented and
gorgeous and romantic and nice?

CHAPEL

Wheaties?

JANE

I just...I don't believe in this
stuff anymore.

CHAPEL

In what?

JANE
Prince Charming.

They hold each other's gaze. This is the bottom of it.

JANE
Presidents. The '69 Mets.

CHAPEL
Never count out the Mets.

JANE
The Mets suck, Chapel. Prince Charming goes off with Sleeping Beauty, not the Fisherman's Wife. I don't want to have an affair or a fling or whatever they call it now...

CHAPEL
Relationship.

JANE
I hate that word.

CHAPEL
Me too.

They sit there.

CHAPEL
What do you want?

She looks at him.

JANE
I don't want anything. I don't want to want anything.

CHAPEL
Then I guess I won't call you anymore.

JANE
Please don't.

She leaves.

CUT TO:

SOUND STAGE - LATER

The crew are crowded around in the shower, fussing...Ian and Jane and the Product Reps are waiting...hoping...

The primpers move off to reveal...BILL CHAPEL standing in the shower with swim trunks and his hat on.

IAN
Ready Billy?

Chapel hates it, but he's gonna do it.

CHAPEL
Ready.

IAN
And...ACTION!

SMASH CUT:

EXT. PITCHERS MOUND - YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT DAY

Chapel THROWS HARD, with a vengeance, directly at...

THE YANKEE BATTER, a kid, his eyes as big as saucers as the hard white bullet just barely curves away from his shrinking body and into Gus's mitt...THWUMP.

UMPIRE
STEEE-RIKE!!!

Chapel stands on the mound, his face dark with anger.

Gus's hand in his mitt actually hurts. He takes it out and massages it. The kid batter watches.

CUT TO:

KID'S P.O.V. Chapel leans in, stalking his prey.

Gus flashes a two.

Chapel doesn't respond.

Gus flashes a ONE. The sign for fastball.

Chapel rears back and fires...

The kid swings frantically, less to hit it than to protect himself from the missile. STRIKE TWO.

Gus tosses the deadly weapon back to Chapel. The kid steps in. Steels himself.

Chapel looks like the Grim Reaper up there on his mound.

Gus SIGNALS another ONE between his legs.

The batter takes a deep breath...

The ball HURTLES out of the sun and SLAMS into his face...blood SPURTS from his nose, he writhes on the ground...

SMASH CUT:

UMPIRE
STRIKE THREE!!!

The KID BATTER is untouched, but his fantasy has frozen him to his spot. He is out.

The KID walks away from the plate. On his way he passes the next batter.

They give each other a look...a look of fear.

RAPID INTERCUTS:

Batter Number Two.

GUS FLASHES ONE FINGER. The ball sings in, the guys swings and misses.

GUS SIGNALS A ONE...second ball, a smoker.

GUS SIGNALS A ONE. Chapel delivers...Umpire bends his knees, jerks his arm and sends the guy out on strikes.

Batter Number Three. GUS is smiling now. We can see it in his eyes as he flicks his finger against the white fabric of his uniform...one...one...one...

THWUMP, THWUMP, THWUMP.

The third batter is still standing there with his bat up, even though the inning is over.

AND CHAPEL walks away from the mound. The Conqueror.

CUT TO:

THE DUGOUT

Chapel plops next to Gus, who is removing his shin guards.

GUS
You're in the zone.

CHAPEL
Feels good.

They fall silent. Watch the game. Watch Eric Matthews fly out.

CHAPEL

San Francisco is a fine town.

GUS

Sure is.

CHAPEL

But you won't be there.

GUS

You don't need me, Billy.

Chapel turns.

GUS

You don't need anybody. They
need you. Giants are lucky
bastards.

Gus moves off. Chapel broods. Looks out at the field.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. BALTIMORE ORIOLES STADIUM - NIGHT

Lights glaring white. Chapel makes a pitch to Cal Ripken. He releases the ball...and suddenly clutches his shoulder...his face contorts in excruciating pain...

Ripken gets a huge hit... towering fly ball headed out toward right field...

Mickey Bell stumbles backward...trying to keep a bead on the ball...it's gonna be close...he leaps up...

The ball passes by his mitt. Home Run. Mickey slams into the wall with a goofy crash that's sure to make the blooper reel.

Orioles fans go WILD as Ripken trots around the bases.

ON THE MOUND, Chapel is doubled over. The medic, the pitching coach and Heck Harman are hustling out to him.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - LATER

Chapel sits on a high massage table in his underwear. Frank, the pitching coach, manipulates his arm...

CHAPEL

Couldn't make it through three
goddamn innings.

FRANK
I think it's a pull.

CHAPEL
Where are we now?

FRANK
Top of the ninth. Down by two.

CHAPEL
Fix me up. I wanna catch the
plane to Cleveland.

FRANK
I'll fix you up. With a valium
and a hotel room. You stay here
tonight...

CHAPEL
In Baltimore?

FRANK
...and get x-rayed in the
morning.

CHAPEL
It's just a pull...

FRANK
Forget it. You're on the
fifteen day.

CHAPEL
What am I gonna do in Baltimore?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Chapel's arm is in a sling. He tries to pack his bag with one hand. MICKEY BELL sits glumly on the bench at the other end of the room.

MICKEY
Sorry about that homer.

CHAPEL
Cut it out, Mick, you couldn't
have caught it.

MICKEY
Ursa woulda caught it.

CHAPEL

Ursa bats three thirty and has
twenty-eight stolen bases. We
can't all be that. You do fine.

Young Pete, the equipment manager, sticks his head in the door.

PETE

Mick, get on the bus or we're
checking you with the baggage.

Pete leaves. Mickey still doesn't move.

MICKEY

Took me ten years to get to the
Show, and I'm thankful to the
Lord. I am. But once...just
once I'd like to be the hero.

CHAPEL

You are the hero. You keep us
all laughing.

Mickey stands. Sobered.

MICKEY

Then I shoulda been a comedian.

He takes up his bag and walks out.

Chapel stands there. All alone. In this strange clubhouse in
this strange town. He turns to the locker and pulls his
leather jacket off the hanger.

The door opens with a squeaky hiss.

CHAPEL

I'm not getting the plane, Pete.

Chapel turns.

JANE STANDS THERE.

He can't believe it. Not only that she is there, but his own
surge of emotion.

JANE

I saw it on television.

CHAPEL

How did you get here?

JANE

I drove.

CHAPEL

All the way here from Manhattan?

She nods. He doesn't know what to say.

CHAPEL

What were you driving? The Space Shuttle?

JANE

Tough chicks drive fast.

She sort of smiles. He does too.

JANE

Are you alright? You looked ...in pain.

CHAPEL

It's just a pull.

He looks at her a long time, his hand kneading the soft leather of his jacket. He finally speaks, the simple, bald truth.

CHAPEL

I'm so happy to see you.

EXT. TURNPIKE - NIGHT

A beat-up old white Karman-Ghia moves down the turnpike.

INT. JANE'S CAR - NIGHT

She drives. Chapel unloads a fastfood bag...hamburgers and shakes and fries.

JANE

I've had this car since I was sixteen. This is the car I drove across the country from Oregon to New York. I dropped out of high school, are you shocked? And I ran away with this crummy musician boyfriend. He was like...a skinny, ugly Mick Jagger, which I know might be a...quadruple negative or something but...anyway. He was gonna be a rock star and I was gonna write novels.

CHAPEL

What happened?

JANE
He got addicted to heroin. I
got a short story published in
the "New Yorker."

CHAPEL
You're kidding.

JANE
My five minutes of fame.

CHAPEL
Can I read it?

JANE
No. Did they give me vanilla,
on that shake? Because I'm a
vanilla person, and they always
give me chocolate. It's a
conspiracy.

She looks over. Chapel is looking at her, smiling.

JANE
What?

CHAPEL
I want to read it.

JANE
Read my Tydee Bowl commercial.
It's my true masterpiece.

He holds out a few french fries. She eats them.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN - FOUR IN THE MORNING

Fifth Avenue is relatively empty; a few taxis loping along here
and there. And then...

JANE'S KARMAN-GHIA streaks into view. She must be going a
hundred past Bergdorf's and Bendel's and Saks Fifth Avenue.

She and Chapel can be heard hooting with glee from the open
windows.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET - VERY LATE AT NIGHT

The car is parked slant-wise in front of an old brownstone. It
doesn't quite fit between two cars...the front end sticks out
into the street.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT

Chapel stands in the middle of her living room. Overwhelmed at the intense...personality of the space. Papers and books everywhere. A cat curled up on the couch. Everything looks comfortable, warm, beautiful...everything looks like her.

