

SAYONARA HOME RUN

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FIRST DRAFT
June 19, 1991

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
A three-two count to Elliot...

37 year-old JACK ELLIOT, tense, sweating, leans in for the pitch.
THE PITCHER, 28, fit, bears down, chewing tobacco. He sets...

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE
Young delivers...

...and Jack swings.

UMPIRE
Strike three!

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE
...which brings the count to three
and three. Not a good position for
Elliot to be in.

Jack looks at the UMPIRE, who holds up three fingers in each hand. Incredulous, he turns back toward the mound, EYES WIDENING, for:

THE PITCHER is now 19 YEARS OLD. He spits tobacco, throws.
Jack swings.

UMPIRE
Strike four!

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE
Ooh, that's tough. As you know,
anytime you get that fourth strike
on you, it's awfully hard to battle
back.

Sweating, Jack digs in. Looks at the mound, does a double-take:

THE PITCHER is now a gum-chewing 12-YEAR OLD. He delivers...

UMPIRE
Strike five!

Jack digs in deeper-- literally. His back leg is a foot underground. When he turns back:

THE PITCHER is 6. He blows a bubble. Jack gapes.

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE
Elliot, a notoriously bad three and
five hitter, digs in at the plate...

The Pitcher throws. Jack grunts and swings. Sweat flies.

UMPIRE

Strike six!

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE

Boy, Elliot's really falling behind now.

Jack, panicked, is now buried to his knees. He turns:

THE PITCHER is now an INFANT, with a pacifier in his mouth.

Jack is now buried to his waist.

SPORTSCASTER'S AND "COLOR GUY"'S VOICES

Wake up, Jack.

JACK

does, sweating and confused-- and eye to eye with a fuzzy pink TEDDY BEAR.

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

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

The girl's ROOMMATE sleeps in the next bed. Jack rubs his head.

EXT. BALLPARK - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

--SMACK!! -- a baseball is hit very far.

Jack, disheveled, joins a couple other PLAYERS (HOOK, JACKSON) behind a BATTING NET as a ROOKIE (22, black) takes cuts. Jack spits tobacco.

JACK

Rookie left fielder?

Hook, nervous, nods. The Rookie smacks another.

HOOK

Jesus. That musta been five hundred feet.

JACK

Nah. Four-eighty, tops. I wouldn't worry about it, Hook. Your position's secure.

HOOK

Ha ha.

Smack! Jack winks at Jackson.

JACK
Of course, there's always the
possibility he can't throw.

The Rookie bare hands an inside pitch and wings it back.

JACK
Or... the possibility he'll get run
over by the team bus.

Hook looks at Jack. Jack shrugs, smiles.

JACK
I know, I know. I'm an asshole.

HOOK
And you know why that's so
frustrating? Cause you know you're
an asshole. So calling you one
doesn't even bug you.

OLDER VOICE (O.S.)
Elliot.

Jack turns. Avuncular LEFTY GROUSE walks him away from the others.

JACK
What's up, Lefty?

LEFTY
Listen, I'm thinking about mixing
things up a little-- just for spring
training. And I just wanted to let
you know about it before I did it.

JACK
Sure, thanks. Course I don't know
where I'd play other than first...

LEFTY
No, I'm keeping you there. But I
thought I'd let the new kid pick up
a couple grounders with you. Just
for the hell of it, you know, I
wouldn't worry about it.

JACK
Oh, no. Hell, fine. Do what you
want. Sounds great.

LEFTY
Thanks, Jack. Listen, whyn't you go
take a couple of swings, loosen up.

JACK
 (a smile)
 Whatsa matter? I don't seem loose?

Lefty winks and walks away. HOLD a beat on Jack, then CUT TO:

VIDEO FOOTAGE

-- SMACK! A YOUNG JACK ELLIOT homers. As he starts a little "Jack dance," we JUMP CUT (this is a COMPILATION VIDEO) TO: -- SMACK! Young Jack "dances," and as it CUTS again, we PULL BACK to--

INT. JACK'S SPRING TRAINING APARTMENT - DAY

Where Jack is practicing his swing, matching it to the stroke on the TV. Smack! Swing. Smack! Swing. Jack pauses, looks at--

THE TV, on which Jack is now seen handing a home run ball to a 24-yr-old WOMAN, with the chroma-key super: "Lisa Elliot."

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (ON TV)
 --retty young lady is the new Mrs.--

CLICK. The TV goes black. Jack stares, then grabs his keys.

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
 I know-- imagine living with it. And since then, it's been really hard for me to, well, to... be "with" someone.

NEARBY

Ty Jackson (from practice) gives the exact rap to a DIFFERENT COED.

JACKSON
 (even smarmier than Jack)
 ...difficult to, you know, "get close" to a woman...

Jackson looks up, winks at--

JACK

Who returns the wink, then turns back to his Coed.

JACK

...so, I don't know, maybe you could help me--

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 night?

JACK

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

CYNDI

(a bit hurt)
Way better than Jose Canseco, but
not nearly as good as Will Clark.

Sudden COMMOTION as THE ROOKIE enters to much attention. CUT TO:

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 gasps, terrified... then WAKES UP and gets his bearings: He is in HIS APARTMENT, alone, at 5:30 A.M. He exhales. Gets up.

Walks to the window and looks outside. Stands there. CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - BATTING CAGES - VERY EARLY MORNING

Whoomph. A rubberized hardball shoots from a pitching machine.
SMISSHHH! Jack, the only player on the field, pops into the net.

MEXICAN GROUNDSKEEPER
(sitting on lawnmower)
Jou're swingin' up, mang. That's
why jou can't go to the opposite
field.

Jack looks daggers at him. The Groundskeeper shrugs, defensive.

MEXICAN GROUNDSKEEPER
I'm just telling jou, mang.

And he buzzes off. Jack turns and literally shreds one. Gives the receding Groundskeeper a raspberry. The Groundskeeper flips Jack off without turning around. Jack reacts, then sets for the next.

EXT. FIELD - A LITTLE LATER

Some fans are gathered as Grouse hits fungos. Jack flips one easily to the pitcher, who covers first.

ROOKIE
Nice stab, man.

GROUSE
Okay, reverse it: Go for two.
Elliot.

JACK'S POV - HEIGHTENED

The ball leaps from the bat and races skittering toward him.

JACK

lunges and dives as it skims off his glove and into right field. Suddenly Jack's EYES WIDEN as while his glove arm is still pinned under his chest--

ANOTHER BALL

Is skipping right toward his face. Closer. CLOSER. Suddenly a GLOVE swoops THROUGH FRAME, leaving only swirling dust by--

JACK

who turns to see the Rookie whip it to the SHORTSTOP, who comes across second and whips it right over Jack's head to first... and we CUT TO:

INT. COUCH GROUSE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Grouse looks up, takes a long draw of his cigarette.

JACK

You wanted to see me?
(re the cigarette)
Hey-- I thought you quit.

GROUSE

I started again.

JACK

Why?

GROUSE

(beat; this is hard)
Have a seat, pal.

CUT TO: THE ASHTRAY

Now with six or seven twisted butts. An eighth is ground out.

JACK AND GROUSE

Are both uncomfortable. After a moment...

JACK

I don't believe this. You're asking me to play behind a guy who's so young his Goddamned mother has to drive him to practice.

GROUSE

Actually, no. I'm not asking you to play behind him.

A sudden silence. Through the opaque window behind Jack, players are milling about in the locker room. Grouse lights up again.

JACK

Lefty-- Lefty look at me. Listen, I know you expected a lot from me when I came to the team last year.
Lefty. What if I DH? Left. Hey.

GROUSE

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," I dunno. You can even throw some stuff around-- hell, that won't be a stretch. Then tell me I can't manage or something and say you quit.

A long pause.

JACK
This is... this is for real, isn't it?

Grouse nods. After a long moment, Jack stands. Walks toward the desk. And pounds it with his fist.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - SAME

The ballplayers turn toward the office, hearing--

JACK (O.S.)
You're full of shit if you think I'm not taking a raise this year.

INT. GROUSE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Grouse sits behind the desk, taking it.

JACK
And no. I will not reconsider.

GROUSE
(bad acting)
But Jack, why, our team needs--

JACK
(serious)
Shut up. I'll do this myself.

Grouse nods quickly, wanting to appease. Jack turns, then turns back. And with genuine emotion, he backhands everything off Grouse's desk.

JACK
(beat)
Goodbye, Lefty.

GROUSE
Uh, Jack-- one other thing. I got a phone call from a friend of mine. He manages a team... in Japan. He said--

JACK
Yeah, right. You and I know I can call five teams and get five offers.

GROUSE
I'm just saying--

JACK
 Forget it, Left. I'm a major
leaguer.

And Jack storms out into--

THE LOCKER ROOM

Where he stalks past the rest of the team-- Hook, Jackson, everybody. They all silently watch him bolt out and slam the door.

INT. GROUSE'S OFFICE - SAME

Lefty sighs, looks for a place to put out his cigarette... but the ashtray is shattered on the floor. And we CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - 747 - NIGHT

A JAPANESE FLIGHT ATTENDANT moves down the aisle, past hundreds of SLEEPING JAPANESE PEOPLE. As we MOVE WITH HER, toward first class, we (and some poor passengers who try to sleep) become aware of:

A WAY TOO LOUD VOICE
 "EXCUSE ME, WHERE IS THE SUBWAY?"
 (then, struggling horribly)
 SOO-mee-MAS-sen, chi-KA-tet-SU ek-I-
 wa do-KU des-KA. Soo-mee-MAS-SEN??
 Seen?? Sin?? Aaarrrgh. Crap.
 (then)
 "EXCUSE ME. IS THAT PINK PLOWER A
 CHERRY BLOSSOM?"
 (then; lamely:)
 "SI-mi-moss-IN..."

The Flight Attendant arrives at JACK, who, with a Berlitz book in front of him, has forgotten he is wearing a WALKMAN.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 (re headphones)
 Summimasen.

JACK
 (still too loud)
Thank you. "SO-mee-mas-INN."

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 No. I mean, "excuse me."
 (tapping the phones)
 Some people are trying to sleep.

JACK
 (removing them)
 Oh! Oh, God, I'm sorry.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 For "sorry," you say: "Gomen asai."

JACK
(not even close)
GOO-man ASS-eye.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
(leaning in, speaking
slowly)
Gomen asai.

JACK
(really trying)
Go-MEEN-ah ZEYE.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
(even slower)
Gomen asai.

JACK
G'homin ess--

She waves him off. He nods.

JACK
Let's just pray they have an
interpreter for me.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
You are here for work?

JACK
Work? No. Baseb-- oh, wait--
(looking it up)
"BEE-zoo...?" "Bee-ZOO...B'ru?"
Jesus, don't you have any words that
sound the same?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
(looking at dictionary)
Oh! "Basebor."
(suddenly)
You Jack Elliot! Chunichi Dragon!

Jack suddenly perks up in his seat and we CUT TO:

INT. DEPLANING TUNNEL - DAY

Jack finishes signing autographs for the flight crew.

ALL OF THEM
Bye bye! Get many homu-rans! Enjoy
Japan! Etc.

JACK
I will...

Jack turns. Though tired from the trip, his walk has the airy bounce of someone embarking upon a new future...

INT. BAGGAGE CLAIM AREA - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jack enters from customs 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
Oh, man. That was priceless. Or, should I say, "priceless." Just kidding. 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.

(holding out food)
Squid on a stick?
(as Jack shakes his head)
You tired?

JACK
Nah, I slept a little earlier this week. Monday, I think.

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 throwing a too-small CHUNICHI DRAGONS uniform top (number
19) over his shirt. Yoji, watching, hangs up a CELLULAR PHONE.

YOJI

Don't worry-- you'll have bigger one
when we get to Nagoya. Come.
People anxious to get to know real
you.

Jack, stifling a yawn, steps into the fray. Group SHOUTING--
until one Japanese voice wins out.

YOJI

He wants to know what you think
about Japan.

JACK

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

YOJI

(subtitled from Japanese)

He says he is impressed with the
transportation systems, and the
architecture he likes, and the
people are questioning and very
literate.

Another shouts a question.

YOJI

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

JACK

Get out... Well, okay, with the
shorter fences and the easier
pitching, I'd say, well, I'm 37
years old-- so, 37.

