

MR. BESUBORU

(aka Tokyo Diamond)

CUT AND PASTE  
Revision: Ed Solomon  
August 25, 1991

\*\*\*\*\*TODAY'S NOTE:

This is a cut and paste of Tom and Hal's notes from last week. Many things are missing (relationship stuff, still-- Uch/Hiroko, Jack/Hammer), but a general structure is there. Good luck with it, I hope it helps.

Ed.

INT. PACKED BASEBALL STADIUM - USA - DAY

Spikes dig nervously into dirt. The tip of a bat touches the edge of the plate. CROWD VOICES waft dreamily, like a breeze. JACK ELLIOT, tense, sweating, leans in for the pitch.

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE

Three and two to Jack Elliot, who's in a tough spot this season...

COLOR GUY'S VOICE

39 years old, just off a painful knee surgery... I'd say Elliot's lucky just to be in the box.

THE PITCHER, 28, chewing tobacco sets, delivers...and Jack swings.

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE

Strike three on the inside corner.

(beat)

Which'll even the count at three and three. Wow, Elliot is really in a slump.

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE

Slump, nothing. The guy just plain sucks.

Jack is perplexed as the Ump holds up 3 fingers on each hand. Then Jack turns back toward the mound, EYES WIDENING, for:

THE PITCHER is now 19 YEARS OLD. He spits tobacco as Jack closes his eyes and shakes his head in disbelief. When he reopens his eyes: THE PITCHER is suddenly 13 YEARS OLD! Jack gapes. The Pitcher smiles. Blows a bubble. Throws. Jack swings and misses. Again. And again.

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE

Strike four, five and six.

Jack looks up at the scoreboard: HIS STATS go from "Elliot-- World Series MVP 1984" to "Elliot-- Rookie of the Year 1973" to "Elliot-- beaten up badly as 7 year old." As it says "Elliot-- a painful delivery..." we HEAR:

GIRL'S VOICE

Hey...

JACK

suddenly awakens-- sweating and confused-- and eye to eye with a fuzzy pink TEDDY BEAR. He looks around, groggily rubbing his head.

INT. GIRL'S COLLEGE DORM ROOM - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

He's in a single bed, surrounded by stuffed animals, under which he finds a shapely, blonde COED, in an inside-out "Tri-Delt" sweatshirt. Above her are pictures of high school friends, posters ("SAE/Tri-Delt Spring Keg-o-rama!"), etc.

GIRL  
(half asleep)  
Hey... were you listening to me? Is it true, you were once really the world series MVP?

JACK  
Huh? Yeah. It's true.

GIRL  
Oh, great. Cause I told my friend Dana that. You know, the other waitress you met, the one with that weird laugh? We met...

Jack rubs his aching head... gets up while the GIRL KEEPS TALKING.

+INT. BATHROOM

Blinding light flicks on as Jack shuts the door behind him. He takes a few deep breaths, steadying himself on the basin. After a moment, he pulls back and looks at himself in the mirror.

GIRL (O.S.)  
... in this sosh class that we both hated, exopt she had to take it for her major and I didn't...

He squints at his face, which is framed under a HAPPY FACE DECAL. Lines and crevasses, bags under his eyes; all standing out more in the harsh bathroom light. He splashes water, and we CUT TO:

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - A COUPLE HOURS LATER

Some gathered FANS. Around the field, players stretch out a little, a few get ready for batting practice.

OVER IN THE DUGOUT

A nervous young DOMINICAN PITCHER sits while Jack, DUANE (another veteran) and RICK (also another vet), speak to him.

JACK  
Listen, Manuel, we know how you're feeling right now. You just got picked up by the Yankees, the best team in the world...

RICK  
You're nervous... thinkin about how  
you're gonna do...

When Manuel turns to Rick, we see Jack remove a butane lighter from the back of his pants and surreptitiously flame his shoelaces.

DUANE  
So Manuel, we don't want you gettin  
yourself uptight. Will you promise  
me that?

MANUEL  
I promise...

Manuel's shoelaces are melting down. He starts to sniff something wrong, but Jack makes him keep his eyes locked to his.

JACK  
Just remember one thing. Baseball  
is a game. And games are supposed  
to be fun.

MANUEL  
AAAARGHHH!!!!

Manuel, HOWLING in pain, leaps off the bench trying to get his FLAMING shoes off his feet. Jack and his cronies practically fall down laughing even though they've pulled this one a million times.

Suddenly they HEAR a THUNDEROUS, AWESOME CRACK. And everyone in the dugout turns his head as--

ON THE FIELD

A YOUNG ROOKIE, 21, black, like a frightening combination of Eric Davis and God, stands at the plate watching the ball he just hit sail over the left field wall.

Jack, who has stepped out onto the lip of the dugout to observe. Trey throws another. --SMACK. Duane and Rick join Jack at the dugout.

DUANE  
Jesus Christ.

RICK  
What is that? Five hundred feet?

JACK  
No way. Four eighty, tops.

The Rookie blasts another shot, this time over the palm tree.

DUANE  
Don't worry, Jack. The guy's got an obvious weakness.

JACK  
What's that?

RICK  
Kryptonite.

JACK  
Wait'll he sees some left handed pitching.

At this moment the Rookie turns around in the box and SMACKS IT from the opposite side.

VOICE (OFF SCREEN)  
Heya, Jack!

A young, well-dressed RATHER SLICK GUY in his 30's wanders over. This is Dick "DOC" O'Connell.

JACK  
Boys, you know my agent.

Nods are exchanged, then Doc turns to Jack.

DOC  
Listen, pal-- they cancelled your lawnmower commercial.

JACK  
Why are you smiling?

DOC  
Whattya think of my new client?

Doc points to the Rookie -- who SMACKS another. CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - AFTERNOON

A FIELDING COACH hits fungos, alternating between Jack and the Rookie. While they go back and forth, Jack, playing as loose as he can, is telling a joke to the Rookie:

JACK  
...the center fielder chases this ball all the way to the wall, where it bounces through this hole in the fence... and so he's feeling around for it. Meanwhile, the runner rounds third and takes the plate.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Hey, Jack.

JACK  
 (speeding up)  
 The center fielder pulls his arm out  
 and sees a pig, on the other side of  
 the fence, swallowing the ball. Got  
 it?

ROOKIE  
 Uh huh...

VOICE (MOVING CLOSER)  
 Jack...

JACK  
 So the question is: what's the  
 official ruling?

ROOKIE  
 Uh... I'm not sure...

JACK  
 Inside the pork home run.

Jack laughs, winks at the Rookie. The VOICE is that of a COACH  
 (TREY), who taps him on the shoulder.

TREY  
 Jack, uh... Skip wants to see ya.

AROUND THE FIELD, players heads turn. Everyone knows what's going  
 on. Even the Rookie looks over, sympathetic, as Jack nods and  
 starts off the field. Over by third base, Rick looks at Duane.

RICK  
 Uh oh...

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE

Jack enters and shuts the door behind him. A short, bald man with  
 a cheekful of tobacco looks up from a broken swivel chair. Trey  
 looks up as well, mimicking his movements exactly.

SKIP  
 Have a seat.

JACK  
 (tightly)  
 That's okay.

Skip looks at him for a second and stuffs another wad of tobacco in  
 his cheek. He tosses the packet to Trey, who does the same.

SKIP

(beat)

Now Elliot, you know I think the world o' you an' you know there's nobody in the whole world I'd rather see out there than old forty-eight...

JACK

Look, Skip, I know I haven't exactly been rakin' the ball, but if you give me a couple of weeks...

SKIP

Jesus Christ, Elliot. Can I finish a sentence in my own goddamn office?

JACK

(beat)

Sure.

Trey glares at him as Skip takes a deep breath.

SKIP

This Davis kid is the real thing and...

JACK

Aw shit, Skip, is that what this is all about? He's a goddamn rookie for Chrissake. His mother had to drive him to camp.

(beat)

Are you gonna get swayed by a five-hundred-foot home run?

SKIP

(beat)

Yeah.

Nobody says anything. Jack stares at him for a moment then glances around nervously.

JACK

So what are you saying? You're saying you're gonna play me behind this kid?

SKIP

We wouldn't do that to you.

Jack waits apprehensively for the other shoe to drop as Skip leans forward and spits a long stream of tobacco juice in the trash can. Trey spits right behind him.

SKIP

We're not gonna pick up the option  
on your contract, Jack.

JACK

I don't believe this! I was the  
World Series MVP!

SKIP

That was four years ago.

TREY

You hit .235 last season.

JACK

I led the club in ninth inning  
doubles in the month of August.

Jack looks at them for a moment then suddenly moves to the edge of  
the desk.

JACK

That's it...after all I've done for  
this club? Remember the time you  
asked me to pinch hit for Anderson  
two weeks after my knee surgery? I  
did it for ya, didn't I? But did  
you know I was in excruciating pain?

SKIP

(beat)

Why dincha say somethin?

Skip just looks at him. Neither one says anything as the truth  
starts to sink in.

SKIP

Jack, uh... we got a call. From  
this guy... He manages a team... in  
Japan.

JACK

The hell with you, Skip.

TREY

Jack, maybe it would be good. Take  
some pressure off, hit some easy  
pitching, get your stroke back--

JACK

I got four or five teams interested  
in me. The Red Sox, the Twins, for  
sure. I'm a major leaguer for  
chrissakes!

Suddenly Jack reaches forward and sweeps the contents of the desk against the wall of the office. Skip winces. Jack storms out of the room and slams the door, and we CUT TO:

NEW YORK CITY

Jack jogs along a street of brownstones. He slows in front of one then turns and jogs up the steps.

INT. KITCHEN

A pretty woman in her mid-thirties heads across the kitchen, opens the door. It swings open TO REVEAL JACK, with a huge smile on his face.

JACK

Hi there.

Karen looks at him for a moment and shakes her head slightly.

KAREN

Shouldn't you be on a ball field in Florida?

JACK

I wanted to see Melissa.

Karen looks at him for a moment and lets out a slight smile. She shakes her head and pops the latch on the screen door.

INT. KITCHEN

Karen crosses to the service porch and swings open the door. A large Irish Setter comes bounding up to Jack.

KAREN

I don't know why you just don't take her, Jack. She's your goddam dog.

JACK

(getting licked)

Well, I can't take her. I mean, I live in an apartment and... I'm on the road all the time.

KAREN

And it's too much responsibility?

She just looks at him. Jack glances over to the living room at a GUY WATCHING A BASKETBALL GAME.

JACK

So who is this guy? Is it serious?

(off her look)

Hey, I quit smoking.

KAREN  
You quit smoking...and you're  
jogging.  
(beat)  
What's wrong, Jack?

JACK  
Hey, I'm thinking about maybe  
heading out to Japan. It's a great  
opportunity. Big money. Take some  
pressure off, hit some easy  
pitching, get my stroke back...

KAREN  
They released you, didn't they?

JACK  
(nods)  
They got this hot rookie coming up.  
They're gonna start him at first  
base just 'cause he can hit.

KAREN  
(moving over to him)  
Aw, honey...

Karen moves over and sits down beside him as he fiddles with the  
pepper shaker.

JACK  
I mean, when do I ever hit in the  
Spring?

KAREN  
(softly)  
You never do.

JACK  
It always takes me a couple of  
months.

KAREN  
Look at '87.

JACK  
Yeah, look at '87.

Jack looks up at her. He stares into her eyes for a moment as she  
hands him a Coke.

KAREN  
What about the Twins, or the Red  
Sox, I mean, last year they were all  
over you.

JACK  
No, this is better. I can get my  
stats up. Have even better  
bargaining power when I come back  
next year.  
(stops, then, off her look)  
... they didn't want me.

Jack glances toward the living room, catching a glimpse of the MAN  
who's parked in front of the basketball game.

JACK  
Is it serious with this guy or what?

KAREN  
Jack, please....

JACK  
I'm curious.

KAREN  
I guess so. I mean, well, we're  
getting married.

JACK  
Really? So... I guess you don't  
want to go to Japan with me, then?  
I've changed, you know-- I swear I'm  
different.

KAREN  
What'd you do last night?

Jack stops and glances immediately down at the table.

KAREN  
(smiling a little)  
You gonna call her today?

He still doesn't move.

JACK  
You think I should go... to Japan?

He looks up at her as Melissa licks his forearm.

KAREN  
Jack, I don't know what you should  
do. What do you want to do?

Karen leans over the place mat, plants a gentle kiss on his cheek.

EXT. W.90TH STREET - DAY

Head down, hands in his pockets, Jack shuffles along the street.

## WIDE SHOT - THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Is being gentrified, leaving several lots vacant. Jack HEARS the vague SOUND of a sandlot baseball game. "Hey batter, hey batter..."

A pitch is fouled back, and one of the outfielders races over and grabs the ball from the shrubs near Jack. He turns to the plate, ready to throw, then suddenly stops.

BOY

Hey... Aren't you on the Yankees?  
Elliot? Right. Jack Elliot. I saw  
you on that lawn mower commercial.

(turning)

Hey guys! Jack Elliot!

Several of the boys start to wander over from the outfield. After a moment, he is surrounded by a dozen twelve year olds.

SECOND BOY

You really on the Yankees?

JACK

Well... Yeah.

The group crowds closer, examining every inch of a genuine hero.

FIRST BOY

Wanna take a swing?

JACK

Well... No, I...

FIRST BOY

Come on. Glen'll strike you out.

SEVERAL BOYS

Come on... do it... pleeeeeez... etc.

The rest of the boys crack up. (GLEN, the pitcher, looks a little bit like the final boy in Jack's first dream.) Jack pauses a moment and looks over at the lot. The smile turns to a childlike grin as he stares at the broken down tool shed.

JACK

Alright. I'll take a swing or two.

The boys let out a war hoop. They race to the very limit of the lot, jockeying to get as far away from the plate as possible.

Jack walks over to the tool shed, sawed-off broomstick in hand. He steps to the plate, takes a deep breath.

Jack cocks the bat on his shoulder with a smile on his face. "Glen" rears back and delivers the pitch as Jack strides into it with his major league swing. The hips open, the elbows lock, and he swings over the ball, missing it completely. It SLAMS against the shed with the monstrous "THWACK," as Jack looks at Glen in sudden horror.

JACK  
WHY DON'T YOU THROW ME A GODDAMNED  
STRIKE!

INT. GEISHA HOUSE - EVENING

Jack relaxes as several BEAUTIFUL JAPANESE WOMEN cater to his every need. Well, to one specific need. As he relaxes back onto a soft, comfortable bed-- the ROOKIE (from the Yankees practice) rises from the bed next to him.

ROOKIE  
Ease back, Jack-- I'll take over  
from here.

Jack's eyes bolt open. He is:

INT. AIRPLANE - 747 - NIGHT

With 6 empty scotch bottles and a language book on his lap. He is the only one left on the plane, and a YOUNG JAPANESE MAN is waking him.

MAN  
Hi, I'm Yoji Nishimura, I'm your  
hat.

JACK  
You're my... hat?

YOJI  
I'm sorry, did I say "hat?" I meant  
"interpreter."

JACK  
You've gotta be kidding me.

YOJI  
I am, wake up. I tell you, we're  
going to have a fun time, you and  
me.

INT. DEPLANING TUNNEL - NAGOYA AIRPORT MORNING

Jack, his hair going in six different directions, staggers forward, led by Yoji. He adjusts his eyes to the brightness of the day...

YOJI  
Come on, many people wanna meet you.

CUT TO: INT. TINY AIRPORT CONFERENCE ROOM

HUNDREDS OF REPORTERS are crammed together, awaiting Jack, who is immediately greeted by SIX MEN IN BUSINESS SUITS.

YOJI

Mr. Nakamura, president of Chunichi company. Mr. Ito, Vice-president. Mr. Sato, treasurer...

As each man bows, he hands Jack his business card.

Drunk and disheveled, Jack bows vigorously, frightening the owners with his height. He then starts to stuff the business cards into his back pocket. Yoji whispers.

YOJI

Not in back pocket. Is major insult. Like you're sitting on their identity. You have business card?

JACK

Look, I was saving them for the kids, but what the hell...

He reaches inside his jacket and pulls out JACK ELLIOT BASEBALL CARDS: autographed photos of himself. He hands them to the owners.

JACK

Here you go. And no sitting on my face.

The TEAM BRASS look at Jack as he does this and exchange glances.

JACK

Here Yoji, you can have the gum.

The "Suits" lead Jack to the reporters and speak in Japanese.

PRESIDENT

(subtitled)

Please allow me to introduce a big star in American baseball league, Jack Elliot. He is our new "helper." Our team needs his power from the left to help us in our pennant race against the Giants.

Hundreds of cameras fire away. Jack belches slightly while the Suits hand him a JERSEY with the word "ELLIOT" and the NUMBER 54

JACK  
 (to Yoji)  
 Uh... my number is 48.

YOJI  
 Now is number 54. For the number of  
 home runs you are expected to hit.

JACK  
 Expected? Only 54? Why so few?

YOJI  
 Oh, no. Never any number higher  
 than 54.

JACK  
 Why not?

But Yoji skillfully avoids giving Jack the answer and turns to  
 shouting reporters. One shouting voice wins out.

REPORTER/YOJI  
 He would like to know what your main  
 reason was for coming to Japan?

JACK  
 (thinking for a moment)  
 Well... let's just say I had a yen  
 to play here.

YOJI  
 (subtitled from Japanese)  
**Elliot-san say money was no issue  
 when it came to this happy decision.**

Many impressed nods-- which makes Jack think he's on a roll.  
 Another shouts a question.

