

"MR. BASEBALL"
MR. BESUBORU

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3rd Revision by
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REVISED FIRST DRAFT
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****PLEASE NOTE:**

This draft is an explicit reflection of the notes from the week of August 6th. Fred has asked that we not make any cuts or even trims in order that we may all assess it as a whole FIRST. Next week we will then make the necessary trims (there are many and they stretch throughout the script) and cuts (I have many suggestions as I'm sure we all will).

Still, there are a few things you need to know before reading this:

First, the script is 20-25 pages too long. This is because it includes EVERYTHING (even though some things still need to be added). Fred and I have discussed ways to deal with this. And I am sure we will receive many helpful suggestions. Suffice it to say, what is page 100 of the script will be page 83 or so when we're done. And page 133 will be 110.

Second. We need to think about the amount of games we have and whether or not we repeat ourselves too much. Also, we should think about having Jack's beaming (and subsequent expulsion) come before his visit to the Grandparents' house. This would solve several problems-- we will discuss this later. This may solve the number of games problem.

(**Fred and I have briefly discussed some larger changes which would begin around the grandparent's house and would serve to 1) make that more of a climax and 2) cut a lot out of the third act and, hopefully, give it a cleaner dramatic line. These should be discussed after you read the script.)

Third. The third act. It still needs the tension of the home run record and the importance of the Giants game, etc. And the Jack-Uchiyama-Hiroko strain needs to come up a couple notches. This is happening, but needs more work, still. Also, the Giants game is too long and still is saggy and without muscle. You will see this, I am sure. And Jack's resolution with Hiroko will be improved when all the other stuff is improved.

Many other character things are still to be layed in (laid in?)... like Uch-Owner stuff, Uch-Hiroko stuff, etc.

Oh, well. Enough of this. If you need me, I'll be back sometime around the first week of September to start these changes. Just kidding. I'll be around. Blah blah blah.

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.

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE

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

39 year-old JACK ELLIOT, tense, sweating, leans in for the pitch.

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE

That's right, Al, when you come off a year as rough as he's had, it seems every little strike out comes back to haunt you...

THE PITCHER, 28, fit, bears down, chewing tobacco. The Pitcher sets, delivers...and Jack swings.

SPORSTCASTER'S VOICE

Strike three on the inside corner.

(beat)

Which'll even the count at three and three, and it looks like Elliot's really in a hole now.

Jack is amazed as the umpire still hasn't called him out. He looks at him, perplexed, as the Ump holds up three 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 blinks a couple of times. The Pitcher throws. Jack swings, digging a little bit into the ground in the process.

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE

Ooh, that's tough. As you know, any time you get that fourth strike on you, it's awfully hard to battle back.

Jack gathers himself. But when he looks back to the mound, THE PITCHER is suddenly 13 YEARS OLD! Jack gapes. The Pitcher smiles. Blows a bubble. The Pitcher throws. Jack swings and misses.

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE

Strike five. Wow, Elliot is really in a slump.

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE

Slump, nothing. The guy's 39 and he's swinging a damned telephone pole for a bat...

Jack looks at his bat. It's literally become a barely maneuverable twelve foot pole. Jack is in a real panic.

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... is it true, you were once really the world series MVP?

JACK

(also half-asleep)

Huh? Yeah. It's true.

GIRL

Oh, great. I've never been with a celebrity...

And she cuddles back up to him and falls back asleep. Jack looks at her, shaking his head in disbelief. The girl's ROOMMATE sleeps in the next bed. Jack rubs his aching head...

INT. BATHROOM

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

HIS POV

He squints at his own face for a moment. Above it, plastered to the mirror, is a large HAPPY FACE DECAL. Lines and crevasses, bags under his eyes; all standing out more in the harsh bathroom light. He splashes water on his face, and we CUT TO:

EXT. BALLPARK - PRACTICE FIELD - EARLY MORNING

No one on the field. Only:

Jack, at the plate, and TREY DAVIS, 40, and an old buddy of Jack's who was once a player with Jack and is now a coach, throwing to him from the mound.

Jack squibs one skittering foul... he looks to Trey. Jack and Trey have a shorthand in the way they communicate. Trey just holds his hand out a little and makes a simple "shift" gesture. Jack adjusts.

He throws again. Jack, his stance adjusted just a tad, connects.

JACK
So what is? My hip?

TREY
Foot.

JACK
(nodding-- he knew it)
Damn. Of course.

He rechecks his foot. Plants it. Nods to Trey to toss another. Trey does. Jack connects again. Watches it sail. Trey nods. Throws another.

TREY
By the way-- my kid's class loved you. You were their favorite show and tell yet.

JACK
Really? That's great.

TREY
It's because you operate at the same maturity level.

JACK
Oh. He's a coach and suddenly he's sooo mature.

Jack swings again. Fouls it. Resets his stance and looks to Trey to indicate "is this right?" Trey taps the back of his leg. Jack nods and adjusts... CUT TO:

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - A COUPLE HOURS LATER

Some FANS have gathered to watch the team practice. Around the field, players stretch out a little, a few get ready for batting practice. Trey is now standing with a couple other coaches.

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. It's the kind that you light fireplaces with.

MANUEL

(accent)

Yes, I hope I do very well...

While his confederates keep Manuel busy, Jack surreptitiously flames his shoelaces.

DUANE

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

MANUEL

I promise...

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

JACK

(holds up a cautionary finger)

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.

On the mound, Trey nods. Looks over at--

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.

JACK
Nice rope...

He SMACKS another. They watch it sail over the wall.

DUANE
Jesus Christ.

RICK
What is that? Five hundred feet?

JACK
No way. Four eighty, tops.

DUANE
Hey, Jack-- think that's the rookie first baseman?

The Rookie blasts another shot, this time over the palm tree. For a brief second, Jack looks concerned-- then he covers it.

RICK
If so, Jack... maybe it's time to think about enrolling in a correspondence course or two...

DUANE
Yeah, you'll have plenty of time to fill out your homework... on the bench.

JACK
Ha ha.

RICK
Look at the good side, Jack. He's gonna die one day.

JACK
Yeah, as soon as he sees a major league curve ball.

A curve ball comes in. He SMACKS that, too.

VOICE (OFF SCREEN)
Heya, Jack!

JACK
I know that voice. What's my agent doing here?

EXT. DUGOUT

Jack steps around to the bleachers to see a young, well-dressed RATHER SLICK GUY in his 30's. This is Dick "DOC" O'Connell.

JACK

Doc? Doc. You're smiling just a little too much. What's the problem?

DOC

Problem? No problem.

(then, as if it's one sentence:)

They cancelled your lawnmower commercial so how's Florida treatin you?

JACK

(beat)

Is that why you came down here, to tell me that?

DOC

No, I wanted to see my new client.

JACK

Who's your new client?

DOC

Him.

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

INT. SINGLES BAR - "THE SWING AWAY!" - NIGHT

Baseball/sex motif. Music pounds. Jack "works" a YOUNG BRUNETTE.

JACK

(really "sensitive"-like)

...I feel so bad, cause I slid into him to break up the double play, and I guess I... I guess what I did was, I... well, I killed him.

BRUNETTE

Oh my God.

JACK

And since then, it's been really hard for me to, well, to... be "with" someone.

Nearby DUANE gives the exact rap to a DIFFERENT COED.

DUANE
...difficult to, you know, "get
close" to a woman...

GIRL'S VOICE
Hi Jack.

Jack turns. A beaming, perky BLONDE GIRL is looking up at him.

JACK
(not recognizing her)
I'm sorry...

BLONDE GIRL
...Cyndi? ...Cyndi Perkins?
(beat)
...You slept with me last week?

JACK
Oh! Right, right!
(caught; trying to joke)
So... so, how was I?

CYNDI
Well, you were way better than
Rick... but not nearly as good as
Duane.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A 20-YR-OLD REDHEAD lies back as Jack rolls to her side.

REDHEAD
That was nice. Can we do it again?

JACK
(smiles, starts to sit up).
Boy, talk about getting in shape for
the season-- aaaah!

Jack leaps back as THE ROOKIE rises from the other side of the bed.

ROOKIE
(a broad, beaming smile)
Ease back, Jack. I'll take over
from here.