CHAPEL

This is where you live?

JANE

Home sweet home.

CHAPEL

Thanks. I couldn't have faced a hotel room.

She takes off her jacket, disappears down the hallway.

JANE

(calling)

Where do you live?

CHAPEL

Oh. I have a place. A couple places. Florida. Aspen.

She reappears.

JANE

I'll make some tea. The bedroom's through there.

She goes back into the kitchen. He walks down the tiny hallway...there's two doors, one open, he catches a glimpse of the big, wide bed as he passes into...

JANE'S ROOM

A tall old dresser. A nightstand piled high with books, a tiny clock, a vase of flowers and...

A BASEBALL. The baseball he had given her is perched there on the table by her bed.

He goes to it. Picks it up.

JANE

I like to hold it.

He turns. She is leaning in the doorway.

JANE

In my hand. Cause I know you're somewhere doing the same thing.

They stare at each other. She comes to him. Takes the ball out of his hand. Gently presses his shoulders...he sits on the bed.

She kneels in front of him. She takes off his shoes. His socks. Strokes the top of his tired feet once with her smooth, feather-light hands. She unbuttons his shirt. He watches her part the fabric from his skin.

Her fingers touch his bare chest. Linger there. She kisses the hard smooth pillows of muscle, covered with downy hair...kisses down, across his belly...lower, lower...

He breathes as her hands reach his belt buckle. She undoes it. Unbuttons his pants, pulls down the zipper.

CHAPEL

Jane...

He lifts her face to his. He kisses her, her mouth opens to him, her neck straining upward, wanting more...his tongue gently brushing her lips...

She pushes him back onto the bed.

INT. JANE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jane straddles him, makes love to him in a slow, easy way...his hands reach up to touch her breasts...

JANE

Your shoulder...

CHAPEL

I don't care.

JANE

Shhh.

She pins his hands to the bed at his side. She moves her hips up and down...she watches his face change, give in...

INT. JANE'S ROOM - LATER

The clock reads five thirty a.m. It is still dark outside. Jane stirs. Awakens...

THE BED IS EMPTY. Chapel is gone.

Jane gets up.

INT. HALLWAY

Jane steps out of the bedroom, pulling her robe around her...

HER P.O.V. There is a single lamp glowing from the living room.

She creeps down the hall...her view of the front room widening with each step, until she sees...

CHAPEL sitting on the rug in the middle of the floor, the NEWSPAPER spread out before him.

He is going over the box scores. Pouring over the description of each inning. Making notes on a steno pad.

Jane watches him for a moment. Then turns back to the bedroom.

JANE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Morning sun seeping in at the windows. Jane lays on her side, her face obscured.

Chapel enters. Gently sits on the bed.

CHAPEL
Are you sleeping?

JANE
No.

He gets in beside her. Wraps his arms around her back.

JANE
What are we gonna do, Chapel?

CHAPEL
About what?

JANE
You're in my bed.

CHAPEL
Want me to leave?

JANE
No. And I don't know what to do about that.

CHAPEL
Do we have to do anything?

Something in Jane's face seems to change. Darken. It is very subtle, not angry or sad just...closed.

CHAPEL

Who's that?

JANE

What?

Chapel's arm reaches across her to the nightstand on her side and picks up...

A FRAMED PHOTO. A snapshot of a smiling, laughing ten-year-old girl.

JANE

That's Heather. She's my daughter.

CHAPEL

You have a daughter? Where is she?

JANE

She spends summers with her father.

Chapel sits up against the pillows, holding the picture.

CHAPEL

You never told me you had a daughter.

She takes the picture out of his hands. Dusts it off with the sheet. She puts the picture back on the table.

JANE

When do you have to get back to the team?

CHAPEL

Couple of days. I'll probably catch up with them in Chicago, or Anaheim...

He begins to hear himself.

CHAPEL

You could...maybe you could... visit...

JANE

Chapel, you don't have to...

CHAPEL

I want to see you.

JANE

Let's not...let's not get that way, like people do. That stupid bullshit why-didn't-you-call-me crap. Let's make a pact. Right now. Let's just have fun, okay?

CHAPEL

Have fun...

JANE

Let's have the best time we can possibly have whenever we're together, whenever that might be. And just...keep it open, we don't have to get all serious...

CHAPEL

But when the Hawks play the Yankees...

JANE

I'll be there.

CHAPEL

A standing date?

JANE

Well. Let's see what kinda seats you come up with.

CUT TO:

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT DAY

Chapel walks out to the mound. He is singing again..."Radar Love."

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"I been driving all night, my hands wet on the wheel..."

Chapel makes a pitch...THE BATTER hits a grounder to Giordano at third, one out.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"There's a voice in my head that drives my heel..."

FLASHBACK - EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Chapel sits in the bleachers watching kids play softball. He sees Jane coming toward him in the distance, waving...

CHAPEL'S VOICE
 "My baby called, said I need ya
 here..."

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT

Chapel makes a pitch, the guy hits a fly ball to Matthews in shallow left.

CHAPEL'S VOICE
 "An'it's half past four and I'm
 shifting gears..."

FLASHBACK - INT. PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

Camped out. Jane lays in the rumpled bed, watching Chapel futz with the hotel TV, which shows a snowy, obscured picture.

CHAPEL'S VOICE
 "When I get lonely and I'm sure
 I've had enough..."

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Jane sits Indian style on a chair and is splicing the cable wires with a steak knife. She reconnects them to the TV...THE PICTURE IS CLEAR. She grins.

CHAPEL'S VOICE
 "She sends me comfort coming in
 from above..."

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT

Chapel sets down the Yankees in order in the fourth, striking out an enraged TUTTLE for the second time in the game.

Chapel walks to the dugout.

ON THE SCOREBOARD, the goose eggs blink on as TIME PASSES...a big O for the Yankees in the bottom of the fourth, another taking shape for the Hawks in the top of the Fifth...

CHAPEL'S VOICE
 "She don't need a letter at
 aaaaalll..."

FLASHBACK - EXT. CHI-CHI MANHATTAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Jane and Chapel are escorted swiftly inside a gala party...Jane looks in awe as Billy greets MICHAEL JORDAN and PAUL NEWMAN.

CHAPEL'S VOICE
"She's got a thing, that's
called radar love..."

INT. DUGOUT - PRESENT

Chapel is nudged. It is time for him to pitch again...

FLASHBACK - INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Chapel is sitting on the couch in his underwear, reading a
tattered old NEW YORKER.

JANE peeks her head out from the kitchen, watching him...

He seems to finish. He closes the magazine, looks up to see
her...HE SMILES.

She hides her face in her hands and disappears again.

CHAPEL'S VOICE
"She's got a light in the
sky..."

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT

Chapel pitches, BIRCH hits it foul off the first base
line...Whitt backs up, backs up...calls off Mickey Bell...and
makes the catch.

Birch shakes his head. Amused at Chapel's dominance.

CHAPEL'S VOICE
"She's got a thing that's called
Radar Love..."

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT

Chapel throws to the next batter, who hits a sharp liner, but
directly to the second baseman, Ransom.

CHAPEL'S VOICE
"She's got a thing that's
caaaaalled..."

FLASHBACK - EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT

Late at night. Workers clean the stands under the lights.
On the field, Chapel and Jane are two small figures, alone,
dancing on the vast expanse of green.

CHAPEL'S VOICE
 "Radar Love..."

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT DAY

Chapel winds up, sends the ball down the corridor...

ROSS'S VOICE
 This is baseball at its best,
 folks. Homeruns are fine, but
 give me a good old fashioned
 pitching duel anyday.

The Yankee takes. The umpire calls a strike. The batter
 FREAKS OUT, throws down his helmet...

ON THE SCOREBOARD, another "0" lights up next to the Yankees
 name.

ROSS'S VOICE
 We're going to the top of the
 sixth, Hawks 0, Yankees 0.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH

Ross speaks into his microphone. Beside him, a MONITOR shows
 what the television audience at home is seeing. A CLOSE UP of
 BILLY as he walks to the dugout.