REPORTER/YOJI  
 He wants to know what you think of  
 Japanese baseball.

JACK  
 I don't know-- what do you think of  
 American Sumo wrestling?

YOJI  
**He likes it.**  
 (off another question)  
 You are asked "How many home runs  
 are you going to hit?"

JACK  
 54.

REPORTER/YOJI  
"To which field."

JACK  
Well... I'll hit 24 to right, 11 to  
center, and 2 to left.

Jack can't believe any of it. But mostly he's just plain tired.  
He yawns, and we CUT TO:

EXT. JACK'S APT. BLDG. ENTRANCE

A TAXI pulls up at an apartment building, where a gaggle of PRESS  
is waiting for him, shouting questions as Jack sleepily follows  
Yoji out of the car.

JACK  
The first homer will be 339 feet.  
The second...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - FOYER

Jack bristles in, shaking his head as he repeats one of the  
reporters' questions to himself...

JACK  
Was I excited to leave American  
baseball to come and play in Japan?  
Oh, yeah... and there's a root canal  
I was really excited about. What  
the hell kind of a question is that?

INT. LARGE, FURNISHED APARTMENT (WITH VIEW) - EARLY EVENING

Yoji drags the indredibly tired Jack in...

JACK  
Hey... you Japanese live very well.

YOJI  
Twenty Japanese live very well in  
this place.

If we knew Yoji better, we may see a tinge of resentment in his  
eyes. But we don't, so we don't...

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Yoji leads Jack outside. They look at the view.

YOJI  
Japan anything like you expected?

JACK  
 No, I expected Godzilla and  
 Mothra... people speaking English  
 with their mouths out of synch...

YOJI  
 (lips different from voice)  
 "Get the mayor, the city hall is  
 burning!"

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Jack's eyes bolt wide open. In darkness, Jack lies awake, unable to sleep from the time difference. Finally, he just gets up.

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Jack sits on his couch, watching TV.

ON TV is a ridiculous (to Jack) quiz show: colors, noises, lights, animals... CLICK, channel changes to: News. CLICK: A tremendously overacted melodrama. CLICK: an odd, sprightly commercial. CLICK: A stupid American movie dubbed into Japanese. CLICK: Men in business suits in chairs, naked girls astride them, talking politics.

He flicks it to CNN, people speaking English. "Headline Sports," showing the USA baseball highlights.

Interested, he watches for a while, seeing people he knows, people he's played with. People doing well, still in the prime of their game... He turns it off. Fuck it.

A LITTLE LATER

Jack lies with his eyes open and his phrase book on his lap... the DOORBELL RINGS.

YOJI'S VOICE (FROM THE HALLWAY)  
 Wakey-wakey! Time for practice!

THE DRAGON LOCKER ROOM

Yankee stadium it isn't. Mesh lockers packed close. It's all elevated on a well-worn carpeted platform. Jack stares at the scene in sheer amazement.

JACK  
 Tell me this isn't it.

YOJI  
 This isn't it.  
 (off Jack's look)  
 You the boss. But is it.  
 (then)  
 I'll go explain our tardiness.

Yoji takes off as Jack wanders forward. Suddenly five players scream at him from the other side of the clubhouse in rapid-fire Japanese. Jack freezes, hears an American voice to his left.

BLACK VOICE

Take your shoes off, Man.

Jack turns. A black man in his late 20's sits in a folding chair. He's dressed in a kimono, with arms like tree trunks. MAX "HAMMER" DUBOIS leans forward, speaks in a precise whisper.

HAMMER

They get upset if you don't take -  
off - your - shoes.

JAPANESE PLAYERS' POINT OF VIEW:

A big, oafish American stands in the middle of a pile of shoes and slippers, staring down at his feet. He bends down quickly, kicking off a pair of size 14 loafers.

JACK

Yeah, it'd be a crime to track any  
carpet onto the mildew.

Jack shuffles into the locker room with a pair of MUCH-TOO-TINY SLIPPERS barely fitting around the toes.

HAMMER

Max DuBois. Around here they call  
me Hammer. Don't ask why.

JACK

I won't, cause I don't wanna know.  
I'm Jack...

HAMMER

I know man. I been in Japan, not  
dead. Also, I used to watch you  
play when I was a kid.

(off Jack's look)

Er, well, a teenager. Want some o-  
cha?

Hammer takes a porcelain cup from the bench and sips his tea with both hands. He lets out a satisfied smile.

JACK

Lemme get this straight. You're an  
American, right?

HAMMER

In Japan I'm a Gaijin... same as  
you.

JACK  
What's a Gaijin?

HAMMER  
It's like being a black guy, only  
there's less of us.

VOICE (O.S.)  
(singing)  
"I Feeeel Good... Like I knew that I  
would, y'all..."

TOSHI YAMASHITA is heading toward Jack doing a James Brown shuffle.

TOSHI  
You like James Brown?

What Toshi doesn't see is THE REST OF THE TEAM, behind him, rolling  
their eyes and scoffing at his antics.

HAMMER  
Meet our rookie, Toshi Yamishita.  
Number one star of the high school  
leagues. He'd give anything to play  
in the...

TOSHI  
(chiming in with Hammer)  
...I love the U.S.A. Gimme five,  
Jack!

Jack stares at the outstretched hand in something approaching  
horror. He taps it weakly. Toshi turns the hand over, impressed.

TOSHI  
Hey man, World Series ring, oh boy.

JACK  
It's not that big a deal. Just  
lifelong fame, the adoration of  
millions... and a trip to  
Disneyland.

Suddenly the TEAM REACTS SHARPLY to the **YELLING VOICE** they HEAR  
O.S.

SUBTITLE:  
**On the field! Everybody! Now!**

They quickly gather up their things and rush out of the room,  
leaving only Jack and....

YOJI  
Elliot-san, this is Uchiyama-san,  
your manager.

The Manager-- UCHIYAMA-SAN-- enters and walks up to Jack, not thrilled with what he sees: an overweight, out of sorts giant. These are men who've been in the game a long time and are very set in their ways. As Uchiyama gives a dignified bow, Jack sticks out his hand. Uchiyama leaves it hanging. A few TEAM GUYS hang around the door and watch.

UCHIYAMA  
(in Japanese, with  
subtitles)  
**How can Mr. Elliot be late when he  
has already missed most of spring  
training?**

Yoji swallows hard then starts to translate.

YOJI  
Your manager welcomes you to the  
team and says he is very happy you  
are here.

JACK  
(smiles at Uch)  
He oughta be happy, I'm gonna save  
his ass.  
(then, to Yoji)  
Just kidding, tell him something  
nice.

YOJI  
(to Uchiyama, with  
subtitles)  
**He understands his responsibility  
and will sacrifice all for his team.**

Uchiyama says one other thing.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI  
Also: A haircut will be necessary.

JACK  
I think he looks pretty good as he  
is, but I'll do my best to give him  
a little trim.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI  
And please to shave off moustache.

JACK  
Tell him I'd be happy to... if it  
grows so long it gets in the way of  
my swing.

(directly to Uch)  
 Skip, I can see you and me are gonna  
 get along great... whattya say we  
 play some ball.

As Jack gives Uchiyama a big slap on the back-- to the shock of the rest of the team, who scurry away from the door. CUT TO:

INT. STADIUM TUNNEL

Jack walks out with Yoji, who is proudly spouting statistics.

YOJI  
 ... rookie of the year in 1959,  
 league MVP 1961 and 63, triple crown  
 winner 1963 also. Plus-- the most  
 consecutive home run games in the  
 history of the sport. Seven. In  
 1972. So as you see, we are all  
 honored to have him as manager--

Jack stops, looks out onto the field. This is a big moment.

EXT. STADIUM - IN THE PRESS BOX

There is a sudden buzz as PRESS PEOPLE turn and begin loading up their cameras. Also turning are a group of SUITS, who begin nodding and pointing as--

ON THE FIELD

Yoji leads Jack toward the assembled team and begins official introductions. He indicates an indignant, seemingly arrogant YOUNG PLAYER.

YOJI  
 Was starting first baseman. Until  
 you. Tomohoko Ohmae...

JACK  
 (trying to get it)  
 Tomahawk oh my...

Re. a HANDSOME GUY who is preening for the press.

YOJI  
 Shinji Igarishi...very popular with  
 the giggling girlie set.

INT. PRESS BOX - SAME

With the group of TEAM SUITS appears a WOMAN. She has a supple beauty, couched behind a stylish but conservative business suit.

ADMINISTRATOR  
(subtitled)  
So he is as we said, neh?--- Big,  
strong, all American.

WOMAN  
(also subtitled)  
Hai. All American.  
(Then quietly to herself)  
Like beef.

The owner picking up her "compliment", chuckles.

WOMAN  
Yes. He's the best of the Gaijin  
we've seen so far.

ADMINISTRATOR  
Hai! And with a haircut and shave -  
Good image for Dragons.

JACK - ON THE FIELD - SAME

Is still trying to get the names. He speaks to an older player.

JACK  
Royal Moocow...?

YOJI  
No. Ryoh Mukai.

MUKAI  
Jacku-assu...

JACK  
Royal Moocow.

A few laughs from the others. Jack ends up right by Uchiyama.

JACK  
Well, Skip. We gonna play some  
ball?

CUT TO: A FEW MINUTES LATER - BY THIRD BASE

Uchiyama watches, arms crossed, from a distance as:

Grunting, sweating-- THE TEAM works very hard. Jack watches as,  
lined up behind Mukai, they follow in a "duck walk" from third to  
home-- waddling while carrying BATS extended from each arm.

JACK  
(to Hammer)  
This is crazy. We're not athletes,  
we're baseball players.

Jack sees Ohmae, Yagi and Kurosawa cross the plate and, of their own accord, YELL and sprint back to third base to do it again.  
(Ohmae passes Jack with a pointed look and a sharp YELL.)

JACK  
You aren't gonna do this?

Hammer shrugs. Starts waddling. Yoji steps up to Jack.

YOJI  
Practice just as important as games.

Toshi passes Jack, grabs two bats. Indicates the PRESS BOX.

TOSHI  
No slack, dude. Owners on the  
lookout. Plus... Mr. Newspaper Guy.  
(sings)  
"Workin' for The Man, every night  
and day."

Mukai, at the plate (and aware of Uchiyama's overseeing gaze),  
YELLS at Toshi-- who gets suddenly serious and starts waddling.

TOSHI  
Catch you on the flip side, Jack.

An army of coaches run over to Jack, blowing whistles. **One of them screams Japanese** right in his face. Yoji races out on the field to mediate.

COACHES/YOJI  
They want to know why you not  
working with team?

JACK  
Tell em I got a bad wheel.

Jack points to the scar on his knee. Yoji nods, turns and exchanges Japanese with the coaches, amid much pointing to the knee.

HORI/YOJI  
Mr. Hori suggests that perhaps your  
wheel may get stronger by work.

JACK  
Yeah, well tell him I got my own  
exercises.

Yoji turns and relays the message. He listens to Hori's **emphatic response.** Uchiyama continues to watch from the background.

HORI/YOJI

He says Dragons must all work together. For harmony. If you cannot do team exercises, team will do yours.

JACK

Sure as hell wouldn't want to upset the harmony...

EXT. INFIELD - LATER

JACK is out front, just barely stretching: shaking his leg out a little. Rolling his neck a bit. THE TEAM follows earnestly-- shaking their legs a little, rolling their necks.

JACK bends forward, halfway to his toes, arms dangling, he shakes then does a lazy roll, then straightens. THE TEAM, confused, like a beginners' aerobics class, dangle, roll and straighten.

JACK jumps from foot to foot and punches the air. THE TEAM try to follow. "Spastic" would be the best description.

Then JACK does some lame squats. On the last one, he stays down and sits. Then flops back onto the ground as if for sit ups. It's a bizzare ballet as the team dutifully follows. They wait for him to begin. And wait. And wait. Finally, a couple of team members raise their heads at the sound of SNORING.

CU JACK

He's sound asleep.

ANGLE - IN THE PRESS BOX

The suits Watch, trying to figure out what's going on. The WOMAN smiles.

KUNIHICO HORI'S

veins pop in his neck. As he goes over to Jack, leans down and BLOWS his WHISTLE in Jack's ear... CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - A LITTLE LATER - WIND SPRINTS

The team sprints from the fence by first base out to the outfield, then turns around and sprints back.

Then Jack, running, slows down... noticing...

THE WOMAN

In the press box. She smiles a little and subtly waves at him.

JACK

Practically slows to a stop as he looks at her... arriving way behind everyone else at the fence by first base.

Mukai yells and they TAKE OFF RUNNING again, leaving Jack to catch his breath... Or is that why Jack has stopped...

Jack leans on the PRESS BOX, right beside the open window... and looks in, where THE WOMAN is hanging out, waiting... for what? For him?

JACK

Hi. Baseball fan? Speak English?  
(then-- off her silence)  
Would you like to marry me? Bear my children?

WOMAN

Kekkon surunaraba shin da hoga  
mashiyo.

A COACH suddenly YELLS at Jack... and he backs away a little, keeping his eye on her as she smiles once again at him. CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - A LITTLE LATER

Jack and Max rub pine tar on their bats as they wait to hit. Jack sticks a plug of tobacco in his mouth, looks at the wall.

JACK

Christ, I could piss over that fence.

HAMMER

Yeah, well don't.  
(as Jack goes to spit tobacco juice)  
And don't spit on the field. It's considered scared.

JACK

Oh.

COACH HORI motions toward the plate. Jack turns to Hammer as he starts toward the box.

JACK

Hey, we're actually gonna hit some baseballs.

Jack steps in. Sets. Feels his bat. This is a big moment.

THE TEAM SUITS

Watch with Uchiyama, exchanging glances. Their big investment.

AT THE PLATE

THE PITCH comes in and -- SMACK!! Jack clocks it. **Hori barks some instructions.**

HORI/YOJI

He says perhaps weight more on foot,  
and more top hand.

JACK/YOJI

Tell him thanks, but my swing has  
done very well for me.

Jack takes another swing-- clobbers it. Uchiyama steps over, **speaks in Japanese.** Everyone on the field shuts up, turns and watches as Jack SMACKS ANOTHER. Yoji translates what Ucvh just said:

YOJI

He say you have a hole in your  
swing.

Jack points to the OUTFIELDER who is running deep to shag it.

JACK

Tell that to him.

Uchiyama glares at Jack. SMACK. Jack ropes another. Smiles.

Uchiyama then snaps his fingers, pointing toward ISSEI ITOI, who stops warming up and rushes toward the mound.

The team looks on: it should be clear to us from their looks that this is not normal practice.

The Owners watch closely. Uchiyama folds his arms in front of Jack. Jack takes another plug of tobacco, grins and digs in. Itoi rears back and delivers....

THWACK! The ball slaps into the catcher's glove.

JACK

(stunned)

What the hell was that!

The catcher looks up at him grinning from behind the plate.

NISHIKAWA (THE CATCHER)

**Shutto.**

JACK

What the hell is a "Shutto?"

HAMMER  
 (from the edge of the cage)  
 I think they call it "the great  
 equalizer."

JACK  
 Great... fine...

Jack readies. Itoi comes back with another "SHUTTO." Jack nearly swings out of his shoes

JACK  
 Shit!

Uchiyama smiles slightly with his arms still folded. Jack glances at him from one knee and turns back toward the mound.

JACK  
 Let's go.

All around the field people turn to watch as Itoi dips into the bucket. Hammer winces. Ohmai and Mukai are pleased. Toshi winces, embarrassed for Jack. But when Yagi grins at him, he forces a smile.

Itoi rears back with a third "SHUTTO" that spins Jack in a circle. Jack, on one knee, stares up at Uchiyama from the dirt.

Uchiyama turns without a word and BLOWS his whistle. All the Players head off for field practice.

THE OWNERS nod their approval.

CLOSE UP - JACK

Jaw set, he catches Uchiyama's eye, nods knowingly, then stands. Then, JACK SPITS a huge gob of tobacco juice on the ground right in front of Uchiyama. He stares Uchiyama down for a brief moment, then starts jogging toward first.

At first, Tomohoko Ohmae takes the "thousand fungo" drill, with a COACH continuously barking instructions on "proper fielding position."

INT. LOCKER ROOM

A TV is on (a cartoon). Some of the team flick towels and goof off. Ohmae does sit-ups in front of his locker. Nishikawa is trying to secretly nurse a bruise on his leg. Good-looking Igarishi has, somehow, managed to keep his uniform SPOTLESS. All of them have lit up cigarettes. Jack enters with Hammer.

HAMMER  
 You can't do that here, slugger.

JACK

He showed me up. You don't do that-  
- and if you don't know the  
difference, you've been here too  
long.

Jack finds his seat, leans his bat against the locker, then reacts  
to the clouds of smoke.

JACK

Good thing I quit smoking.

Jack suddenly hears an agonized YELL from BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR.

VOICE

Oowwwwwwwwww.

HAMMER

(off Jack's look)

Morita-san. We call it "The Massage  
of Death."

Suddenly a COACH taps Jack, points to the EQUIPMENT SHELF, speaks.

HAMMER

He says you should put your  
equipment away first, then sit down.

Jack rolls his eyes, grabs his bat and crosses to the shelf, tosses  
the bat in.

JACK

I gotta take a shower.

HAMMER

Uh, Jack...

Jack stops, looks into:

THE BATH ROOM

Where there are no showers-- only a half-dozen naked Japanese men  
squatting on stools and a nother half-dozen naked in the bath.