Jack snaps up in his bed in his

HOTEL ROOM.

Where he wakes from a deep sleep. He is alone. He drags himself
from bed and crosses to the window to look at the dawn. He
exhales. He is very alone.

EXT. FIELD - AFTERNOON

Some fans are gathered as 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. 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...

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.

TREY'S VOICE

Hey, Jack.

Jack turns. Trey is standing before him, with a portentous look on his face... There is a beat where neither says anything. The Rookie continues to pick up grounders.

TREY

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

JACK

(looking around, shrugging)
Where is he?

TREY

(beat)
In his office.

Another beat. 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 - A FEW MINUTES LATER

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

SKIP

Elliot, come in.

(then)

Listen, have a seat, pal.

JACK

(tightly)

That's okay.

SKIP

(after a beat)

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

JACK

(beat)

Sure.

SKIP

But this James kid is the real thing, and...

JACK

Aw shit, Skip...He's a goddam rookie for Chrissake. His mother had to drive him to camp.

(beat)

Are you gonna get swayed by a couple of five-hundred-foot home runs?

SKIP

(beat)

Yeah.

JACK

I don't fuckin believe this! I'm a world series MVP!

SKIP

That was four years ago, Jack.

JACK

Hell, last season I led the club in ninth inning doubles in the month of August.

SKIP

Jesus, Jack... only you would keep a stat like that. You hit .235 last season.

Silence. Skip, seeing the rest of the team through the glass door, milling about in the locker room, decides to try another tack.

SKIP

Jack... Listen, I want you to yell at me. I dunno, call me some names or something. "You stupid asshole, you don't know what you're doing--" you know, shit you've said to me a million times. You can even throw some stuff around-- hell, that won't be a stretch either. Then tell me I can't manage or something and say you quit.

Jack stares at Skip for a moment. He glances at Trey, nervously.

TREY

(quietly, sympathetic)
Jack, the time comes for everyone.
It's not as bad as you--

JACK

Maybe for you it isn't. And it's
NOT MY TIME...

Silence. After a long moment, Jack walks toward the desk. Then backhands everything off it.

Jack heads for the door. Trey looks to Skip, nods, Skip sighs then--

SKIP

Jack, uh... we got a call. From this guy... He manages a team... in Japan. He asked if he could call you.

JACK

Japan? Forget it. I got four or five teams interested in me. The Red Sox, the Twins, for sure.

TREY

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

JACK

Who the hell needs Japan? I'm a major leaguer for chrissakes!

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.

HER POV - DOORWAY

It swings open TO REVEAL JACK, with a huge smile on his face.

JACK

Hi there.

WIDER

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

KAREN

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

JACK

Well... I was chasing a foul ball-- a really well hit one-- about a thousand miles... and... next thing I knew...

KAREN

Jack...

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. A chance to travel-- hey, you always said I should broaden my horizons...

KAREN

You got cut, didn't you?

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
Did you try the Red Sox? Or what about the Twins, I mean, last year they were all over--

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? You've only been seeing the guy, what...?

KAREN
Two and a half years.

JACK
Two and a half, ... wow.

KAREN
Time flies when you're not paying attention, huh?

JACK
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. Karen smiles a little more and leans over the place mat. She plants a gentle kiss on his cheek.

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?

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 SOMETHING which makes him stop walking. What he HEARS is:

The vague but unmistakable SOUND of a sandlot baseball game drifts through the neighborhood. "Hey batter, hey batter..."

HIS POV

Several pre-teenagers are gathered around a construction site playing stick ball with broomsticks and a bright red "Spauldeen."

JACK

walks to the edge of the lot as the chatter gets slowly louder: "Heybatter-heybatter-heybatter SWING!"

The 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 of boys crowd a little closer examining every inch of a genuine hero. Jack seems to straighten up a little as the boys stare at him in wonder.

FIRST BOY

Wanna take a swing?

JACK

Well... No, I...

FIRST BOY

Come on. Glen'll strike you out.

The rest of the boys crack up. (GLEN, the pitcher, looks a little bit like the final boy in Jack's first dream.)

GLEN

Shut up, Trevor.

SEVERAL BOYS

Come on... do it... pleeeeee... etc.

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. A slight murmur runs through the outfield.

JACK

(beat)

WHY DON'T YOU THROW ME A GODDAMNED
STRIKE!

CUT TO:

6 empty SCOTCH BOTTLES jiggling on a seat-back tray-table... we are:

INT. AIRPLANE - 747 - NIGHT

Jack is passed out in his seat, a language book on his lap. As we PULL BACK we realize he is the only one left on the plane, and a STEWARDESS is trying to wake him. Finally she succeeds. Jack groggily opens his eyes.

JACK

Oh, shit. I'm here.

INT. DEPLANING TUNNEL - NAGOYA AIRPORT MORNING

Several PASSENGERS, washed and ready to go, exit the plane. After a moment, Jack, his hair going in six different directions, staggers forward. He adjusts his eyes to the brightness of the day... and continues on.

INT. BAGGAGE CLAIM AREA - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jack enters from customs, yawns, and suddenly rolls his eyes--

JACK

Oh, Christ...

-- as he walks toward a MAN HOLDING A PLACARD which says "ERRIOT."

PLACARD MAN

You are Tom Erriot?

JACK

First of all, it's Elliot. And second--

VOICE FROM BEHIND JACK

I'm Tom Erriot.

A GUY BEHIND HIM (TOM ERRIOT, presumably) walks off with the Man. Jack stands a beat, then, hearing LAUGHTER, turns to see a MAN laughing so hard he can barely hold his "JACK ELLIOT" sign.

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, lighten up. I tell you, we're going to have a fun time, you and me. You tired?

JACK
And drunk.

YOJI
Good. Cause there's some people who wanna meet you.

CUT TO: INT. TINY AIRPORT CONFERENCE ROOM
HUNDREDS OF REPORTERS are crammed together-- awaiting--
JACK - WHO IS JUST OUT OF THEIR VIEW
And 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.

Jack, returning the bow, does so vigorously. Being so tall, it is frightening to the owners, causing them to back away from the disheveled, drunken American. 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.

JACK
Oops, sorry. I guess it's tough cause I'm always sitting on my identity.

YOJI
You have business card?

JACK
Gosh, I wish I had something... wait... I was saving them for the kids, but what the hell...

He reaches inside his jacket and pulls out JACK ELLIOT BASEBALL CARDS: Little 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 turns to Yoji. He has something for him too.

JACK

Here Yoji, you can have the gum.

The 'Suits' lead Jack in to the crowd of reporters and speaks in Japanese.

OWNER

(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

54? Christ, good thing I'm not number 84.

YOJI

Oh, no. Never any number higher than 54.

JACK

Why?

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. Another shouts a question.

REPORTER/YOJI

He wants to know what you think of our country.

JACK

Already...? Well, hell... let's see, the airport is certainly nice, and from what I can tell of the people, they are all, uh, inquisitive and carry pens.

YOJI

He says , and the architecture he likes, and the people are questioning and very literate.

YOJI

You are asked "How many home runs are you going to hit?"

JACK

54.

Impressed nods. Then another question.

REPORTER/YOJI

He want to know "to which field."

JACK

He's not serious, is he?

(off Yoji's nod)

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:

INT. TAXI - DRIVING

Jack, half-asleep, stares out the window at the foreign landscape. Most of what he sees is an industrial or technical buildings.

YOJI

Japan not what you expected, huh?

JACK

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

YOJI

(lips different from voice)

"Get the mayor, the city hall is
burning!"

Yoji pulls the car over at an apartment building, where a gaggle of
PRESS is waiting for him, shouting questions as Jack sleepily
wanders 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... There are pre-set
FLOWERS, WINE and a DINNER (burger, fries and a Coke) by the
microwave.

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...

YOJI

Come on, I give you quick tour.
Jack?

Yoji turns to see Jack just stumbling toward the bed, which he
crashes upon and falls immediately asleep. CUT TO:

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.

EXT. JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jack opens the door and steps outside-- it's the middle of the night and there's nobody on the streets. Well, almost no one. A FLASH goes off and a REPORTER is standing there.