YOJI
(subtitled)

37.

Impressed nods. Then another question.

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 is incredulous as people actually write it down. Another
REPORTER asks a question. Jack cuts Yoji off.

JACK
I'll get it: The first homer will
be 339 feet. The second...

WHOOSH-- THE BULLET TRAIN

Shoots past at 164 km/hr.

YOJI (V.O.)
Japan not what you expected, huh?

INT. TRAIN

Jack, tired, looks out at the primarily INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE.

JACK
It's not even close. I expected,
you know, pagodas, rice fields.
Maybe a monster or two, you know,
Godzilla, Mothra... people speaking
with their voices out of synch...

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

Yoji laughs, then notices Jack eyeing the SNACK GIRL.

YOJI
You married?

JACK
Uh... not anymore. My wife, well,
she dumped me...

YOJI
She a bitch.

JACK

... for sleeping with an eighteen year old ball girl.

YOJI

Scratch that: you an asshole.

JACK

Yeah, you're not the first to say it.

YOJI

But I'll be the last--

JACK

--Don't count on it--

YOJI

--in English! From now on, it's kussottare. Asshole in Japanese.

Jack nods... leans against the window... yawns... closes his eyes... and Yoji taps him on the shoulder.

YOJI

We're there.

EXT. NAGOYA TRAIN STATION

FLASH-FLASHFLASH-- More REPORTERS as Jack emerges by a KIOSK (that says, simply, "LET'S KIOSK!"), now wearing a too-large Chunichi Dragons uniform top (now with the number 37). Yoji, overweighted with Jack's luggage, hangs up his cellular phone.

JACK

Is this number why I think it is?

YOJI

Lucky your age not fifty-seven. Also, we get you one that fits by time to apartment. For now-- this Mr. Ito and Mr. Sato, executives for Chunichi newspaper company, owner of Chunichi Dragons.

They bow, nod. PHOTOS FLASH. Ito and Sato hand Jack CARDS.

MR. ITO

(a rehearsed line)

A good time was had by all?

JACK

Yes. A very good time.

(re business cards)

Gosh, I wish I had something...
wait..

(fishing through wallet)

I keep these for little kids... Here
you go...

He hands them "Jack Elliot" baseball cards.

JACK

Actually, it's a bad picture, it
rained a little that day..

Ito-san and Sato-san nod at Jack's good-natured joke. Jack starts
to stuff Ito and Sato's cards into his back pocket. Yoji whispers.

YOJI

Not in back pocket. Is major
insult. Like sitting on their
identity.

JACK

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

Jack puts the cards in his chest pocket, turns to face the barrage
of Reporters. An assault of Japanese voices.

YOJI

They want to know what you think of
Japan and how many home runs you are
going to hit.

Jack looks at Yoji, yawns, then looks past a sign that says "TAXIS
ARE AT THERE," and we CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF JACK'S APARTMENT BLDG - EARLY EVENING

A CAB pulls up with Jack's barely-awake face pressed against the
window. REPORTERS FLASH PHOTOS as Yoji comes around, opens the
door. Jack, almost asleep, pulls himself out. More PHOTOS.
Jack's so tired that all he can say to the MASS OF PRESS is--

JACK

Thirty-seven.

And, with Yoji apologizing for Jack's tiredness, we CUT TO:

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

Yoji drags Jack in... There are pre-set FLOWERS, WINE and a DINNER
(a burger, french fries and a Coke) set by the microwave.

JACK

Hey... you Japanese live very well.

YOJI

Twenty Japanese live very well in
this place.

Jack looks at Yoji. 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 grunts... Yoji leads him out onto--

THE BALCONY

Where he shows Jack the view.

YOJI

Nagoya mostly bombed out during war.
City rebuilt western style-- wide
streets, straight lines. Easy to
find way around. Japanese not used
to that, therefore get very
confused.

(pointing)

See those lights? Hot spot of
Nagoya. Much fun to be had, eh?
Don't worry-- I take very good care
of you.

Jack, leaning on the balcony railing, nods. Turns. Looks:

INTO THE APARTMENT NEXT DOOR

Where a BLACK MAN sits zazen on a tatami mat, eyes closed.

YOJI

Max DuBois. Eight years play here.
Long time for Gaijin.

JACK

(nods)

Yeah yeah, listen, I really gotta
sleep.

YOJI

Okay, tomorrow night, I take you
out. Fun fun fun, neh?

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

In darkness, Jack lies awake. Finally, he just gets up.

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

Jack sits on his couch. After a long pause, he picks up the remote control device and flicks on the 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.

This being the best he can find, he settles back and watches. And just when he is about to fall back asleep... the DOORBELL RINGS.

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

EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF JACK'S APARTMENT BLDG - EARLY MORNING

REPORTERS FLASH more PHOTOS as Jack, looking horrible, steps outside.

JACK
Wow... you mean the sun actually comes up? It doesn't just start halfway across the sky?
(to Reporters)
By the way, if you guys wanna just crash on the couch...

A reporter asks some questions.

YOJI
He say you look overweight, with opening day so close, what's your condition?

JACK
Well, if I look bigger it's cause I'm probably still wearing my pajamas-- in fact, I might even have my pillow in here somewhere, I got up so quick... As far as my condition, I'm in very good shape... and I'm looking forward to getting in even better shape.

Yoji nods, pulls him into the TAXI. As he does, Jack turns to him.

JACK
I don't really look overweight, do I?

YOJI

No, no, you look good.

JACK

No, seriously, be honest with me...

This continues on as the taxi pulls away. CUT TO:

EXT. (LOCATION TO COME) - NAGOYA - MORNING (A HALF HOUR LATER)

TWENTY YOUNG JAPANESE MEN are lined up, stretching. Eight SOMEWHAT OLDER MEN supervise. MORE REPORTERS are around as the CAB pulls up, and Jack steps out, still speaking sotto voce to Yoji.

JACK

...important to me that you're being truthful about this.

YOJI

Okay, maybe twenty or thirty kilos overweight...

JACK

Really??

YOJI

I'm kidding.

Yoji is suddenly serious as a strong, MIDDLE AGED MAN approaches Jack. The team stops and looks, then resumes (per his orders).

MAN

(thick accent; a struggle)
I call... name... Uchiyama.

JACK

Jack Elliot.

UCHIYAMA

I induce... inter...

He gives up, turns to Yoji, and speaks in RAPID-FIRE JAPANESE.

YOJI

He say he will introduce you to teammates, and I will meet you at clubhouse with your equipment. Also hopes you hit 37 home runs, as promised.

Jack nods. Uchiyama starts him at the front of the line. The FIRST MAN (UEMOTO), seemingly arrogant, is cursory in his greeting.

UCHIYAMA

Akira Uemoto...

JACK
(trying to get it)
Akiya Ooeymotta...

UCHIYAMA
Toru Sugita...

JACK
Daroh Soogeedo...

Handsome SUGITA turns away. Why? Jack looks: FLASH. Sugita, apparently, has quite a knack for knowing where the CAMERAS are.

CUT WIDE TO: Jack now near the END of the line, really getting lost with all the names. Two of the GUYS (KONDO and ANZAI) share a snicker at Jack's fumbling.

UCHIYAMA
Hishashi Kondo... Takaya Anzai...

JACK
(now just babbling)
Hibababobo... Takakakakazai...

ANZAI
Jackackackackack...

A glance from Uchiyama shuts him up. Jack picks up a strange "attitude." Is it reverence, or resentment? Hard to tell...

UCHIYAMA
... Yasushi Akiyoshi... Yujiro
Hiraizumi...

HIRAIZUMI
Ogen-ki desuka.

JACK
... Soosi Oshi... Ogenki Deska...

SEVERAL PEOPLE crack up at this. Even Uchiyama smiles. The last guy in line-- 30 year old, black, MAX DUBOIS (the guy we saw sitting zazen last night) steps forward.

MAX
Ogen-ki desuka means "How you doing?"

JACK
Oh. Woops.
(to Hiraizumi)
Fine thanks.
(then, extending hand)
Max DuBois... DuBois... It's so
great to hear an American name

MAX
Ogen-ki desuka.

JACK
Yeah, not bad.

Uchiyama calls out to the team in Japanese...

JACK
Alright! Let's play some ball!

...and they begin walking.

JACK
Hey-- where are we going?

MAX
Morning walk.

Jack looks, the line is leaving. He shrugs, joins it... CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF NAGOYA - NEARING STADIUM - AN HOUR LATER

Jack is in line with Max as they walk with the team.

JACK
So... I'm assuming this'll all make sense soon, right?

MAX
Yeah, it takes about six months to get it all figured out. After about nine months, you realize you've only got about half of it figured out. Then, after a year, it becomes clear you don't have anything figured out. That's when it really gets great.

One of the many COACHES shouts something at Jack, in Japanese.

MAX
He says make sure you breath properly when walking. Better for your circulation.

JACK
Oh, okay.
(to Coach)
Thanks. Uh... Domo.
(to Max)
By the way. Who are all these guys?

MAX
Coaches.

They heave reached the STADIUM PARKING LOT, where the EIGHT COACHES are barking orders as THE TEAM gathers around them.

JACK

Now what?

MAX

Team meeting.

JACK

About what?

MAX

Who knows-- it could be about the walk.

Jack and Max exchange looks and the coaches begin. Jack sees the JAPANESE SCHOOLGIRLS gathered to view the players. He winks. They giggle. Yet MORE REPORTERS FLASH PHOTOS. And we CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - FIRST BASE - A FEW HOURS LATER

A WHISTLE blows. Jack, sweaty and exhausted, does another in a series of WIND SPRINTS. The team works hard and is in very good shape.

JACK

Max, I think I blew it-- I think I enlisted in the Japanese Army by mistake. Christ, these guys aren't ballplayers, they're athletes.

MAX

A lot of these guys started in January. With voluntary practice.

JACK

(as if he's trying to recall the month)

January? January?... Oh, wait-- I think I spent that month in bed with a hangover.

Jack catches his breath. One of the guys, KATO, looks over at him. Makes a comment to SUGIMOTO (we hear the word MORITA). They laugh.

JACK

Wha wha wha?

MAX

He said you better watch out-- or get Morita-san.

JACK

What's that?

MAX

We call it "The Massage of Death."

Another WHISTLE BLOWS. The guys take off. Max waits a beat for Jack, who starts.

Jack and Max arrive with the rest of the team. Jack, extremely winded, bends at the waist, trying to get his breath.

ANZAI (the team cut-up) does a behind-Jack's-back impression of him. Some of the guys laugh. Jack turns. They silence.

One of the Coaches, squat, wiry COACH ATACHI squawks at them. They run again. Jack stands, out of breath.

JACK

I kinda like this. Get the entire season's worth of practice out of the way in one day, then we sleep till the first game.

Max starts to run again. Atachi says something to Jack.

MAX

(as he runs off)

He wants to know if you want to take a break.

JACK

(panting)

No, no. I'm fine.

He turns to run... and collapses. And we CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY NEAR LOCKER ROOM - END OF THE DAY

The team files toward the locker room. Jack is beat.

MAX

...and they got this thing about blood type. Mine's A positive. I think that means I have power to right, and a good lateral leap on line drives... Listen, you just gotta hang out a while, see it from their side. Oh, by the way-- take off your shoes.

As they reach the entrance to the locker room, Jack notices the rest of the guys slipping from cleats into slippers.

JACK

Really? Wow...

Jack leaves his in the middle of the pile. His and Max's are way bigger than the others. Unfortunately, there are no slippers to match. CUT TO:

CLOSE ON TWO HUGE FEET

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

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wire mesh cubicles, dust in corners. A TV is on (a cartoon). The team pours in and immediately begins flicking towels, goofing off and LIGHTING CIGARETTES. Jack, his slippers slipping off, enters.

JACK

(re cigarette smoke)

Wow... run run run... then this. At least they'll be in good shape when they die of cancer...

Jack leans his bat on his locker, glances around: Good-looking Sugita has, somehow, managed to keep his uniform SPOTLESS. Several players are snickering amongst themselves, especially as rookie HIRAIZUMI arrives at his locker... and begins CRYING, as his BAGS ARE ALL PACKED. Some of the TEAMMATES toss a "gomen asai" his way... and then CRACK UP. Hiraizumi bursts into a wide SMILE (from embarrassment, not pleasure).