EXT. STADIUM - PARKING LOT - MERE SECONDS LATER

Jack exits in full uniform, carrying his bag. Yoji tags behind,  
laughing.

YOJI

So funny, all baseball players,  
first day not bath with other men.

But Jack has stopped. Something has caught his eye. What?

## THE WOMAN

From the press box is standing by a Porsche, looking at him.

Jack slows down... approaches her.

WOMAN

I would rather poke my eyes out with  
a stick.

JACK

I'm sorry?

HIROKO

The answer to your question: "Would  
you marry me, bear my children."

Jack nods. Yoji is very uncomfortable about all this, and tries to  
get in between the woman and his charge, Jack.

WOMAN

Are you free for dinner? I would  
like to talk to you.

YOJI

Excuse me, but tonight I take Jack  
out.

JACK

Tomorrow night, Yoj.  
(to the woman)  
You don't mind if I go home and  
shower first?

WOMAN

Actually, I would prefer it. Meet  
me at this address. Any cab driver  
will know it. I look forward to it.

She hands him a card. Jack stares, transfixed, as she steps into  
her Porsche. He flips the card over and reads the English side.

JACK

Hiroko Aoshima...

YOJI

(sotto, to Jack)  
Very complicated woman. Too many...  
torrents.

JACK

Speak in English, Yoji.

YOJI  
 (this is difficult)  
 Modern woman, very traditional  
 family. Very bad idea.

JACK  
 Yoji-- I'm a grown up. I can take  
 care of myself.

YOJI  
 (the only answer he dare  
 give)  
 O... Okay.

INT. VERY LOUD, TRENDY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Hiroko looks stunning in her casual business-like outfit. Jack,  
 now dressed for the evening, clearly thinks the same thing. He  
 leans across the table a bit, looks right into her eyes.

HIROKO  
 It's nice being out with an  
 American... someone who can deal  
 with a woman in a mature fashion...  
 as an equal. Do you know what I  
 mean?

JACK  
 Uh, yeah... Of course.

HIROKO  
 Business dinners are always  
 difficult with Japanese men. They  
 have such preconceptions about a  
 woman's role.

JACK  
 Look, I'm sorry about the line about  
 bearing my children. I was just  
 having a little fun.

Hiroko smiles. Beat. Then acknowledges the "apology".

JACK  
 You seem very...independant, for a  
 woman of your background.

HIROKO  
 (a little too quickly)  
 You know about my background?

JACK  
 Oh, only that you come from a very  
 traditional family.

Hiroko looks right at him, considers a moment, then grins to herself.

HIROKO  
I think it's best if we stick to  
business, Mr. Elliot.

Jack nods as if to say "What else?"

HIROKO  
I own a graphics company. We are  
looking for, you know, the "rugged  
rebel" type, for a clothing  
commercial we are doing...  
(now that she has his  
attention)  
...and I thought perhaps you could  
recommend someone.  
(then, as his ego  
deflates.)  
Sorry. It's hard to resist, joke  
with you. From what I have observed  
so far-- you are better than all the  
men we have seen.

JACK  
(charmingly self-effacing)  
Oh, well, once you get to know me,  
I'm sure you'll see otherwise.

HIROKO  
(smiles)  
Oh, I'm sure...

The Waitress brings food which is covered under metal serving  
dishes. Hiroko sees that Jack's nervous about what it might be.

HIROKO  
You like mucous-cooked slugs?

JACK  
(hardly missing a beat)  
It depends on how they're prepared.

HIROKO  
This is the specialty of the  
house...

The Waitress sets the covered dish down. Jack tries not to, but he  
winces. The Waitress pulls the lid off. It's...

HIROKO  
Filet Mignon.

(she chuckles with delight  
at his reaction)  
This is a French restaurant. Japan  
takes the best from all over the  
world and makes it its own.

JACK  
They sure do, don't they...

Jack drifts off for a second. Hiroko notices this. She shakes her head.

**\*new dialogue to come:**

She makes an introspective comment, perhaps about "Sometimes I wonder what is Japan anyways. When I was little, I used to have one idea. But I think all the good things are memories..."  
From her attitude, we get the feeling those memories are the best part of her life.  
Jack drills her, accidentally coming on a little too strong (because of his own present situation): "What's so good about memories?"  
But she is adept in reading what's going on with Jack that shw is able to fix the situation.

Jack reaches for some wine, starts to pour his own. She stops him. Takes it from him. Pours it for him.

HIROKO  
In Japan, never pour your own drink.

Jack nods. Pours hers.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - A LITTLE LATER

FLASH. A couple of giggling GIRLS ask Jack for an autograph. Jack smiles, flattered.

HIROKO  
Baseball player... not only hit home runs, but also big hit with the girls, neh?

Jack shrugs, smiles.

JACK  
I'm not very interested in...

HIROKO  
Bambis?

JACK  
Bimbos.

HIROKO  
You'd know, Mr. Elliot.

The Waitress brings them the check. Hiroko reaches for it. Jack immediately takes it.

HIROKO  
No-- this is my treat.

JACK  
But you got dinner. Besides, it's too late.

Jack pulls his credit card out from under the bill-- he's already paid it. All that's left is for him to sign, which he does.

JACK  
I gave it to her on the way in.

Hiroko puts her American Express credit card in her wallet. Then notices Jack looking at her.

HIROKO  
Is something...?

JACK  
You look very pretty.

Ignoring him, she turns and gets up. CUT TO:

INT. HIROKO'S PORSCHE - DRIVING - NIGHT

Loud music playing (a German neo-pop band) as Hiroko drives.

JACK  
You don't respond well to compliments, do you?

HIROKO  
Not good for a woman in--

JACK  
Wait, let me guess. Business?

HIROKO  
(nods)  
I guess I am easy to read through, neh?

Hiroko stops the car in front of a building.

HIROKO  
Sorry to keep you out so late. I know you have a game tomorrow.

JACK

I'm fine. I've slept great.  
Besides, it's a night game. Would  
you like to come up? We could  
discuss more business.

HIROKO

That would be nice. It seems like a  
pleasant idea.

JACK

(getting out of the car)  
Well, see... it's a good thing I  
asked..

But when Jack steps away from the curb, Hiroko hands him her card--

HIROKO

Please come by the office and we can  
talk further.

--and as she's about to take off she suddenly COVERS HER FACE.  
Jack looks around to see why and sees a COUPLE OF GUYS pop out of  
their cars and SHOOT PHOTOS at Jack and her. Jack waves them off.  
Looks at her-- and she is taking off. Jack watches her go, nods.  
Whatever.

Now alone in front of his apartment building, he looks around.  
Starts walking. Sees nothing but strange buildings, strange signs,  
different people. Stops. Looks around. Has no idea what to do,  
where to go.

After a moment he just turns around and goes back inside. CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - 11 AM

Yoji, panicked, KNOCKS on Jack's apartment door.

YOJI

Jack-san! It's me, Yoji!

Jack-- incredibly groggy-- opens the door. Yoji has a panicked  
look on his face.

JACK

What time is it..?  
(looks at clock: 10:55)  
Jesus, Yoji, it's the crack of  
eleven.

YOJI

Yes, but we have 6:20 game today.  
Practice starts in a half an hour.

JACK

That's crazy. I haven't slept in 4 days. I'll be there three hours before game time. Like I always do it.

And before Yoji can protest, Jack slams the door on him.

INT. DRAGON LOCKER ROOM - AROUND 4 PM

The team stands around a rinky-dink table with some pots of soup and plates of squid, eel, and rice. (From their sweat and the look of their uniforms, we can tell they've been practicing hard.)

Jack enters. He is quickly aware of some team resentment as Mukai and Ohmae turn their backs and move away **muttering about lazy, overpaid Gaijin**. He ignores them. Returns a nod to Kurosawa who greets him brightly and with some awe. He quietly crosses to Hammer, who turns to him with a heaping bowl of noodles.

HAMMER

Hey, slugger-- I see you already got the Gaijin timetable down. Grab yourself some soba and stretch out.

Hammer shows Jack his picture in the paper-- the one with AN INDETERMINATE WOMAN (whom we know is Hiroko) covering her head outside his apartment. Hammer smiles.

HAMMER

Heavy night?

He sets the paper down, then continues expertly manipulating his food with the chopsticks. Jack screws up his face as he peers at the various things on offer, then at Hammer's bowl.

HAMMER

Noodles. A little pregame seaweed.  
(when Jack wrinkles nose)  
Might have some eel left.

JACK

(re the food)  
Jesus...  
(then, re the paper)  
Jesus...

Silence as players become aware of Uchiyama, who is standing, staring at Jack. Jack pops a wad of tobacco into his mouth and then turns to his locker and starts dressing. Yoji turns the paper over to hide the photo. **Uchiyama barks**. Yoji tries to translate, but Uchiyama just keeps talking.

UCHIYAMA  
 (subtitled)  
**The team are glad you decided not to  
 sleep the entire day away.**

Yoji is just starting to gear up to translate when Jack just turns to Uchiyama and cuts him off mid-sentence.

JACK  
 Look, I don't want to leave my game  
 on the practice field.

At this point, Yoji stops translating Japanese-to-English for Uchiyama and turns to Uch and starts translating English-to-Japanese for Jack. But it doesn't matter, cause Uch isn't listening to Yoji-- he just starts right in with:

UCHIYAMA  
 (subtitled)  
**I see you want to play the American  
 way: fat, not fit.**

JACK  
 (overlapping-- not paying  
 any attention to Yoji)  
 If you want me to give you my best,  
 then I have to do it the way I know  
 how. I know baseball and I know  
 myself.

We HEAR a pained WHIMPER from BEHIND MORITA-SAN'S CLOSED DOOR.

VOICE  
Oowwwwwwwwww.

Uchiyama turns to leave, **speaks**. Yoji translates.

YOJI  
 He would like to please visit  
 Morita-san. For, how you say,  
 "chill out."

A couple of the guys, hearing this, smile a little. The closed DOOR OPENS and Toshi exits...

TOSHI  
 Oh, man, limp-rag me, baby, my God.

Jack takes a breath. Walks toward the open door. Steps into--

THE MESSAGE ROOM

And then stops in his tracks, suddenly relieved.

Morita-san is an 85 pound, 75-YEAR-OLD LADY.

Jack rolls his eyes. Looks outside. Smiles at Hammer ("they've been fucking with me, haven't they?") Hammer smiles. Morita-san points to the table. Jack gets on. Morita-san approaches him...

IN THE LOCKER ROOM

The team cracks up as they HEAR:

JACK'S VOICE (FROM BEHIND DOOR)  
Oooowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!!

EXT. BALLPARK - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

CLOSE ON A JAPANESE SCREAMING. THE OENDAN are going nuts with their NOISE. Drums, flags, whistles. Vendors move through the stands selling noodles, octopus balls, squid on sticks, and even hotto doggos...on sticks. On the sidelines, a group of black clad umpires practice their calls with fierce intensity. The Oendan erupts as:

EXT. FIELD - DAY - THE DRAGONS

run out, following Uchiyama to the stands where they begin bowing with arms outstretched. Jack saunters over, watches Hammer bowing, shrugs and bows with him.

JACK  
 What're we doing?

HAMMER  
 Apologizing to the fans for our poor play last year.

Jack stops mid-bow. He straightens, drops his hands.

JACK  
 What the hell am I doing? I wasn't even here last year.

Jack looks over-- Igarishi has stepped aside to pose for a PHOTO.

QUICK SHOTS

In A CROWDED NAGOYA NOODLE SHOP - THREE OLD WOMEN settle behind their cooking pots as they switch from a Japanese-dubbed "Golden Girls" to the DRAGONS game.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY CONTRUCTION - NIGHT

A WORKMAN on the NAGOYA EXPRESSWAY stops hammering, turns on the radio. We hear a lot of Japanese, then the word - "Dragons!"

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD

It's game time. The HANSHIN TIGERS are on the field, in the middle of a CONFERENCE. (For the Dragons, Toshi is on first base.) Jacks is in the on-deck circle, basking in the noise.

JACK  
Come in, Iggi! Knock!  
(then, to pitcher)  
Hang it, meat!

CRACK-- Igarishi HITS A SHOT. The second baseman dives, scoops it and swings to make the throw to second-- out. The throw to first is late--- Igarishi's on. Jack nods, impressed.

JACK  
Whoa... actual baseball is actually occurring.

Uchiyama steps out of the dugout and says something.

UCHIYAMA  
(subtitled)  
**I hope your first hit is good.**

But Jack, not understanding, thinks it's more barking of orders and just says:

JACK  
Same to you...

The two men exchange looks. Then Jack turns and walks toward the plate.

QUICK SHOTS

FACES in the STADIUM and UNDER THE STADIUM anticipate Jack's first appearance.

A GUY IN A CAR looks at his DASHBOARD TV. He is in a traffic snarl which starts to move forward as--

EXT. STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

THE SCOREBOARD reads: "JACK: WE WISH GUTS BALL!"

Jack, at the plate, digs in. Taps the plate with his bat. Leans in for the pitch. Feels it. The season's beginning...

CATCHER  
Ooooh, Dai-leega.

JACK  
You got it, babe.

Jack looks at the pitcher. Checks his stance....

The Pitcher throws from the stretch. And the pitch is outside.  
But **the Umpire calls a strike.**

Jack, eyes wide, turns and looks at the Umpire.

UMPIRE  
You big. You can hit.

JACK  
Fine.

The Pitcher sets... and delivers again... and-- CRACK!!

CUT TO: QUICK SHOTS

FACES in the stadium. The TEAM in the dugout. PEOPLE rushing away from the snack lines.

And the GUY IN THE CAR, who raises his hands in the air--

GUY  
**Oishhh!**

-- and RAMS the car in front of him as--

ON THE FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Jack takes the turn at first and...

THE BALL

bounds off the right field wall.

QUICK SHOT: IN A JAPANESE SWEETS STORE

A TEENAGE GIRL EMPLOYEE yells to (subtitled) "**Get back!**" as--

ON THE FIELD - JACK ROUNDS SECOND

and then has to skid to a halt halfway down the line--

JACK  
What the hell--??

--as Igarishi has stopped at third! Jack dives back, barely safe.

RY  
Nice hit.

JACK  
Jesus! What's he doing? He  
could've given us the lead!

The Shortstop tosses back the ball and helps Jack up.

SHORTSTOP (RY)  
Get used to it. Probably didn't  
wanna take the risk. Lose face.

JACK  
(brushing off)  
With a puss like his, what's he  
afraid of?

RY  
Don't ask me, I just work here.

Jack, now standing, acknowledges the CROWD. They go WILD. Jack gives a pointed look at Uchiyama.

RY  
(setting behind Jack)  
I think you scared em-- you've seen  
your last fastball in Japan.  
(then)  
Oh, by the way, we're doing a pick-  
off move here.

Jack starts back as the Pitcher wheels and throws to the Shortstop, who moves in behind Jack and tags him-- too late, of course.

JACK  
Thanks.

RY  
No problem. You owe me a beer.  
(throwing the ball back)  
I'm Ry Ward.

JACK  
We met in Baltimore.

RY  
(a memory)  
Oh, man... Baltimore...

DISSOLVE TO:

ANGLE - JACK - ON THE FIELD - LATER IN THE GAME

stretches a little on his familiar turf at first base, then smiles as he takes a position to hold an opposing runner on the bag.

JACK  
Nice rap. Got any nude pictures of  
your wife?  
(off his blank look)  
Wanna see some?  
(then...)  
Never mind...

EXT. DRAGON STADIUM - CLOSE SCOREBOARD - NIGHT

It's the bottom of the ninth. Score DRAGONS - 4, TIGERS - 4.

ON THE FIELD

Max is on first. Jack comes up to bat behind him...

VARIOUS SHOTS:

The Pitcher stares him down. RY WARD, the shortstop makes eye contact with him... as Jack steps into the box.

THE PITCHER

Bears down and fires... The ball screams toward the plate... then rises up and in and...

JACK

Steps and tries but...

THWACK. The ball slams into the catcher's mitt.

SHOT: THE DUGOUT

Uchiyama and Hori look at each other.

HORI

Shutto?

UCHIYAMA

Hai, shutto.

HORI

(turns and yells to Jack;  
subtitled)

Foot in. Shoulder down, hand over.

JACK

Hears it-- but it washes over him. Along with the noise from the stands, which, for some reason, gets louder. Jack steps in again.

A SECOND LATER

THE PITCH comes HIGH AND INSIDE-- aimed directly at Jack's head. Jack has to DUCK FIERCELY to avoid getting hit.

JACK

Jesus!

When he finally regains balance, Jack looks back toward the dugout-- really expecting a protest from Uchiyama. But Uchiyama is unmoved.

Jack takes a couple steps toward the mound. Angrily points his bat at the Pitcher.

JACK  
That's the last one of those I'd  
better ever see.

THE PITCHER

Though he doesn't understand a word, gets the gist of it. He takes the challenge... winds... and fires.

ON JACK

As his face registers the REALIZATION...

JACK  
Oh, fuck...

CLOSE - THE BALL -SLOW MOTION

We know what it is, cause we can see the rotation... it's a wicked **shutto**.

CLOSE - JACK - SLOW MOTION

Waiting on it. He takes a long slow stride into the ball, hands breaking through, all power...

But all he can do is barely get a piece of wood on it. It's a nubber down the line. He flings his bat down angrily and takes off.

WITH JACK - SLOW-MOTION - RUNNING

Jack legs it down the line as the Tigers THIRD BASEMAN scoops the roller up and throws to second to start the double play. The SECOND BASEMAN comes across the bag in front of Hammer, who bails out. Jack HUFFS AND PUFFS toward first, desperately trying to beat the relay. He lunges for the bag... The UMP jerks his thumb. OUT!