JACK

54 home runs. Love Japan, loooove it.

And he turns and ducks back inside his place.

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.

JACK

Oh, thank God...

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

Still awake, Jack is alone, now reading a JAPANESE PHRASE BOOK.

JACK

Um... summimasen. Okay... let's see...

(yawns)

Oh, man...

He starts to close his eyes again... and just as he is about to fall asleep... 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.

Jack wanders slowly forward. Suddenly five Japanese players start screaming 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'S HUGE FEET

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

WIDER

Jack approaches his locker, looking at the hanging uniforms with names like IGARISHI, KUROSAWA, MUKAI... and DUBOIS.

HAMMER

Max DuBois...

JACK

DuBois... Oh, man, it's great to
hear an American name.

HAMMER

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.

Jack looks daggers at him.

HAMMER (CONTINUING)

Er, well, a teenager.
(in fluent Japanese,
subtitled)
Everybody meet Jack Elliot.

They stare at him coolly.

JACK

Thanks, boys... I'm thrilled to meet
you too.

HAMMER

They'll warm up after a season or
two.

JACK

I don't plan to be here that long.

HAMMER

That's what I said... 5 years ago.
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

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

HAMMER

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

JACK

(pausing)
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?

JACK

Do I what?

TOSHI

"I feeeeel nice, like sugar'n spice
Bum-bum-bum... Yee-owwww!"

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 Yamashita.
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 as Toshi moonwalks backward past Hammer.

Toshi stops DEAD SILENT as he arrives at his locker... and starts to practically CRY as he sees that his BAGS ARE ALL PACKED.

JACK

Oh, shit... poor guy-- he get cut?

Two of the guys toss a "gomen asai" his way... then the TEAM GUYS CRACK UP. Toshi bursts into a wide SMILE (from embarrassment, not pleasure).

HAMMER

Nah, they're just messing with him.

JACK

I like a joke, but...

Suddenly the TEAM REACTS SHARPLY to the YELLING VOICE they HEAR O.S. They quickly gather up their things and begin to rush out of the locker room.

JACK
Who's that?

HAMMER
One of the greatest players in the
history of the Japanese game... And
one of the most uptight mana--

YOJI (O.S.)
Elliot-san, this is Uchiyama-san,
your manager.

THE MANAGER - UCHIYAMA-SAN --

slowly enters the room and walks right up to Jack, not thrilled
with what he sees: an overweight, out of sorts giant. Some of the
team, instead of leaving completely, hang around the door to watch
as the two men look at each other. These are men who've been in
the game a long time and are very set in their ways. Uchiyama
gives a dignified bow. Jack sticks out his hand. Uchiyama leaves
it hanging.

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
(in Japanese, with
subtitles)

I hope he can adapt to our game and
doesn't turn out to be one of those
disappointing Gaijin who disturbs
the team Wa.

YOJI
He looks forward to watching your
great feats on the field of play.
And knows you'll be good for team
harmony.

Uchiyama says one other thing.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI
Also: A haircut will be necessary.

JACK
Tell him I think he looks pretty
good as he is, but if wants to pull
up a chair, 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... whatty 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--

EXT. FIELD - NEAR DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Jack exits onto the field with Yoji, shaking his head as he looks at:

The team, squatting in the middle of the field listening to one of the (many) coaches talking to them.

JACK

What are they doing?

YOJI

Meeting.

Jack rolls his eyes. He takes in his surroundings and becomes aware of activity in

THE PRESS BOX, where the SUITS, barely visible behind the glass windows, are pointing at him and speaking to someone (who is hidden behind them).

CLOSER ANGLE

The PERSON they are talking to steps up to peer out an open window...

ON THE FIELD - JACK

Does a double-take.

It is a WOMAN. She has a supple beauty, couched behind a stylish but conservative business suit. An administrator speaks to her.

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.

OWNER

Straight from Marlboro country, neh?

WOMAN

Yes. And he looks like quite the clothes' horse, too. He's the best of the Gaijin we've seen so far.

OWNER

Hail! And with a haircut and shave -
Good image for Dragons. Right image
for commercial, eh? So! Maybe we
can negotiate something?

She turns from them and looks back at

EXT. FIELD

Where the meeting is just breaking up. Yoji introduces Jack to
some of the players. He indicates an indignant, seemingly arrogant
YOUNG PLAYER.

YOJI

Tomohoko Ohmae...

JACK

Tomo...

YOJI

Tomohoko Ohmae.

JACK

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

YOJI

Was starting first baseman. Until
you.

JACK

Oh. Maybe next year, kid, when I'm
back playing in the states.

They pass a HANDSOME GUY who is preening for the press, who are
watching and photographing from the stands. He is unaware of Jack.

YOJI

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

JACK

Iggishi....

(then to Yoji)

What about those Giggling girlies
and you and me having fun, fun, fun,
Yoji?

YOJI

(deliberately not hearing
Jack)

Let's see... Itoi, Kurosawa,
Nishikawa... Yagi...

Jack exchanges greetings per each guys' responses to him...

JACK
 (trying to get the names)
 A toy, Cool a saw, Nifty car,
 Yucky..

AKITO YAGI listening to squat, wiry batting coach KUNIHICO HORI talk to him about his stance.

YOJI
 (listens as they pass)
 Yagi-san is big, he should hit for
 power.
 (then)
 Team captain, Ryoh Mukai...

Jack and Mukai nod to each other, two older players, two team leaders...

JACK
 Royal moocow...

Mukai snickers, turns to Ohmae.

MUKAI
 Jacku-assu...

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

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
 Well, we're holding bats-- but I
 wouldn't exactly call it baseball.

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
 (incredulous)
 You can't be serious-- 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 (who's still standing), 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, arriving at the scene with Uchiyama.

COACHES/YOJI

They want to know why you not
working with team?

JACK

Tell Skip I got a bad wheel.

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

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

Mr. Uchiyama 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 Uchiyama's
emphatic response.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

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

JACK

(shrugs)

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.

ANGLE - THE TEAM

Follows earnestly-- shaking their legs a little, rolling their necks.

JACK

bends forwards, 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.

ANGLE - THE SUITS

Watch, trying to figure out what's going on.

ON THE FIELD

More waiting. Finally, a couple of team members raise their heads at the sound of SNORING.

CU JACK

He's sound asleep.

IN THE PRESS BOX - THE WOMAN

Who's been watching, smiles.

CLOSE - KUNIHICO HORI

The 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. They finish at--

BEHIND HOME PLATE - A LITTLE LATER

players catch their breath. Jack is way more tired than the rest of the team.

JACK

Jesus, Max. I think I enlisted in the Japanese army by mistake.

Mukai does a behind-Jack's-back impression of him. Some of the guys laugh. Jack turns. Toshi, caught in between, tries to be friendly.

TOSHI

Imitation: "Number 1 form flattery."

Another whistle blows. Mukai yells and they TAKE OFF RUNNING again, leaving Jack to catch his breath.

JACK

(sotto; to Hammer)

This is crazy. We're not athletes, we're baseball players.

Jack crosses to lean on the PRESS BOX. He looks up. He is right beside the open window. He spots THE WOMAN, back amongst the reporters desks, talking to a few ASSISTANTS.

JACK

Hi. Baseball fans? Any of you guys speak English?

(then-- off their silence)

Would you like to marry me? Bear my children?

Jack calls Yoji across.

JACK

I just proposed, and I need you to translate for me.

Yoji's heads over to Jack. He can't see the woman through the glass from where he stands but he can hear her.

WOMAN

Kekkon surunaraba shin da hoga mashiyo.

YOJI

Oops, uh oh... I think you get your answer.

JACK

I did? But she said she didn't speak English.

WOMAN

I believe you asked "Any of you guys speak English."

JACK

Oh-- so what was the answer?

Yoji, now alongside Jack, gets his first view of THE WOMAN.. From his reaction it appears that he's impressed. She looks straight at Yoji, smiles very slightly, then nods at him to translate.

YOJI

Actually, it means "I would rather poke my eyes out with a stick."

JACK

Ah. Yes. Then perhaps a blind date would be in order. Get it? You hate me, don't you?

WOMAN

Yes.