MAX

They do that every year to a rookie: make him think he's been cut.

JACK

The poor guy cried...

MAX

They take this shit seriously.

Jack suddenly hears a pained WHIMPER from BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR. Then an agonized YELL.

JACK

Jesus... what's that?

SEVERAL OF THE GUYS

Morita-san...

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

MAX

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?

MAX

Yeah?

JACK

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

SHOT: The toilet. It's Japanese-style-- just a hole in the floor. Max 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.

JACK

Well, I don't know what you guys are waiting for...

(plunging in)

Mmmmmnnnn... that's nice.

Jack starts to soap up, sees many faces turning, aghast.

JACK

What? What'd I do?

(realizing)

Oh... whoops. Here, I'll take care of it.

He reaches down and pulls the plug. Even more horrified gapes.

JACK

What??

EXT. STREET - NAGOYA - NIGHT

Jack and Yoji walk (at the moment, passing a "BEAUTY SALOON").

JACK

You've gotta tell me these things. Cause who'd know? I mean, bathe before bath-- it's like jerking off before sex.

YOJI

Good idea. In Japan, that make
second time last longer.

JACK

Really? That's a Japanese trick?

YOJI

No-- it a Yoji trick.

Jack quickly shakes his head, as if trying to rid it of awful thoughts.

YOJI

What?

JACK

Nothing-- some images passed through
my head that were just too
frightening to discuss.

They reach a restaurant. Jack notices flags hanging on the frame.

JACK

Now what do I do?

YOJI

(re flags)

This Japanese car wash. Just
kidding. Traditionally, these make
you bow when you enter an
establishment. It's about humility.

Jack taps the top of the frame-- which he'd still have to duck
under.

JACK

Seem's like the entire country's
built around that.

YOJI

Yes. It's true. Come on-- this
restaurant best place to be seen in
Nagoya.

JACK

Yeah, but how's the food?

YOJI

Expensive.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

They enter. ALL THE EMPLOYEES greet them

EMPLOYEES
Ohaio gozaimas!

JACK
Aaaooiiiiiyya...
(to Yoji)
Now, you're not going to make me eat
anything crazy, are you? I mean,
that was one of the reasons I left
the states, cause I was sick of
Japanese food.

YOJI
You like mucous-cooked slugs?
Japanese specialty.

Jack stops. Yoji WINKS. -- Only kidding. CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - A LITTLE LATER

Yoji and Jack, tipsy, have several empty beer bottles before them.
Yoji stops Jack, pours for him.

YOJI
Uh uh uh... in Japan, never pour own
drink.

The WAITRESS arrives with a metal-covered dish.

JACK
Uh-oh...

YOJI
This specialty of the house. Very
popular dish.

JACK
(wincing)
What is it...

The Waitress removes the metal cover. It's...

YOJI
(smiles)
Tagliatelli. I forget to tell you,
we in Italian restaurant.

Jack exhales. Two GIRLS come over and ask for autographs. CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - A BIT LATER

A PHOTO FLASHES as Jack, drunk, poses with an ELDERLY COUPLE. Yoji
pours him more beer. Jack pours Yoji. The bill comes.

JACK
I got it...

YOJI
(taking it)
No, I pay. Expense account.

JACK
(gives the bill back)
Oh... so bosses okay you taking me out...

YOJI
Bosses rather me taking you out.
That way know where you are.

Jack nods again.

YOJI
Bosses give me hell of assignment,
baseball players. "Take me out, get
me girl..." Wanna do everything but
play baseball.

Jack pours him more. Yoji stops him.

YOJI
No more. Japanese get drunk, say
truth about things. Don't wanna say
too much.

JACK
So what? It's not like anyone'll
hear you.

YOJI
Yes. Bosses right behind you. In
same restaurant.

Jack turns. ITO-SAN (from the train station), crossing from the
Men's room, waves them over. As they rise, Yoji looks concerned.

JACK
Hey, you worried you're drunk enough
to tell your bosses what you think?

YOJI
No, I worried they not drunk enough
to not remember.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - JUST IN BACK - SECONDS LATER

Jack, tipsy, and Yoji, trying to maintain, stand at the door where
Ito, Sato, FOUR OTHER SUITS and one stylishly-dressed WOMAN are
finishing their meal. (Before the woman are a portfolio's-worth of
DRAWINGS and designs.) Yoji refers to the MAN at the head.

YOJI

Jack Elliot, this is Mr. Nakamura-san. He is Owner of Chunichi Dragon.

Nakamura-san bows.

YOJI

When you bow, bow from shoulders. Bowing is from old Samurai tradition of offering your neck to say you trust them.

JACK

(bowing; sotto, to Yoji)
Then I guess if I really wanted to show I trusted him, I'd unzip my fly.

YOJI

(smiling, as Jack rises)
Shut up, Kussottare...
(to Owner, in Japanese with subtitles)
He says it is an honor to meet you, and he appreciates the opportunity to play for you.

Owner nods, hands Jack a business card.

YOJI

Mr. Nakamura-san wants to know your favorite Japanese baseball team.

JACK

Why, the Chunichi Dragons, of course.

Yoji explains. Nakamura grunts, nods.

YOJI

Nakamura-san is a Yomiuri Giants fan.

JACK

The owner of the Dragons is a Giants fan?

YOJI

Giants are most popular team in Japan. More popular than 1963 U.S. Yankees and Dodgers combined. In fact, sometimes if we beat Giants too bad, sales of Chunichi newspaper will go down.

JACK
Unbelievable...
(to Nakamura)
Go, Giants.

Yoji continues the round of introductions. Jack bows to each, taking cards from each of them.

JACK
(sotto)
Back pocket--

YOJI
(sotto)
No!

JACK
Just kidding.

Jack removes his wallet.

JACK
Listen, I'm out of baseball cards...
but let's see...
(fishing around)
Library card from 1977-- Jesus,
Jack, maybe you should clean your
wallet...
(finds something else)
... ah, here we go. "In case of
premature death, donate organs
to..." Perfect, you can even fill
it in yourself. Or, maybe I'll keep
it. Sorry, no cards.
(then, nudging Yoji)
And who is this? Our mascot,
perhaps? Hopefully?

YOJI
This is Hiroko Aoshima.

THE WOMAN bows. But Jack just looks at her. In her stylishly accentuated conservative outfit, she is quite striking.

JACK
Hello... Nakamura-san is a lucky man
to have an assistant as beautiful as
you.
(bowing, a bit tipsy)
Please to marry me and bear my
children.

She smiles politely. Speaks Japanese. The TEAM OWNERS CRACK UP, ribbing Jack.

YOJI

Uh oh...

JACK

What? What'd she say?

YOJI

She say: "She would rather poke her 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?

HIROKO

Yes.

JACK

You do? Already?

YOJI

Jack--

HIROKO

I mean: "Yes, I get joke." In terms of hate you: "no." I know you only enough for moderately dislike you.

At this point Yoji is trying to pull Jack out of the room. The Owners find this quite funny. Nakamura-san speaks. A lot of winks and nods. Yoji, slurring, translates.

YOJI

He want to make sure I "looking after" you.

JACK

No. He's not-- although he keeps promising me he will.

Owners make more "suggestive" comments. Jack looks at Hiroko.

HIROKO

This is part where I just nod and act like understand that women are objects, here only for men.

JACK

Won't your bosses get mad if they hear that? Or are they so drunk it doesn't matter?

HIROKO
Not bosses. Not drunk. Plus, their
English-- how you say?--

JACK
Sucks?

HIROKO
Perhaps, yes.
(re Yoji's discussion with
Owners)
He saying you more interested in
getting rest for practice.
(a knowing smile)
Very unusual for ballplayer.

YOJI
Come Jack. Many places to go.

Yoji bows to the team Owners... and he and Jack exit to:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

They exit the restaurant ("Il Tiramisu").

JACK
What was that all about?

YOJI
She very big, hot-shot designer.
She possibility for you for very
good-- how you say?-- "good gig."
Maybe she want you for commercial.
If she like you. But now...

JACK
Oh, come on-- a little teasing, I
wouldn't worry about it.

He turns as Hiroko and a couple of the team Brass exit as well.

JACK
Hey, listen-- I'm sorry if I was
offensive. I'm a ballplayer. It's
our job to, you know, hit home runs,
and hit on women.

HIROKO
Yes. Also to strike out a lot, neh?

Yoji practically buries his head in his hands. Hiroko calls for a
cab. All Jack can muster up for a retort is a:

JACK
Hey...

And as Jack just watches her go, we CUT TO:

INT. TAXI CAB - NIGHT

Jack, tired, rides with Yoji.

JACK

You said "many places to go." I assume we're going. Come on, I'm a ballplayer, "take me out, find me girl."

YOJI

Yes, yes. I take care of you very well.

The cab stops. Jack looks out the window. It looks familiar.

JACK

Hey-- this is my place.

YOJI

Good sleep necessary. But tomorrow we have a lot of fun, neh?

Jack, stepping out of the pulling-away cab, nods.... So this is how Yoji does this... A PHOTO goes off. The FIRST REPORTER asks:

FIRST REPORTER

Did you enjoy food at "Il Tiramisu?"

JACK

I'm sorry?

SECOND REPORTER

How was tagliatelli?

FIRST REPORTER

What's your blood type?

JACK

(beat)

Red.

He writes it down, and, as Jack looks at them, we CUT TO:

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

4 GUYS (incl. Max) hit into nets-- with COACHES all over them. A GUY is taking the "thousand fungo" drill. Jack (w/Yoji-- perky and in a 3-piece suit) waits for batting practice.

At the plate, Coach Atachi is continuously correcting young, seemingly arrogant Akira Uemoto's batting stance. Uemoto swings with the typical Japanese batting style-- lifting and replanting the front leg.

JACK

This kid's, what? Nineteen?
Twenty? Doesn't he know how to hit
by now?

YOJI

Always can refine proper form.

JACK

Yeah, but it's his stance, it's not
like there's a necessarily "proper"
form...

Jack replaces Uemoto in the box. Uemoto stands beside him, still
getting instruction from Atachi.

Jack takes a swing. Closes one. Uchiyama steps up. Speaks.

YOJI

He say perhaps shorten stance, use
leg more on swing.

JACK

Tell him thanks, but I've faced
probably a million pitches, and my
swing has done very well for me in,
oh, one... two... thirty years of
playing.

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

YOJI

He say perhaps thirty years take
toll you not aware of. But he can
see you have need to change.

(a personal note)

I know it may seem silly.

JACK

You can say that again.

YOJI

I know it may seem silly.

Uchiyama can sense what Jack's saying. He waves Yoji off. Says:

UCHIYAMA

Sempai, Kohai.

YOJI

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

JACK
Look, I appreciate it, but--
(SMACK)
--you know what they say... "If it
ain't broke, don't fix it..."

Uchiyama starts away, throwing a parting comment over his shoulder.

YOJI
He mean you and Uemoto-san. Maybe
he learn from you.

Jack looks at Uemoto (with Atachi still blabbering at him).

JACK
Yoji, the last thing this kid needs
is another guy barking in his ear.
(then)
And what's this shit about being
old??

Atachi barks something at Jack.

YOJI
He say: "Tell him something."

JACK
(to Uemoto)
Uh... what feels comfortable to you?

Yoji translates for Jack. Uemoto speaks.

YOJI
He say: "Must refine proper form."

Jack shrugs, shakes his head. This is pointless. CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - LATER IN THE DAY

Jack, legs wobbly, is on grounder 700 of the 1000 fungo drill when
the TRAINER-- TAKEYASU-- steps over with Yoji. Takeyasu speaks.

YOJI
After practice...

TAKEYASU
(pointing to Jack)
Morita-san.

Jack's eyes widen. CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM - END OF DAY

Jack, exhausted, sits before a CLOSED DOOR (from behind which we HEAR a LOUD GROAN). He watches the guys-- FULL OF ENERGY-- zip around the locker room, laughing and smoking. Anzai passes through, smiles.

ANZAI

Moocorrriiittta-san!

He disappears into the bath as the DOOR OPENS and Hiraizumi exits like a rag. Takeyasu points. Jack takes a breath. 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 Max ("you've been fucking with me, haven't you?") Max smiles. Morita-san points to the table. Jack gets on. Morita-san approaches him...