JACK  
(out of breath)  
Shit!

WIDER

Jack throws his batting helmet angrily, turns and sees Hammer trotting in.

JACK  
Why the hell didn't you break up the  
double play?

HAMMER

They don't do that here man. It's disrespectful to take someone out with a slide.

JACK

What horseshit! That's sure as hell not a way to get yourself into the Dai league.

Jack sees Hammer's stung, backs off. He slaps him on the butt.

JACK

Ok, Ok... we'll get em next inning.

HAMMER

Uh, there ain't gonna be a next inning...

JACK

What're you talking about?

HAMMER

No inning can start after four hours. The game's over.

JACK

When do we make it up?

HAMMER

Never. That's it.

JACK

That's it? A baseball game can't end in a goddam tie!

HAMMER

Oh, man-- don't get me going on this. Every year I gotta explain it to the gaijin and every year it makes less and less sense.

JACK

Unbelievable.

Hammer, genuinely exasperated about this, starts toward the dugout. After a beat, Jack heads after him. CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A JAPANESE MELODRAMA....

only, when the pretty young LEAD ACTRESS SPEAKS, she is not speaking in soft, mellifluous Japanese; rather, her voice is that of:

A GRUFF, DRUNKEN AMERICAN MALE  
 (corresponding to TV)  
 "GET ME OUT OF THIS GODFORSAKEN  
 COUNTRY!"

DIFFERENT MALE VOICE  
 (for a different character)  
 "I will take you out, but only if  
 you-- holy shit! It's Jack Elliot!"

INT. GAIJIN BAR - CARLOS O'LEARY'S - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Huge American flags, a poster of a hamburger on the door. A  
 "truckers served first" sign, etc.

At one particular table, FOUR GAIJIN, holding a KARAOKE MICROPHONE  
 as they ad-lib lines for the Japanese TV that's on silently in the  
 background. A couple of them have TURNED and are looking toward:

THE DOOR

Where Jack is entering with Hammer, still worked up about the game.

JACK  
 How can we enjoy a beer when we're  
 not playing to win? What's to  
 celebrate?

Jack's interrupted by RY WARD (from the Tigers' game-- who now  
 holds a mic) and LYLE MASSEY (the Tigers' right fielder), who,  
 along with a couple other Gaijin (STEVENS and NEVIN), wave them  
 over.

RY  
 Come on in, bro-- we're all on the  
 same team now!

Jack and Hammer join the guys at the table as A GAIJIN WAITRESS  
 sets more drinks and some food.

WAITRESS  
 Here you go, one American burger  
 with American cheese, on white  
 bread.

JACK  
 Oh, gimme one of those.

STEVENS  
 So Jack-- we hear you put up some  
 numbers today. Well, one number.  
 One for four.

JACK

I woulda done better if I had a decent ump who know how to call a strike.

RY

That ump was the best in the league. Welcome to the Gaijin strike zone. Where they want you to do good, but not too good.

STEVENS

Yeah, wait till they get you figured out-- they'll throw you junk, throw at your head.

NEVIN

They're as confusing as the women here.

JACK

No shit...

NEVIN

Oh, don't tell me you brought your dick? Same mistake I made.

HAMMER

Yeah, Nevin's dick's back home-- in mini-storage!

LYLE

Or try and break one of their records... number 54.

JACK

What do you mean?

HAMMER

55 is Sadaharu Oh's record for home runs in a season. You didn't know that?

JACK

(nods, realizing...)

Oh...

STEVENS

And you're not gonna change em, so you just gotta do it their way and pocket the cash.

JACK

Yeah... well I don't play that way. And I'm not about to change either.

LYLE

You'll end up doing it and a lot of  
shit that's worse.

RY

You'll sleep in hotels the size of  
shoe boxes.. .Hell, you'll end up  
eating crustaceans, man.

STEVENS

You've changed already, Jack...

Jack just stares at him as Stevens turns to the bartender.

STEVENS

Read him the paper, Walt.

The Bartender takes a Japanese sports daily and lays it across the  
bar. On it is a picture of Jack.

WALT

(translating)

". ..Naturally I always longed to  
play in Japan. And to have the  
chance to play under a such a wise  
and skilled manager as Uchiyama-san  
is a golden opportunity for me to  
grow as a player..."

JACK

Who said that?

HAMMER

You. Don't you recognize it?

JACK

What!?

The guys chuckle. As Walt is about to resume reading, CUT TO:

INT. CROWDED SUBURBAN TRAIN - DAY

Yoji, crushed up against Jack, cowers as Jack thrusts his phrase  
book at him.

JACK

See these words? These words mean  
these words. "Hello, how are you"  
does not mean "Uchiyama is a  
genius." Do you understand?

YOJI

Y...Yes, Jack-san.

JACK

Good. From now on I want you to say exactly what I say-- only. And nothing else. Speak the truth. Got it?

Nervous, Yoji nods.

JACK

Good.

Jack looks around, amazed at the SALARYMEN who blithely read MAGNA COMICS (comics which feature naked women) right next to ELDERLY WOMEN and LITTLE GIRLS.

JACK

Nice art.

He notices a particularly explicit drawing in one of the comics right next to an old lady's face. Real low art. CUT TO:

HIGH ART

Real interesting graphics-- framed advertising art. Jack steps into frame, adjusts his coat. We are:

INT. GRAPHICS COMPANY

And Jack and Yoji are in the waiting area. Yoji is aware that Jack is very 'up' for this meeting. It's making Yoji restless. He leans to Jack.

YOJI

Jack-san, regarding what you said, about speak the truth: Japanese women seem to be one way, but in the end they are all their father's daughters.

JACK

(a little confused)  
Uh huh...

Yoji nods, satisfied that he has done his job.

JACK

Whatever...

An attractive young assistant (EIKA) enters.

A SMALL STUDIO

Eika leads Jack in. He suddenly stops in his tracks, for before him is a roomful of SENSUOUSLY-CLAD MALE DANCERS AND MODELS...

EIKA  
Please. One moment, please.

Jack looks around.

Hiroko is in the middle of work. She is surrounded by assistants, in the middle of a commercial "stills" shoot. It is very stylish and interesting, with attractive Japanese men in sleek and sensual poses under a graphic for a cologne called "AURA."

Hiroko-- camera in hand-- is gently suggestive, encouraging, and, above all, in charge.

EIKA approaches and whispers to her. Hiroko looks up from her camera and smiles as she sees.... Jack. Some of the FEMALE ASSISTANTS giggle and smile when they see the famous Gaijin ballplayer.

Hiroko despatches Eika on some errand then straightens and tells everybody to--

HIROKO  
OK. Relax. Thankyou. Good work,  
thank you. Take a break, you  
deserve it.

She crosses to Jack, who is impressed with her-- but uncomfortable with the scene.

HIROKO  
A little daring, neh? I hope this  
doesn't embarrass you.

JACK  
(clearly embarrassed)  
Oh, no. Not at all... I... it's...

HIROKO  
(knowing and enjoying it.)  
I didn't think so. Because you  
American men are much more  
comfortable with your feminine side  
than Japanese men, aren't you?

JACK  
Oh... oh, definitely.

HIROKO  
I think Japanese men are also ready,  
neh, in fact, relieved to show their  
full self. They just need to be  
spurred on a little.

She leads him into her OFFICE AREA. She indicates the couch for Jack to sit as she takes a folio from Eika who hustles in behind them.

JACK  
 I don't, uh... I'm not going to...  
 (re the "sensual" men  
 nearby)  
 ...this stuff... you don't expect me  
 to... I mean, I'm an athlete, you  
 know...

Hiroko sits alongside Jack spreading the folio out on a low table.

HIROKO  
 (smiles)  
 You can rest ...how do you say  
 it...easy. Your ad is all team-  
 approved. And we all know there's  
 no challenging tradition when it  
 comes to Japanese baseball.

JACK  
 You can say that again.

Jack is depressed to think about it. He withdraws into himself.

HIROKO  
 Hard to understand, neh?

JACK  
 It makes no sense to me at all.

HIROKO  
 (softening briefly)  
 Maybe sometime I can help explain a  
 little... well try at least.  
 (there's a brief moment  
 between them, then)  
 ...but for now, may I explain our  
 concept to you?

JACK  
 (coming out of it)  
 Uhh. Ohh... sure. You mean it?

HIROKO  
 (not understanding)  
 Pardon?

JACK  
 I can call on you... to explain  
 things?

Her look is all the confirmation Jack needs-- and comfort.

INT. DRAGONS STADIUM

Hundreds of plastic cones are being banged together. That and the chanting are deafening, almost drowning out

IN THE DUGOUT - UCHIYAMA SCREAMS AT

The team, who sit, completely nervous. Yoji, next to a shocked Jack, translates along with Uchiyama. He knows the rant.

UCHIYAMA

(in Japanese; subtitled)

...IT'S NO WONDER WE'RE 5 AND 11!  
THE GIANTS DESERVE TO BEAT US!

YOJI

(same cadence)

It's no wonder we're five and eleven. The Giants deserve to beat us.

JACK

(sotto)

Jesus, you'd think we'd already played the game or something.

HAMMER

(whispering back)

Yeah well don't mess with him today. The Giants get him wrapped pretty tight. They're more popular than the Yankees and Dodgers combined. And they always kick the shit out of us.

UCHIYAMA

YOU ARE DISHONORING THE DRAGON  
UNIFORM!

YOJI

You are dishonoring the Dragon uniform.

UCHIYAMA

YOU ARE LOWER THAN THE LOWEST DOG!

YOJI

You are lower than the lowest dog.

JACK

(amused)

...the lowest dog? Wow that's low.

Silence. Uchiyama looks up. Jack tries to joke his way out of trouble.

JACK  
Nice speech coach... gave me goose  
bumps.

Yoji would translate but Uchiyama ignores both he and Jack. CUT  
TO:

EXT. STREETS OF TOKYO

People watch the SHINJUKU BIG SCREEN, which lights up with "GO  
GIANTS!" and--

ON THE FIELD

It's "BATTLING OENDANS!" The Dragons Oendan cheers. The Giants  
Oendan cheers. THE DRAGONS STANDS are full of yelling, hopeful  
faces-- which is in direct contrast to:

THE DRAGONS' DUGOUT-- where all we see are tense, sullen faces.  
Currently looking at:

THE PLATE

Where Toshi strikes out.

Among the crowd reactions, A FIESTY UNRULY FAN shouts obscenities  
at Uchiyama as Uchiyama walks out on the field to meet Toshi-- and  
then knocks him on the helmet, in front of everyone.

CUT TO: QUICK SHOT

In a ZEN TEMPLE, several MONKS react favorably to the blow.

ON THE FIELD

As Jack grabs his bat, he shakes his head. As passes Uchiyama, he  
tries not to say anything... but he can't stop himself.

JACK  
Good "wa," Skip. The kid's a rookie  
for Chrissakes...  
(to Toshi)  
It's no big deal. You'll get 'em  
next time.

TOSHI  
Must refine proper form.

Jack lets him walk off. Shakes his head. Gets into the on-deck  
circle as

HAMMER - AT THE PLATE

Takes a swing and LAUNCHES IT into the corner. He rounds first and  
stands at second to great applause.

JACK TAKES THE PLATE

THE SCOREBOARD

Shows The Dragons behind. And shows Jack's stats for the day: 0 for 2. His season's stats so far: 8 for 50...

JACK

Breathes deep and sets-- determined...

THE PITCH - SLOW MOTION

Rolls from the grunting, straining pitcher's hand... rotating slowly...

JACK

watches it start toward the plate... so he starts to swing... then...

THE BALL

Starts to MOVE AWAY from the plate... so

JACK

Checks his swing... and..

WHOOMPH. The ball smacks into the catcher's mitt, having just caught the inside corner.

UMPIRE  
Sutoraiku!

Jack turns to the catcher.

JACK  
Shutto?

CATCHER  
Hai. Shutto.

JACK  
Shit.

Jack nods--

THE NEXT PITCH

Is also a **shutto**! And Jack SWINGS HARD-- missing it by a mile.

THE THIRD PITCH

Doesn't even have to leave the pitcher hand before we CUT TO:

JACK - IN THE DUGOUT

Throwing his bat into the rack. Uchiyama is staring at him. Jack grabs his glove and starts onto the field.

QUICK CUTS: A DRAGONS' FAN RISES, FULL OF HOPE... THEN SITS DOWN, PISSED. A GIANTS' FAN CHEERS AS--

IGARISHI - AT SHORT

Doesn't dive for a ball and it careens off his glove and into left field.

JACK  
Come on, pretty boy... dive for it.  
Jesus.

HIGH WIDE SHOT SHOWS NO ONE HAS LEFT THE STADIUM.

THE SCOREBOARD

shows 2 Giants out, and the Giants ahead 3 to 2. It's getting close to the end of the game. Now the Dragons are at bat.

IN THE DUGOUT

Players are tired, tense.

JACK  
Come on, guys... we're beating ourselves. We're only-- what?-- three hours and forty-five minutes into the game. Come on! Rally caps! Remember: "It's not over till the fat lady sings."

YOJI  
(subtitled)  
**It's not...**  
(having to stop mid-translation)  
--- what?

Jack, giving up, waves him off. Yoji explains:

YOJI  
(in Japanese; subtitled)  
**Jack says when game's over a fat woman will sing for us.**

Jack sees Igarishi, who stepped out of the dugout for a moment for some photographs, return. Jack reaches into his bag for something (which we don't see), calls Igarishi over, sits him next to him on the bench. Puts his arm around him, keeping one hand out of sight.

JACK

Hey Iggi. I need your advice.  
You're a big hit with the women  
here. And I have this problem cause  
I brought my dick with me. And I  
need some advice about a women I'm  
sort of hot for...

Suddenly Igarishi leaps to his feet, yelling.

IGARISHI

Yaaaaahhhhh!!

NEW ANGLE - FROM ABOVE THE DUGOUT

We HEAR a lot of HOLLERING, then we see IGARISHI leap out of the dugout as if he were chasing down an imaginary grounder and roll in agony trying to get his shoes off.

THE PRESS

Has a field day photographing the squirming, sweating Igarishi.

IN THE DUGOUT

The team actually starts LAUGHING. Even Ohmae and Mukai smile a little. It's the first time we've seen this kind of joi d'vivre from them. Then...

UCHIYAMA

barks at them, evidently to shut-up. The team obeys immediately. Uchiyama looks over at Jack.

JACK

Baseball's a game. And games are  
supposed to be fun.

Jack grabs his bat. Steps out of the dugout.

The Oendan GETS EVEN LOUDER as--

AT THE PLATE - HAMMER

Drives a single into center field.

JACK

Yes! Hammer, alright! Way to  
swing!

Jack dashes a quick glance at Uchiyama... then starts toward the plate.

THE DRAGONS CHEERING SECTION

goes crazy, spelling out "ELLIOT" with their cushions, as--

VARIOUS SHOTS - FANS WATCHING

In a MORTUARY: people see Jack's face with Japanese writing over it. We see him step to the plate.

IN A DENTIST'S OFFICE - SAME  
IN AN AIRPORT LOUNGE - SAME

AT THE STADIUM - SAME

Jack readies himself. Digs into the dirt. Looks to the THIRD BASE COACH. He gets the "bunt" sign.

JACK  
... What?  
    (to Ump)  
Time.

Jack steps out of the box, signals to Uchiyama, who comes onto the field, followed by Yoji.

JACK  
Did I see that sign right?

UCHIYAMA/YOJI  
You must move runner, get him in  
tieving position.

JACK  
You don't pay me to bunt.

UCHIYAMA  
Banto shinakere ba benchi iri dazo!

YOJI  
I suggest you bunt.

BACK AT THE PLATE

Jack steps in. The Pitcher sets. Jack, unhappily, sets to bunt.

And the pitch comes in way inside-- sending Jack a few steps out of the box in reaction. But the UMPIRE calls it a strike!

JACK  
Of course. Fine.

Jack checks the sign again-- same sign. Bunt. The Pitcher sets. Delivers... Jack, reading the pitch, changes his stance and--

BASEBALL'S POV-- HEADING RIGHT TOWARD THE PLATE as Jack steps in and swings right AT CAMERA -- CRACK!

SERIES OF SHOTS of PEOPLE REACTING.

ON JACK as he watches.

BASEBALL'S POV - SAILING long... but edging toward the foul pole...

MORE PEOPLE'S REACTIONS - all over the country (SHOPS, PARKS, INSIDE, OUTSIDE, YOUNG, OLD, MALE, FEMALE). Wondering whether the ball will sail fair or foul.

BASEBALL'S POV - as it approaches the pole... and goes... foul.

PEOPLE'S DISAPPOINTED REACTIONS.

JACK

Stops halfway down the first base line... and turns around. And then has to walk back, passing Uchiyama. Who glares furiously at him.

Jack pointedly avoids Uchiyama's look. Returns to the plate.

IN THE STANDS

There's a new buzz. A hope.

THE PRESS

Watch intently as--

AT THE PLATE

Jack grips the bat... stares down the pitcher. Doesn't even look at third for the sign.

THE PITCH - SLOW MOTION

JACK

starts to swing... then hesitates... then CONTINUES HIS SWING AND...

WHOOMPH. The ball smacks into the catcher's mitt, leaving Jack twisted in a circle at the plate.

THE CATCHER has the same silly "shutto" grin on his face.

JACK

Shit.