JACK

You do? Already?

WOMAN

I mean: "Yes, I get the joke." In terms of do I hate you: "no." I know you only enough to moderately dislike you. Are you free tonight?

JACK

(taken aback)

Tonight?... Dinner?

WOMAN

Yes. I'll pick you up after practice.

She turns and leaves. Jack can't believe his luck.

JACK

Fun, fun, fun...Yoj. Is she beautiful or what?

YOJI

(suddenly shifty)

Too many "torrents" for you.

JACK

Speak in English, Yoji.

YOJI

(this is difficult)

She's a very modern woman, from a very traditional family. Very bad idea.

JACK

Yoji, I can handle it. What do you think?

YOJI

(the only answer he dare give)

O... Okay.

Suddenly UCHIYAMA is right beside them, yelling for them to join the other players for

ANOTHER GODDAMNED MEETING...

As Jack wanders slowly off he looks back to see...the Owners speak in Japanese to Uchiyama, pointing at Jack. Uchiyama nods. Obviously they are talking to Uchiyama about disciplining Jack.

ON THE FIELD

the meeting breaks, and the coaches, yelling, start to herd players over toward batting nets.

JACK

(to Uchiyama)

Wait... You mean we're actually going to hit some baseballs?

AT THE PLATE

Jack, a huge wad of tobacco in his mouth, steps into the box. Sets. Looks out at the field. Feels his bat. Settles in the box. This is a big moment.

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

(Bowing to the field)

Oh.

Jack sets and -- SMACK!! Clocks it. Uchiyama barks some instructions.

UCHIYAMA/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 for, oh...
thirty years of playing.

Jack takes another swing-- clobbers it. Uchiyama nods, speaks.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

He say perhaps thirty years take
toll you not aware of. And, you
have a hole in your swing.

UCHIYAMA

Sempai, Kohai.

YOJI

It mean "Older, Younger." Older
person have wisdom, experience.
Younger can learn.

JACK/YOJI

Look, I appreciate it, but I'm not
interested.

Uchiyama tosses a cold glare at Jack. Jack sees it. SMACK. He
ropes another. Smiles.

Uchiyama nods, then snaps his fingers, pointing toward ISSEI ITOI,
a gangly pitcher, who eagerly rushes toward the mound and replaces
the older PITCHING COACH.

JACK

What's going on here, Max?

Hammer shrugs--

HAMMER

(with a wink)

Probably just wants to see if you're
as good with the bat as you are with
your mouth.

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

The Owners nod down toward Uchiyama. 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 pounds the plate with his bat.

JACK
Great... fine...

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

JACK
Shit!

ANGLE - SOME GATHERING PLAYERS

Hammer winces. Ohmai and Mukai are pleased. Toshi winces, embarrassed for Jack. But when Yagi grins at him, he forces a smile.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - INCLUDING UCHIYAMA

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

JACK
Let's go.

Even though it is unspoken, the count is 0 and 2. All around the field people turn to watch as Itoi dips into the bucket.

Jack sets at the plate, crowding it a little and bending his knees.

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.

Uchiyama looks to the stands. THE OWNERS nod their approval. Uchiyama smiles.

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. I gave it back to him.

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

Oowwwwwwww.

JACK

Jesus... what's that?

HAMMER

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.

JACK

Christ, I can't believe this...

(moving toward the toilet)
 I mean, what's next-- are they gonna
 try and tell me how to take a crap
 as well?

(beat)
 Hey Max?

HAMMER
 Yeah?

JACK
 I, uh... I need someone to tell me
 how to take a crap.

SHOT: The toilet. It's Japanese-style-- a porcelain contraption in
 the floor. Hammer smiles... CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM - OFURA (BATH)

6 or 7 JAPANESE MEN and one huge BLACK GUY squatting on tiny
 plastic yellow stools, washing themselves. We hear a GROAN, and
 Jack enters, towel only, caked with mud. He drops his towel, gets
 into the water and immediately begins soaping up.

Suddenly there are horrified gasps and all the guys all turn and
 stare at him.

JACK
 What'd I do? What?

Toshi, the nearest guy to Jack, says:

TOSHI
 In bath: wash first, man.

INT LOCKER ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Jack is finishing dressing. He is sitting by Toshi, who is also
 finishing dressing.

JACK
 "Wash before bath." I don't get it.
 It's like jerking off before sex.

TOSHI
 Please, I'm sorry? You jerk it
off!?

JACK
 Well, no-- not actually "off"--

TOSHI
 (laughs)
 I know, It's a joke, baby. Jerk
 off. "Pull your putz." "Have a
 tug." "Beat your meat."

JACK

Okay, okay... sorry.

TOSHI

"Whack your pud."

JACK

Okay. You've made your point.

Ohmae and Mukai stick their heads out of their lockers and say something derisive toward Toshi. (If we spoke Japanese, we'd know they were saying "Hey, Tosh, why not wipe the shit off your nose while you're at it.") Toshi, suddenly embarrassed, moves away a little. Jack sees this. Nods. Moves away himself-- not wanting to create too much of a problem for Toshi. But just before Toshi leaves, he turns his head back and says:

TOSHI

"Spank the monkey."

JACK

Toshi!

CUT TO:

INT. VERY LOUD, TRENDY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Hiroko looks stunning in her casual business-like outfit. Jack clearly thinks the same thing. He is sitting close to her, leaning across the table a bit and looking 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

Oh, I know, I know. It can be horrible. They say things like "will you marry me, bear my children..."

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

HIROKO

It's not the best of lines-- even to
a bambi.

JACK

(leaning forward)

That's ...Bimbo.

HIROKO

You'd know, Mr.Elliot.

She smiles again. Did she zing him-- or just accept the
correction? Whatever. Jack quickly adjusts. He goes fishing.

JACK

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

HIROKO

(a little too quickly)

You know about my background?

JACK

Well....I was told 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

From what I have observed, you are
better than all the men I have seen
as well.

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. Hiroko smiles. The Waitress pulls the lid off. It's...

HIROKO

Filet Mignon.

(she chuckles with delight
at his reaction)

This is a French restaurant.

JACK

Good. I was hoping it wasn't Japanese. I've sort of had enough...

HIROKO

Oh, this place is very Japanese.
Japan takes the best from all over
the world and makes it its own.

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. A couple of giggling GIRLS come up and ask Jack for an autograph. Jack smiles, flattered. They take out a camera.

HIROKO

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

Jack shrugs, smiles. And on the FLASH, we CUT TO:

INT. JAZZ CLUB - A LITTLE LATER

Lights. Rich, trendy people. Hard to talk over the music. But Jack tries. He's in the middle of his tried-and-true pick-up story.

JACK

...and, well, I killed him... and,
it's crazy, but I haven't been able
to, you know... "be with" a woman
ever since.

Pause. Hiroko is silent. She just nods. Almost smiles. Finally,
after a long pause, she just says:

HIROKO

Wow... how exciting.

JACK

What?

HIROKO

I'm out with a murderer.

JACK

No, no... it wasn't murder... it
was...

(shrugs)

...a lie.

HIROKO

You should try honesty, Mr. Elliot.
Many women actually prefer it.

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.

JACK

Hey, where are we going now?

(deflating)

Oh, this is my place.

(then)

So, since you'd like me to be
honest...

(a breath)

Would you like to come up?

(a beat)

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, a COUPLE OF GUYS pop out of their
cars and SHOOT PHOTOS at Jack and her. Jack looks at them, waves
them off. Looks at her-- and she is taking off. Jack watches her
go, watches the PHOTOGRAPHERS 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.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - CLOSE ON TV

On it is a really wierd show: Guys drink and drink, and the first guy to have to pee loses. Jack can't believe it. He looks around. He is in a different world, a different time zone and wide awake.

INT. JACK'S APT. - NOON

Jack sleeps tangled in his sheets and only half-out of his clothes when the DOORBELL RINGS. Jack, startled, picks up the radio, the clock, an empty beer bottle---then, finally, the phone.

JACK

Hello?

(beat)

MUSHY-MUSHY? HELLO??

IN THE HALLWAY OF HIS APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME

Yoji, his finger on the doorbell, is yelling through the door.