IN THE LOCKER ROOM

The guys all crack up as they HEAR:

JACK'S VOICE (FROM BEHIND DOOR)

OooowwwwwwwwwWWWWWW!!

IN THE BATH - AN HOUR LATER

Jack sits with Max. He looks like he's been through a blender.

JACK

Bed.

MAX

Nope.

Jack looks at Max... don't tell me--

JACK/MAX

Meeting.

INT. FORMAL ROOM - NIGHT

The TEAM BRASS (incl. COACHES and MANAGER) at one head table. The TEAM, in suits, sit at formal dinner tables, some bored, some passing notes and giggling, a few listening. A couple MOUTHING ALONG (they've heard this before). Jack sits with Max.

UCHIYAMA

.....Gaijin player is "suketto--" a helper. Only. We must be strong as a unit-- a unit of Japanese, in harmony, with team spirit, as in the great Samurai tradition-- kept alive in amateur athletics-- which started at Meiko university in 1893, then moved to the high schools, and now, to the great ranks of professional athletics. It's principles-- courage, endurance, strength-- remain true to this day...

Jack looks at Max. Notes the 6 more coaches in line by the podium.

JACK

Are we gonna hear from all of them?

Max nods. Jack rolls his eyes. CUT TO:

FOUR HOURS LATER - THE TEAM

All gathers for a PHOTO. There is a FLASH.

JACK

Finally, we're done. We can go.

The PHOTOGRAPHER shouts something out.

JACK

What?

MAX

He said "one more."

JACK

(stopping)

Oh, no.

MAX

(pulling him off)

It's okay. We can still go.

JACK

What?

Max leads Jack to the side. The team continues to pose. FLASH-- they take one without the Gaijin. Jack, incredulous, looks at Max.

MAX

Don't worry about it. Seriously.

One more PHOTO, and we CUT TO:

EXT. NAGOYA STADIUM - FOUR HOURS BEFORE THE GAME

Fans just begin to dribble in. Some PRESS are already there.

ON THE FIELD - JACK

Watches while the team runs. Uchiyama YELLS something at him.

YOJI

Uchiyama-san suggest practice pick up grounders.

JACK

What? It's game day. I'm pacing myself.

YOJI

Yes, but Uchiyama suggest practice pick up grounders.

JACK

Yoj---

YOJI

Jack-san. If you please. Today first game. Many press arrive early... and Uchiyama must be seen to coach.

Jack gets it. Nods. Stands. Suddenly PHOTOS FLASH and Uchiyama steps before Jack, makes comments. Jack tries to play along.

YOJI

Uchiyama says you bad habit of back on heels too much. Must stay on toes so to for spring up easier with bad hop.

JACK

Tell him thanks...

YOJI

(in Japanese; subtitled)
I respectfully thank you.

JACK

... cause I haven't been told the basics...

YOJI

Because I haven't been told the basics...

JACK

... since Goddamned little league.

YOJI

(beat)

...and I could always use a little
brush-up.

Uchiyama looks at Jack. Nods. Jack nods. More PHOTOS. It seems
Sugita is there for all of them. CUT TO:

EXT. BALLPARK - A FEW HOURS LATER

THE OENDAN are going nuts with their NOISE. Drums, flags,
whistles.

Cause it's game time. The HANSHIN TIGERS are on the field, in the
middle of-- you guessed it-- a MEETING. (For the Dragons, Susumu
Sagimoto squats on first base, waiting.)

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

JACK

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

MAX

Get used to it. For them the game
is as much about the pauses between
the action as it is the action.

JACK

Maybe during practice we could work
on pausing a little-- and I wouldn't
be so wiped. Man, how do you stand
this noise?

MAX

This is nothing. Wait till we play
the Giants.

Jack goes to spit a wad of tobacco juice.

MAX

No! Not on the field. They
consider it sacred.

JACK

Oh.

(bowing to "the field")

Sorry. Man, they take this shit
seriously.

The Tigers' meeting breaks. Jacks steps back onto:

THE ON-DECK CIRCLE

And watches Toru Sugita take his ups.

JACK

Let's go Toru-babe, hum now big guy,
hum now Tor-bud, little bingo Tor-
 babe now...

(then, seeing no one
 understands a word)

... or, not.

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

JACK

Whoa... actual baseball is actually occurring.

(dropping the donut)

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

CUT TO: 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 digs his spikes in. Taps the plate with his bat. Leans in for the pitch. Feels it. The season's beginning...

CATCHER

Ooooh, maja-leega.

JACK

You got it, babe.

Atachi calls to Jack and indicates something about his stance.

JACK

Yeah yeah...

The Pitcher sets. Jack talks to himself.

JACK

Here we go, pal... nice'n easy,
 now... swing sweet, babe... caress
 that baby... let it flow...

The pitch comes in-- a FASTBALL. Jack leans, steps, connects--

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 Sugita has stopped at third! Jack dives back, barely safe.

JACK

Jesus! I can't believe it. He stopped at third! And blew my damned RBI to boot.

The SHORTSTOP, a GAIJIN, tosses back the ball and helps Jack up.

SHORTSTOP

Get used to it. Probably didn't wanna take the risk.

JACK

(brushing off)

Why?

SHORTSTOP

Hey, don't ask me, I just work here.

Jack, now standing, acknowledges the CROWD. They go WILD.

JACK

Probably something about losing face, I guess. Didn't wanna try and fail.

SHORTSTOP

(setting behind Jack)

Didn't want to have to change his uniform.

(off Jack's look)

Hey, some of em do. Oh, by the way, we're doing a pick-off move here.

JACK

Thanks.

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

SHORTSTOP

No problem.

Jack takes his lead. Short sets. Max steps to the plate.

JACK

Let's go Max now, hum-now Max now, frrrozen rope Max now, let's go babe...

(suddenly seeing the sign)

What??

SHORTSTOP

They're giving him the bunt, right?

JACK

But we're down by one run. We have runners on second and third! There's only one out!! It's the FIRST INNING!!

SHORTSTOP

Sure. Going for the tie. Playing the percentages.

(throwing the ball back)

By the way, I'm Ry Ward.

JACK

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

RY

(a memory)

Oh, man... Baltimore...

The Pitcher delivers. Max, as told, squares to BUNT... CUT TO:

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

Jack's with Ry, LYLE (the Tigers' other Gaijin), and 3 DRUNK GAIJIN. A GAIJIN WAITRESS sets drinks. Also present are many JAPANESE.

LYLE

Of course DuBois bunted. He's one of them. He defected years ago, he'll never leave.

(to the Waitress; tipping)

God, it feels good to tip. They won't let you tip in this damn country.

JACK

Oh, Max is okay. So, he likes it here. So what. The place is okay.

DRUNK GAIJIN #1

Yeah, you just wait.

(tipping; to the Waitress)

Send yourself to college. Become the rocket scientist you're meant to be.

JACK

Wait for what? It's still a good game-- the guys are fit, they can sure spray the field...

RY

What about the coaching?

JACK

The coaching? Well... there's sure a lot of it...

A JAPANESE GUY (KIRISHIMA) sidles up to Jack, drunk.

KIRISHIMA

Elliot Jack. "Geetonic?"

JACK

I'm sorry?

RY

He's asking you if you want a gin and tonic.

Jack fumbles through his phrase book, shakes his head "no."

JACK

"Iiei... domo..." Uh... "Kekko desu."

KIRISHIMA
"Catch you later, man."

And he wanders off. Jack looks a beat. Turns back.

LYLE
Have you seen a shutto yet?

JACK
A shutto?

RY
We call it the "Great Equalizer."

LYLE
Or try to ask for a day off. Like
if your father dies? Just try. Job
comes before family. Hell, job is
family.

Kirishima returns with TWO JAPANESE WOMEN. The guys shut up again.

KIRISHIMA
Elliot Jack. Ward Ry. Massey Lyle.
Besuboru. Yes?
(patting Jack)
37 homu-ran. Yes? Shirt sign, yes?

He hands Jack a pen, then turns. Jack looks at the other guys,
then shrugs and signs Kirishima's shirt.

KIRISHIMA
Thanks, man. "Until we meet again."

And he's gone.

JACK
I love this place.

ALL FOUR (AD-LIBS)
Yeah yeah. You just wait. Sure,
right.

The Waitress returns to Gaijin #1 and re-lifts his bottle (the one
she already set down), then re-sets it down. Gaijin #1, drunk and
unaware, re-tips her.

JACK
Hey hey hey, guys, wait a
second... If it's so bad here, why
don't you all go back to the states?

They look at him. The answer's in their eyes: If they had
anything to go back to, they would... Jack stands. He doesn't
need this.

EXT. NAGOYA STREET - OUTSIDE GAIJIN BAR - NIGHT

Jack steps out, alone. Looks around. Everything's in Japanese-- except the things that are in bad English. Some people recognize him. He waves. This feels good. He 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. CUT TO:

YOJI (V.O.)

"Could Elliot be the spark plug the
Dragons need? With seventeen hits
in his first twenty games-- and
seven home runs...

INT. CROWDED SUBURBAN TRAIN - DAY

Jack, crushed by Yoji (who reads the Sports page), is amazed at the SALARYMEN who blithely read MAGNA COMICS (comics which feature naked women) right next to ELDERLY WOMEN and LITTLE GIRLS.

YOJI

(who notices Jack's
staring)

"In any case, if Elliot's growing
paunch doesn't get in his way--"

Suddenly Jack turns.

YOJI

Just kidding-- I wanted to see if
you paying attention.

JACK

(urging him to continue)

"Seventeen hits, twenty games..."

Then what?

(then)

It doesn't really say anything about
a paunch, does it?

Yoji smiles. Jack notices a particularly explicit drawing in one of the comics right next to an old lady's face.

JACK

Don't Japanese women get angry about
that stuff?

YOJI

If so, what do we care?
 (winking-- a joke)
 Just kidding. Perhaps, but I think
 Japanese women may be too
 embarrassed to say anything.

Jack looks once more at one of the drawings.

JACK

I don't blame 'em... Sheez.

WOMAN'S VOICE OFF

Does embarrass you?...

INT. HIGH-TECH GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDIO - DAY

HIROKO AOSHIMA (whom we met at the Italian Restaurant), sits across from Jack and Yoji, studying a polaroid of a MAN IN A VERY REVEALING, SENSUOUS POSE.

It is a test polaroid, one of half a dozen or more, amongst several storyboards for a commercial for a men's cologne - AURA.

HIROKO

... Any of this?... does embarrass you?

JACK

(clearly embarrassed)
 What, these? Oh, no. Not at all--
 (then, re one in particular)
Jesus!

HIROKO

(putting it aside)
 No, this one not right-- too much.
 Jack, how much of self you are
 willing to show?

Jack laughs, a little uneasy. He leans back in his seat.

JACK

How much? What, you mean, like, of my body?

Hiroko gets up, sits by Jack. Flips through more polaroids.

HIROKO

We looking for masculine man...

JACK

Uh huh.

HIROKO
...who not afraid to show feminine
side, also.

JACK
...Really?

HIROKO
I think American male more
comfortable with feminine than
Japanese. Do you?

JACK
Oh... oh, sure.

HIROKO
But I think Japanese man also ready,
neh, in fact, relieved to to show
full self.
(to Yoji-- completely
throwing him)
Eh, Yoji?

YOJI
What? Heh heh. Yes, very relieved.
Very much so. Heh heh.

HIROKO
(smiles-- almost to
herself:)
If not, we make you ready.

Yoji just laughs nervously. Jack pats him on the back.

JACK
Why? You don't think these guys are
ready?

HIROKO
Not if ex-husband is example.

An assistant hands Hiroko a CELLULAR PHONE, apologizes. Hiroko
says several HARSH WORDS (in Japanese), then hangs up. Turns back.

HIROKO
Sorry-- sometimes, to succeed in
job, woman must be four times
masculine as man in this country.
Where was I?

JACK
You were married to an asshole.

HIROKO

Oh, yes: We want ad to have-- how you say?-- controversial. To challenge Japanese male: be sensual, as part of masculinity. Therefore: sportsman, especially: player of ball. What do you think? Do you think you can be comfortable with?