ROSS
 The shadows are getting long.
 It's only five o'clock, but
 summer's going. Yankee fans are
 ready, hey, bring on the Fall
 Classic. But I'll tell you,
 when you get to a certain age
 you never want the summers to
 end. And I got a sneaking
 suspicion that today, Billy
 Chapel isn't pitching against
 the Yankees...he's pitching
 against time. Against the
 future, against age, against
 endings. And today, I believe
 he could win. I believe he may
 use his aching old arm to push
 the sun back up in the sky, and
 give us one more day of summer.

Ross falls silent. MARV looks at him, nudges his shoulder.
 But Ross keeps watching Chapel.

Asburg attempts to save the dead air.

ASBURG
One more day. We'll be right
back with more from Yankee
Stadium.

He turns off his mike. Leans back.

ASBURG
What the hell's going on?

Ross looks up.

ASBURG
Chapel's not dead, Ross. It's
just a game.

ROSS
This is different.

ASBURG
I knew it. What is it?

Ross shakes his head.

ASBURG
What? He has cancer. He's on
drugs. He's your secret homo
lover.

ROSS
You're an idiot, Marv.

ASBURG
What do ya got? Come on, man,
we're partners.

ROSS
They're trading him. To the
Giants.

Beat. Asburg is, for once, at a loss for words.

ASBURG
They can't trade Billy Chapel.
He is the Hawks.

ROSS
That's what I said when I told
him this morning.

ASBURG
You told him.

ROSS
Yeah. He's thinking about
hanging it up.

ASBURG
Jesus. What a scoop. Aren't
you gonna break it?

ROSS
He hasn't decided yet. There's
nothing to break.

ASBURG
Look at this game, Ross! Look
at how he's pitching!

ROSS
It's not confirmed.

ASBURG
So what! Say its a rumor. It's
your duty, Ross. Keep the
people tuned in.

ROSS
Chapel's doing that all by
himself.

The AD counts down, silently, Asburg and Ross put on their game
faces...Asburg takes the lead, something different in his
voice...he's starting to take notice.

ASBURG
Top of the sixth, we're locked
in a scoreless tie...

We push in on...

THE MONITOR, where the camera is on Chapel, sitting in the
dugout. We see him make an almost habitual, unconscious
gesture...

HE RUBS THE BICEPS of his pitching arm.

DISSOLVE TO:

ANOTHER TELEVISION SCREEN

INT. AIRPORT BAR

Where Jane has been joined by a noisy bunch of Yankee fans.

JANE
His arm's hurting.

DRUNK YANKEE FAN
What do you mean? He's killing
us.

JANE
He rubbed his arm...see, he's
doing it again, right there...he
does that when it's tingling.
Pretty soon it'll feel numb.

DRUNK YANKEE FAN
What are you, his mother?

JANE
I know him.

DRUNK YANKEE FAN
Right, honey. And I'm Mickey
Mantle.

He blows smoke in her face. Other drunken bruisers cheer. He
gets up.

She looks in her pack of cigarettes...ONE LEFT. She looks
around, then reaches in the Drunk Yankee Fan's coat pocket and
pulls out a FRESH PACK of MARLBORO'S.

She takes it, replacing it with her own nearly empty one.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Can I get one a those?

Jane turns. There's a woman sitting beside her.

WOMAN
You should steal the coat too.
Asshole. I hate Yankee fans.

JANE
You rooting for the Hawks?

WOMAN
Sure. I'm with you, honey.

Jane holds out the pack. The woman takes it. They light up.
Watch the TV through the smoke.

WOMAN
You really know Billy Chapel?

Jane's eyes cloud. She peers into her drink.

JANE
...yeah.

WOMAN

Oh. Love, huh?

A VOICE comes over the PA.

BRITISH WOMAN'S VOICE

This is a preliminary boarding
announcement for British Airways
flight 17 with service to
London's Heathrow...

Jane begins to pack up her things.

WOMAN

You're gonna miss the game.

JANE

I don't want to see it.

WOMAN

Your guy's winning.

JANE

He won't win.

WOMAN

Why not?

Jane finishes the last of her drink.

JANE

He's stubborn. He's hurting,
and...he won't tell anyone
or...ask them...I don't know.
He's gonna lose 'cause that's
the way my day is going.

WOMAN

Honey, that's the way my life is
going.

The two women clink glasses.

CUT TO:

INT. DUGOUT - SAME

Chapel is sitting on the bench. Letting his arm hang. Moving
his fingers, tensing his hand in and out of a fist.

Frank Perry comes by...Chapel stops.

FRANK

How ya holding up?

CHAPEL

Good, good.

Frank sits down beside him. Speaking low, seriously.

FRANK

Listen to me, Billy. If you're in pain, you gotta say. You gotta come out. It's not worth it to blow it all on this. We need you for next year.

Just then...a CRACK of the bat...

ON THE FIELD

Gus Osinski has made contact. It's a shallow fly that drops in the gap, he'll have to run it out, and he's slow...his shirt is pulling out of his pants as he PUSHES, DIVING for the bag...

UMPIRE

Safe!

IN THE DUGOUT

The team is cheering.

CHAPEL

Way to go, Gus! Way to go!

Chapel exchanges a look with HARMAN, who is happy to eat crow if it means getting a run.

CHAPEL'S P.O.V. Gus gets up. Grinning, brushing off his uniform. He makes a signal to someone in the audience...

HIS GIRLFRIEND is clapping wildly, her ample cleavage fairly bursting...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. KANSAS CITY ROYALS STADIUM - DAY

JANE CLAPPING...the camera PULLS BACK to reveal...

A DIFFERENT STADIUM....no city around the outskirts, the flat, bright sun of a Kansas day beating down.

Jane wears a cap and sunglasses...fans herself. All around her, Royals supporters are shouting. Stomping their feet.

HER P.O.V. The scoreboard. 3-2, Hawks over the Chiefs. Two outs. Chapel on the mound with men on first and third.

Jane leans forward. Focusing on Chapel.

HER P.O.V. He is pitching from the stretch. His body turned toward her, straight as an arrow, erect, his concentration total, he looks in for the sign, looks back at first base.

He is so handsome at this moment. So sure of himself, a man at the peak of his powers...

Chapel delivers the pitch...SOCK, the batter hits a line drive...it's whizzing toward Cabrillos...maybe Ozzie Smith could have made the play, but certainly not Jesus. He leaps to his side but he can't reach the ball, which goes tumbling merrily into the outfield.

BOTH BASERUNNERS SCORE, giving Kansas the lead. Chapel stands with a hand on his hip.

INT. CLUBHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Chapel and Jane are walking out, through the concrete hallways. It is a long, silent process.

Chapel's face is set in anger. He's not talking. Jane feels his edginess.

JANE

You know...

CHAPEL

Don't.

Jane looks at him.

CHAPEL

Don't say anything.

His voice is low, his eyes like steel. Jane clams up. Click click click, their feet carry them down the concrete corridor to the exit. Chapel pushes the door open...sunlight pours in.

OUTSIDE, a small group of admirers awaits him...

TEENAGE BOY

Hey, Billy, Billy!

And Jane sees Chapel transform before her eyes...from a morose, taciturn loser to a gracious, smiling superstar. Signing autographs, shaking hands.

Jane watches silently as he gives himself to the fans.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Chapel sits in a chair, staring off into space. Jane is looking out the windows of the suite.

CHAPEL

I don't know how he hit it.

JANE

Well, he had this big wooden bat in his hands...

He doesn't laugh.

JANE

Big...wooden bat...yeah.

CHAPEL

You don't need to cheer me up. I just have to think about it until I...stop thinking about it.

She gets up. Goes to her purse and takes out a cigarette. Flicks on her lighter.

CHAPEL

Are you gonna smoke that?

She stops.

CHAPEL

The smoke really cuts down on my stamina.

She puts the cigarettes down. Plops on the bed.

JANE

I hope you win in Oakland.

CHAPEL

Maybe you shouldn't come to Oakland. Season's almost over, I'll have lots of time. Come up to Aspen. Come spend a month...

JANE

I have to work.

CHAPEL

Oh.

JANE

I don't have an off-season.

They stare at each other. He comes to sit beside her.

CHAPEL

I'm sorry. Let's...let's talk about something else. What's happening with you?

JANE

Heather's coming home next weekend.

CHAPEL

She excited to get back to school?

JANE

Yeah. Chapel, I have to tell you something...

CHAPEL

(interrupting)

It was the wrist, it had to be. Because I had the follow through, my hand ended up down and across the thigh...

He makes the movement...

CHAPEL

Down and across...but the wrist snap...