YOJI

Jack-san! It's me, Yoji!

IN THE BEDROOM - SAME

Jack yells into the phone.

JACK

Yoji? I can hardly hear you! It's a horrible connection!

Yoji KNOCKS.

In the bedroom, Jack, starten to awaken, starts to realize what's going on. He puts the phone down.

IN JACK'S LIVING ROOM

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

YOJI

Jack-san-- today is first game-- where are you??

JACK

Well, I'm not sure. I'm think I'm in my apartment. What time is it..?

(looks at clock: 11:55)
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

Yeah, well 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
greeted 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 Hiroko
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. Hammer 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. Sorry.

Yoji's head flips back and forth. We occasionally get a little glimpse of an English word from him... Finally, Uchiyama changes tack, takes a breath.

UCHIYAMA

(subtitled)

Okay. Fine. We will try it your way... until your way fails you.

Yoji is about to finally catch up with his translation when he'd drowned out by 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 MASSAGE 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)

Oooowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!!

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 OENDON 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.

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

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD

It's game time. The HANSHIN TIGERS are on the field, in the middle
of a CONFERENCE. (For the Dragons, Toshi squats on first base,
waiting.)

Jack leans out of the dugout taking it all in. Hammer is by him.

JACK

This is the longest first inning
I've ever seen.

HAMMER

For these guys, the game is
practically as much about the pauses
between the action as it is about
the action.

JACK

Man, how do you stand this noise?

HAMMER

This is nothing. Wait till we play
the Giants.

The Tigers' meeting breaks. Jacks steps back onto the on-deck
circle while Igarishi readies at the plate.

JACK

Come in, Iggil! 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.

(dropping the donut)

... And Jack... you're on.

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

Oooooh, maju-leeqa.

JACK

You got it, babe.

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

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

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

UMPIRE

You big. You can hit.

JACK

What?

He shakes his head-- this is crazy. But he takes a breath and settles himself. Steps back into the box. Sets. The pitch comes in-- it's practically in the dirt. But it, too, is called a strike!

JACK

Great. By the way, I enjoy your albums, Mr. Wonder.

Jack looks to the dugout for support. Uchiyama stands there, stoic, arms crossed.

JACK

Fine.

Jack resets in the box, determined to get a hit despite the bad calls.

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.

JACK

Jesus! What's he doing? He could've had it-- easy!

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?

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

RY

(setting behind Jack)

I'm telling you, this place is
unbelievable.

(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

Yeah, I think I played you when you
were at Baltimore.

RY

(a memory)

Oh, man... Baltimore...

EXT. DRAGON STADIUM - CLOSE SCOREBOARD - NIGHT

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

ON THE FIELD

Toshi's on first. Jack comes up to bat behind him, and swings at
the pitch, barely getting 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 Toshi, 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 Toshi trotting in.

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

Hammer, sensing the situation, comes over.

HAMMER
Well, they don't do that here man.
It's disrespectful to take someone out with a slide.

JACK
What horseshit!

Jack sees Toshi'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 ten o'clock. The game's over.

JACK
The game can't be over. It's four - four, we're tied! 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.

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

INT. TUNNEL

The team scuttle in dejected. Jack enters with Hammer.

JACK

The last time this happened to me was when I coached my niece's goddamned girls' softball league. We tied. And Uchiyama is satisfied with that. Unbelievable.

They round the corner. Uchiyama is standing there. As Jack passes, Uchiyama speaks to him.

UCHIYAMA

Please don't be fooled by your good game. You still have a hole in your swing.

JACK

(to Hammer)

What's he saying?

HAMMER

(translating as he and Jack pass)

Good game aside, you still got a hole in your swing.

JACK

(loud enough for Uchiyama to hear)

What does he care about my swing? He's not going for the win anyway.

And he and Hammer continue on.

JACK

Hey, Max. Is there any place around here we could go to get some good old fashioned cholesterol?

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 with the
 action on the TV)
 "Yes, I will keep the child, as long
 as you 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!"

WIDER ANGLE - we are:

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. He points his finger--

JACK

Hey...

Recognizing RY WARD (from the Tigers' game-- who now holds a mic)
 and LYLE MASSEY (the Tigers' right fielder), along with a couple
 other Gaijin (STEVENS and NEVIN).

RY

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

Then Ry turns back with his mic, and, as the COUPLE ON TV starts to
 kiss...

RY

("speaks" for her)
 "Oh... kiss me, Yuriko... kiss me
 like Elliot..."

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.

NEVIN
 (now becoming one of the TV
 people)
 "Burger? You want my burger? Then
 I'm afraid you must DIE!!!"

ON TV a character is spraying people with machine gun fire. Jack
 pays for the burger-- then gives the Waitress more yen.

JACK
 Here-- get more burgers. Get
hundreds of burgers. And keep the
 change. God, it feels good to tip
 again.

STEVENS
 So Jack-- we hear you put up some
 numbers today.

JACK
 I did okay.

HAMMER
 He did great.

STEVENS
 Yeah, till they get you figured out--
 - or they figure you got them
 figured out-- then that's it for
 doing great.

JACK
 Billy-- you were never this cynical
 in Milwaukee.

STEVENS
 This sure as hell ain't Milwaukee.
 They throw you junk, throw at your
 head...

JACK
 They do that in Milwaukee-- hell,
you did that to me in Milwaukee!
 (jokingly raises his fist)
 In fact...!

HAMMER
 (into mic-- per a TV
 "Maiden's" worried look)
 "Oh no! Please don't hurt him! We
 need him to service all our women!"

JACK
 What's the deal with the women here
 anyway?

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!

Ry suddenly taps a couple of the guys.

RY

Hey! It's our commercial!

ON THE TV, a PARTICULARLY SILLY COMMERCIAL-- with all sorts of
MUSIC AND SILLY GRAPHICS-- has come on. Ry grabs the mic and
starts:

RY

(making up words as the
music plays under)

THIS PLACE SUCKS, BUT I NEED THE
BUCKS.

Ry hands the mic over to Lyle, who does his verse.

LYLE

PAID TO HIT, BUT WANNA QUIT.

HAMMER

(taking the mic)

CAR HOME IN STORAGE WHILE I'M HERE
IN WHORAGE.

GUYS

(variously)

Hey, Hammer-- not bad, etc.

The mic is thrust to Jack, who, not having any idea of the song,
just shrugs and say:

JACK

(speaking, and not really
in tempo)

I dunno, this place is okay.

Stevens grabs the mic from him.

STEVENS

(drunk and off-key)

SURE THAT'S WHAT THEY... ALL... SAY.

The commercial ends and the regular show resumes. Some ad-lib
comments about what occurred. Stevens is intent on continuing his
point.

STEVENS

I'm serious, Jackie boy. Have you seen a shutto yet?

JACK

Well, I haven't exactly seen one...

STEVENS

Or the gaijin strike zone!?

RY

It's just that they want you to do good, but not too good. Like... 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, struggles to read from yet another Sports Paper.

YOJI

"With seventeen hits-- 6 of them home runs-- in his first twenty games, Jack Elliot should be called MR. BASEBALL--"

JACK

Wait-- where does it say that?

YOJI

Here. "Besuboru."

Jack continues on, joking, as if he were reading.

JACK

(making it up)

"And Elliot credits the clever managing of Uchiyama and the skilled training program..."

YOJI

Oh, you've read this?

JACK

Sure...

(then, with a hint of introspection)

And I can't wait to see what they write if my stats drop a bit--

(then, covering)
 --you know, if I get injured or
 something.

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, please go easy. Japanese women seem to be one way, but in the end they are all their father's daughters.

JACK
 (reassuring)
 Don't worry, Yoj... It's strictly business.

Yoji is about to say more but they are interrupted as 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... if they get really wierd?

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 stiff and nervous. Yoji, next to a shocked
Jack, translates along with Uchiyama. He knows the rant.

UCHIYAMA
 (in Japanese; subtitled)
 ...YOU HAVE PRACTICED SHAMEFULLY!
 THE GIANTS DESERVE TO BEAT US!

YOJI
 (same cadence)
 You have practiced shamefully. 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 63 Yankees and Dodgers combined.
 And they nearly 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 decides to ignore 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 Itoi strikes out.