THE FINAL SCOREBOARD

shows a Dragon loss.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

The team scuttle in dejected. Igarishi throws his burnt shoes into the trash and turns to glare at-- Jack, who, pissed, enters with Hammer.

JACK

...And to think, a month ago I was on the New York Yankees.

HAMMER

Jack, listen-- I'm only saying this cause I'm tired of making friends and losing them halfway through the season. You're in Japan, man. And I know it may seem frustrating, but--

JACK  
Save it, Max. SHIT.

Jack emphasises his point by slamming his bat into the side of his locker. It smashes in half.

Jack becomes aware of the SILENCE in the room. Turns around to see several of the TEAM GUYS, standing, looking at him. There is a chorus of "Shutto's" and giggling as the players take off for their baths.

Jack, frustrated, sits by his locker. Toshi, seeing this, comes over and sits down next to him-- this time it's his turn to cheer Jack up.

TOSHI

(Singing)

Me-ee a-and Missus... Missus  
Jonesu...

Toshi sees his attempt to cheer up Jack isn't playing.

TOSHI

We gotta thiiiing.... goo-in on.  
Woo-wooo....

(pats Jack on the back)

Hey, big guy, keep it light.  
Uchiyama, kick all butts. He think:  
Old way is good way. But he not bad  
man.

JACK

Tosh, in America, we have a saying:  
"The fish stinks from the head."

Why is Toshi suddenly backing away uncomfortably? Because--

Uchiyama is entering the room with Yoji. Jack thinks--"Oh, shit," because it's clear Uchiyama has heard this. Yoji, thinks fast-- then **translates**.

YOJI  
 (subtitled)  
 Perhaps Uchiyama-san would like to  
 go fishing and we could discuss  
 matters further...?

Uchiyama gives Yoji a fast, querying look. Yoji just shrugs.  
 Uchiyama looks at Jack. All eyes are on the two men.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI  
 It has been decided that you are  
 fined 50,000 yen for disobeying your  
 manager on the field.

Jack pulls a wad of money from his pocket, hands Uchiyama five  
 10,000 yen notes. Uchiyama looks at the broken bat.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI  
 Also 10,000 for disrespect to your  
 equipment.

JACK  
 Fine. Here.

Jack reaches into his pocket and removes TWO more 10,000 yen notes.  
 Hands them to Uchiyama, **who then speaks calmly** to Yoji.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI  
 He wants to know what the second one  
 is for.

JACK/YOJI  
 That's for next time.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI  
 He wonders when the next time will  
 be.

Jack grabs a bat and SMASHES A BATTING HELMET ricocheting around  
 the locker room. Uchiyama watches calmly, then, regarding the  
 swing Jack took, just says:

UCHIYAMA/YOJI  
 Uchiyama-san is reminded, you're  
 hitting off the front foot. And  
 your top hand must come over more.

Jack stares at Uchiyama. Uchiyama stares right back. CUT TO:  
 Outside, the sun's about to come up as--

## INT. JACK'S APARTMENT

Tacked to the refrigerator is a SEASON SCHEDULE, on which Jack has already begun Xing out days. (About a month and a half of the season has gone by.)

Clothes are scattered. The CAMERA PANS across the debris: a shirt... a pair of pants... a half finished game of solitaire... a crumpled McDonalds bag... a couple empty Budweisers.

WOMAN'S VOICE (THROUGH TELEPHONE)

I don't know, maybe you're opening  
your hips again.

The CAMERA CONTINUES to wander across the floor, coming to rest on JACK. He stands with a mop cocked on his shoulder, staring at his reflection in the glass. He pins the phone against his neck.

JACK (CONT'D)

No, it's not that. I think it's  
with my foot. But I can't figure it  
out--

INTERCUT - NEW YORK CITY APARTMENT - LATE AT NIGHT - SAME

Jack's ex-wife Karen sits on the bed, on the phone. Behind her, that guy she's marrying is watching "The Tonight Show."

KAREN

(kindly)

Jack-- I'm not your batting coach.

JACK

But you know my swing better than  
anybody...

KAREN

And I'm not your wife, anymore.

JACK

I know, I know...

KAREN

(pause, sighs)

Did you check your hands?

Jack takes a swing and freezes it at the point of connection, then checks it in the mirror. He nods...

JACK

God, my hands.

(visualises for a moment  
then)

That could be it. It really could.

(takes a breath)

So... who's on The Tonight Show?

EXT. NAGOYA STADIUM - DAY

Jack, in his home uniform, takes a swing.

UMPIRE  
Sutoraiku one!

EXT. DIFFERENT STADIUM - NIGHT

Jack, in his away uniform, takes a swing.

UMPIRE  
Sutoraiku two!

EXT. NAGOYA STADIUM - NIGHT

Jack, back in his home uniform, takes yet another swing.

UMPIRE  
Sutoraiku three!

EXT. NAGOYA - DAY - IN THE RAIN

Lost, alone... Jack is alienated by the strange signs and language. Everything's in Japanese--except the things that are in bad English ("DONKEY BURGERS," "TAXI'S ARE AT THERE."). A straggler wanders by, recognizes him. Jack tries to flag a passing cab, but it doesn't stop. There's a PHOTO FLASH, and Jack realizes he's being tagged by a couple of reporters. He turns to them:

JACK  
My sixth grade teacher's name was  
Mr. Pock. My shoe size is 12E. I'm  
wearing grey and green Calvin Klein  
boxers.

They write this down. He still can't get a cab. He turns back to them.

JACK  
Do any of you know where I live? I  
think it's Tagamichi street...or  
maybe thats the name of my tape  
deck. I don't know anymore.  
(as they all nod)  
Could any of you give me a ride?

They smile. And disappear. CUT TO:

INT. HIROKO'S GRAPHIC DESIGN COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

With it pouring outside, Hiroko sits at her design table, staring blankly at some semi-completed sketches. The PHONE RINGS.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - WITH RAIN AROUND

Jack stands in the street, on the phone, as if nothing were wrong.

JACK

Hi...

EXT./INT. NAGOYA MALL - EVENING - RAINING

Jack and Hiroko, out walking, passing, alternately, SHRINES, PACHINKO PARLORS, OLD WOODEN RESTAURANTS, MODERN FAST FOOD JOINTS, etc...

JACK

... He doesn't understand me. I can't get through to him. He's not supportive. He seems go goddamned uptight.

HIROKO

Our culture has a way of doing that. It is hard to be an individual in a country where group consensus is...  
(thinks, then, confidently)  
...queen. And always has been. We have a saying here: the high nail will get hammered down.

Hiroko sighs, frustrated.

JACK

No kidding. You seem to manage.

She sadly shakes her head. As she speaks the following, she finds herself getting gradually wound up.

HIROKO

Please believe there are even more hammers for the new rising Japanese woman. You feel sometimes everything is banging you back, back---to home, babies-- down, down--wife. Your mother, your father...  
(a big sigh)  
... my father. I think perhaps he was much like you. But he has... given in.

Jack is taken with the intensity of her feelings. He is surprised when she stops suddenly.

HIROKO

I... I'm sorry-- I never talk... We never... I guess you are a pathetic ear.

JACK  
I think that's sympathetic ear.  
(beat)  
Tough dad, huh?

HIROKO  
I feel you would like him if you got  
to know him...but please this is  
difficult...we Japanese...

JACK  
I always wondered if I'd be a good  
father. I was good with Melissa...  
fed her every day... never left her  
in a kennel.  
(off Hiroko's look)  
My dog.

HIROKO  
Oh. Thank God.

JACK  
No, I never really got around to  
having kids. For the longest time I  
thought I was too young... then, I  
guess, I thought I was too old. But  
now I sorta wish...  
(stops himself)  
It's funny... the important  
decisions....

Hiroko looks at him. They walk a little further. Jack floats off  
into reverie.

JACK  
You know what it is?

HIROKO  
What?

JACK  
It's my top hand. Karen says it's  
my hands, and I think--

HIROKO  
Excuse me, Jack. What are you  
talking about?

JACK  
(as if it's the most  
natural thing in the  
world)  
My swing.

HIROKO  
Oh...

Without realising it they have stopped and are smiling at one another, recognizing how comfortable they have been. The looks between them draw them close, but their spell is broken by--

A TELEVISION SET (in a corner ANTIQUE SHOP) being turned up. On it are several CLIPS OF JACK STRIKING OUT, with a SPORTSCASTER yabbering away.

JACK  
Am I right that I don't want to  
understand what the guy's saying?

HIROKO  
(listens)  
Perhaps so.

They resume walking, past the NAGOYA NOODLE SHOP (THE ONE WITH THE THREE OLD LADIES). Jack waves, smiles. But gets no response. However, a CUSTOMER says something.

JACK  
What'd she say?

HIROKO  
"You have holes in your swing."

JACK  
Yeah, well everybody has holes in  
their swing.

YET ANOTHER PERSON walks by-- and just shakes his head. Jack shakes his...

JACK  
When I was twenty two, I was hitting  
three seventeen.... I didn't even  
know how good that was. I was just  
so glad to be up there, you know?  
Then after the season, some press  
guy called me the next Mickey  
Mantle...  
(pauses)  
...next Mickey Mantle... Then there  
was this very specific moment... I  
was standing in the cage and  
somebody yelled "go on, Mick, park  
one." I was holding the bat and I  
remember thinking "God, just don't  
miss. Whatever you do, just don't  
miss."

Jack stops talking entirely. Hiroko looks at him, but he's a million miles away.

JACK  
My whole life I'd been trying to hit  
the ball, and then, all of a sudden,  
I'm trying not to miss.

Jack shakes his head. There's nothing like being scared. Hiroko sees this. Suddenly perks up, noticing something.

HIROKO  
Oh, look! We'll pick your fortune!

EXT. ZEN TEMPLE (WHICH IS RIGHT THERE IN THE MALL) - CONTINUOUS  
She pulls him over to the little window, where MONKS sell fortunes.

HIROKO  
I used to do this all the time with  
my family. In this very place.

Hiroko pays and draws a stick from the MONK. Looks at it...

JACK  
What?

HIROKO  
This: "growing up"...no ... "old."  
(aware that Jack has been  
taken aback)  
It's not important. Sometimes these  
can be very silly.

Jack watches her tie the little paper. CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

It's POURING RAIN as Hiroko's car pulls up. They sit there a minute sharing a smile, then, hesistantly, both speak at once--

JACK/HIROKO  
(overlapping again)  
Perhaps you'd like/I'd like...

JACK  
Stop.  
(beat)  
You go.

HIROKO  
My grandparents live in the country.  
Not too far from here. I plan to  
visit. Next week, perhaps. I think  
it will be a chance for you to get  
to know my father...

JACK  
I'd like that.

They hold onto the moment for as long as they can. Then Jack starts to get out. He stops, takes a deep breath, turns...

JACK

Look, I don't suppose you... nah, forget it.

HIROKO

That would be nice. It would seem a very pleasant idea.

JACK

(disappointed)

Okay... no problem. Well, thanks for talking.

He climbs from the car, rushes through the rain and into his building. Completely unaware that Hiroko hasn't driven off.

She gets out of the car, locks it and dashes in after him.

INT. HALLWAY OF JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - A MOMENT LATER

Jack exits the elevator, starts down the hall. The SECOND ELEVATOR DOOR opens, and Hiroko gets out. She follows behind him.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS (WITH RAIN OUTSIDE)

Jack sighs and throws off his coat, still completely unaware that...

HIROKO IS STILL RIGHT BEHIND HIM. He crosses to the kitchen, grabs a beer (as does Hiroko, before the fridge closes), continues into the living room and crashes on the couch. He turns on the TV, flicks a couple of channels... then finally looks to his side and jumps back--

JACK

Aaaahhh!

-- as he sees Hiroko, sitting right next to him.

HIROKO

Is that the way you treat a lady?  
You are worse than a Japanese man.

Jack just looks at her, shocked. She smiles. And he softens.

JACK

I thought...

Jack gulps. Looks at her. Moves toward her and we CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - VIEW THROUGH THE OUTSIDE WINDOW

Rain washes over the window, giving their lovemaking the look of a moving Japanese watercolor.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

They lie next to each other.

JACK

I'm... a baseball player.

(beat)

I'm a baseball player and I've always been a baseball player. Even before I was a baseball player I was a baseball player.

(pauses)

I don't know if I could be anything else.

After a moment, Jack looks over at her.

JACK

I'm sorry. You probably have no idea what I'm talking about.

HIROKO

That's okay-- I'd rather you not use your mouth for any more talking...

She moves slowly closer to him. And as Jack closes his eyes in anticipation, we CUT TO:

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE (OVER)

Well, with three balls and sixty-four strikes, Elliot seems to have completely disappeared.

EXT. DREAM BALLFIELD - USA - DAY

By home plate is a DEEP, DEEP HOLE where the batters' box used to be.

INT. DEEP, DEEP HOLE - IN NEAR COMPLETE DARKNESS

Jack, in exasperated confusion, stands with his bat.

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE

It's too bad. To see a world series MVP go through this...You gotta know-- when your time's over, it's over.

(sound of ball hitting  
mitt)

--whoops-- there goes strike sixty-five!

Jack swings... digs himself a little deeper. And suddenly something starts to crumble! He looks down. There is LIGHT coming from the breaking earth below his feet. He bends, PUSHES, and--

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - JAPAN

-- JACK'S HEAD rises from the batters' box. Suddenly his EYES WIDEN, as he sees that EVERY PLAYER ON THE FIELD, instead of a glove, holds a HAMMER. As does the UMP. And the MANAGER. And the FANS.

And as they all raise them into the air, we CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S JAPAN APARTMENT - MORNING

Jack awakens with a start, sees Hiroko sleeping next to him. This gives him calm... and we CUT TO:

A NEWSPAPER CARICATURE OF JACK

Twisted up like a corkscrew, with sweat flying off his face. Beneath it is the HEADLINE: "\$900,000.00??" It is being perused in:

THE MANAGER'S OFFICE

By the Team Brass-- who then shift a chastising glance at Uchiyama. Uchiyama nods... We HEAR STADIUM NOISE and we CUT TO:

EXT. DRAGON STADIUM FIELD - NIGHT GAME #3 DRAGONS VS TIGERS  
KOSHIEN STADIUM

JACK

Approaches the plate, a little cocky-- after all, he did just get laid...

He looks around. The crowd is relatively non-committal.

THE PITCHER

Sets, winds and lets loose...

THE PITCH.....

Is coming in low and inside...

JACK

Grits his teeth-- and checks his swing. He even has to lift his foot to keep it from being hit. It slaps into the catcher's mitt way inside and right at the dirt... But it's called:

UMPIRE  
Sutoraiku one!

And Jack's cool demeanor is suddenly snapped.

JACK  
Oh, come on! What, are we playing  
CRICKET here? Come on! You call  
that fair!? The guy was goddamn  
bowling!

Jack looks to Uchiyama in the dugout-- but Uchiyama gives him nothing.

JACK  
Christ. Come on!

Hammer, in the on deck circle, comes over and settles Jack down.

HAMMER  
Easy, man. It's okay. You can't  
get a hit from the bench.

Jack nods. Calms himself. Gets back into the box.

THE NEXT PITCH

Brushes him back. But it's called

UMPIRE  
**Sutoraiku two!**

And Jack really goes crazy. He throws the bat down.

JACK  
What?? Are you out of your mind?!  
(a walking theater)  
Oh... man... this sucks. This  
really sucks... That fucking parted  
my hair!

VARIOUS SHOTS: THROUGHOUT THE RURAL COUNTRYSIDE

ARTISANS and FARMERS watch TV's and listen to radios, some angered and some bemused by Jack's histrionic display.

IN THE STANDS

THE FANS laugh at Jack's antics and urge him on. The TEAM BRASS are not amused.

AT THE PLATE

The Ump, ire pumped, turns toward Jack as Uchiyama starts onto the field. Jack sees him, is relieved.

JACK  
 (to Uch, re the Ump)  
 Straighten him out, would you? You  
 speak his language: pig-headed,  
 stubbornness.

And Jack, smug, just waits while Uch crosses toward... uh oh...  
 toward Jack. Uch picks up the bat and gets right in Jack's face.

UCHIYAMA  
 (re bat)  
 Speak with this.  
 (re Jack's mouth)  
 And shut that.

Uchiyama then turns and starts off the field. FANS CHEER.

JACK

Steps to the plate - taking all this in. The noise, the colors,  
 the lights. Jack stares down the pitcher, spits tobacco juice into  
 the dirt in front of him.

JACK  
 Hang it, asshole.

TIGHT SHOTS: Jack. Faces in the crowd. Uchiyama. Hammer. More  
 noise. The crowd is almost swirling around Jack.

THE PITCHER

Leans in... Sets... and with grim determination, hurls the ball--

BASEBALL'S POV

Heading right toward Jack's ever-widening eyes... Jack turns his  
 head just as--

--CLUNK!! The ball smacks into Jack's helmet and Jack is rocked to  
 the ground. Rattled, he lies there a minute. And-- and don't  
 think Jack doesn't hear this-- the CROWD CHEERS.

Jack steadies himself, then props himself up, the stadium  
 practically spinning. He peers back at the Pitcher, who tips his  
 hat.

And that's it for Jack. He scrambles up... and charges the mound.

VARIOUS SHOTS:

The OTHER PLAYERS, the FANS, the PRESS -- all leap to their feet.