JANE

You threw a sinker that didn't sink. It was slow and straight and even I could have hit it. You made a mistake. Big deal. It's just a game.

CHAPEL

It isn't just a game. Your writing isn't just a game...

JANE

Sure it is.

CHAPEL

Maybe that's why you never got another story published.

Jane gasps at his audacity.

JANE

You think I didn't try to be a writer? You think I didn't come home for years after this and pound out more stories and send them to every goddamn magazine I could think of? Huh? I even wrote a goddamn book! That's the best I could do.

CHAPEL

How do you know?

JANE

How many kids wanted to be ballplayers? Every one. Every little boy you see. And most of them didn't. They had to grow up and face the fact that they weren't good enough. But you never did. You're the best there is.

(she swallows)

Well, I'm just J. Aubrey. That's all. One of the A's in the phone book.

She snatches up her cigarettes, crosses to the balcony, throws open the arcadia door and steps onto the depressing concrete "terrace."

Chapel looks out at the terrace. He gets up to follow her...but stops.

He suddenly goes into a slow motion wind-up...reliving that pitch.

CUT TO:

PRESENT - DUGOUT - YANKEE STADIUM

ANOTHER HIT shakes Chapel awake.

This time it's Marcus Ransom. A smooth grounder to center... Gus is going...Marcus makes it to first...

Everybody's safe.

The Hawks have themselves a rally. Brian Whitt is coming to the plate.

Chapel claps, absently, the memory still strong in his mind...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - THE HOTEL TERRACE - LATE AFTERNOON

Jane has finished her cigarette. Chapel appears. Leans on the railing beside her.

CHAPEL

Hi.

JANE

Hi.

They both stare out, not looking at each other.

JANE

I shouldn't have come.

CHAPEL

You're not what you said in there. You're so much more.

Pause. Jane doesn't answer.

CHAPEL

You want to go out or something?

JANE

What do you usually do when you're here?

CHAPEL

Eat. See a movie. Get on my skateboard and hit the 7-11.

Jane finally looks at him.

CHAPEL

I grew up here.

JANE

You're a farm kid?

CHAPEL

Sort of. We bred dogs.

He touches her slender hand. She lets him.

JANE

Dogs? What kind?

CHAPEL

Different kinds. Border Collies. Setters. Sheep Dogs.

JANE

Are your parents alive?

CHAPEL

They both died in the last
couple years. They were older.

JANE

Is it far?

Her hand turns upward to hold his.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LONG SHOT - LATE AFTERNOON

It rises out of the flat wheatfields, silhouetted against the
red sunset.

The house has new tenants. You can see lights on in the
windows. And a rental car parked on the road.

Chapel and Jane knock on the door...an OLD MAN opens it. We
see Chapel explaining.

INT. BARN

The roof stretches up to its traditional peak...beams shoot
across...empty stables and mildewed hay bales decay in the
golden, fading sunlight that stripes the interior.

CHAPEL

This is where we used to
practice, cause if we played
outside the dogs were always
chasing the balls and running
off with 'em.

Chapel looks around. Finds a dirty, folded-up tarp.

CHAPEL

He used a towel. A great big
bath towel.

He fusses with the tarp, folding it and refolding it to get it
just the right size, then ceremoniously LAYS IT DOWN on the
dirt floor near the door. Jane watches with interest.

CHAPEL

That's what he called home
plate. Course, the towel got
smaller as I got better.

He counts off paces from the towel...sixty feet. He turns and
looks at Jane.

CHAPEL

Come here.

She crosses to him. He takes a baseball out of his jacket pocket. It always seems like a trick.

CHAPEL

Give me your hand.

He opens up her paper-thin palm, and places the ball in it, closing her fingers around it.

CHAPEL

Feels good, huh?

JANE

Mmmmm.

CHAPEL

The seams are the brilliance of it. Depending on where you place your fingers on those seams...you can send that ball any which way you want to.

Chapel leaves her there and walks back behind the towel.

CHAPEL

My daddy would set me up there, where you are, with a bucket of balls beside me...they had a Single A club over in Hazelton, I used to run around in the street collecting up homers... then he'd hunker back here...no mask, nothing...

He bends and holds out his hands...

CHAPEL

Just get it over the towel...

JANE

Me?

CHAPEL

All you gotta do is throw it over the towel.

JANE

What if I don't want to?

CHAPEL

You don't have to.

JANE
Is that what he said?

CHAPEL
He didn't push me, if that's
what you mean. I wanted to. I
used to dream about it, getting
the ball over, about it curving
and dropping. Used to draw
pictures of it all over my
homework.

Jane twirls the ball in her hands. She suddenly winds up, as
she has seen pitchers do, and throws the ball...

IT GOES WAY TO THE SIDE, nowhere near the towel, and THWONKS
into the barn door. Somewhere a dog barks.

JANE
You can't see a thing when
you're doing all that winding up

CHAPEL
Valenzuela's eyes used to close
when his arm came over.

He tosses the ball back to her.

CHAPEL
Keep your eye on me, now...

Jane throws it on the outside corner. Chapel has to stick his
hand out, but she gets it over the towel.

CHAPEL
There you go. Ready for the
Majors.

He throws her the ball again. She catches it. Looks at it.

JANE
You love it, don't you?

CHAPEL
Baseball? I do.

JANE
Why?

CHAPEL
I can't...put it into words.

JANE
Try.

Chapel thinks.

CHAPEL

When I go out there...it's all of me. I don't know. When I'm...happy...if you asked me when I was the most...the best moments of my life...it's the late innings, men on base, in scoring position, you know, no easy outs, their best hitters coming up...and you stand there and take a deep breath and then you give it all you have, all you have. You pour yourself out. And the great thing about baseball, about sports, is that sometimes...it works. The miracle happens. Sometimes you win. Sometimes, everything inside you, everything you have...is actually enough.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT - DAY

CARAAAACKK!!! Brian Whitt, at the plate, has just SMACKED a base hit. Ransom is on first, Gus on second...

The guys in the Hawks dugout rise as one.

Gus is chugging toward third base, the coach is WAVING HIM HOME...Ransom, behind him is rounding second...

IN THE OUTFIELD, the center fielder picks up the ball and THROWS IT HARD...

Gus is puffing, pushing, running as fast as he can toward home plate...

THE YANKEE CATCHER prepares to block him, his mitt out for the ball sailing his way...

Gus puts his head down like a bull...

The ball hits the Yankee catcher's mitt...

Gus and the catcher COLLIDE...two semi-trucks crashing head-on, time seems to stand still...and then we see it. That mischievous little white ball ROLLING out from the fracas toward the backstop.

Gus crawls across the dirt and SLAPS home plate with his hand...

The Umpire yells SAFE!!!

The Hawks WHOOP IT UP. Gus trots to the dugout, returns to his fives and hugs and pats. His face is flushed and full of pride. He gets to Chapel, who gives him a rattling handshake.

GUS
That was for you, Chappie.

CUT TO:

CHAPEL ON THE MOUND

AN OLD BUCKET is set on the dirt beside him...

HIS HAND reaches in, disappearing from view...it comes out....

IT IS A CHILD'S HAND.

CHAPEL as a BOY OF FIVE is standing on the mound at Yankee Stadium. We hear his voice...as a kid...singing...

KID'S VOICE
"Ooooooooo-klahoma where the
wind come's sweepin' down the
plain..."

Behind the plate CHAPEL'S FATHER is clapping his hands for the ball. The towel lays across homeplate.

Dotted all around the field...DOGS. Big shaggy sheep dogs, red setters, rambunctious border collies, sniffing the grass, laying by the infield players, running around in the outfield. The Yankee hitter, the scared kid from the third inning, steps up to the plate and waits for the pitch from the boy...

YOUNG BILLY delivers...the hitter swings, hits a hard grounder to WHITT at first. He steps on the bag.

CUT TO:

THE MOUND

Chapel, now eight years old, reaches in the bucket for a ball.

KID'S VOICE
"You ain't nothin' but a hound
dog, cryin all the time..."

YANKEE BATTER NUMBER TWO hits a fly ball to center. Eric Ursa catches it.

CUT TO:

THE MOUND

Chapel, now twelve and entering awkward puberty, reaches in the bucket for another ball.

KID'S VOICE

"When I saw her standing
there..."

Chapel throws, striking out the batter.

CUT TO:

THE MOUND

Chapel is now seventeen. Lanky and pimply and cocky.