IN THE DUGOUT

Toshi grabs his bat. Jack goes over to him.

JACK

Listen, Tosh... you've got a great swing. All you gotta do is ease up a little, wait on the ball

He is drowned by COACH HORI, who shrieks instructions in Japanese, indicating all sorts of things about form and stance.

Jack, shaking his head, sits down between Hammer and Kurosawa-- who is now into chewing Sunflower seeds and is starting a moustache. Hammer sees Jack's frustration, leans close to him.

HAMMER

Listen, I'm only saying this because I'm getting a little tired of making friends and then losing them halfway through the year... You're in Japan, man. And I know it's frustrating, but I just gotta tell you-- if you fight it, it'll only get worse.

Jack nods-- then suddenly shakes his head as:

At the plate, Toshi swings too hard and 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 slap him, in front of everyone.

CUT TO: QUICK SHOT

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

CUT BACK TO: THE DUGOUT

As Jack moves along the bench to get Toshi's glove, Jack shakes his head. As he nears Uchiyama, he tries not to say anything... but he can't stop himself.

JACK
Good "wa," Skip. The kid's a rookie
for Chrissakes...

He leaves the dugout before Uchiyama can respond. Hands Toshi his glove and walks with him onto the field.

JACK
It's no big deal. You'll get 'em
next time.

Jack gets no quarter from Toshi.

TOSHI
Must refine proper form.

Jack lets him walk off. Shakes his head. CUT TO:

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

A GIANTS RUNNER reaches first on a single...

ANGLE - JACK - ON THE FIELD

stretches a little on his familiar turf, then smiles as he takes a
positon to hold the Giant's runner on the bag.

JACK
Nice rap. Got any nude pictures of
your wife?

The Runner looks over at Jack.

JACK
Wanna see some?

The guy looks at Jack blankly, shrugs his shoulders like "what'd
you say?". Jack rolls his eyes, so much for his razzing routine.

JACK
Never mind...

HIGH WIDE SHOT SHOWS NO ONE HAS LEFT THE STADIUM.

THE SCOREBOARD

shows 2 Giants out, and the Giants ahead 3 to 1. It's getting
close to the end of the game.

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.

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. But Japanese women are real strangers to me. And since they consider you so hot....

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.

(then-- turning as he HEARS
a SMACK)
Yesss! Max!

AT THE PLATE

Hammer WATCHES A BALL SAIL OVER THE FENCE.

HAMMER
Yesss!

IN THE DUGOUT - AS HAMMER COMES IN

Jack and he bash arms. The score is Giants 3, Dragons 2. Jack comes back into the dugout.

JACK
Okay, guys.... come on! Rally caps!
No response. Jack grabs his bat...

JACK
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.

JUST OUTSIDE THE DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Jack looks out at the (still-screaming) Oendan. Jack steps up to the on deck circle. He likes the atmosphere. Like a world series crowd. He gives a little wave of his bat before he does he warm up swings.

They respond by GETTING EVEN LOUDER as--

AT THE PLATE - YAGI

Drives a single into center field.

JACK
Yes! Yagster, alright! Way to
swing!

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

THE DRAGONS CHEERING SECTION

goes crazy, spelling out "MR. BESUBORU" with their cushions, as--

VARIOUS SHOTS - FANS WATCHING

In a MORTUARY, in a DENTISTS OFFICE, in an AIRPORT LOUNGE, people see Jack's face with Japanese writing over it. We see him step to the plate.

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

What are you doing? You're asking me to bunt?

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

You must move runner, get him in tying position.

JACK

That's ridiculous. That's not what you pay me for.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

Uchiyama is manager. Is important you listen to what he says.

UCHIYAMA

Bunto shinakere ba benchi iri dazoi

Uchiyama turns, leaving Jack and Yoji. Beat.

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
 What are you...? Okay, fine. Fine.
 (stepping back in)
 I got friggin' Mr. Magoo here behind
 the plate.

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

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 three!

Jack turns to the catcher.

JACK

shutto?

CATCHER

Hai. Shutto.

JACK

Shit.

Jack nods and crosses to--

THE DUGOUT

Where Uchiyama waits for him, arms crossed. Yoji stands next to him. Jack enters, then stops, noticing the team looking at him and Uchiyama in anticipation... Beat. Then:

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

(calmly)

Why didn't you bunt?

JACK

(making light of it)

Hey, come on, Skip-- I had two strikes on me.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

Before that.

But before Jack can respond, Uchiyama starts yelling in rapid fire Japanese.

JACK
 (to Yoji, re Uchiyama's
 rant)
 Are you getting any of this?

YOJI
 Words I caught were... "arrogant"...
 "pigheaded"...

JACK
 "Asshole", perhaps?

YOJI
 (listening)
 Nope... nope...

UCHIYAMA
 (among the many words)
 -- Kussotare--

YOJI
 ...Yup.

JACK
 Kussotare?

YOJI
 Bingo.

(In the background, Kurosawa squares to bunt, and POPS IT UP.)

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. SHIT.

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

HAMMER
 Better get used to it, Slugger. You
 scared 'em. You've seen your last
 fastball in Japan.

Jack becomes aware of the SILENCE in the room. Turns around to see several of the TEAM GUYS, standing, looking at him. They were waiting for their chance--

MUKAI
Shutto, neh?

ITOI
Shutto!

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. So he continues...

TOSHI
We gotta thiiing.... goo-in on.
Woo-wooo....

Toshi gives him a pat on the back.

TOSHI
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. Starts walking toward him. 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 shakes his head, pulls a wad of money from his pocket. All team eyes shift to these two men. Jack hands Uchiyama five 10,000 yen notes. Uchiyama looks at them, looks at him. Then 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.

CLOSER - UCHIYAMA

He looks at the two bills. Beat. Separates the second note. Then he speaks calmly to Yoji.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

He wants to know what the second one
is for.

Jack looks directly at him and smiles.

JACK/YOJI

That's for next time.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

He wonders when the next time will
be.

JACK/YOJI

Right now.

Then 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 looks at him. Uchiyama looks right back. CUT TO:

LATE NIGHT - JACK WANDERS THE STREETS

Lost, alone... he is alienated by the strange signs and strange language. He turns a corner, thinking he recognizes the street... but he doesn't. He can't read the signs. 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 that's the name of my tape deck. I don't know anymore.

They all nod. They all do.

JACK

Could any of you give me a ride?

They smile. And disappear.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - AROUND SUNRISE

Jack sits against the wall, drinking a Budweiser and listening to Bob Seger out of a boombox which is plugged into a fairly empty wall. There's a crumpled McDonalds bag near him. And a pile of postcards he's trying to fill out...

Tacked to the refrigerator is a SEASON SCHEDULE, on which Jack has already begun Xing out days. (About a month of the season has gone by.) Stats are kept for the first couple weeks. Then, oddly, they sort of peter out...

Outside, the sun's about to come up.

The Seger song dissolves into STADIUM NOISE, and we HEAR a soft, feminine voice:

P.A. ANNOUNCER

Goju-yon. Jack Elliot...

EXT. YOKOHAMA STADIUM

It's noisy, crowded and bright. The Dragons are playing the Yokohama Taiyo Whales.

THE CHEERING SECTION

Holds their "Mr. Besuboru" cushions up... only they don't all find the enthusiasm for it... so it sorta spells: "M. B.s..u," or something.

JACK

Is at the plate... staring down:

THE PITCHER

Who glowers at him from the top of the mound...

CLOSE ON FANS' FACES

Watching.

JACK

Cocks his bat on his shoulder. Settles in the box.

THE PITCHER

Bears down and fires... and the pitch comes in WAY outside. Jack turns to the Ump.

JACK

Try and call that a strike.

UMPIRE

Hai.

(then, yelling)

Sutoraiku!

JACK

Oh, Jesus...

Jack looks over toward the bench for support. He indicates for Uchiyama to challenge the call. Uchiyama is having none of it. He looks to Max, who's on first base. They both just shake their heads.

JACK

Fine, you wanna play games.

Jack back into the box, all determination.

JACK

Come on, man... Give me a little smoke...