EXT. NAGOYA STREET - AT A POLICE BOX

A POLICEMAN, at the beckoning of his PARTNER, runs into the box and  
 watches the little TV, as--

ON THE FIELD - SAME

Jack takes a swing at the opposing pitcher. THE FANS shout and boo and literally RAIN DEBRIS onto the field. BOTH TEAMS empty onto the field. Hammer is one of the first to arrive.

HAMMER

Stop it man! It was a mistake!

JACK

No shit, it was a mistake!

He unleashes another wild haymaker at the guy, misses him but catches YOJI flush on the jaw. He goes down like a sack of potatoes.

Hammer wraps his huge arms around Jack, pinning his hands to his side.

HAMMER

He tipped his cap! It means he's sorry. The pitch just got away from him.

STADIUM TUNNELS---fans leave their lines and run in to watch.

The Crowd BOOS disgustedly as Hammer lifts Jack off the ground and literally carries him toward the dugout. He sets Jack down by Uchiyama... who, with Yoji behind him, signals Hammer to stop and says to Jack:

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

You are dishonoring the team. I am tired of you blaming other people for your problems. You Americans are all the same. You are arrogant. You think only of yourselves. You think nothing of the team.

JACK

(To Yoji)

Is he finished? Tell him to fuck himself, smoke a cigarette... then fuck himself again. TELL HIM WHAT I SAID!

(beat)

And don't change a word.

Yoji swallows the lump in his throat then **translates**.

Uchiyama's face shows no emotion. He lets Yoji squirm for a moment, head bowed, then speaks to him in measured ENGLISH.

UCHIYAMA

Thank you for translating that for me. I was afraid I had perhaps heard incorrectly...

Yoji's head snaps up. He looks to Jack in shock.

JACK

Well whattya know... the cagey little bastard speaks English.

Uchiyama shoots a look to Yoji. He melts into the background-- along with the gathering players who become makeshift groundlings for this little show.

UCHIYAMA

That's right, I speak English. I prefer Japanese. After all, why should I accomodate you? But I think at this time it is very important that we understand each other. As of right now, you are on indefinite suspension.

INT. JACK'S PLACE - DAY

GLASS BREAKS in the kitchen as an ENTIRE SHELF is emptied onto the floor... and a DRAWER. In the living room Jack KICKS OVER THE DINING ROOM TABLE, then the COFFEE TABLE.

ON TV is HIS PICTURE, fronted by ANGRY REPORTERS, and though we can't tell what they're saying, we know it's bad. Jack kicks it over with a CRASH. The picture goes black.

INT. ALLIED ARTISTS' AND ATHLETES AGENCY - MORNING

Dick "Doc" O'Connell is on his phone, holding a "just a minute" finger to a CLIENT as he speaks into his head jack.

DOC

I'm sorry, kid... there's nothing.

INTERCUT - INT. JACK'S PLACE - SAME

Jack paces angrily, holding the phone in the wreckage.

JACK

What about triple A? Or double A?

DOC

Look, what can I tell you? Who's gonna even consider you-- you're hitting .215, in Japan. And that's when you're playing.

Jack hangs up. Seethes a moment. Then walks out onto the balcony and looks around at the strange, foreign night. CUT TO:

EXT. JAPANESE COUNTRYSIDE - LATE DAY

It is a curious mixture of rice fields, factories, houses and offices.

Suddenly a PORSCHE blows by... and we CUT:

INSIDE THE PORSCHE - DRIVING

With Hiroko and Jack. Jack takes it all in.

HIROKO

There are some things you need to know about my father before you meet him.

JACK

Don't tell me...he hates all Gaijins.

HIROKO

No....he hates you specifically.

The car follows a very narrow road through fields and factories towards a tiny, traditional village.

The road in the village barely has room for them. Suddenly they swing off into a little courtyard and pull up.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE HIROKO FAMILY - DAY

HIROKO

Ah. He's here.

They get out of the car and begin to round a path toward the SIDE OF THE HOUSE.

HIROKO

He can be a real individual, a real spirited man. Because he once was. And he does have a good heart. And... I think he really could like you. So when you see him...

They round the corner of the house almost colliding with a man climbing down a ladder. He turns, brushing at his work clothes, as **Hiroko speaks Japanese.** And we see who he is.

HE IS UCHIYAMA-SAN.

And both Jack and Uchiyama's mouths drop, simultaneously, wide open.

JACK/UCHIYAMA  
 (in English)/(in Japanese)  
Holy shit./ You've gotta be kidding  
me.

HIROKO  
 I believe you two know each other.

JACK  
 (unable to form words)  
 Well... uh...

UCHIYAMA  
 (dumbstruck; alternating  
 between Japanese and  
 English)  
**Watashi wa...** this... how... ???

Then, suddenly, Jack and Uchiyama BOTH REALIZE WHO IS TO BLAME, and, for the first time since the two men have met, they are in perfect agreement about something: They are furious at Hiroko.

And everyone starts talking at once: Jack and Uchiyama (in different languages) screaming at Hiroko.

An example:

JACK/UCHIYAMA  
 (in English)/(in Japanese)  
 What the hell? You never told me!?  
**How on earth could you keep this**  
**from me!?**  
 (simultaneously:)  
 You know how I feel about this  
 guy!/You know how I feel about this  
 guy!

Hiroko, as well, starts screaming, defending herself-- speaking simultaneously in Japanese AND in English-- depending on which man is yelling at her louder at any split second.

She says things like:

HIROKO  
 (To Jack)  
 I knew how you felt.  
 (to her father; in  
 Japanese)  
**I thought maybe you would appreciate**  
**this!**  
 (and, to Jack)  
 I was really hoping this would help!

At this moment the REST OF THE FAMILY comes out, and everyone sort of quiets down a little-- after all, they did sort of forget the basic tenets of polite Japanese customs.... Then:

Hiroko, trying to regain composure, introduces her teeny-weeny GRANDMOTHER and fiesty GRANDFATHER. And Hiroko's MOTHER (Uch's wife).

HIROKO  
Jack, this is my mother. And my  
Grandparents.

They bow, trying to be gracious. UCHIYAMA PARTS COMPANY. Jack smiles, politely, and says:

JACK  
Hello. Your son and I can't stand  
each other.

They nod back, smiling politely. It's clear that no one here is incredibly approving of Jack, and their looks (if not their actual words) seem to subtly censure Hiroko. **Grandpa mutters something in Japanese...** and Jack looks to Hiroko for translation.

HIROKO  
Nothing.

JACK  
No, what?

HIROKO  
He says: You have a hole in your  
swing.

JACK  
Ah... so that's where he gets it...

Then, after a LONG, AWKWARD MOMENT-- where nobody says anything, they just exchange glances (a couple of smiles from the women, a big frown from Grandpa)-- the head inside. Jack turns to Hiroko and whispers:

JACK  
I just looove your family.

CUT TO: --- if you thought their introductions were awkward...

DINNER TIME - AROUND THE TABLE

Uchiyama is silent, stoic. As is his wife. Jack is also silent. Hiroko is silent. And Hiroko's Grandparents are silent.

Everyone eats. Silent. Trying to be polite. Every once in a while the tiny Grandmother looks up at Jack and, with a glance at Hiroko, clucks her tongue and shakes her head.

Jack, kneeling and incredibly uncomfortable, pushes his food around with his chopsticks, trying to find something that, to him, looks even sort of good.

Uchiyama glares at Jack, indicating his mother, who has obviously worked very hard to prepare this meal. Jack, taking this as a challenge to eat (which it is), forces more into his mouth.

JACK  
Delicious. Uh, **oishi**.

Now Jack lifts his glass-- and holds it out to Uchiyama to fill it. But Uchiyama remains motionless, leaving Jack sitting at the table with his arm outstretched. Hiroko has to lean all the way across to pour Jack's wine.

JACK  
Thank you...  
(as much for Uch's ears as  
for Hiroko's)  
... sweetheart.

Uchiyama then holds his glass out. Of course, Jack doesn't fill it. Hiroko has to get up again and lean all the way forward to pour it.

Then Jack inadvertantly STICKS HIS CHOPSTICKS INTO HIS RICE. Horrified glares from everyone. Jack doesn't know what they're for. Hiroko tries to pantomime "remove chopsticks from rice" but Jack can't figure it out. He tries "sitting up straighter," "lifting his glass," and even, for a minute, thinks she is talking about his swing... (he mimes "top hand over?"). Finally, he gets it.

JACK  
Oh!

He does. People relax. Uchiyama shakes his head. Jack sees that. **Grandpa says a few things to Hiroko** which we don't understand-- but we should get a sense that he is displeased with Hiroko.

HIROKO  
(to Jack-- aware that her  
grandfather's comments are  
pointed ones)  
He wonders if Americans are as  
influenced by the Japanese as the  
Japanese can be by the West.

JACK  
(to Grandpa; re Hiroko)  
By some Japanese...

Forced smiles all around. Jack glances at Uchiyama. He is just scowling at Jack. **The mother says something to Hiroko.**

HIROKO'S MOM

I know you think this is not going well but, it doesn't matter. He'll be going back to America soon anyway.

UCHIYAMA

Gaijins are always problems.

Jack picks up on 'Gaijins' and on Hiroko's flushed reaction--embarrassment or anger?

JACK

What did they say?

HIROKO

It doesn't matter.

Jack takes a deep breath. The silence is deafening. CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

Jack and Hiroko are walking toward her car.

JACK

Just a tiny question... an itsy bitsy little thing I'm just a tad curious about... WHAT in CHRIST'S NAME were you THINKING!?

HIROKO

Sorry. I thought if you saw each other other as people, away from the ball field, you'd see that you two are very much alike.

JACK

I'm like him? JESUS CHRIST!

HIROKO

Well, you're like he was. But he has changed from his playing days. They used to call him "The Banshee."

JACK

Him? Man, this system stinks... and this country... if it'll take a guy like me and turn him into a guy like him.

Hiroko, opening the door for Jack, stops.

HIROKO

Jack. I can talk that way about my country and my father. But you can't.

JACK

You talked about him a lot. You just left out a few details. HOW could you NOT tell me he was your FATHER?

HIROKO

I was waiting for the right moment.

JACK

(dripping with sarcasm)

Well you certainly found it.

Hiroko's look at Jack turns into an angry stare-- and she slams Jack's door before he gets a chance to get in.

JACK

Hey! Jesus!

Hiroko lets out a burst of Japanese.

JACK

Ahh. Now it all comes out... What you really think. Too bad I can't understand a word of it.

HIROKO

Pity you never tried to learn...anything about us.

JACK

Who the hell are you to tell me about Japan anyway?

HIROKO

Meaning?

JACK

You may look Japanese, but that's it! Look at your clothes, your car, everything about you is from somewhere else. Hell you even studied your work somewhere else.

HIROKO

You came here and you thought we were easy-- easy country, easy baseball... easy women I'll bet, too.

JACK

Bullshit-- I didn't think anything of the country.

HIROKO

Even worse.

JACK

No, what's worse is what I think of  
it now that I've been here.

At this point neighbors are poking their heads out their windows.  
But the argument escalates.

HIROKO

(in Japanese, subtitled)

You didn't want to get to know us.  
You just wanted to use us.

JACK

You can say it in English... 'cause  
I still won't understand it.

HIROKO

I wish you'd never come.

JACK

So do I.

Hiroko jumps into her car.

HIROKO

I thought you two would get along  
because you were so alike. Well you  
deserve each other. Neither of you  
will ever change. He'll never  
understand me for who I am. And  
you'll never learn to apologize.

And she steps on the gas. And the car takes off, leaving Jack  
standing there.

JACK

Hey! Hiroko! Goddamn it!

Jack watches the car disappear screaming down the little rural  
road. After a moment, when it's finally silent, Jack turn to see  
Hiroko's family staring at him through the window of their house.

Like someone tossed out of a spaceship, Jack just sorta floats up  
the street a little, nowhere really to go.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - A LITTLE LATER

Jack is walking down a street, alone, when a CAR pulls up. Jack  
looks inside. It is UCHIYAMA.

INT. CAR - DRIVING

Neither Jack nor Uchiyama speaks a word. Finally, after a long  
time, Uchiyama pulls the car off to the side of the road, into the  
parking lot of a TINY LOCAL BAR.

UCHIYAMA  
Japanese get drunk, can say what  
they think.

INT. TINY BAR

Locals. Dragon photos on the wall. Uchiyama is probably a celeb here in his local town.

Jack and Uchiyama sit with the remains of many a beer...

**\*\*in this scene Jack tells Uchiyama what he thinks, and Uchiyama tells Jack that in order to play he has to apologize.**

(maybe some of this can be used:)

JACK  
All this crap about harmony is  
bullshit. You manage by scaring the  
shit out of these guys, and they've  
gotten so tight you can't stick a  
greased BB up their butts. And I  
know why... cause you're scared.  
You don't wanna win, you just don't  
wanna lose face.

(Also perhaps some discussion of Hiroko?)

**\*\*then we'd go to a version of THIS - at Uchiyama's parents house in the country.**

INT. UCHIYAMA'S HOUSE

(with the family in other rooms)

Jack is reluctantly on his knees.

JACK  
Like this?

UCHIYAMA  
You have to mean it.

JACK  
I mean it. Isn't it enough that I'm  
humiliating myself here?

UCHIYAMA  
We don't call it humiliation. In  
Japan, we call it respect.  
(then)  
Are you willing to work?

JACK  
 I don't think I have any  
 alternative...  
 (pulling a "Yoji")  
 I hope you'll teach me to be as good  
 as you were.

Uchiyama looks at Jack and, ever so slightly, he softens a little.

INT. UCHIYAMA'S HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER

Jack sits Japanese style, before a small table, sipping Ocha. He is uncomfortable. Uchiyama holds forth.

UCHIYAMA  
 The key to hitting Japanese pitchers  
 is patience. And eye. It is not  
 power.

Uchiyama takes his time, evidently enjoying the situation. Jack's knees are killing him. His eyes drift to a small table of framed photos. He searches for one of Hiroko. There is one-- Hiroko as a young girl, smiling. Just as Jack finds it, Uchiyama leans into his view. He is not smiling. Jack looks down at his Ocha quickly.

Suddenly Uchiyama is all brusque business. He gets up, crosses to a cupboard and reaches to pull down a LONG, CLOTH-WRAPPED CYLINDRICAL OBJECT.

UCHIYAMA  
 This will take only one hour to  
 learn.

JACK  
 Thank God!

A loud SWIISH silences Jack. His eyes open wide as Uchiyama swings around and slices the air with a beautiful old SAMURAI SWORD.

UCHIYAMA  
 And a thousand hours to practice.  
 Think right, swing right. This is  
 what helped me to think right.

JACK  
 Just don't mess with my head, Old  
 Grasshopper.  
 (off Uchiyama's look)  
 I.. ahhh.. my head's ready when you  
 are.

EXT. UCHIYAMA'S BACK YARD - NIGHT

A PIECE OF PAPER falls like a white leaf-- and then, suddenly, it is SLICED IN TWO by the blade of the sword.

Uchiyama smiles proudly. He hands the sword to Jack.

JACK  
Which half of the paper counts as  
the hit?

UCHIYAMA  
First you have to actually make  
contact.

He drops piece of paper. Jack swings with the sword-- missing  
completely.

UCHIYAMA  
Youd've made a lousy Samurai. First  
fight, no head.

JACK  
I'd bring a gun.

UCHIYAMA  
You're such an American.  
(then)  
Focus on the paper, not yourself.

Uch drops one, and Jack swings, missing-- but fluttering the paper  
a little.

UCHIYAMA  
Weight more on back foot. Top hand  
over more. Ready?

Uchiyama drops one. Jack almost gets it.

UCHIYAMA  
Still too much front foot.

Jack swings again to his surprise he hits it. Just. He hands the  
sword smugly to Uchiyama.

Jack hands the sword to him. He hands Jack the paper. In the  
background, MRS. UCHIYAMA starts exit the house with a tray of  
cakes. Jack holds a piece of paper up. Uchiyama nods for him to  
drop it. Just as he does, he says:

JACK  
I love your daughter.

This time Uchiyama stutter-steps--- and the sword shoots from his  
hands and THWANGNGNGNGS into the side of the house, vibrating only  
inches from Mrs. Uchiyama's terrified head.

CLOSE ON JACK

JACK  
(subtitled)  
**Please accept my apologies...**

REVERSE ANGLE

Jack is standing in the locker room, reading from a piece of paper.  
THE TEAM is all standing before him, listening to him apologize.

JACK  
(speaking in stilted  
Japanese)  
... for being disrespectful to you  
in words and behavior. I hope that  
I can earn your respect back, and  
help build a chopstick between us...  
(as the team laughs)  
Oh, wait, that's not right... a...  
(subtitled Japanese)  
Goat farm.  
(More laughs. English:)  
No, wait. Oh!  
(subtitled Japanese:)  
A BRIDGE!  
(then, as the team nods)  
**And may we beat the shit out of the  
Giants.**

(CONT'D)

There's a chorus of **HAI's** as the team punch the air. Then whistles  
blow and Uchiyama is back to his old screaming self.

UCHIYAMA (V.O.)  
**Hayaku hashire!**

JACK  
(straining for sincerity)  
Yeah. Lets get our lazy asses  
running.

Jack struggles to lead the pack. It doesn't last.

EXT. FIELD

**\*here we could do the Jack-yelling-at-Yoji beat.**

YOJI  
I told you, Jack-san...

JACK  
When did you tell me?

YOJI

I said: "Too many torrents." "Very traditional family". "She is her father's daughter."

JACK

Yes, but none of those things mean "SHE - IS - UCHIYAMA'S - DAUGHTER." Just because we speak the same language doesn't mean I understand you. You are my interpreter, not just my translator.