TEENAGER'S VOICE

"He can't be a man cause he
doesn't smoke the same
cigarettes as me..."

HIS FATHER, still behind the plate, is older.

Teenage Chapel reaches in the bucket...

TEENAGER'S VOICE

"I Can't Get No..."

The batter waits at the plate...the pitch is delivered...
Wood touches leather...it's a grounder to Ransom who fields it
at second.

CUT TO:

CHAPEL AT TWENTY-FIVE, reaching in the bucket, delivers the
pitch, the batter strikes out.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"And when we saaaaay...Yeow!"
"Ayipiyoiyaaaaaay...."

CUT TO:

CHAPEL AT HIS CURRENT AGE

Standing on the mound, he reaches in and plucks out...

THE LAST BALL IN THE BUCKET.

His own breath roars in Chapel's ears. He doesn't sing. He
doesn't speak or even think. He looks at the ball...looks at
home plate...

HIS FATHER, now very old and feeble, FADES AWAY...GUS takes his place at the plate.

AND TUTTLE walks forward. Cranky and snarling and hungry for a hit. This is his third at bat and possibly his last of the game if he can't get something going.

Chapel stands, looking at him, prepared to do battle. He bends, looking for a sign.

Tuttle spits and crouches in his by now familiar neanderthal batting stance.

Chapel finds his voice again...low, determined.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"We're only sayin' you're doin'
fine, Oklahoma...Oklahoma..."

He nods almost imperceptibly. Straightens. Rests the ball in his mitt at his belt.

CHAPEL'S VOICE

"O,K,L,A,H,O,M,A
Oklahooooooma!"

On that last note he FIRES the ball, his arm coming over his head and YANKING hard...

Big Tuttle makes a surprise move, sliding his bat down in his two hands and BUNTING...

The ball takes a bounce, sails over Chapel's head, he has to LEAP UP in the air and EXTEND his ARM high...

He CATCHES THE BALL IN HIS MITT...comes down, in slow motion...HITTING THE GROUND WITH A THUD.

Billy whirls and RELEASES the ball...his shoulder injury twinges...he grimaces...pain sears through his body and...

RRRRRAAAHHHHHHHH!!!!

The crowd noise BURSTS through Chapel's consciousness, straight to his eardrums like thunder. He HEARS THEM. Boy, does he hear them.

They are screaming for Tuttle to beat the throw to first. The ball sails through the air. Whitt stretches, straining to dig it out. Tuttle runs past...

The Umpire waits for dramatic effect.

UMPIRE

Out!!

The crowd WAILS. Tuttle can't believe it, he yells and points to the bag as if it were a corroborating witness. The Yankee manager is hustling out as well.

And Chapel HEARS IT ALL. A cacophony of sound. He stands on the mound, looking up, stunned, as if he hadn't known there were quite so many people there.

HIS P.O.V. The stands stretch up, filled to capacity with dots of color...tiny, fleshy faces of fifty, maybe sixty thousand people.

CUT TO:

INT. BROADCASTING BOOTH

D.B. Ross and Marv Asburg lean in to their mikes.

ROSS

Incredible! We are witnessing the domination of a great team by a great pitcher.

ASBURG

If you've been keeping score at home, I don't have to tell you...

ROSS

Don't jinx it, Marv.

ASBURG

Alright, Ross. But I will say this....we may be seeing one of the rarest feats in this grand old game. And it's all the more moving when you consider the rumor we uncovered early this morning...

Ross looks at Asburg in shock. He mouths to Asburg..."Don't you fucking dare..."

Marv looks at his partner.

MARV

I repeat, it's just a rumor...

ON THE MONITOR

The camera is showing TUTTLE arguing with the umpire, the Yankee manager trying desperately to pull him away...

ASBURG

As you know, teams like to wheel and deal in the off season, especially a last place team like the Hawks, and we have it from sources close to the management...

Ross sees Marv is going to scoop him. He JUMPS IN.

ROSS

It's not official, folks, but word is that Billy Chapel, after playing for this same franchise his entire nineteen years in baseball...

ASBURG

Another rare feat...

Ross flips him off. Keeping his finger up all through the announcement...

ROSS

...is being traded to the San Francisco Giants for three as yet unnamed players.

CUT TO:

THE STANDS

Certain fans sprinkled throughout have radios and Sony Watchmen...we see them get the news...people all over the stadium talking, nudging, telling their neighbors.

ROSS'S VOICE

I spoke to Chapel this morning in his hotel room. At thirty-nine years old, he's wondering whether it's worth it.

INT. HAWKS CLUBHOUSE - SAME

Pete is glued to a TV...Ross is on the picture now.

ROSS

To play out his final years in a strange uniform, in an unknown city...

Pete gets up out of the chair, runs out...

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT BAR

Jane's seat is empty. The WOMAN she had been talking to watches the television...

ON THE SCREEN, Tuttle and the Umpire are now in each other's face...

ROSS'S VOICE

We could be watching this great pitcher's last game.

MARV'S VOICE

And what a game it would be.

The Woman turns...

HER P.O.V. At the gate, Jane is giving her boarding pass to the stewardess.

ON THE TELEVISION, the Umpire makes a huge, sweeping gesture across his body. Tuttle throws down his helmet...

ROSS'S VOICE

The first base umpire has just ejected Tuttle from the game...

CUT TO:

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - DAY

The Yankee manager is PUSHING hothead Tuttle toward the dugout. The fans hoot and jeer...

Chapel turns and walks off the mound. And then...a strange thing happens...

The Yankee fans get quiet. A low murmuring hum and then...

THEY BEGIN TO CLAP. They are clapping. Not all of them, of course, but enough that he notices, especially the people behind the Hawks' dugout, who stand, holding their applause out...TO HIM.

Chapel can't understand it. He heads for his dugout, expecting some congratulations for his field play.

HIS P.O.V. The guys in his camp are definitely buzzing with happiness, ahead one to nothing, he can see them smiling, patting their first batter in the top of the eighth, the DH, Kevin Spencer.

Chapel arrives, walking down the steps...and the team gets VERY QUIET.

HIS P.O.V. Smiles fade...they look away as his eyes meet theirs. They step out of his way, one after another, clearing a path to his spot on the end of the bench.

ON THE SEAT, someone has left a BABY RUTH CANDY BAR.

He approaches it. Picks it up, looks around.

No one pays the least bit of attention to him. They are absorbed in their own conversations and thoughts.

Chapel sits. Suddenly, abruptly rather tired. Aware of pain...numbness in his arm. He absently unwraps the candy bar. Takes a bite. Turns to JESUS, sitting next to him.

CHAPEL

Hey.

Jesus snaps his head toward him, something like fear in his eyes.

CHAPEL

When you begin to hear the crowd, that's time to quit. You ever notice that?

Cabrillos stares at him.

CABRILLOS

Bueno, Chapel. Muy bueno.

Then he gets up. Moves away, sitting near Giordano and talking with him. The other teammates throw furtive glances at him.

Chapel munches on the candy bar.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. JANE'S GREENWICH VILLAGE APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's winter. Cold wind and dead trees.

A taxi deposits Chapel at the curb. He has flowers. He walks up the steps and knocks on the door. He waits.

It opens...

CHAPEL

Surprise!

But it isn't Jane. It's a co-ed, nineteen. Dirty hair, pretty face, sharp eyes.

GIRL
Hi.

CHAPEL
Hi.

CHAPEL
...is Jane here?

HEATHER
She'll be back soon. You want
to come in and wait?

She holds out her hands for the flowers. He gives them to her.

IN THE HOUSE

He follows her down the hallway toward the kitchen.

GIRL
You're not wearing your hat.

CHAPEL
Pardon?

GIRL
You're the Sport Formula guy.
Are you here to work on another
commercial?

IN THE KITCHEN

Chapel stands awkwardly as the girl puts the flowers in a vase.

CHAPEL
No. I'm...Jane and I...

The girl turns to him. Puts a hand on her hip. Very
proprietary. She has a little half-smile that suddenly seems
very familiar.

GIRL
Jane and you what?

Chapel is very confused.

CHAPEL
Do you...are you the babysitter,
or...?

The girl's smile fades.

GIRL
Are you my mother's boyfriend?

CHAPEL

Your mother?

She looks down, her voice suddenly sounding very young.

GIRL

What a creep.

CHAPEL

I'm sorry.

GIRL

Not you, her.

She opens a cupboard and pulls down a jar of MARSHMALLOW FLUFF.