JACK

Oh... oh, well... yeah. Sure.

Yoji and Hiroko speak in Japanese.

JACK

Wha wha what?

YOJI

Nothing. Just details of your schedule. Arrangements with team, schedule, that all.

JACK

Don't you guys need me for that?

HIROKO/YOJI

No.

They speak again in Japanese.

JACK

What now?..

YOJI

She say it good you not available for three weeks. You have time to lose a little weight.

Jack looks at Yoji. Is he kidding? He'd better be.

CUT TO: 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 GIANTS/DRAGONS game.

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

On the STREETS OF TOKYO, people watch the Shinjuku BIG SCREEN where they see the it light up with "Go Giants!"

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Oendan noise can be heard through the walls as Jack sits, psyching up for the game. He looks up to watch a couple of his teammates settling down to huge bowls of noodles. He turns to MAX.

JACK

Jesus...I still can't believe they eat all this food just before a game.

Then Anzai, Uemoto and Sugito come in-- all CHEWING: seeds, gum, toothpicks. They sit by Jack. Turn away. When they turn back, they have moustaches. They're doing an Jack impressions.

ANZAI

Hum-babe rettsu-go babe! Now!

JACK

Ha ha.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The Oendan is noisy and crazy, as usual. The Giants are up by two. The Dragons have a runner on first.

IN THE DUGOUT - THE TEAM

Quiet, tense... the opposite of their locker room antics. Jack is standing, trying to roust them.

JACK

Guys, hey, come on-- loosen up, it's a game.

(to Max)

Jesus-- what happened to the guys from the locker room?

MAX

Pressure's on.

JACK

Yeah, well. If they used practice to loosen up and get ready for the game they'd...

MAX

Practice is Practice. Game is game.

JACK nods, then turns to watch Uemoto who's struggling at bat.

JACK

Humm now baby...lil bingo. Uemoto-san. You can do it man.

UEMOTO STRIKES OUT.

JACK

You idiot! Loosen up, man. How could you swing at that?

UEMOTO comes back smiling. Jack turns to Yoji.

JACK

Now he smiles. What the hell does he find so funny?

YOJI

He embarrassed.

Uemoto ashamedly sits in the corner. Jack calls out to him. Yoji translates.

JACK

Listen, pal... it's okay. Hell, even the best blow it 7 out of 10 times. That's still hitting .300. You'll get 'em next time, man.

Yoji, watched closely by Uchiyama, translates. No response from Uemoto. Jack sits silently, shaking his head.

CUT TO:

A series of shots of TENSE DRAGON FACES on the field. And the OENDAN is unbelievably noisy.

EXT. FIELD

--CRACK-- a ground shot to Uchida, at second. Uchida tries to get in front of it when he should be back-handing it. It bounds off his leg for an error.

JACK

(under his breath)

What are you doing getting behind that? Backhand it... what's your... damn.

IN THE STANDS - A FEISTY, UNRULY FAN

Shouts what must be obsceneties at Uchiyama, who does not respond. But he does call time and brings Nishiyaki onto the field. And then SLAPS Uchida. In front of everyone. And Uchida just... smiles.

CUT TO: QUICK SHOT

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

CUT BACK TO: THE FIELD - THE VERY NEXT PLAY

Is a grounder to Nishiyaki's left... which he might be able to get (if he dove). He doesn't, and the ball goes through... CUT TO:

THREE AND A HALF HOURS LATER

The game's still going on. The Dragons are down by one. Players are tired, tense. Even Jack's not so up. But he tries as he heads for the on deck circle. Yoji interprets.

JACK

Come on, guys... we're beating ourselves. We're only-- what?-- three hours and forty-five minutes into the game.

(then, realizing)

Three hours and forty-five minutes!? Christ! But still it's not over till the fat lady sings. That is, if it's ever even over.

YOJI

(having to stop mid-translation)

--- what?

Jack, giving up, waves him off. Grabs his bat. Steps out of dugout. Yoji explains to the team:

YOJI

(in Japanese; subtitled)

Jack says when game's over a fat woman will sing for us.

JUST OUTSIDE THE DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Jack stands by Max. Looks out at the (still-screaming) Oendan.

JACK

Don't they ever shut up?

Max just shakes his head. And they get LOUDER as Sagimoto gets on. Then-- a moment later:

JACK cracks a line drive into right field corner.

In the STANDS cheerleaders blow whistles and wave huge flags.

MEN in a TINY BAR are mixed in their reactions. Why? Are they Giants' fans? Could be any number of reasons...

Jack coasts into third.

The DRAGON PLAYERS are up. So is the crowd. UCHIYAMA tenses. He hesitates. Turns and points at Hiraizumi.

Jack waves his hat at the crowd. Then sees who's up at bat. He is shocked. He yells towards the dugout..

JACK

What? Do you wanna throw the game?
The kid can hit but, shit....now?
This isn't the time to work in a
rookie! You call that managing?

HIRAIZUMI STRIKES OUT.

ON TV: UCHIYAMA

Is being interviewed after the game. The score (the Giant's won) is supered in front of him. Uchiyama speaks Japanese.

UCHIYAMA

Why did we lose? Need to play more
as a team. Need more practice.

The INTERVIEWER nods in agreement as the TV CUTS TO UCHIDA being slapped. Then we CUT TO:

ON ANOTHER TV

A HEAD flies off a pair of shoulders as an angry SAMURAI WARRIOR wields a sword right INTO CAMERA. It's a bloody warrior film-- but it's barely visible through the THICK CIGARETTE SMOKE IN THE:

INT. TEAM BUS - MOVING

Where those who aren't totally getting into the movie are reading Magna comics.

Jack sits with Max. He is airing his grievances. He is aware that he is in earshot of Uchiyama. The thought pleases him.

JACK

Practice practice, fundamental
fundamental. And what's the point?
They learn so many rules they don't
have any instinct. And they're too
busy trying not to lose to have time
to try to win.

Jack sees that Max is just looking at him.

JACK

What?

MAX

(speaking quietly so Uch
can't hear)

I'm only saying this cause I've been here eight years, right, and I'm getting tired of making friends and then losing them at the end of every season, or sooner... Now, they let you play the way you're used to-- you know, come late to practice, not do all the running-- cause you're a Big Leaguer, and they want to make you comfortable. But you gotta remember something: for whatever reason, you're in Japan. And so you're playing Japanese baseball. Japanese.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Japanese signs. Japanese lights. Japanese people. Japanese buildings. The smoke-filled Dragons bus pulls into Osaka...

INT. BASEBALL STADIUM - OSAKA - NIGHT

The noise from the Oendan here is just as loud as everywhere else. The score is tied. The team is tight, tense.

IN THE DUGOUT

Jack works the room - Japanese style. He has two plastic noise cones and is banging them together walking up and down the dugout. Every now and then he pulls out a piece of paper and reads a Japanese phrase from it.

JACK

(in Japanese)

We hope your guts! Sayonara home-run!

Jack stops and grabs some more plastic cones and tries to pass them out. Max can't help but join in.

He turns as Sugita blasts one down the line at third. The third baseman dives, recovers, and fires a shot to first. Sugita's out.

JACK

Hey come on guys. Whatever happened to humor in the face of adversity? Anzai? I know! Rally caps!

JACK turns his hat inside out, grabs his bat and jauntily strolls to the on deck circle.

JACK

Fine. I'll do it my damned self.

CUT TO:

Jack steps up to bat.

JACK
(to himself)
Okay, pal, swing sweet buddy. Let's
show these guys a thing or two...

Looks to Atachi. He gets the "bunt" sign.

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

Jack signals to Uchiyama, who comes out, followed by Yoji.

JACK
What are you doing? We're down by
one run. You're asking me to bunt?

UCHIYAMA
(struggling with language)
You move runner. DuBois-san bunt.
Runner on three. Then bunt: tie.

JACK
That's ridiculous.

UCHIYAMA
I manager... important...
(getting frustrated-- in
rapid-fire Japanese:)
Banto shinakere ba benchi iri dazo!

Uchiyama turns, leaving Jack and Yoji. Beat.

YOJI
I suggest you bunt.

JACK
Yoji-- that's just wrong.

BACK AT THE PLATE

Jack steps in. The Pitcher sets. Delivers. A fastball.

JACK
Yesssss.

--CRACK!!

BASEBALL'S POV: up and away from the bat

SERIES OF CLOSE-UPS: In the stands, heads snap up.

HIGH SHOT: Sailing over the field as players look up.

AT THE PLATE, JACK turns to the team.

SERIES OF CLOSE-UPS: Smile, smile, almost smile...

AT THE PLATE - JACK

drops his bat... and, for the first time (perhaps since his early playing days) does a little knee-wiggle-- his "Jack dance."

THE TEAM

Leap to their feet and rush out of the dugout. All except Uchiyama ("almost smile"), who stays inside.

THE CROWD

Goes wild. The SCOREBOARD reads: "SAYONARA HOME-RUN."

BASEBALL'S POV: Careening into the stands.

AN INCREDIBLY HUGE (35 FOOT) BIG-SCREEN TV

Replays Jack's dance and crowns him "MR. BESUBORU!" We are:

EXT. BRIGHT LIGHT DISTRICT OF OSAKA - NIGHT

And Jack, with Yoji, is standing amongst a crowd of people, watching it. People call to him, do his dance. He signs autographs. Two ATTRACTIVE WOMEN in particular pay attention to him. Yoji, though he enjoys the residual attention he's getting, looks at his watch.

YOJI

Jack, excuse me. Uh, Jack-- hey, Mr. Besuboru! Is late-- perhaps maybe we go. Get up early, practice...

JACK

Yeah, right.

As the Two Women start to lead Jack somewhere...

YOJI

Jack, seriously, bad time for bad impression-make.

JACK

What are you talking about, Yojster? We got dates!

INT. HOSTESS BAR - NIGHT

The Women are sitting very close to Jack, laughing and giggling as Jack makes Yoji (for some odd reason, completely sober) translate for him.

JACK

...slid into him... and killed him.

The girls, per Yoji's reluctant translation, respond, shocked (but playing along).

YOJI

They say "perhaps you could use two women-- that would help."

(then quickly-- a personal note)

But Jack, perhaps time to get your "hat" and go--

JACK

Yeah yeah yeah-- I know all about you and your curfew.

YOJI

No, it not about that.

The BILL comes. Jack is immediately sober. CUT TO:

EXT. STREET BY JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - A BIT LATER

Jack exits the cab. Yoji, who tells the driver to stay, follows him.

JACK

Twenty-two hundred dollars. Twenty-two hundred dollars. Twenty-two hundred dollars. Christ, no wonder assholes like me have to have a Goddamned curfew... And you're supposed to tell me about his kind of thing.

YOJI

I tried, I did. I said get your hat and go.

JACK

Hat?

YOJI

Me!

JACK

Jesus, Yoji... Just because you speak English doesn't mean you speak our language. You have to say what you mean to us Gaijin, because we don't read minds.

CUT TO: VARIOUS SHOTS

A NEWSPAPER with "Mr. Besuboru." A PHOTO of him hitting his HR. Then, also: PHOTOS of Jack in the Osaka street, and, even more odd, PHOTOS of him and the two women AT THE HOSTESS BAR.

The papers are shut brusquely. We are in:

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - NAGOYA

Uchiyama is ranting at Jack in Japanese. Yoji sits alongside anxiously.

JACK

(to Yoji, re Uchiyama's rant)

Are you getting any of this?

YOJI

A lotta words like... "lazy"...
"selfish"...

JACK

"Asshole", perhaps?

YOJI

(listening)

Nope... nope...

(then)

...Yup.

JACK

Bingo.

YOJI

He say: disappointed in you.
Expect more.

JACK

More? Jesus, I'm having the best season I've had in eight years. Besides, the pitcher saw I was gonna bunt, so he threw me fast and up... and what was I supposed to do? I used my head-- that's the American way--

YOJI
(speaking for himself)
You not in America.

JACK
Are you answering for him or
interpreting for him?

Yoji turns to Uch, speaks. Uch responds.

YOJI
He say: you not in America.

JACK is silent a moment. Then, he takes out a phrase book.