The Pitcher looks at him, uncomprehending. He checks the sign from the catcher. Nods.

CLOSE SHOTS: FANS, THE PRESS, OTHER PLAYERS

JACK

Grips the bat tightly... as:

THE BALL

screams toward the plate... then rises up and in and...

JACK

Steps and tries but...

THE BAT

Comes around and then, in SLOW MOTION, it... can't... seem... to... connect.

JACK

Spins in a circle as--

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

SHOT: THE DUGOUT

Igarishi nods, secretly pleased. Ohmae nods-- not so secretly pleased. 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, seems louder today. He stays out of the box for a second, coaching himself.

JACK

Hips. Hips.

He glances over to Hammer. Indicates "is this right?" Hammer just signals "loosen up, it's okay."

Jack paces in the dirt, settling himself. Then 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...

WHAP! It slaps harmlessly into the leather of catcher's mitt.

UMPIRE

Sutoraiku three!

JACK

WHY DON'T YOU THROW ME A GODAMNED STRIKE!

And Jack wings the bat skittering across the grass-- Yagi has to leap to avoid getting his knees knocked. The bat skips and rolls and ends up at the feet of

UCHIYAMA

Who just shakes his head, disgusted.

INT. DUGOUT - AFTER THE GAME

Jack, ripping off his batting glove, is still steaming after the game. He grabs his things and heads for the tunnel with Hammer. He is furious. Probably more mad at himself than anything, but at the moment he is just lashing... (The rest of the team skillfully manage to avoid walking near him, or even making eye contact.)

JACK

What are we doing here, Max?
(then, before Hammer can
answer)

I know what I'm doing here... but
what the hell are you doing here?

HAMMER

I just keep thinking someone's gonna
see what I'm doing over here.

Then, suddenly, Uchiyama steps into Jack's path and stops him. The rest of the team just flow by like debris on a river as Jack and Uchiyama stand face to face, with Yoji in tow. Even Hammer takes a skiff... He nods to Jack ("catch you later-- good luck"). Uchiyama indicates for Jack to follow him back outside to the edge of the field. They stand alone in silence for a moment studying each other. Yoji hovers nearby. Jack makes the first move.

JACK

What?

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

He say "How are you enjoying your
srump?"

JACK

I'm not in any goddamned srump.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

Ten games, two hits, no runs, no
RBIs at all-- is a slump. The
American way isn't working.

Jack starts to brush by Uchiyama.

UCHIYAMA/YOJI

In Japan, we have a saying. "The
high nail will be hammered down."

Now Jack stops. Turns back.

JACK
(To Yoji)
Is he finished?

YOJI
Yes. He's finished.

JACK
Tell him to fuck himself, smoke a
cigarette... then fuck himself
again.

Yoji freezes and just looks at him. He stares at Jack with his
mouth open while the American glowers back at him.

JACK
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...

Uchiyama shoots a look to Yoji. He melts into the background.

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.

JACK
Oh, good. You wanna understand?
Well hear this: 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.

(then)
 Okay, what's the punishment? Let me
 pay it so I can get out of here.

UCHIYAMA
 There is no punishment, Mr. Elliot.
 You are doing that to yourself.

Uchiyama then turns and walks off. Jack turns and looks out at the
 empty field. Uchiyama's words still ring in his ears. 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. Gets up, crosses to the window and
 looks outside. He stands there, totally alone, with no one to talk
 to. Outside it is raining. CUT TO:

LATER - IN THE APARTMENT

Clothes are scattered all over the floor. The CAMERA PANS slowly across the debris: a shirt.. a pair of pants... a half finished game of solitaire... Jack's VOICE plays O.S.

JACK (O.S.)

It's been eighteen games, and I've hit the ball well three times. And one of those should've been caught, but the guy didn't dive...

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

JACK (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

...I dunno... it's like a forkball, or a slider or something...

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

Jack's ex-wife Karen sits on the side of his bed, talking on the phone. Just behind her, that guy she's marrying is watching "The Tonight Show."

KAREN

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

JACK

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

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...

There is a pause. Then Karen sighs and says:

KAREN

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. Thanks.

(takes a breath)

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

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

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

JACK

... Is it him? Is it me? Or is it
the culture? I can't tell. I've
gotten so uptight-- but then
everyone seems to be.

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.
He's right-- the high nail will get
hammered down.

Hiroko sighs, frustrated.

JACK

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.

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. Hiroko sees Jack sees this. Suddenly perks up, noticing something.

HIROKO

Oh, look! Fortunes!

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 Mother. In this very place.

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

JACK
What?

HIROKO
This says river. "Flow." This is
the word for acceptance. Accept
flow, it is natural.

She looks at him. He at her. She reads... then, deciding not to
read any more, goes to a palanquin, starts to tie the fortune on.

JACK
Hey, you're not done. What are you
doing?

HIROKO
If your fortune is not all good, tie
it here and say a prayer to cleanse
it.

JACK
Wait-- read it. What's this?

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--

JACK

To meet your father? Because I'd
like to do that.

HIROKO

And to see a different side of
things.

JACK

Is this by any chance an invitation?

HIROKO

Not by chance.

JACK

Yes?

HIROKO

Yes.

JACK

Yes.

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

I don't suppose you'd like to come
up for, uhh... well just come up?
How? I mean next week's a long...

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 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? I
figured if I missed they'd send me
back down, so I just kept hitting.
Then after the season, some press
guy called me the next Mickey
Mantle...

(pauses)

...next Mickey Mantle... Then it started. New car, new clothes. I drove this thing to camp and everybody said "Hey, look at that, Mick's got a Firebird." Then there was this moment... like-- 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.

(shakes his head)

Oh, man...

HIROKO

What?

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

No, Jack. I do. But I have two questions. Who's Mickey Mantle?

JACK

One of the greatest Yankees of all time. He was amazing.

HIROKO

(smiles)

And... who's Karen?

Jack looks at her.

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:

A NEWSPAPER CARICATURE OF JACK

Twisted up like a corkscrew, with sweat flying off his face.
Beneath it is the HEADLINE: "Mr. Besuboru??" 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:

THE PITCHER

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 three!

And Jack goes livid. He throws down his bat and gets right in the
umpire's face.

JACK

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

Jack looks to Uchiyama-- but Uchiyama gives him nothing.

JACK

(to Ump)

How many fingers am I holding up?
Go on, I dare you.

Pissed, Jack throws his helmet and heads to the dugout.

DUGOUT

Uchiyama gives Jack a look that borders on disgust as Jack stamps down into the dugout.

JACK

Right on, Skip. Be angry with me and not him.

(jerks his finger at ump)

It's OK. I know that's how it's done here...backwards. You do everything backwards. Well two can play that game.

Jack storms past into the lockerroom. Nobody, including Uchiyama, knows what to make of it.

ON THE FIELD

Yagi strikes out. End of inning.

The OENDAN gives a loud cheer about something. Then the crowd stands, pointing and laughing.

JACK

is heading for first base-- all his clothes are on backwards. His hat too. Even his shoes are on the wrong feet.

He waves to the crowd, many of whom go nuts. Others don't. But nobody doesn't react in one way or another.

His teammates shake their head. Some loving it. Mukai and Igarishi hating it.

Uchiyama just folds his arms.

Jack turns for one final bow to the crowd notices a HAND-DRAWN SIGN which reads: "JACK SHOULD GO HOME." He stares at it for a second when he is distracted by --CRACK-- a shot to Mukai, at third. Mukai lunges and the ball raps off his glove and spins in front of him. Mukai scrambles to get it while Jack moves to first.

JACK

Come on, Mucky. Get it over...

The RUNNER tears toward first... Mukai picks it up and THROWS it badly, off-balance... Jack leans, stretches... SLAP -- BOOM-- the ball arrives a split second before the runner--but, the Ump calls him:

UMPIRE

Safe!

Jack turns to him.

JACK

What?? Are you out of your mind?!

The Umpire indicates Jack's foot, and then lifts his own into the air.

JACK

You're saying my foot was off the bag? No way!

(a walking theater)

Oh... man... this sucks. This really sucks... We gotta the fucking THREE STOOGES calling the game. You're crazy if you think I pulled my foot.

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.