GIRL

I'm Heather, okay? And I don't need a babysitter anymore.

CHAPEL

Heather Heather?

She is agitated. Yanks open a squeaky drawer...utensils rattle within. She takes out a spoon.

HEATHER

Heather Heather Aubrey. Like Butros Butrosghali.

She opens the jar, dips the tip of a spoon in and takes a gooey bite.

CHAPEL

I thought you were ten.

HEATHER

She never told you about me?

CHAPEL

She did but...I guess I...

(tapers off)

Did she ever mention me?

Heather shakes her head. She sees his disappointment.

She picks up another spoon and holds it out to him, as solace or a peace offering.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

We hear keys in the lock. The door opens...JANE ENTERS, loaded down with books and her briefcase.

JANE
Heather? Sorry I'm so late!

She walks down the hall, dumping things as she goes.

JANE
The subway stopped again. We
sat there in total darkness for
fifteen minutes. I think I may
have had sex with a homeless
man.

She comes into the

KITCHEN DOORWAY...and stops dead in her tracks.

HER P.O.V. Chapel and her daughter are staring at her.

HEATHER
Busted.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Jane and Heather and Chapel have dinner. They're trying hard
at normalcy, but even the dishes tinkle awkwardly.

HEATHER
So, how long have you two been
dating?

JANE
We're not really dating...

CHAPEL
We're not?

JANE
We're very good friends.

HEATHER
You don't sleep together?

Chapel has trouble swallowing his food.

HEATHER
I have to look out for her.
You're by far the cutest guy
she's ever dated.

CHAPEL
I see. Well, we've been...very
good friends for about a year.
And yes, we sleep together.

HEATHER

A year?

Heather stares daggers at her mother.

CHAPEL

So. How long have you been
Jane's daughter?

HEATHER

Nineteen years. But this is my
last day.

JANE

Don't be mad.

HEATHER

He thought I was ten, Mother.
He asked me if I was the
babysitter.

JANE

Honey, it's complicated...

HEATHER

My mother's dating one of the
most famous men in America and I
don't know?

JANE

I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Heather,
I'm sorry, Billy, I'm sorry.
I'll go right now and have it
tattooed on my butt, I'm sorry.

Pause.

CHAPEL

Butros. What do you say we let
her off the hook?

HEATHER

I guess.

JANE

Butros?

They don't volunteer an explanation. Everyone eats.

HEATHER

Dad called.

CHAPEL

Dad?

JANE

Mick Jagger.

HEATHER

Oh. He's Mick Jagger now. She used to call him the Junkie.

JANE

About five years ago he had an acid flashback and remembered he had a daughter.

HEATHER

He's a record producer. Flew me and my girlfriends to Montrose on a private jet to see U2.

JANE

I hate him.

HEATHER

He said he'd pay my tuition until you get another job.

CHAPEL

What?

Jane looks down. Heather looks at Chapel, then at Jane.

HEATHER

Oh, Mom...

CHAPEL

You need another job?

JANE

...I got laid off. There was a merger and...there were too many copywriters, I guess.

CHAPEL

When was this?

Jane clears her throat.

JANE

A few months ago.

Chapel gets very quiet. Heather observes them both.

HEATHER

What is it that you two talk about?

CUT TO:

THE BEDROOM

Chapel stands by himself in Jane's room. After a moment, Jane enters, shuts the door softly behind her.

JANE

She says to say goodnight.

Chapel nods. They just stand there, staring at each other.

CHAPEL

Why didn't you tell me about the job?

JANE

I didn't want to bother you with it.

CHAPEL

I could have helped. If...if you need money...

JANE

I don't want your money.

She crosses to the bed, starts to take the pillows off.

CHAPEL

Why didn't you tell me Heather was nineteen years old?

JANE

I tried. You were too busy trying to figure out if your wrist was snapping correctly.

CHAPEL

At least I'm not keeping secrets. When I'm hurt, you know it, when I lose, you know it, you know everything about me...

JANE

I see you once a month, if I'm lucky. I've never been to your house, I've never met your friends, I don't know what you do in the off-season...

CHAPEL

What do you want to know?

JANE

This is ridiculous.

CHAPEL
Ask me. I'll tell you.

JANE
These aren't the rules we made.

CHAPEL
You made those rules...

JANE
Let's just forget it...

CHAPEL
Come on, Jane!

JANE
Have you been with anyone else?

Chapel looks at her.

JANE
Have you slept with anyone?
Since we've been...

CHAPEL
No.

She tries to hide her relief behind a poker face.

CHAPEL
Have you?

JANE
Of course not.

CHAPEL
Have you lusted in your heart?

She can only manage a dry puff of laughter.

CHAPEL
What's going on, Jane? You
thought I was sleeping around?

JANE
I thought we said we were just
supposed to have fun.

CHAPEL
I've been with you for a year
and I don't even know you.

JANE
You know all the good stuff.

CHAPEL

You think I can't handle the bad stuff?

JANE

I think you have it very easy...

CHAPEL

You think this is easy?! This thing with you?! I never know what you want, I never know what pitch to throw...

JANE

This is life, Chapel, it isn't baseball!

CHAPEL

It sure as hell feels like it. I think I know what's coming and then boom, I get a fastball in the head!

JANE

I'm not playing games.

CHAPEL

Bullshit. You lied, Jane.

JANE

I didn't...

CHAPEL

You kept me out and I want to know why. Why're you trying to beat me? Why're you putting me on the other team?

JANE

Because you are! We're not the same, Chapel! Sure, you lose, but there's always tomorrow. There's always another chance. Because the truth is, life is a game to you. And for now, you're letting me play. You picked me. I don't know why, but...you chose me. And I'm... I'm having the most wonderful time. But...in the end...I have to go home.

CHAPEL

Jane...

JANE

...And when that happens, I want to be okay with it. With my regular old life. It's my gift, I think. Making the best of things. I got pregnant when I was sixteen and it turned to be the best thing that ever happened to me. But...

(pause)

I can't think of a single good thing about losing you.

CHAPEL

You're not gonna lose me.

JANE

That's because I'll never really have you.

CHAPEL

I want to be there for you.

JANE

You can't. You're always off fighting Angels and Indians.

CUT TO:

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT DAY

IN THE DUGOUT, Chapel stares off. All around him, his teammates rise for the bottom of the eighth.

ON THE FIELD

He walks toward the mound. The team follows behind him, silent, serious, electrified. Chapel feels their silent energy behind him, feels the anticipation of the crowd. He is perplexed. Then, for the first time in the entire game, he looks at

THE SCOREBOARD

Zeros, one after the other next to the Yankee name. And at the end, under HITS...

Another round, white fire ZERO of light.

No hitter.

Chapel knows it now. He steps onto the mound, rolling his shoulder.

Gus trots out to him.

GUS
How ya doin', Ace?

CHAPEL
A little tired.

GUS
It's Joe Birch. What do you
want to do?

Chapel sees Big Joe swinging his bat in the on deck circle. He sees the fans, behind him, their feet up on the cement wall.

He sees the overweight plate Umpire fiddling with the new white balls.

He sees Gus's messy hair...the sun on his face...the intense green of the grass behind him...

It is as if he just arrived at the game, as if he can see it clearly for the first time.

CHAPEL
Gus, how many men have there
been on base?

Beat. Gus swallows.

GUS
Nobody.

CHAPEL
Nobody?

Gus shakes his head. Chapel's face is implacable. No one on base at all...

HIS P.O.V. Those heavy white base pads, slouching in the dirt.

Nobody on base. So unusual a thing.

GUS
This I ain't seen much of.

CHAPEL
Me neither.

GUS
Chappie. I never have.

Chapel nods. Gus returns it. Then heads back to the plate. Crouches down. We HEAR the television announcers calling the game.

ROSS'S VOICE

Bottom of the eighth, I think we
can say it. Chapel has not given
up a hit. Has not walked a
batter. Through seven innings,
twenty-one men up, twenty-one
men down.

Joe Birch STEPS IN.

ASBURG'S VOICE

Only nine men in the hundred
year history of baseball have
even done it. Pitched a perfect
game.

ROSS'S VOICE

No one wants it more than Chapel

ASBURG'S VOICE

And no one wants to stop him
more than Joe Birch. He may be
the Yankee's only hope, their
best hitter in what is likely
his last at bat of the game.

Chapel stares at Birch. Crowd noise dulls to a low rumble.

SMASH CUT:

CHAPEL'S FANTASY

An image of Jane...running away from him across that Central
Park softball field.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT

Chapel pitches...