JACK
Goo MEIN a SAY..Goo.. I'm sorry.
I...
(looks through book, then)
WOGGurryMister..Wok ahh shit. Yoji!
Look, I understand I showed you up
in front of the guys. Harmony,
unity, blah blah. So, fine. I'll
do it for the team. I'll try. But
I can't say it makes any sense.

EXT. JAPANESE HOT SPRINGS - DAY

'Traditional' site. A Pagoda. A Japanese garden. And:

JACK
It makes no sense: "Men, dare with
sensitive."

Jack, wearing only a towel, looks incredibly uncomfortable as he
stands halfway out of the springs holding a bottle of "Aura."

Around him are the dozens of PEOPLE and pieces of EQUIPMENT which
make up a FILM CREW. Though Jack pretends it's the "words," from
his body language, it's clear he's just plain not at ease.

HIROKO
To you, no. But what important is
sound to Japanese ear. Try again.

JACK
(just plain bad)
Men. Dare with sensitive. Aura.
(quickly)
I'm sorry. Seriously, I've never
been good at this. Even in Jr. High
we did this play, "The Clown Who
Cried," and I was Circus Master
Steve, and even then--

HIROKO

Jack.

JACK

I'm holding everybody up. It must be costing a fortune. I'm sorry-- look, I'm actually sort of embarrassed here...

Beat. Hiroko takes his hand.

JACK/HIROKO

(overlapping)

I'm trying too hard./You're trying too hard.

HIROKO

(thinks, then)

What you do in game-- to deal with pressure?

JACK

I talk to myself.

HIROKO

Please give example.

JACK

Well, like...

(soft, calming)

"Nice'n easy, pal, take your time, swing sweet, flow through it..."

HIROKO

Say that last part again.

JACK

(relaxing more)

Swing sweet and flow through it.

HIROKO

I like that. Now try with our words: "Men, dare with sensitive."

JACK

(almost sensual)

Men, dare with sensitive.

HIROKO

Very good. Once more.

JACK

Really? You know, this is actually sort of easy.

HIROKO
Try once more.

JACK
Men. Dare with sensitive.

Jack is completely unaware that he is no longer wearing his towel and Hiroko has signalled the crew to begin filming. But as soon as she does... there is a CLAP OF THUNDER... and it starts pouring.

JACK
(looks up)
Thank God.
(then, noticing he's naked)
Hey!

MOMENTS LATER - UNDER A TARPOLIN (IN THE RAIN)

Jack, in a robe, sits under the tarp as a PRETTY YOUNG STYLIST (EIKA) works on his hair. Yoji translates a moment in Japanese... then Jack continues.

JACK
...and I guess I slid so hard that,
well... killed him.

Yoji finishes. Eika speaks Japanese (with subtitles):

EIKA
What the hell is he talking about?

YOJI
(laughs, speaks in
Japanese)
I haven't a clue-- and I have to
hang around the guy all day.

JACK
Wha wha what? What're you laughing
at?

YOJI
Nothing. She say she sorry to hear
you murder second baseman.

JACK
So I guess the answer is no date?

YOJI
Are you free at all this week?

EIKA
For him?

YOJI

Actually, no. If you don't mind, I was thinking for me.

EIKA

(thinks, smiles)

For you, perhaps I can make time.

YOJI

(to Jack)

She say: "She is sorry, but busy all the time."

Jack nods. At this moment, Hiroko turns off her phone, plops in the chair by Jack, exasperated. The rain starts to let up.

HIROKO

Ahh... damn.

(then, shifting out of "business" mode)

By the way-- word of advice. For Japanese women, try "honesty."

JACK

I'm sorry-- "honesty?" I'm not sure I understand the concept. Perhaps you can give me an example.

HIROKO

I think you interesting. Perhaps to take you to dinner.

JACK

Oh. Okay.

(turning to Eika)

I think you are--

HIROKO

No. That not example. I think you interesting. Perhaps to take you to dinner.

Jack looks at her. The DP shouts something--

Outside there is a break in the clouds. People run toward their equipment. Jack, his confidence boosted, gets up from his chair and we CUT TO:

THE COMMERCIAL BEING SHOT

Sexy, interesting shots, designed by Hiroko, of Jack in the hot springs with the cologne...

He tries to enjoy it. He gives it all he's got. Hiroko interacts. Even Eika, to Yoji's consternation, finds it intriguing.

Finally Jack turns to the camera and says:

JACK
Men: Dare with Sensitive.

WIDE SHOT

A beautiful pose, beautifully lit. As Jack says "AURA," we CUT TO:
EXTREMELY CLOSE ON JACK'S FACE

In severe pain, continuing to say:

JACK
.....Aaahhhhhh!

He's being massaged by Morita-san.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jack hobbles out of Morita's room. Sees Max.

JACK
I'm telling you, it's good to be on
home turf. That stuff's hard--
prancing around in front of the
camera. Posing, holding these
awkward positions. Hell, I felt
like Sugita.

Jack winks at Sugita. But Sugita doesn't wink back. He just
exits.

JACK
What?
(to Max)
What's his problem? Oh, he's
probably jealous I got the
commercial and not him.

Max shrugs. CUT TO:

AT THE PLATE - JACK

Swings with a grunt.

UMPIRE
Sutoraiku two!

JACK
What the hell pitch was that?

CATCHER (FOR TAIYO WHALES)
shutto.

UMPIRE

Hai, shutto.

JACK

That was a shutto? THAT?

(to himself)

Okay, pal... swing sweet... flow
through this Goddamn piece of crap
shutto--

The Pitcher sets. Delivers another of the same. Jack swings,
misses.

UMPIRE

Sutoraiku sree!

INT. DUGOUT

Jack throws his helmet down. Uchiyama says something.

YOJI

He say you falling off 37 home run
pace. Suggest you shorten your
stance. Maybe choke up on bat.
Move up in box. Average is falling,
and will fall more.

UCHIYAMA

Srump.

JACK

What is he talking about? So I've
fallen off a little. It's a natural
thing. So what? And I'm not in a
Goddamn srump.

Uchiyama says some things.

YOJI

Bet you can't guess what Uchiyama
suggest.

JACK

Practice?

YOJI

No. He suggest you wake 4 AM, eat
raw whale, run 200 mile and sleep on
spikes.

(off Jack's look)

Actually, he suggest more practice.
But I make it sound more attractive,
neh?

Jack looks at Yoji. At Uchiyama. He's not interested. CUT TO:

ON A SUBWAY

Someone reads an article on Jack, shaking their head and clucking disapprovingly. A DRAWING OF JACK shows him perceived to be fat and out of shape. CUT TO:

INT. VERY LOUD, TRENDY (NOUVELLE FRENCH) RESTAURANT - NIGHT

HIROKO

(over the noise)

You are okay? Are you not happy?

JACK

No, no. I'm fine. I just thought we'd go someplace more... Japanese.

HIROKO

Oh, this place very Japanese. Japan take best of all worlds, make own. Japan have best French food than France.

Hiroko takes the check. Jack sees that it's for a ton of dough.

JACK

Also, more expensive.
(as she gets wallet)
Wow... you sure?

HIROKO

(nods)

You client. My treat.

INT. JAZZ CLUB

Loud music. It's hard to talk. But they try.

JACK

You look fantastic.

HIROKO

Georgio Armani.

JACK

I makes you look very pretty.

HIROKO

(shakes her head)

I'm from country, but I like city.

JACK

I said pretty.

HIROKO

No. Country.

The bill comes. Hiroko takes it. CUT TO:

INT. HIROKO'S PORSCHE - DRIVING - NIGHT

Loud music playing (a German neo-pop band). Road noise.

JACK

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

HIROKO

Perhaps not as well as you. Beside, can be dangerous for woman in business.

Jack nods. Hiroko pulls up to Jack's apartment building.

JACK

So... would you like to come up? But there's only one problem with my apartment-- it's very quiet. Of course, if you want, I can throw on the tv, the stereo, the blender...

HIROKO

That would be nice. It seem very pleasant.

JACK

Oh, Good.

Jack gets out of the car. But when Jack steps away from the curb--

HIROKO

Thank you for very nice evening.

--she takes off. Jack watches her go, nods. Whatever. CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jack watches TV, alone. On it is a really wierd show: Guys drink and drink, and the first guy to have to pee loses. CUT TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - TALK SHOW SET

Colors, lights, strange shapes and designs... two HOSTS and a HOSTESS. And Jack and Uchiyama-- the guests. The First Host picks up a newspaper, speaks English (the Hostess translates).

FIRST HOST

Tell me, Mr. Besuboru, how can you explain your performance in last games?

JACK

Oh, well... I'm doing okay. Just hit a little backslide, that's all. I'm sure it's a temporary thing.

SECOND HOST

Temporary? Ha! Last eleven games, only one hit. Average dropped .277.

JACK

Well, uh... you now, they've seen my stuff, they're very clever. And one thing's for sure, they've stopped throwing me any fastballs.

The Hosts turn to Uchiyama. Now they speak Japanese and the Hostess translates it into English for Jack.

HOSTESS

(speaking for 1st host)

"You recruited him from the major leagues-- what are you doing to correct this situation?"

(then, for Uchiyama)

"We talk about it. We're going to practice more. Jack is no longer a power hitter, and he wants to change his swing."

JACK

I do??

The Hosts turn back to Jack, speak English. Hostess now speaks Japanese.

SECOND HOST

Any last words for Japanese baseball players?

JACK

Yeah-- I'd like to tell them to challenge me a little.

END MUSIC STARTS. Hosts wrap things up.

FIRST HOST

Okay! Hope you are "Mr. Besuboru" again soon!

SECOND HOST

And not typical Gaijin-- "Mr Goat."

FIRST HOST

Or "Mr. Who?"

On Jack's sort of stunned silence, we CUT TO:

EXT. BALLPARK - THE SCOREBOARD

Shows "On deck: Elliot, #37. Avg: .261."

INT. DUGOUT - BALL PARK

Anzai comes over to Jack as he prepares to bat. Hands him a piece of paper.

ANZAI

"Challenge me, stupid pitcher." Is
Japanese: "Itsu mademo, bokuwa
natao, sihai motasobi tai."

JACK

(looking at paper)
Itsu mademo, bokuwa natao, sihai
motasobi tai.

Anzai motions to Jack to keep it. Jack steps out of dugout.

EXT. BALLPARK

Jack, at the plate, watches a pitch that seems way outside.

UMPIRE

Sutoraiku one!

JACK

What are you talking about? That
was way outside.

UMPIRE

You big. You can hit.

The Pitcher sets. Delivers. A shutto.

UMPIRE

Sutoraiku two!

Jack sighs, exasperated.

JACK

Come on, man... give me a little
smoke for once...

He glances over at Anzai. Anzai gives him a look of encouragement.

The pitch comes in. Though it seems low, the call is:

UMPIRE

Sutoraiku sree!

JACK
 Oh, come on...
 (then, pulling out the
 paper)
 Itsu mademo, bokuwa natao, sihai
 motasobi tai!!!

The Pitcher breaks into laughter. So does EVERYONE IN THE DRAGONS' DUGOUT. Especially the group led by Anzai. Even the Umpire giggles.

JACK
 What? What'd I say?

Jack breaks the bat over his knee.

INT. DUGOUT - A MOMENT LATER

Jack throws his now-two-part bat down. Looks at Yoji, furious.

YOJI
 It nothing. You say, "You look good tonight." It only a joke-- not worth breaking bat.

JACK
 No, the bat's for him--
 (the pitcher)
 Cause I haven't got a Goddamn fastball in a Goddamn month.

MAX
 That's cause they stopped throwing them to you.

JACK
 What, do "they" all think with the same Goddamned brain?

Suddenly, outside the dugout, the CROWD ERUPTS and, inside the dugout, the TEAM LEAPS PAST PACK and--

OUT ONTO THE FIELD

Where Uemoto is finishing up a HOME RUN TROT. He shakes hands with his teammates, and when he has reached Jack (the nearest one to the dugout), he gives him the "power fist." Says (in reference to Jack's comment to him way earlier):

UEMOTO
 Hey. "Good try."

But Jack's not in the mood for jokes-- or what he perceives to be jokes. And he's especially not in the mood for Uchiyama's gaze, which he perceives to be harsh and judgemental.

JACK
 Alright, alright... I'll practice.

UCHIYAMA
 Also: "fine."

JACK
 You're gonna fine me for breaking a
 Goddamn bat?