YOJI

No. Jack-san. I'm not your anything. I'm assigned to you...by The Chunichi Dragons.

HIGH SHOT     PRACTICE FIELD     LATER

Jack is straining to keep up as another set of wind sprints are called. He calls out to Uchiyama as he passes.

JACK

Do we have to do a thousand hours of this too?

UCHIYAMA

(pointing)

Hayakyu hashire, to itta daro?!?!?

Uchiyama coldly points to the stadium steps. Jack obediently starts to climb them. CUT TO:

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - AFTERNOON

Jack is in the middle of the THOUSAND FUNGO DRILL-- somewhere around fungo number 250, when his legs are starting to give way.

UCHIYAMA

(hitting from the plate)

You want to quit?

JACK

What do you think I am, some kind of pussy?

Another one is hit... and Jack looks, leans a little... and collapses with a plop. Uchiyama comes over, lifts Jack's head up.

UCHIYAMA

Now you're ready to hit.

LATER - ON THE MOUND - ITOI

Throws a **shutto**. Jack swings from the stance Uchiyama had instructed, CRACKING it sharply into left field. No one's more amazed than Jack. He glances back at Uchiyama. The Stoneface hasn't changed expression.

UCHIYAMA

Again!

Jack barely has time to get back into position before the next pitch is coming his way...

EXT. STADIUM FIELD (GAME #6 DRAGONS VS (WHALES)) - CLOSE ON CATCHER'S MITT

--THWACK.

UMPIRE

Sutoraiku!

We are now at a GAME. Jack looks back at the catcher.

JACK

(with a knowing smile)

**Shutto!**

CATCHER

(grinning)

**Hai.**

JACK

It's okay. I big. I can hit.

Jack glances back to where Uchiyama is staring at him from the top step of the dugout. Jack looks at him for a second, then steps back into the box. Weight back. Hands over.

The pitcher kicks and throws him another **shutto**. This time, Jack takes a step and BLASTS it...

IN THE DUGOUT

Hori watches a ball sail deep over the right field wall. He looks to Uchiyama.

HORI

(surprised)

Shutto!?

UCHIYAMA

(almost showing pride)

**Shutto.**

AS JACK CROSSES THE PLATE

He is handed the traditional gift for hitting a "Sayonara Home Run"-- a carton of cigarettes and a bottle of whiskey. CUT TO:

-- CRACK!!-- and:

(\*need to set up Uch/Jack HR tension.)

-- CRACK!!-- again.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - AFTER A GAME

Jack enters, carrying more CIGARETTES AND WHISKEY. He passes the tiny 75 year old woman and slaps her hard on the back.

JACK  
How's it going, Morita-san!

ON THE TV in the locker room are JAPANESE ANNOUNCERS giving their version of post-game spin.

ANNOUNCER #1  
(subtitled)  
6 home runs in the last 14 games --  
4 of them in the last 4!

ANNOUNCER #2  
(same)  
Do you think he's the one to beat  
the consecutive home run record?

The Announcers continue to debate in Japanese while Jack, unaware of what they are saying, passes Hammer, who's watching the TV while finishing getting dressed. Hammer is shaking his head, disgusted with what he sees.

HAMMER  
Unbelievable. Guy gets a streak going, and they make it into this big deal. Like after four games you're really gonna go and blow Uch's record out of the water. The press, man. I'm telling you.

Jack crosses to his locker and dumps the gifts in a PILE which now consists of about a half-dozen of the same, then turns and looks at Hammer and smiles big, with a kind of joking (but not so joking) bravado. Hammer looks at Jack, can't help but smile as well.

HAMMER  
You cocky son of a bitch.

Hammer throws his towel at Jack. CUT TO:

-- SMACK!! Jack parks another HOME RUN.

IN THE DUGOUT - THE TEAM

Is ecstatic. All but--

UCHIYAMA

Who stands, stoic and pensive. And not amused when Jack slaps him on the shoulder and says, playfully but competitively:

JACK  
Five in a row...

VARIOUS PUBLIC SHOTS:

A SHOPKEEPER replaces a DRAGONS PHOTO (WITHOUT JACK) FOR A DRAGONS PHOTO (WITH JACK). A DIFFERENT SHOPKEEPER sets a JACK ELLIOT DOLL out on display. And...

IN HIS NEW YORK OFFICE - DICK "DOC" O'CONNELL

Yaks on his head jack as he pulls a JACK ELLIOT DOLL out of a Japanese-gift-wrapped mailed package...

DOC  
It's beautiful, Jack, it's you...

Doc signals "hang on" to the THREE OTHER PEOPLE in his office.

INTERCUT - INT. JACK'S APARTMENT

JACK  
(smiles)  
You got the tickets?

Doc pulls out two AIRPLANE TICKETS from the package as well.

DOC  
... Yes, I got em. And I'm coming out.

JACK  
With the guy from the Dodgers?

DOC  
Jack. I'll see you in a couple days.

Jack hangs up.

JACK  
Yesssss...

INT. BUDDHIST TEMPLE - DAY

Very traditional. MONKS, altars, etc. Though they're only ACTORS PLAYING MONKS, the area still has the sense of calm and tranquility that a temple would have. Except for Jack and Hiroko who, at the moment, are going at it like cat and dog, even though Jack is surrounded by technicians and crew...

JACK

I have changed, and so has your father. You're the only one who won't change-- and you're supposed to be the one open to new ideas.

HIROKO

The only thing that better change is your silly expression if we're going to get this shot.

VOICE (OFF SCREEN)

ROLLING!

Suddenly everyone around Jack drains away, and he is left to do what he was obviously supposed to do... But his mind is clearly on other things. He is left speechless. Beat.

VOICE (OFF SCREEN)

CUT!

Hiroko comes forth first, before the rest of the crew, which immediately follows her.

HIROKO

Jack, you have lines to say, remember? And you're wrong about my father. He hasn't changed a bit!

JACK

How would you know? You don't know him.

HIROKO

Is that my fault?

The Director calls out to Hiroko. She nods, then turns back to Jack.

HIROKO

(totally tense)

He says "loosen up!"

(then, back to what's

really on her mind)

And besides, he'll never let you break his home run record. It's the only thing he's got from his past.

JACK  
Yeah, well hanging onto the past is  
a problem we all face, isn't it?

Hiroko turns away again. Jack follows her.

JACK  
Look, my agent's coming out. I've  
got big decisions to make. And I  
want you to be a part of them.

HIROKO  
(turning back to him)  
Would you please just say your  
lines?

JACK  
I love you.

DIRECTOR  
(really disgusted)  
CUT.

TOSHI (VO)  
Women. You can't live on top of  
them. And you can't live outside of  
them.

INT. JAPANESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Jack sits with the REST OF THE TEAM. Yamashita [Toshi], Nishikawa, Mukai, Yagi, Igarishi, Ohmae, Kurosawa, and Hammer. Yoji is there as well-- drinking from a straw, as his mouth is still recovering.

JACK  
Close Toshi. Close.

The WAITRESS brings to the the table a COVERED DISH. Jack grabs it and eagerly pulls the cover off it. THE TEAM is shocked as Jack's LIVE LOBSTER starts crawling around.

JACK  
I thought you guys were used to  
eating out of tide pools.  
(then)  
Shit! My dinner likes Kurosawa  
better than me.

Jack's meal has walked off his plate... and we CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

The TEAM CHANTS like frat boys as Jack, and Mukai race each other to down their bottles... -- WH-WHAM. Jack just beats Mukai. CUT TO:

INT. GAIJIN BAR

Walt, the bartender, looks up, shocked, when:

AT THE DOOR

Jack and Hammer enter... followed by 7 Japanese guys!

JACK  
Walt-- if you thought Gaijin could  
drink...

GAIJIN BAR - A BIT LATER

Eight TEQUILAS WITH BEER CHASERS hit the table, and are immediately refilled. ON TV is an old western. Big gunfight scene. The guys are messing around with the mic.

MUKAI  
"American Mister West. Macho bang."

Ohmae is about to chime in with something, when everybody stops what they are doing, HEARING:

UCHIYAMA'S VOICE  
(in Japanese; subtitled)  
I'm gonna plug you, you Gaijin  
creep. You been messing with my boys  
too long.

Shocked heads suddenly turn as Uchiyama is standing at the end of the bar, holding another mic. He sets it down and strides silently towards the table. He picks up a cup as though he were about to throw it into the wall... then holds it out to be filled.

Relieved, Hammer fills it. Uchiyama raises his glass.

UCHIYAMA  
(subtitled)  
To... our team.

JACK  
(raising his glass)  
For whatever he said... Kampai!

TEAM  
Kam-pai!!

Jack and Mukai's cups bang the table ahead of the others. They look over at Uchiyama.... who smiles smugly, as he has beaten them both by five seconds. Jack can't believe it, offers a toast.

JACK  
The Banshee, ladies and gentlemen!

CUT TO:

TOSHI - WITH A MICROPHONE

TOSHI  
(singing)  
A WAP BABBA-LOO BOP A WOP BANG BANG,  
TUTTI FRUTTI, OH ROOTIE!

Toshi continues, with the team having a great time as we are now:

INT. KAROAKE HOSTESS BAR - LATER

Everone SINGS the Japanese cartoon theme "PICARO."

EVERYBODY  
"PICARO PIIICARO, PICARO PIIICARO!"

Everyone, except Jack and Uchiyama who sit off in a corner on there own. Well, almost on their own. There are two HOSTESSES there, pouring them drinks, laughing occasionally, and pretending to be part of the conversation, which they are not-- and which they wouldn't understand even if they were.

\*of course, this scene needs to be better. I think here the H-J-U relationship could be used to good effect. (like what Uchiyama says to Hiroko in her office later:

UCHIYAMA  
Jack made me realize you are what I  
once was. I should not be angry at  
you, I am angry at myself.

-- this could be the type of challenging thing Jack says to Uchiyama here.)

UCHIYAMA  
(serious)  
The only thing between the pennant  
and us, Elliot-san, is the Giants.  
We need to beat them.

JACK  
Hey, I'm doing my best.

UCHIYAMA  
Your best is not enough.

JACK  
Jesus, what the hell else do you  
want from me?

UCHIYAMA

My best. That's why I fought to bring you over here. Because you can give the team that which I have lost.

JACK

The Banshee.

UCHIYAMA

I miss those days.  
(pause; this is not easy,  
drunk or not)  
Elliot-san... I am asking for your help.

Even amidst the noise and the lights and all the booze, Jack can't help but for a moment be actually a little touched. There's chaos over where the ballplayers are. A bunch of them fall over a table with one of the girls. Right onto Yoji. Who struggles out from under, stands and shouts to the room.

YOJI

You ballplayers. Goddamnit, you all. I hate ballplayers.

And suddenly Yoji rolls his eyes and PASSES OUT with a clunk.

Jack laughs, turns to Uchiyama-- but he has grabbed his coat and is heading for the door.

JACK

Hey-- where you going?

UCHIYAMA

People getting too drunk. I don't wanna hear what they have to say.

And he ducks out. Jack is engulfed as he is suddenly surrounded by girls and ballplayers. They fill up his glass. And all start talking at once--**in Japanese**. If we could understand we would hear things like "**We all thought you were an asshole** etc". Subtitles help. Jack gives up and enjoys it.

CLOSE-UP - JACK - MORNING

Groggily opens his eyes. Sits up. Bangs his head. We're:

INT. "CAPSULE" - MORNING

Jack, really hung over, rubs his head and looks around. He's in some sort of bed... in what looks like a pristine plastic coffin...

INT. LONG HALLWAY - "CAPSULE HOTEL" - CONTINUOUS

Double-stacked "tubes"-- 40 on each side of this hall. From one, about 4/5ths of the way down, TWO HUGE WHITE FEET stick out. Below them are TWO HUGE BLACK FEET. The top ones stir...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jack lets himself out, looks around.

JACK  
My God... I've died. I'm in a  
morgue.

He looks into a NEARBY CAPSULE: Yagi sleeps. IN THE CAPSULE BENEATH HIM: Igarishi. In the NEXT CAPSULE OVER: Yoji, his legs wrapped over his head, looking as though he's been literally STUFFED in by other drunk people...

Beneath him sleeps HAMMER, who rolls his head, groggily opens his eyes.

JACK  
Where are we?

HAMMER  
Capsule hotel. Businessmen use em  
when their too drunk to drive home,  
or too late for the train. I think  
we were both.

EXT. BALLFIELD - MORNING BEFORE GAME

**\*Guys still hung-over as they try and practice. Jack lets Mukai lead practice. Do some of these beats:**

Hung-over guys trying to practice baseball: Jack sees TWO BALLS coming at him at first... Yagi, in the outfield, runs RIGHT INTO THE FENCE. Jack offers some chewing tobacco to Igarishi.

JACK  
Just remember, don't spit it on the  
field.

Igarishi nods. Takes a chaw... suddenly gets very GREEN...and THROWS UP.

JACK  
Well, at least you didn't spit.

PRESS PHOTOS of Igarishi barfing. **\*Uchiyama isn't there-- where is he? He's:**

INT. HIROKO'S OFFICE

(\*If Jack and Uchiyama have spoken about Hiroko, and Jack has told Uchiyama things which would naturally lead him here, this scene may not need any dialogue at all.)

HIROKO  
 (in Japanese)  
**Why are you here?**  
 (quickly)  
**Oh, sorry, please. Is this about Jack?**

UCHIYAMA  
**He's the reason I've come, but this is about you and me.**

There is a pause. Hiroko indicates for him to enter. He does.

Beat. The two look at each other. Then, quickly, Hiroko gets up from her chair.

UCHIYAMA  
**Where are you going?**

HIROKO  
**Getting tea. Japanese tradition.**

Uchiyama nods. Hiroko smiles a little.

GIANTS-MANIA

All over the country. At a KYOTO TEMPLE, a hundred red-capped STUDENTS cut their line to glimpse a TV set. Way up in HOKKAIDO a fisherman wearing a GIANTS' CAP for warmth has a radio going. In TOKYO a KABUKI PERFORMER, while putting on make-up, watches the TV.

Everywhere, people are Giants' fans... everywhere except:

NAGOYA

Where it's DRAGONS-MANIA. In the SHOPPING MALL Jack's picture is up all over the place. Everyone is wearing Dragon-blue...

ON VARIOIUS TV'S THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

Various SPORTSCASTERS talk to one another and to camera.

SPORTSCASTER #1  
**...Dragons only one game behind the Giants, this could be the one...**

SPORTSCASTER #2  
**But more on people's mind is the question of the consecutive home run record...**

EXT. DRAGON STADIUM - DAY

A capacity crowd unloads from the commuter trains as they stream up the long concourse that leads to the stadium.

IN THE RUSH TO GET INTO THE STADIUM

Jack's agent DICK "DOC" O'CONNELL and some guy HOWIE GOLD (the scout from the Los Angeles Dodgers) are buffeted around.

DOC

Hey-- hey-- hey, come on--

THE DRAGON OENDAN

is staging a "Jack Elliot" contest. There are judges and the ubiquitous TV crew. To great laughter and cheers, a LINE of contestants come forward and do their own imitations of Jack. They each have funny mustaches. They imitate his home run trot, charging the mound and getting in a fight, etc.

WALKING DOWN THE AISLE THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF IT

Are UCHIYAMA'S PARENTS and WIFE, heading toward their seats. They are not thrilled as a large, obnoxious "Jack Elliot" blows past them, pushing them into a couple other "Jack Elliot"s. At the moment, they are surrounded by them.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - SAME TIME - JACK

kicks off his shoes outside the door next to the other players' shoes without even thinking. He crosses the room, his game face on today.

The rest of the team are all finishing getting dressed... and it's obvious everybody's feeling the pressure.

IN UCHIYAMA'S OFFICE

Uchiyama and the Chunichi Brass are in a serious discussion.

CHAIRMAN

(subtitled, of course)

Because of the importance of this game, we feel the following strategies will need to be enacted...

UCHIYAMA

(cutting them off)

Excuse me. I am the manager. I will manage the team.

(standing, bowing)

With all respect, I have a job to do.

And Uchiyama leaves the stunned Chunichi Brass' standing there.

## IN THE LOCKER ROOM

Jack is putting on his uniform as Toshi comes shuffling past doing his James Brown. He slaps Jack on the back.

TOSHI  
(singing loud)  
I Feeee-eeel Good!!

Jack finishes dressing and pads over to where the team's putting on their cleats. As he laces up his shoes, Mukai, grim-faced as ever, is standing over him. Igarishi sits down next to him. Mukai starts talking to Jack in Japanese. Yoji is with them.

JACK  
What's he saying?

YOJI  
(translates)  
He wants you to know that although  
at first he didn't like you, he now  
respects you very much.

They both turn back to Mukai as he continues very soberly. When he has finished, Jack turns to Yoji for the translation.

YOJI  
He says he has learned much from you  
about how to play baseball...

What WE SEE, but Jack does not, is Igarishi firing up Jack's butane lighter and applying it to his shoelaces.

YOJI  
... He knows that you are feeling  
pressure about breaking Uchiyama's  
record...

Jack's shoelaces are cooking now.

YOJI  
... but he and all your teammates  
are rooting for you.

Jack looks genuinely touched. He turns to Mukai.

JACK  
Tell him... AAARGH!

Jack jumps up off the bench in pain, trying to kick the flaming shoe off. When the blaze is finally snuffed, the rest of the Dragons wait for his reaction. Jack looks around the room, his gaze finally stopping on Mukai and Igarishi. He breaks into a big grin.