THWUNK. Into Gus's mitt. A ball. Way outside.

Gus throws it back. Chapel holds the ball.

CUT TO:

CHAPEL'S FANTASY

An image of Jane, his imagining. In her bedroom, suitcases
open on the bed. She sits on the edge, watching HIM on the
television, holding the baseball in her hands.

CUT TO:

INT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT

Chapel throws his second pitch, too quickly, trying to shake off the thoughts of Jane...

IT'S WILD. It goes way past Gus and into the net backstop.

The crowd shudders. Chapel rubs his shoulder.

IN THE DUGOUT, Perry and Harman are up and pacing.

Chapel readies to throw again...

CUT TO:

CHAPEL'S FANTASY

An image of Jane. Going through her house, turning off lights, locking windows...she turns off the television...

INT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT

The ball hits Gus's mitt. The Umpire makes his sign...

BALL THREE. Three and 0. Birch backs out. Knocks the dirt off his cleats. Then sets in...

GUS wags a sign between his legs...one, one, fastball all the way.

CLOSE UP on Chapel's eyes. He has to throw a strike.

ON BIRCH'S EYES...he knows it, he's waiting...bring it to me...

ON GUS'S EYES, sheer concentration, he might be praying...

Chapel winds, his arm comes over...

CUT TO:

CHAPEL'S FANTASY

An image of Jane. Standing on her street, handing her luggage to the taxi driver, who puts the bags in the trunk.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM - PRESENT

Chapel releases the pitch...

THWACK! Birch has pulled it long....the ball is CAREENING out to right field, it is easily high enough to go over the fence...it has the distance...the power...and the only thing that can stop it is...

MICKEY BELL, who goes back...he's heading back...

HIS P.O.V. Trying to find the ball in the sun...it suddenly appears, coming down...

Mickey feels behind him...feels for the wall...the ball's coming down...he LEAPS...his mitt stretching OVER THE TOP OF THE FENCE...

HE CATCHES IT!!

It lands in his mitt like metal to magnet. He comes down, banging onto the grass.

He looks into his mitt. He can't believe the ball is there. A big goofy smile stretches across his face.

The fans in the bleachers behind him yell obscenities and pelt him with things. But nothing can phase him. He HURLS the ball hard and high...back to...

Chapel, who tips his cap to him. Mickey nods.

CUT TO:

THE SECOND YANKEE BATTER

Muscling the ball out to shallow left. Matthews comes in and makes the easy catch.

CUT TO:

CHAPEL ON THE MOUND

Winding up, throwing to the third batter in the eighth.

It's a grounder up the middle. Cabrillos is over to field it. The guy is out.

Chapel sags. He looks old. He turns to go. His fatigue is palpable. His face sweaty with concentration. His chest is tightening. He hears the roar of the crowd. He murmurs under his breath.

CHAPEL

Three more, buddy. Three more.
We're close to the end.

He looks up...

JANE is sitting in the dugout. No one is there but her. RAIN FALLS INTO FRAME and we

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - RAINY AFTERNOON

Chapel walks across the field in a plastic poncho. Behind him the grounds crew stretches the tarp across the grass. In the stands there are a few fans filing out under their umbrellas.

He stops. Seeing Jane.

CHAPEL
When did you get here?

JANE
Just now. Pete let me in.

CHAPEL
No game.

JANE
That's okay.

He steps down into the dugout.

CHAPEL
I didn't know if you would come.

JANE
I would call or something. I
wouldn't just...not come.

CHAPEL
You okay?

JANE
Yeah.

CHAPEL
How's the job search?

JANE
Good.

CHAPEL
You want to...get some coffee?

JANE
Let's just...sit here for a
minute.

He takes off the poncho. Sits down beside her.

JANE
I have an interesting interview
coming up.

CHAPEL
Really?

JANE
You remember Ian, the director?

CHAPEL
Yeah.

JANE
He called me. He's starting his own agency. In London.

CHAPEL
London, England?

JANE
Yeah.

CHAPEL
Would you have to live there?

JANE
I'd have to move there as soon as possible.

Suddenly awkward.

CHAPEL
Good old Ian.
(pause)
What does Heather think?

JANE
She thinks it's cool. Come to England for Christmas.
(pause)
What do you think?

CHAPEL
Me?

JANE
Yeah.

She looks at him. We can see the vulnerability she tries to hide. The seconds pulse between them. And finally, he says...

CHAPEL
I think it's great. If it makes you happy. I hope you get it.

Jane looks down. Seems to gather herself. Put on her game face.

JANE

Well. We'll see. It's gonna be a long process, interviews and stuff.

Jane gets up. Walks to the edge of the dugout. Folds her arms.

JANE

It's such an amazing place.

CHAPEL

"The perfect greenness of it."

JANE

Sometimes when I'm at the games, watching you, I get jealous. Of your success. Your excellence. But then the seventh inning stretch comes and we all stand, the guy next to me and the kid next to him and the woman next to him...all the way around the stadium. We all get up together and sing a song. Fifty thousand people. Singing. And I think, poor Billy.

CHAPEL

I sing. In my head.

JANE

Well. You oughta try it out loud sometime.

She picks up her sweater and walks out, up the tunnel into the clubhouse. After a moment he follows.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DUGOUT - PRESENT DAY

Chapel stares at his hands.

CHAPEL

I threw the wrong pitch.

Gus looks at him, but says nothing. The team is very quiet. They line the bench, each man lost in his own thoughts.

THEIR P.O.V. Cabrillos hits the ball, it goes right back to the pitcher, who throws him out.

The Yankees walk off the field, are already cheering themselves on to a rally. They have one more inning, one more chance. Bottom of the ninth.

On the DIAMOND VISION, graphics of the word CHARGE pulsate out, and on the PA they're playing a peppy rock song.

IN THE HAWKS DUGOUT, They look to Chapel.

He stands.

CUT TO:

THE FIELD

The guys are walking out together, a unit. Ransom places a hand on the small of Chapel's back.

RANSOM

Listen. You give it to 'em,
Chappie. We're with you. If I
drop the ball, so help me, I'll
kill myself.

Ransom jogs off. Chapel takes the mound. Gus is there.

GUS

Three more to get. Only three.
Throw anything. The guys are
behind you...we'll get 'em.

CHAPEL

I think I may have given it all
I got.

GUS

Buddy, you throw. Go all the
way like you've done so far
today and you can't lose...
never.

He moves off. And Chapel is alone.

HIS P.O.V. The first batter steps into the box. A stranger.
Rookie pinch hitter. The Yankees are desperate.

Chapel takes a deep breath. He winds and throws in SLOW
MOTION...we see his face in a grimace of pain...

It is a fast ball, up the middle. The guy takes strike one.

Chapel catches the ball. Sets, waits for the sign. He
straightens. Breathes in. Winds, throws...

BATTER'S P.O.V. The ball coming toward him...

The kid is determined...he's waiting, waiting...he swings. SOCK...he makes contact...it's a pop up heading out toward Cabrillos, one of those elevator shaft specials. The ball finally comes down...Cabrillos handles it with ease.

One down. The crowd doesn't know whether to clap or cry.

The Ump takes a new ball out of his pocket and throws it to Chapel, who steps off the mound. Walks a bit. Rolls his shoulder.

The next Yankee batter takes the box.

ON THE MOUND, Chapel takes his place. Licks his lips.

HIS P.O.V. BEHIND HOMEPLATE, in the seats behind the backstop, he sees JANE and his FATHER...watching...

He SHAKES his head...straightens.

HIS P.O.V. He narrows his field of vision to Gus's mitt...the brown leather mitt, hovering there...

He winds, throws...the batter fouls it off. 0 and 1.

EYES ON THE MITT

He throws another, the guy gets a piece of it again.

It sails back behind him, into the UPPER DECK, where fans scramble for the legendary ball. 0 and 2.

ON THE MOUND

Chapel leans in for the sign.

HIS P.O.V. A one...one finger against the now dirty white of Gus's uniform.

Chapel's jaw clenches, he tenses for the pain...he finds it within himself to throw another smoker...SWING AND A MISS. The batter strikes out.

Two down.

The crowd all over the stadium begins to stand. Up on their feet. These cross, rude, die-hard Yankee fans are rising. For Billy.

IN THE ON DECK CIRCLE

The third Yankee batter swings two bats. He spits in the grass. One of their stars who has been sidelined with an injury. Brash kid. He turns to the fans...behind him.