UCHIYAMA
 No. Owners fine you.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

In POURING RAIN. Several NEWSPAPER GUYS are there, taking photos and scribbling under umbrellas.

Jack stands behind first base. A grounder is hit to him, leaving a spraying wake as it rolls to a stop just before it reaches him.

Jack just looks at it. Looks at Uchiyama. Turns. Walks.

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
 Hi. Listen, I dunno what you're up
 to, but I could really use a little
 user-friendly company...

EXT. (INT.) NAGOYA COVERED SHOPPING MALL - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Jack (carrying bags of touristy stuff) and Hiroko walk, passing, alternately, SHRINES, PACHINKO PARLORS, OLD WOODEN RESTAURANTS, MODERN FAST FOOD JOINTS, etc. Hiroko is almost rueful:

HIROKO
 In Japan, say "High nail is hammered
 down." I think, perhaps, that
 happen to you. Sometimes I have
 hope: perhaps it to change...
 but...

She just shakes her head. Then notices Jack stopped by a TV SET (in a corner ANTIQUE SHOP). On it is a PHOTO OF HIM.

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

HIROKO
(listens)
Perhaps so.

They resume walking. Jack sees something... a STONE FOX in a SHRINE next to a store. She's not nearly as excited as Jack, though she does find it a tad amusing that he is.

JACK
Oh! Hey, look at this. I love these things, they're all over.

HIROKO
Oh, fox is god for merchants. Is about cunning. Many shopping malls have.

JACK
You hate this kind of stuff, huh?

Hiroko says nothing. Jack nods. They walk 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 swing up. Can't hit opposite field."

Jack nods. YET ANOTHER PERSON walks by-- and just shakes his head. Hiroko sees Jack see this. Then, suddenly, she perks up.

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
This I used to do all time with Grandmother and Mother. In this very place.

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

JACK
What?

HIROKO
This say river. "Flow." This word for acceptance. Accept flow, is natural.

JACK

Hey, yeah: "Let it flow."

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 fortune not all good, tie here, say prayer to cleanse it.

JACK

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

HIROKO

This word: "age." Is not important. Sometimes these very silly.

Jack watches her tie the little paper. CUT TO:

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

Hiroko and Jack sits in Hiroko's car. It's still POURING.

HIROKO

I as frustrated with culture as you. But at least you not woman.

JACK

Yeah, I couldn't imagine having to sleep with a guy like me.

Jack leans over and, checking his Anzai-given piece of paper, speaks very heartfelt (as if saying "You look very good tonight"):

JACK

(in Japanese)

Itsu mademo, bokuwa natao, sihai motasobi tai.

Hiroko's mouth practically drops open. Jack gapes.

JACK

Oh, God... don't tell me. I said "challenge me you stupid pitcher," or something.

HIROKO

No. You say: "I want to fondle you all over."

(then, looking at Jack's piece of paper)

Yes. That exactly what you say.

JACK

Oh. Oh... that little creep. I'm gonna take his little neck... so...

(then)

I don't suppose you'd want to come in, then, right? Especially now.

HIROKO

That would be nice. It seem very pleasant.

JACK

(disappointed)

Okay... no problem. Well, thanks for talking. It was nice to have sympathetic ears.

HIROKO

Your ears not pathetic.

Jack looks at her, about to correct her on what he said... then figures, "ah, forget it." And he opens his door and rushes through the rain and dashes inside his building.

And then Hiroko gets out of her car.

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 way you treat lady? You worse than Japanese man.

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

JACK

Why'd you come up? I thought...

HIROKO

Actually...

(Anzai's words)

Itsu mademo, bokuwa natao, sihai motasobi tai.

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

Oh, man...

HIROKO

What?

Jack leans to the side of the bed...

HIROKO

Where you going?

JACK

Nowhere.

He looks down. ON THE FLOOR BY THE SIDE OF THE BED is a little Japanese/English dictionary, with some note paper sticking out.

JACK

(in Japanese; trying to pretend he's not reading)

Anatawa bokuga...

(forgetting; having to look again)

...bokuga... kitai siteru hito ja nai.

Hiroko leans back against the pillow and says, very sweetly, the SAME EXACT THING which Jack was trying to say.

HIROKO

Anatawa bokuga kitai siteru hito ja
nai.

JACK

(thinking she's correcting
him)

No no--

Then Jack "gets it--" she was also saying it; not correcting him.
He settles back, sighs, a little confused.

JACK

You're not what I expected either.
In fact, this whole thing... it's...
I'm...

(to himself)

... an asshole.

(looks through phrase book)

You're... we're... wait....oh, man.

HIROKO

(soft)

Jack. Sometimes words fail you.
They really do. Better you talk
with heart. Or hands.

(getting close to him)

I have plans for mouth.

And she and he lean together... and we CUT TO:

EXT. JINGO STADIUM - ESTABLISHING

Fans, cars, excitement: Yakult Swallows vs. Dragons.

INT. STADIUM CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Jack, carrying his bags, enters:

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

And senses something very strange going on. He sits down. No one on the team is quite looking at him. Even Max avoids eye contact.

JACK

Max...

MAX

(grabbing his stuff,
exiting)

See you on the field.

Jack is confused... slowly he notices the posted LINE-UP SHEET. He goes over to it... traces his finger to cleanup, his usual spot, and find's MAX'S NAME there. He finds HIS NAME... on the bench.

INT. DUGOUT - DURING GAME

Jack sits, chewing tobacco, not pleased. At one point he gets up, walks to the field, and spits right onto it, then sits back down.

JACK

What's going on? What happened??

Jack turns to Max, who just looks down.

JACK

Don't tell me, I'm making you "lose face" as well, you being part of the "team," you being Mr. Harmony, Mr. Team Spirit, Mr. Humility. Well I hate to break it to you, Max, but you can sit on your tatami mat, you can speak the damned language, but you're still a Goddamned Gaijin, just like me. And I'm sorry if I'm giving us both a bad name.

Max looks at Jack. Fiercely. Then:

MAX

This has nothing to do with you.
Not everything is about Jack Elliot.

Max leaves. Jack exhales. Yoji comes over.

YOJI

His wife in hospital, in U.S.A. Her pregnancy going bad, but team not want him to leave.

JACK

When'd this happen?

YOJI

Last week. Everybody talking about it. But you not paying any attention--

JACK

(getting up)

Oh, shit...

Jack gets up. Follows Max--

INT. STADIUM TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Jack catches up to Max.

JACK

Listen... I didn't realize...

MAX

Save it, Jack. We're not teammates any more. I quit.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jack continues to walk with Max.

MAX

I told them I want to be with Yolanda. They said yes, as long as I was back by the Giant's game. I said I'll be back as soon as she's alright. They said yes, as long as she's alright by the Giant's game.

JACK

Oh, man. I'm sorry.

MAX

One thing I'm not gonna miss is your empty apologies.

JACK

I know, I know. I'm an ass--

MAX

And that's the other.

Max reaches a TAXI CAB.

MAX

Listen, I, uh... I wish we could've got to be friends. I was really hoping this would be the year.

Taxi cab drives away. Jack is alone.

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 in the batters' box.

INT. DEEP, DEEP HOLE - IN NEAR COMPLETE DARKNESS

Jack, in total confusion, stands with his bat.

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE
 It's too bad, too, cause--
 (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 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.

SPORTSCASTER'S VOICE
 Whatever happened to the good old
 days?

"COLOR GUY"'S VOICE
 No kidding...

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

INT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - TOKYO - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Jack awakens, gets up out of bed. Walks over to the window. Looks out: Three tiers of traffic below him. Glittery lights. Maybe some rain.

Jack looks lost, lonely... maybe even a little bit scared. CUT TO:

A CHARICATURE OF JACK

Swinging like a corkscrew with sweat flying off. We are:

INT. LOCKER ROOM - PREGAME

Yoji reads the newspaper while Jack is dressing. On the TV, a REPORTER speaks while behind him PHOTOS OF VARIOUS GAIJIN flash by.

REPORTER
 (subtitled)
 ...with another Gaijin gone, it
 brings up the question, "Do we need
 Gaijin at all?" And, even if we do--
 - do we want them? They're
 overpaid, lazy, and, for the most
 part, all washed up...

YOJI
 (re newspaper)
 Very angry at DuBois-san. Say "he
 let us down."

JACK

What's it say about me? Never mind,
I don't wanna know.

He gets up, crosses to the phone. Dials.

INT. HIROKO'S APARTMENT - SAME

Not big, but very tasteful and stylish. Her MACHINE clicks on and mutters some Japanese. BEEP. Then we HEAR:

JACK'S VOICE

Hi, are you there? Just calling you
again. I'll try you later, or--
wait--

CAMERA REVEALS HIROKO, sitting near the phone, listening...

JACK'S VOICE

(calling OFF)

Yoji! Talk to her in Japanese.

Beat. Then:

YOJI'S VOICE

(begins-- subtitled)

Please call him back, he's terrified
you're not calling because he's a
bad lover...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - SAME

YOJI (CONTINUING; SUBTITLED)

...and he won't leave me alone about
it. So please call him.

Yoji hangs up.

JACK

What did you say?

YOJI

I say: Please call him back, he's
terrified you're not calling because
he's a bad lover, and he won't leave
me alone about it. So please call
him.

JACK
 (not buying it)
 Ha ha. I'm sure whatever you said,
 it was good. Thanks.
 (then)
 I wonder where she is.
 (then, lying:)
 Ah, it doesn't matter anyway.

Uchiyama enters, calls attention. We hear the word "Gaijin."

YOJI
 Uchiyama-san bring in new Gaijin.

JACK
 Already??

YOJI
 He on farm. Team only allow two
 Gaijin on major, three in whole
 system.

Suddenly a nervous young ASIAN MAN (WILSON YU) enters with his
 INTERPRETER (DUK).

JACK
 He's the new Gaijin?? Yoj, wait--
 you're kidding me again.

YOJI
 He from Taiwan. Therefore more of
 Gaijin than you.

Yu, with HIS INTERPRETER (DUK), steps up to Jack and Yoji. Yu says
 something to Duk in Chinese. Duk says something to Yoji in
 Japanese. Yoji turns to Jack, speaks English.

YOJI
 He say he heard about you for years,
 is a pleasure to be on same team
 with you.

JACK
 Tell him thanks, good luck.

Yoji speaks to Duk; Duk speaks to Yu. Yu nods to Duk; Duk nods to
 Yoji; Yoji nods to Jack. Jack rolls his eyes. Yoji starts to roll
his to Duk, but Jack stops him. Yoji smiles-- a joke. CUT TO:

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - DAY

NOISE. Loud. As loud as it's ever been, but seeming LOUDER to:
 Jack, who sits on the bench-- waiting... as Atachi leans in.

ATACHI
Elliotto. On decku. Hit-pinch.

Jack looks. Takes a breath. CUT TO:

AT THE PLATE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack looks around, looks at Uchiyama... looks at the whole stadium. The Pitcher leans in. Delivers a shutto.

 UMPIRE
Sutoraiku!

 JACK
 Come on! Jesus.

The Pitcher sets. The OENDAN BEATS ITS DRUMS. The stadium practically swirls around him...

And the ball just misses JACK'S HEAD! He dives back into the dirt.

 JACK
 (to the Ump)
 Did you see that? DID YOU??

And the CROWD CHEERS. Jack can't believe it. He gets up, shakes his head, then resets in the box. Wipes a bead of sweat.

The Pitcher leans in. Jack digs in... The Pitcher sets... The CROWD NOISE becomes DEAFENING.

And something very strange happens.

After a moment, Jack just drops his bat... and RUSHES AT THE MOUND.

VARIOUS SHOTS:

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

INT. STADIUM TUNNELS

Fans leave their lines and run in to watch.

EXT. NAGOYA STREET - AT A POLICE BOX

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

ON THE FIELD - SAME

Jack takes a swing and KNOCKS THE OPPOSING PITCHER to the ground, then is engulfed in a TIDAL WAVE OF PLAYERS, both home and away.

THE FANS shout and boo and literally RAIN DEBRIS onto the field.
OUTSIDE THE STADIUM people are yelling and running around.
REPORTERS go crazy.