JACK  
You got me...

As Mukai smiles and he and Igarishi slap Jack on the back. CUT TO:

THE CROWD

leans forward in anticipation as Elliot comes to the plate to start the second inning. Jack steps into the box. He pulls his helmet down and digs in. He checks his stance, right toe in, hands out. He's ready. He stares out at the mound.

THE GIANT PITCHER - THE SAME ONE WE'VE SEEN BEFORE

looks back at Jack with his patented smirking grin. The drama of the moment builds as he goes into the stretch. Hammer's on-deck.

HAMMER  
Knock, baby!

But Jack has no chance to knock. The Giant catcher jumps out of his crouch and receives the pitch three feet outside.

JACK  
Shit!

THE CROWD

Are disappointed. There is a collective sigh as they watch ball two go past in the same way. Then--

THE SCOREBOARD

Shows ball 3.

JACK

flips his bat aside on ball four and jogs to first base. On his way there, he looks out into the stands and sees:

HIROKO'S GRANDPARENTS AND MOTHER

None of whom are particularly friendly to him when he tries to wave to them. He particularly notices that Hiroko is not there.

AT FIRST BASE

The Giant first baseman is Stevens, from the gaijin bar. Throughout the following Jack darts his head back to Hiroko's empty seat.

STEVENS  
Greetings fellow American...

JACK  
 (shakes head)  
 I knew these guys would pull this  
 crap.

STEVENS  
 There's a thousand buck fine for  
 every strike they throw ya, babe.  
 Remember what I told you -- they  
 don't want gaijins settin any  
 records.

JACK  
 (pissed, screams)  
 Make em pay, Hammer!

HAMMER does. He BLASTS a double into the right field corner.

Jack chugs around the bases, running hard toward home. His knee gives him some trouble, but he charges toward home. Jack draws the throw from the outfield... he's... SAFE. Then the catcher whips the ball to third-- Hammer slides in, just barely safe, having taken the base on the throw. Jack rises in the dirt and gives a fist to Hammer.

ANGLE - DOC AND HOWIE GOLD

Howie Gold watches Hammer slide hard into the third baseman, knocking the relay out of his glove. A triple for Hammer. Doc gives Jack the thumbs up, then goes back to his octopus ball. CUT TO:

INT. DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

As Jack grabs his glove from the dugout, he passes Uchiyama.

JACK  
 I see the whole family has turned  
 out to watch you keep your home run  
 record... well, almost the whole  
 family.

And Jack leaves the dugout... not seeing Uchiyama, curiosity suddenly picqued, step out of the dugout and glance up in the stands. CUT TO:

AT FIRST BASE - THE TOP OF THE THIRD

With the SCOREBOARD showing a Dragons' lead of 1 run...

Jack kicks the dirt around. There's already a RUNNER ON FIRST.

JACK  
 (mid-joke)  
 ...so what do you think the official  
 ruling was? Inside the pork home  
 run.

He looks over at the mound where Itoi is slapping the ball into his mitt. He's so nervous he's hyperventilating.

JACK  
 All right, all right... just throw  
 it.

Itoi looks over at Jack, nods with mock-confidence. He goes into the stretch... and fires.

THE GIANTS BATTER

drives it so deep Hammer doesn't even move. The ball sails over his head, deep into the right field bleachers. Immediately:

ITOI

assumes his deep-bow-at-the-waist position, waiting for Uchiyama to come out and take him off the mound. (**\*SET THIS UP EARLIER IN SCRIPT**)

JACK'S POV - IN THE DUGOUT - UCHIYAMA

looks from Itoi, still bent in half, to Jack. He is glowering, but not moving from the top of the steps.

JACK  
 (to Itoi)  
 Stand up will ya, he's not comin.

ANGLE - MOUND

Itoi peeks out from under his cap, then straightens. He looks like a man who just got a last minute reprieve from the electric chair. He smiles at Jack. Itoi winds up and fires... The next Giant BATTER smashes it into the hole. It's a sure single until...

IGARISHI

launches himself horizontal. He knocks the ball down, gets up and throws from his knees to Jack. Jack makes a long stretch, the ball slaps into his mitt just before the runner hits bag. OUT! As the Dragon fans rise to cheer...

ITOI  
 Now I buy the poosies!

JACK  
 Now you own the pussies.

SHOT - SCOREBOARD

The Giants 2, the Dragons 1. DISSOLVE TO:

Igarishi goes to smack away the dirt from his uniform, then thinks, "nah, what the hell."

THE FIFTH INNING

With the score Giants 3, Dragons 1.

THE DUGOUT - ANGLE ON JACK

Jack pulls his bat out of the rack while looking at Uchiyama the whole time. We follow him as he walks to the plate and digs in. Without looking, he snorts at the Catcher.

JACK

You pussies gonna give me a chance  
this time?

In response, the Catcher holds out his left arm. They're going to walk him again.

JACK

turns his bat around, holds it at the fat end for ball Two and Three. He turns it around again, looking like he's barely paying attention. He relaxes his grip on the bat and just lets it sit limply his shoulder. The Pitcher sets and throws. Just then, Jack REACHES ACROSS THE PLATE and WHACKS the outside ball. It screams at ...

THE PITCHER

who barely avoids decapitation, letting the ball shoot through the box for a hit.

JACK

starts down the first base line where he tips his cap to the pitcher just a second before he is CALLED OUT BY THE UMPIRE for stepping on the plate.

JACK

(can't believe it)  
Oh, Jesus...  
(turning to his teammates  
in the dugout)  
Sorry, guys-- I think it's Dragons  
vs. all of Japan, today.

Jack takes another glance at the still-empty seat before he ducks into the dugout.

THE DRAGON OENDON

pounds the big bass drum as we... DISSOLVE TO:

THE SCOREBOARD - LATER

Giants 5, Dragons 2. It's the bottom of the 7th.

IN THE CHUNICHI BRASS SEATS

The Team bigwigs are starting to get very concerned...

IN THE DUGOUT

Uchiyama is starting to get uptight. The team are tensing up. Hammer sees this and leaps to his feet.

HAMMER

Rally caps! Let's go, guys! Rally caps!

Jack turns his hat inside out. The other guys do, too. Jack and Hammer look over at Uchiyama, and, from his look, challenges him to do the same. The team urges him on. Finally, after a pause, Uchiyama, remaining very cool and aloof... does the same to his. Then he grabs a noisemaker and does a couple perfunctory whaps with it.

This is enough to spur the team on. They start to get their energy up. Jack starts out of the dugout.

Starts walking to the base, looking at the pitcher. He even has a tiny smile on his face, as if to say "Let's see... I wonder what we're gonna get dished up today..."

JACK

Reaches the plate. Looks at him.

THE PITCHER

Looks at Jack.

AT THE PLATE

The catcher flashes his sign. The Pitcher gives a sinister nod, then winds up. He comes with a fastball, way inside. Jack tries to spin out of the way but it WHACKS him in the ribs.

Jack winces in pain as the Fans all jump to their feet with a collective GASP. Jack rubs his shoulder, glares at the Pitcher.

He pantomimes "TIP YOUR GODDAMN CAP!" The pitcher does nothing. Jack does it again. Again, nothing.

Then, Jack is about to rush the mound when-- WHOOOOOSH! The entire team rushes past him, CHARGING THE MOUND.

Now the pitcher tips his hat-- again and again. In fact, he tips the hell out of his hat... but it doesn't matter, because:

AN ALL-OUT MELEE has let loose.

GRANDMA AND GRANPA UCHIYAMA

Watch. Grandmother shakes her head. As does Uch's Wife. Grandfather pantomimes punching someone.

GRANDFATHER  
(in Japanese)  
**Kick his ass, Mukai! Come on,  
Igarishi, knock his head off!**

IN THE STANDS - THE FANS

are BOOING the Giants as down on the field the fight is broken up.

SHOTS:

The Owners. Uchiyama. The Fans.

A MOMENT LATER - HOWIE GOLD

looks up at the CRACK of a bat.

AT THE PLATE - HAMMER

Smacks a shot into the gap... He reaches first, happy.

MORE SHOTS...

Now the Giants are starting to get worried... especially as:

A MINUTE LATER - TOSHI

RIPS the Giant pitcher's first offering deep. Way deep, into the bleachers.

Hammer and Toshi round the bases and cross the plate to WILD CHEERING of the crowd.

As the team gathers around the plate to congratulate him... Jack notices something:

AMID THE CHEERING CROWD

HIROKO is descending the steps... and takes a seat by her Grandparents and Mother.

Jack stops what he is doing for a moment. They almost make eye contact, but Hiroko looks away.

SHOT - SCOREBOARD. GIANTS - 5, DRAGONS - 4. It's the bottom of the ninth now.

INT. DUGOUT

Jack passes by Uchiyama, who is stiff, tense. Jack looks at him. Doesn't have anything to say. What is to say?

Jack paces around, holding his bat. Uchiyama paces around. Jack glances out of the dugout to see if he can make contact with Hiroko. He can't.

SHOTS: THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE

People watch eagerly.

KUROSAWA

slaps a single to center.

ITOI

Bunts him to second. ONE OUT.

YAGI

Beats out a grounder.

TOSHI

Is walked.

THE FANS

are going nuts... as the BASES ARE LOADED and...

JACK ELLIOT

Is heading toward the plate.

IN THE DUGOUT

Yoji and Hammer look at each other.

YOJI

Bases loaded. He has to pitch to him. Do you think...?

HAMMER

Do I think he'll get the bunt sign?  
(nods)  
If I know Uch he will.

## THE OWNERS

Scoff, smug. They know Jack's gonna get the bunt.

## AT THE PLATE - JACK

stops, grips the bat. Settles in, sets... glances at Hiroko, who gives nothing...

Jack looks down at Hori who's touching various body parts. The Coach stops, claps his hands. The sign's been given. Jack shakes his head, confused.

JACK  
(to Ump)  
Time...

Jack heads toward the dugout. Uchiyama, perched at the top of the steps, meets him halfway.

## ANGLE - IN THE STANDS - THE UCHIYAMAS

Watching as--

MRS. UCHIYAMA  
He's often wondered how long his  
record would last...

HIROKO  
Don't worry, mother, it will last.  
He'll never give it up to Jack.

## ON THE FIELD

Jack and Uchiyama confer.

JACK  
Did I read that sign right?

UCHIYAMA  
Yes, you did.  
(beat)  
Swing away.

JACK  
Maybe I'll break your record.

UCHIYAMA  
Then we will all win.

Jack looks at him a long moment... Uchiyama does not break. Uchiyama is serious.

Jack nods slightly, then turns and strides back to the plate with determination.

JACK

Digs in, stares out at the Giant pitcher.

The pitcher smirks, checks all the runners, then comes to the plate. It's a **shutto**, way inside. Jack lays off it.

UMPIRE

Striiike!

Jack looks back at him in disbelief.

JACK

(to Ump, re Uch)

Don't worry, pal-- this is between  
me and him, not me and you.

Jack takes his time and steps back in. All the Dragon players are on their feet, chewing sunflower seeds and yelling at the Ump.

IN THE STANDS - DOC

leans back in his chair, nervously chewing a cuticle.

REVERSE ANGLE - INCLUDING PITCHER

He rears back and comes at Jack with another **shutto**-- again coming way inside. It would be a ball, but Jack's not taking any chances. The American swings and just gets a piece of it, fouling it straight back into the screen.

A huge MOAN rises and falls. Jack steps out of the box and takes a deep breath. The CHANTING grows even louder.

And here it comes.

THE GIANT PITCHER - IN SLOW MOTION

delivers the inevitable 'shutto'. The spin is vicious, tailing hard up and in.

JACK - IN SLOW MOTION

stays with it. He keeps his head down, extends his arms over the plate...and DRAG BUNTS down the first base line.

WIDER ANGLE - THE PITCHER

and the rest of the Giant's infield are taken completely off balance by this stunt. Stevens charges the ball while the Pitcher races to cover first base. There's no time for him to come over to the line and up, he's cutting straight for the bag...

JACK

is barreling down the basepath toward him. Three months ago Jack would've been out by three feet. But now as Stevens makes a desperate underhand flip of the ball to first it's going to be close.

#### THE BALL, THE PITCHER AND JACK

all arrive at first base simultaneously. The ball hits the Pitcher's glove just as he comes across the bag in front of Jack. There's a moment of wide-eyed fear on his face as he looks up to see Jack launch himself towards him, forearms up. The collision is all-American, Jack slamming into the guy with a bone-jarring CRUNCH that would make Pete Rose proud.

#### THE PITCHER

goes flying through the air, landing on his ear. As Jack steps on the bag, the ball trickles helplessly from his glove. The Umpire spreads his arms...SAFE at first. The Pitcher's too dazed to react, but as the other Giants scramble to retrieve the ball...

#### MUKAI

follows Toshi ACROSS Home plate with the winning runs. As Mukai and Toshi BASH forearms...

#### THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND FANS

leap to their feet. The Dragons have finally beaten the Giants.

#### ANGLE - THE DUGOUT

The Dragons are going crazy. Yoji's going crazy. They all pour out onto the field, leaving only Uchiyama.

#### JACK

is mobbed by teammates. He runs a gauntlet through them as they pound him on the back and head after his deed of team sacrifice. Jack looks up at the last man standing in the line.

#### UCHIYAMA

is there, arms folded as always.

#### UCHIYAMA

You disobeyed me...

#### JACK

Yeah... what'd you expect from a spoiled gaijin?

Uchiyama breaks into a wide grin. He claps Jack on the back American-style. The two men put their arms around each other's shoulders and turn to the crowd. As they bow to the crowd together and the crowd goes BERSERK... CUT TO:

INT. TEAM ROOM - LATER

All the players are smoking cigarettes and drinking champagne while they congratulate each other and get dressed.

UCHIYAMA

is being congratulated by the ecstatic Chunichi brass who look like they're ready to give him a long term contract.

DOC AND HOWIE GOLD

Are ecstatic as well. We don't see who they're talking to.

HOWIE GOLD

You'll love it in Los Angeles. And the Dodgers will get a lot of use out of you next year... out of both of you.

REVERSE ANGLE

Doc and Howie are talking to HAMMER and TOSHI, who are both grinning huge.

DOC

Jack was right-- you guys were worth the trip out here. Say, listen... you got agents?

ON THE LOCKER ROOM TV

We SEE the "STAR PLAYER INTERVIEW" from the emptying stadium. The INTERVIEWER holds his mic up to JACK, who is there with Yoji.

EXT. FIELD - SAME

Jack is being interviewed on the grass.

INTERVIEWER/YOJI

He would like to know what made you decide not to break Uchiyama's record.

JACK

Well, he's got this really big sword...

(then, seriously)

The team won, so I'm happy. Besides, I consider it an honor to tie a record as great as that of Uchiyama-san.

Yoji looks at Jack as if to say "are you joking?" Jack motions "go on, tell him. He does."

## INTERVIEWER/YOJI

He asks, now that you have  
acclimated yourself to Japan, will  
you play here next year?

## JACK

(laughs)

In Japan? No way in hell. This  
will be my last year as a player  
anywhere.

Yoji is a little surprised. Jack himself can even feel the weight  
of what he says.

## INTERVIEWER/YOJI

He ask: What are you going to do?

Jack looks at the Interviewer... looks at Yoji... slaps Yoji on  
the back. He has no answer... But suddenly something catches his  
eye:

There, among the still-thinning crowd, is HIROKO and HER FAMILY.

The Interviewer starts another question.

## INTERVIEWER/YOJI

He ask--

But Jack's attention is suddenly elsewhere. Completely forgetting  
about the interview, starts walking toward them, as though her were  
being pulled.

The Interviewer and Yoji just sort of stand there, agog. Now that  
the interview is over, the STADIUM LIGHTS start to go off ONE by  
ONE.

Hiroko smiles, waves a little as Jack comes closer. He waves back,  
unable to help but to smile. Jack notices the elderly  
Grandparents. Even they are smiling. He speaks to them through  
the screen.

**\*DIALOGUE TO COME**

**\*\*ENDING TO COME\*\***

They kiss. The last STADIUM LIGHT GOES OFF... and we DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DREAM BASEBALL FIELD - USA

HAMMER is at the plate.

## SPORTSCASTER

Two-one pitch is outside for ball  
three.

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE  
 (which starts to sound  
 vaguely familiar)  
 This is really the perfect spot for  
 a player like Boomer, uh...  
 Slammer... uh...

AT THE PLATE, HAMMER looks up toward the press booth.

HAMMER  
 Hammer!

IN THE PRESS BOOTH

Sits a well-known SPORTSCASTER and, in the COLOR GUY seat... Jack Elliot, wearing a red polyester jacket with an NBC logo. Jack is nervous, sweating, as he speaks into his mic.

JACK  
 (trying to get the name)  
 ... Bammer... Pounder... you know...  
**Eigo-wa hanase masuka? Summimasen!**  
**Summimasen!**

JACK

Wakes, suddenly. In a HAMMOCK in:

A JAPANESE GARDEN

Among finely manicured trees, bushes. And HIROKO is tapping him.

HIROKO  
 Jack... aren't you doing the game of  
 the week tonight?

Jack looks at his watch. Leaps out of the hammock. She hands him his JACKET -- the same red one from the dream.

He turns. Looks at her. And they KISS again...

...and as they do, we RISE UP, ABOVE THEM, over the garden, to reveal that the garden is actually on the rooftop of their New York City apartment...

And as they continues to kiss, the garden behind them and the city behind that... we FADE OUT.

THE END