YANKEE BATTER

I'm gonna wreck it. Watch me
wreck it.

He walks up to the plate. Gus throws the ball to Chapel.
The batter walks around. Scuffs his cleats a bit. Then steps
on the rubber.

It's one man against another, which is all baseball comes down
to anyway. Chapel and the batter look at each other.

The batter is lean and fresh, his first at bat in the game.

Chapel is wilted. He looks like someone's dad, his face is
lined, his eyes sinking back in his head...but there's still
that knowledge there, that light, that desire.

He throws the first pitch.

UMPIRE

Steeeee-rike One!

The buzz begins...bubbling upward.

The ball comes back. He pulls his cap down. Waits for the
sign, all his focus on that mitt, that man with the wooden
bat...

He throws again...SWING AND A MISS. Strike two.

The batter is angry at himself. He walks around the dirt. 0
and 2.

The crowd is clapping and stomping. Chapel is sweating. His
stomach is tight. He catches the ball.

The batter leans in. God, he wants to destroy it.

Chapel. Stands...feels the ball in his mitt. He closes his
eyes. Opens them. And then...his leg kicks up, his arm comes
over.....

SLOW MOTION, there's not much on the ball. A sinker that
didn't sink. It floats right in...we see the batter actually
SMILE as he SWINGS...

CRAAAACCCCKKKK!!!

The ball is hit hard on the ground, skipping, skipping merrily
right toward the hole between short and second. Moving fast,
but not unreachable, not impossible...

Cabrillos and Ransom both break for it...

The batter is SPRINTING toward first...

Cabrillos bends to scoop the ball...it slips under his arm...heading outward...Ransom, behind him, still has a chance if he dives, DIVES, stretching his arm and his body to the fullest...

He stops it on the ground, leaps up, turns in the air, firing it across the diamond as fast as he has ever thrown.

And there, at first, Whitt's long arm out with the glove open for the ball, and the batter coming and the ball hitting the mitt, the runner crossing the basepad...it all seems to happen at once.

Fifty thousand people hold their breath. The umpire makes his call...

UMPIRE
YeeerrrrrrrOOOUUUUTTT!!!

Ransom LEAPS in the air.

Chapel's arm falls, his head hangs, he just stands like that, exhausted, on the mound as his teammates RUSH TOWARD HIM...

Gus makes it there first, crashing into Billy and LIFTING HIM INTO THE AIR.

The crowd is deafening, going wild. We hear the voices of Asburg and Ross.

ROSS'S VOICE
He's done it! He's done it!
The perfect game!

ASBURG'S VOICE
Chapel has pitched a perfect
game!!!

Even the Yankees stand outside their dugout, applauding the victor, as Billy Chapel is carried off the field.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLUBHOUSE - LATER

Champagne is popped and pouring over Billy's head, as if he had won the pennant.

The Hawks are giddy with celebration, full of pride. Reporters are crowding into the locker room.

Ross pushes through with a camera man...

ROSS
Billy...Billy...can we get you
over here for a second!

Chapel licks the champagne off his lips, grabs a towel, wipes
it out of his eyes...

Ross positions himself. A light flashes on and floods over
him.

ROSS
It's pandemonium in the Hawks
locker room, you'd think it was
the World Series...and here's
the man who stopped the Bronx
Bombers. Billy Chapel. How
does it feel, Billy?

CHAPEL
Good, Ross, it feels good.

Behind him, Mickey sticks his Sockhead in between them and
BELLOWS.

MICKEY
Wooooooohhhhhh!!!!

He's gone. Ross laughs.

ROSS
What do you think? About the
trade?

CHAPEL
It's hard to say, Ross.

ROSS
After today, you must be ready
to tear 'em up out there at
Candlestick.

CHAPEL
Never played a game in
Candlestick.

ROSS
Windy.

CHAPEL
But nice. On the bay.

ROSS
What are you saying, Billy?

CHAPEL
I'm pretty tired, Ross. Gotta go.

He just walks away from the camera.

ROSS
Billy!

But Billy is making his way to the showers, leaving the noise behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

A cab pulls up. Chapel gets out. Leans back in to haul out GUS, extremely drunk.

INT. PLAZA HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chapel walks Gus down toward his room.

GUS
You're the man, Billy. You're the cream in my coffee.

INT. GUS'S ROOM

Chapel dumps Gus on the bed.

CHAPEL
Need anything?

GUS
Water.

Chapel goes into the bathroom. Gets a glass of water. Comes out, setting it on the nightstand.

GUS
Chappie. Thanks.

CHAPEL
No problem.

GUS
Not for the water.

CHAPEL
I know.

Chapel turns out the light.

GUS
See you tomorrow.

Chapel stands in the doorway.

CHAPEL
Gus.

No answer.

CHAPEL
I've known what I was going to
be doing every day. Every day
of my life since I was younger
than ten. And tomorrow...I'm
gonna wake up, and I'm gonna
have no idea. No idea at all.

No response...except the soft, low rumbling of Gus's sleeping
breaths.

INT. CHAPEL'S EMPTY ROOM

Keys in the lock. Chapel lets himself in. Closes the door
with a quiet click.

He walks in, right to the phone, looking to see if there are
any messages...

The message light is dark. He touches the plastic knob.

He sits on the bed. He picks up the phone and sets it in his
lap.

But he doesn't do anything. His hands clutch onto it until the
knuckles turn white.

Tears fill his eyes. He tries to clench them back.

DISSOLVE TO:

HOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The sun has barely come up outside the windows. Chapel's
suitcase is open on the rack. He tucks everything in and snaps
it shut. He takes his coat and cap from a hook on the door.

He pauses in the doorway. Turns back...

Tosses his BASEBALL CAP back onto the bed. It lands like a
feather.

Chapel picks up his suitcase and goes.

INT. KENNEDY AIRPORT - EARLY MORNING

A double glass door slides open electrically. Chapel walks in, in his leather jacket and jeans.

CUT TO:

INT. GATE AREA - MORNING

A wide expanse of blue carpet and rows of plastic seats.

Chapel walks into the silent waiting area. Looks around....

To his left...THE BAR, where Jane had been. Empty now.

To his right, the airport stretches on. Across the way there is another gate, a few people there, a sleeping marine. A Latino woman and her bored little boy, swinging his feet...

Chapel goes over to the windows and looks out to the dark for a long time. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees...

BAGS, IN A CHAIR...a computer, a backpack, a canvas bag with books...

THE SPORTS PAGE, folded open to the box scores.

He turns.

JANE IS STANDING THERE. On the linoleum of the concourse. A cup of coffee in her hands.

JANE

What are you doing here?

He holds up a ticket envelope from BRITISH AIRWAYS.

CHAPEL

Going to London.

They watch each other across the labyrinth of chairs.

CHAPEL

What are you doing here?

JANE

I missed my plane.

CHAPEL

How come?

JANE

Well. There was this really exciting baseball game.

CHAPEL

You saw it?

JANE

In the bar, over there. You should have seen me. Cheering and crying...like I was a teenager.

CHAPEL

You've been here all night?

JANE

I went home. I called you, but ...I didn't leave a message.

CHAPEL

Why not?

She throws the coffee cup in the garbage. Steps onto the carpet.

JANE

Why didn't you tell me? About the trade?

CHAPEL

I knew you would stay. And you shouldn't stay.

Pause.

JANE

How's your arm?

CHAPEL

I blew it out. There was a certain point where I had to decide. Do I hold back? For a couple more years on the mound? Or do I go for it? For the one big game. My last game.

JANE

You're not...

CHAPEL

I'm not taking the trade.

He's nervous. Puts his hands in his pockets, like a kid.

CHAPEL

I'm on real thin ground here.

He walks toward her.

CHAPEL

You said, I didn't need you.
But last night...you know, that
should have been the biggest
night of my life.

He looks at her.

CHAPEL

And it wasn't. Because...
because you weren't there.

She can't meet his eyes.

CHAPEL

So. I just wanted to tell you,
not to change your mind or
anything, but just so you
know...and I know.
(he swallows)
I need you.

Jane's voice comes out husky.

JANE

I need you.

He tilts her chin up. Tears are in her eyes.

JANE

Chapel....I never believed...

CHAPEL

Believe it.

He embraces her. Feels the body he knows so well, fitting
perfectly into his. Breathes in her scent. He caresses her.
Kisses her.

Holds onto her for dear life.

FADE OUT