NEAR FIRST BASE

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 gets right in Jack's face.

UCHIYAMA

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.

Uchiyama then turns and starts off the field. FANS CHEER. Jack looks around-- suddenly OHMAE is standing next to him, at first base. There's an odd moment when there are two first basemen.

Then, slowly, Jack gets the message: he's been benched.

Jack looks at Uchiyama, who's by now in the dugout. Uchiyama points a finger at Jack, and then signals to him "into the dugout."

Jack looks at the nervous Ohmae. In the midst of everything, he still manages to feel a little for him.

JACK
Go for it, Omo...

As Jack leaves the field, the crowd CHEERS. Jack looks around. The noise gets deafening and we 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.

JACK
(Re the overcrowded
landscape)
Boy. There's no getting away from
it, is there?

HIROKO
Ahh. Your first insight. Now you
know a little of why we are like we
are.

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.

HIROKO
Ah. He's here.
(A little nervous, she
exhales, then off Jack's
look)
My father.

Jack is taken aback as they get out of the car and begin to round a path toward the SIDE OF THE HOUSE.

JACK
Hey don't worry...I have had a
little experience at this. We'll hit
it off like gangbusters.

HIROKO
It's just... he doesn't like...

JACK

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

HIROKO

No....he hates you specifically.

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:

INT. PORSCHE - DRIVING AGAIN

Jack and Hiroko. In silence. For a long time. Finally:

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 looks at Jack.

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 the car RUNS THROUGH A RED LIGHT. Jack reacts.

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.

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 gives the car more gas. They drive on a while.

JACK

Then I guess I don't know why you're wasting your time with me.

HIROKO

I don't know why either.

Another pause. Jack looks around. Looks at his watch. Hiroko looks at hers. They keep driving. Neither looks at each other.

HIROKO

And by the way... I've got something else to tell you.

JACK

Great-- and people say I have a big mouth.

HIROKO

About your commercial: it's been cancelled.

JACK

Very Japanese.

Big silence as they drive on. And on. And on.

And on.

EXT. JAPANESE COUNTRYSIDE

The car zooms past... heading toward the city lights, which still loom pretty far off in the distance...

EXT. JACK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - AN HOUR OR TWO LATER

Hiroko jerks the car to the side of the road. Jack throws the door open. Turns, takes one last looks at her.

JACK

Yoji was right. You are your father's daughter.

And he slams the door. CUT TO:

EXT. DRAGONS STADIUM GAME DAY

Fans crows through the gates. Jack winds his way through them towards the players entrance. Yoji is with him and he is getting hell from Jack.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

it is empty as the players are out for pregame practice. Jack comes in followed by Yoji mid-explanation.

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.

Jack looks at him. Nods. Oh, okay. Jack pounds his fist. CUT
TO:

THE DRAGONS' OENDAN

Beats its drums and blows its horns. The stadium is jammed and the
NOISE is deafening.

Toshi's at bat, swinging too hard for a strike.

JACK

Is in the DUGOUT, sitting right behind Uchiyama-- riding him.

JACK

(re Toshi)

I'm telling you, the kid's got
potential, but you're batting him
too high in the order...too much
pressure.

UCHIYAMA

Needs more practice.

JACK

Needs to loosen up. But you don't
know how to deal with talent and
individuality in people. People
like, oh... like your daught--

UCHIYAMA

Don't say it.

ON THE FIELD

Toshi swings and missed again. The count is 0 & 2

JACK

Although from what I've been told
by...you know who... you used to be
quite a rebel.

smiles. He gives Ioshi a comforting pat as he passes and then, his smile turns into a more serious demeanor, as he psyches himself up, knowing the count is way against him.

JACK

Steps to the plate.

JACK

(quietly steeling himself)

Now come on Jack....for god's sake
hit one!

He stretches a little, and looks around at the crowd. And the noise-- none of which is directed at him. It's just noise. He stares at the pitcher and spits tobacco juice into the dirt in front of him.

JACK

Hang it, Kussotare.

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.

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 signals Hammer to stop and says to Jack:

UCHIYAMA

Your behaviour shames us. You are
little better than an animal.

JACK

You talking about baseball or
family?

That does it for Uchiyama. He steps right up into Jack's face - you know he wants to smash him - and spits out his response.

UCHIYAMA

There is nothing more I can say or do!...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 .225, 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:

Something REALLY WEIRD AND TENTACLED floating by on a TINY LITTLE BOAT. We are:

IN AN OBSCURE SUSHI BAR (THE KIND WITH THE SUSHI BOATS)

Jack looks decidedly unhappy as he stares at the 'food'. Hammer sits beside him, enjoying his reaction until--.

JACK

You've been here too long, pal.

HAMMER

I like it here.

JACK

Yeah, I can tell...

(beat)

I think all this "fitting in" crap
is an excuse. You're hiding out,
Max.

HAMMER

Whoa whoa whoa, wait a minute, man.

JACK

You'd shit in your pants if a scout
showed up.

HAMMER

(pissed)

Slugger... I get enough of that
noise from the voice in my own head.
So back off with it.

Beat. Jack nods-- point taken.

HAMMER

Jesus...I'm trying to help you and
you're trying to take the heat off
yourself... as usual.

JACK

I'm not wrong about that, Max... and
you know it.

(beat)

But I am in one hell of a goddam
mess, aren't I? I'm nearly f...
f...

HAMMER

Fifty?

JACK

I thought things are supposed to get
easier as you get older.

(then)

Max... I'm listening.

Jack's on edge. He snaps his head around as A WAITER brings a
couple of covered dishes over to them. It's not something he wants
to deal with.

HAMMER

Don't worry, it ain't raw...

The Waiter pulls the cover off the dish. Jack's mouth drops open.
On his plate is a LIVE LOBSTER.

HAMMER

It's live...

(softening a little)
 Once you get used to it, it's not that bad. Besides, it's not tough to eat live lobster, or raw urchin... what's tough about this place is learning to eat a little crow. You dig?

Hammer looks at Jack. Jack nods. CUT TO:

UCHIYAMA - STANDING IN HIS DOORWAY

And looking down...

UCHIYAMA

Such sincerity from you, Mr. Elliot. I'm not accustomed to it. Is a punchline nearby?

... at Jack, who is on his knees, head bowed, before Uchiyama.

JACK

Please. 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...aah, sorry.

(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 SWIIISH 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

You'd'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.

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!

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...

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:

-- 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:

CLOSE ON JACK

Eager, smiling. Holding flowers. And some tea cakes. And a little wrapped gift.

REVERSE ANGLE - HIROKO

Is all business. And not smiling. We are IN HER OFFICE.

HIROKO

This is my place of business, Jack.
It is important that you please
leave.

JACK

Hiroko. Wait, please. I heard what
you said to me. I'm changing... I've
eaten live crustacean, for
chrissakes.

HIROKO

You'd better work on your acting,
Jack. You're shooting in two weeks.

JACK

What?

HIROKO

Your commercial has been reinstated.

JACK

I don't care about that. I came
here to apologise.

HIROKO

You came because you have nowhere
else to go, Jack.

Hiroko crosses to her door, holds it open and leaves Jack no choice
but to leave. He hands her the flowers.

JACK

You should put these in water. So
the place will pretty when I come
back and try again.

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. KARAOKE 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.

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 - VARIOUS SHOTS:

Hung-over guys trying to play baseball: Jack sees TWO BALLS coming at him at first... Yagi, in the outfield, runs RIGHT INTO THE FENCE. Kurosawa, at the plate, gets "Ball four." But he stays there.

UMPIRE

(repeating himself)

Bouru fouru.

KUROSAWA

(staying there, nodding)

Hai.

(then, suddenly realizing)

Ahh-so!!

He drops his bat and heads down the line. CUT TO:

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. 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

Yessss...

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.

INT. HIROKO'S OFFICE

Hiroko enters, clearly upset about the events of the day. She
tosses her folder onto her desk, flops into her chair.

The door opens a crack.

HIROKO
Jack, go away.

But the door opens further. And Uchiyama enters.

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.

UCHIYAMA
Jack made me realize you are what I once was. I should not be angry at you, I am angry at myself.

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 VARIOUS 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 Feee-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