JACK

Is pulled away from the gang by SIX OF HIS TEAMMATES and we CUT TO:

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, then, exhausted, steps out onto--

THE BALCONY - DAY

And leans against the rail, out of breath.

It's then the DOORBELL RINGS. And Hiroko steps inside.

HIROKO

Jack. I hear news of suspension. I
sorry.

JACK

Where you been? I've been calling
and calling...

HIROKO

I know. I home. But I having
terrible time.

JACK

Cause of me or cause of us?

HIROKO

Us.

JACK

But we had a wonderful time.

HIROKO

Yes, wonderful. But that the
problem. I always know you leave.
And I fear wonderful get broken.
But now I think sooner than expect.

Jack nods. Goes and sits down. She sits by him.

HIROKO

You want talk about what happened?

JACK

I'm still not sure. But I got to the plate, and... see, I used to get up at the plate just trying to get a hit. Then, a few years ago, I started getting up trying not to miss. Now, suddenly, that feeling's back. And I'm standing there. And the image is clear: There's no way I'm going to be able to stay here. Then I thought of you-- and I thought I'd end up hurting you. And suddenly, for the first time in my life I realized what it would mean to really hurt someone-- because it was the first time I was feeling the same thing. Cause I realized, "hey, my intentions are no longer dishonorable." Then I thought, God, I'm an asshole. Then I got really confused. Then this ball whizzed past my head. Thank God it missed, because I wasn't paying any attention. And I looked up, and I saw the guy who threw it was Japanese. And I thought "I'm in Japan... and I'm thirty-seven..." and then, well... I just had to smash him. I don't know, it made sense at the time. But now, I can't... I just... I mean... oh, shit, I never was much of a thinker...

He just drifts off into confused silence. Finally he turns to her.

JACK

So... if you know you're going to get hurt, and I know I'm going to get hurt, why'd you come over, anyway?

HIROKO

I think maybe you need a friend. And maybe we enjoy a little wonderful before it get broken.

(then)

Also. Jack-- you not a bad lover.

JACK

That bastard Yoji...

CUT TO: EXT. TRADITIONAL JAPANESE GARDEN - A LITTLE LATER

Shapes merge and converge. Eventually we find Jack and Hiroko, walking along a finely manicured path.

HIROKO

I wish now I could get this in my work: order, simplicity of design. But always evolving, changing. It's perfect. You make me want to come back here.

JACK

God. I can't believe I was once really interested in this country.

HIROKO

No, I think you were more right than me. Japan not all bad. In fact, I forget how much is great. For instance, being right here. Right now. I'm afraid we both get wrong idea of Japan. Or, maybe, right idea of wrong part of Japan. In fact... there another place I miss.

CUT TO: INT. HIROKO'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE - EVENING

Mid-dinner. NOISE. Lotta FAMILY, and FRIENDS, and a couple NEIGHBORS. Their KIDS. Big SHABU-SHABU dinner. Food is passed around. Jack's in the middle of it all.

We're out in the country, in a little town. Maybe out near Kyoto.

JACK

Oishi. Totemo oishi.

Much impressed oohs and aahhs (he said "very delicious"). Suddenly HIROKO'S FATHER raises his fist in the air-- like Jack did when he clocked the pitcher--

JACK

Oh, no...

--starts laughing. As do many others. He speaks to Hiroko in Japanese.

HIROKO

He say it about time somebody punch Kondo-san. Baseball getting boring.

JACK

Oh, thank God.

He smiles at Aoshima-san. Aoshima-san mimes Jack decking Kondo. Jack nods. Mimes it back. Aoshima-san cracks up, mimes it again. One of THE NEIGHBORS asks Jack a question in Japanese.

HIROKO

She say: What it like to be
American in Japan?

JACK

(a breath, then)

Hmnnn... well... when I first got
here I went into this Gaijin bar in
Nagoya I thought "Jesus, if these
guys had half a life, they wouldn't
be here." And, stupidly, I thought
I was different from them. And
I'm... hell, soon I'm gonna be...
God... fff... ffff...

HIROKO

Forty?

JACK

Yeah. And who am I kidding?

(shakes his head)

Man... this place'll really make you
look into yourself.

More food is passed around. Aoshima-san jumps up from the table.
SEVERAL OF THEM discuss (amongst themselves) what Jack just said.
Hiroko's parents begin ARGUING about some tiny, parental little
point. ---Basically, life at a big family dinner happens.

And Hiroko looks at Jack, who has drifted off into silent thought.

Until Aoshima-san rushes over to him with a tattered old BASEBALL
SCRAPBOOK, pulling out a CARD.

HIROKO

This for you. Gift.

JACK

This is Uchiyama.

HIROKO

Long ago. They call him "Wild Man."
He player with much spirit. Father
say you remind of him.

JACK

What, old? Washed up?

HIROKO

Perhaps people change.

Jack looks at her. Some of the LITTLE KIDS show up with little
baseball bats.

ONE LITTLE KID

Jack! Hit show.

JACK
 (smiles)
 Oh, you want me to show you how to hit?

Hiroko translates. The kids shake their head.

JACK
 Wha...?

HIROKO
 He say: No, he show you. You swing up. Bad for opposite field.

Jack shakes his head. Looks at Hiroko.

HIROKO
 Perhaps you and me both could learn a little Japanese humility, neh?

EXT. HALLWAY OF OLD, INEXPENSIVE APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Jack, looking at an address on a piece of paper, checks to make sure he has the right apartment, and then knocks.

JACK
 Yoji? Hey, Yoj?

The door opens.

JACK
 Jesus, Yoj-- how far from Nagoya do you live?

INT. TINY APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Small. Lots of books-- and surprising things. Records. Articles. Odd collections of all kinds. Yoji leads Jack inside.

YOJI
 Take one hour forty-five minute commute to stadium each way, each day.

JACK
 Wow...
 (looking around)
 Nice foyer. Before we go, I wanna see the rest of it.
 (opening the next door)
 What's in the next...

EXT. BACK FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS

Jack, outside now, looks out at the ALLEY behind Yoji's apartment.

JACK (CONTINUING)
...room?

INT. YOJI'S TINY APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jack closes the door. Looks around the incredibly dinky apartment.

YOJI
And this my biggest place yet.
Plus-- no roommate.
(then)
Well-- you ready?

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

Jack and Yoji, following Jack's directions, stop at a home.

YOJI
You sure this is right address?

Jack, proud of the fact that he's reading it in Japanese, nods.

JACK
Jesus, Yoj-- gimme a little credit.

Jack rings doorbell, then gets on his knees. Yoji translates as Jack begins. We SEE two feet stand there. Two more join them.

JACK
Please accept my honest and humble
apologies. You were right, the
years have taken a toll greater than
I thought. And I need help if I'm
going to continue playing at all...
which I'd give anything to do.

Two TINY FEET, then two more, even TINIER FEET join the four adult ones. A PAN UP reveals they are apologizing to a FAMILY OF COMPLETE STRANGERS.

STRANGE FAMILY'S POV: A grown American on his knees, and a Japanese man, winking at them.

JACK
I guess what I'm saying is... I
would do anything to play again.
(looking up)
... uh oh.

Yoji laughs. Jack gulps. The Father points to the next house.

STRANGE FAMILY FATHER
Uchiyama-san live next door.

INT. UCHİYAMA'S HOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Trophies, photos, clips-- plus all sorts of stuff that has nothing to do with baseball. Yoji translates for Uchiyama.

YOJI

He let you play under one condition.

JACK

I'll practice, I'll mow the field,
I'll drive the team bus...

UCHIYAMA

No...

Uchiyama waves Yoji off, motions for Jack's dictionary. Occasionally Yoji coaches Uch with a word or two.

UCHIYAMA

You leader...

(looks up word)

"Potential." Not used. Too...

(another word)

"Ego." When I play...

(points to self)

Ego. I think....

Then, getting frustrated, he speaks RAPID-FIRE JAPANESE.

YOJI

He think he know what correct for coaching. But now that he coach, there so much tradition, and if he break it, and they lose-- he get a lot of blame. Lose his job. But he has watched you. He thinks you have abiltlity to inspire. Team and him. Maybe help loosen both up.

UCHIYAMA

I have... too tight...tukamu.

YOJI

Grip.

UCHIYAMA

And you...

He goes into RAPID-FIRE JAPANESE again.

YOJI

"High nail hammer down" not refer to statistics-- refer to attitude. He say: Team respects you, naturally, because you a major leaguer, and you older. So at first they consider it rude to approach you. But you never approach them, so they decide you not want to. Old fable: Weak man go to group. Strong man bring group to him. Gaijin mean "outsider." Please become... insider.

UCHIYAMA

(taking dictionary)

"Intoxication."

(then)

"Invitation."

JACK

Invite them out to get drunk?

UCHIYAMA

Hai. Sempai, Kohai.

JACK

You wanna come?

Uchiayama laughs, shakes his head. Speaks.

YOJI

No-- team get drunk, say what they think. He don't want to hear it.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The team, getting dressed, completely ignores Jack as he enters the room with Yoji. Yoji looks at Jack. Jack pulls out piece of paper. Clears his throat.

JACK

Summimasen... um... summimasen.
Gomen asai.

Slowly, the team begins to turn around. Jack reads:

JACK

Jibunga machigaeta kotowa
wakarimashita...

The team gradually stops their dressing to listen to Jack...

EXT. STADIUM - ON THE FIELD - A LITTLE LATER

Jack steps to the plate to BOOS from the CROWD. But he grins and bears it. The Pitcher leans in. Jack checks the sign... and can't believe it, but he... BUNTS.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jack is cleaning up when the DOORBELL RINGS.

YOJI'S VOICE (FROM HALLWAY)
Hey, Jack! It's the Yojster! I
brought some buddies!

The door opens and Yoji comes in with Sagimoto, Anzai, Uchida, and Sugita. And Uemoto. And Hiraizumi. And Yu and Duk. Anzai hands Jack a BOX.

YOJI
You must put this on. Is
traditional hazing outfit.

JACK
Hazing? Oh, God...

The team nods. As Jack starts to pull it out, we CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Laughing, the Guys from the team ENTER FRAME, followed by Jack, wearing a man's FORMAL KIMONO. All have beers. They stop at a RESTAURANT and look in the window, where a tank of LIVE UGLY SEA CREATURES are swimming.

YOJI
You must pick.

JACK
Oh, gosh... choices, choices... and
they all look so good.

He points to one, and we CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The team guys are all around a table, more drunk. They all laugh as a WAITRESS brings to the the table a RIDICULOUS LOOKING COOKED SEA CREATURE. Jack gapes. Everyone watches as Jack... digs in.

JACK
(really trying)
Mmmn-mnnn good! You guys want any?

They laugh, wave him off.

YOJI

They hate this shit.

Jack shakes his head, forces himself to keep eating. Sugito notices Jack's cup is empty, re-pours. Jack lifts it. CUT TO:

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT - LATER

Eight SAKE CUPS hit the table, and are immediately refilled. Jack, his Kimono getting ruffled, raises his again.

JACK

Kampai!

TEAM

Kam-pai!!

They drink, then Uemoto's is filled. He raises it. Speaks.

YOJI

He want to admit: he admire Jack's spirit, and he learn a lot from Jack's swing. Both how to swing, and how not to swing.

Hiraizumi's is filled and he raises his glass to Jack, says something. Yoji, drunk and slurring, translates.

YOJI

He say: I gotta admit something. I always thought you an asshole.
(to Hiraizumi)

Hai! Oremo onaji dayo!

JACK

What'd you say to him?

YOJI

I say: Me, too!

Jack lifts his glass.

JACK

I gotta admit something: I was an asshole!

Everyone nods, AGREEING.

JACK

Hey-- you're supposed to say: "No, no, you were actually a nice guy."

The team DISAGREES. Anzai says something to Jack.

YOJI

Japanese get drunk, tell the truth.

In the background UCHIDA has picked up a mic and has begun SINGING.

UCHIDA
"I REFT... MY HEART..."

YOJI
... or sing.

JACK
Tell him to shut up or I'm gonna
slap him.
(then)
Well, when in Rome...
(joining in)
"IN SAN FRANCISCO..."

REST OF TEAM
"HIGH ON A HILL... SHE CALLS TO
ME..."

INT. KAROAKE BAR - LATER

Really sloshed now, Jack leans on a couple of the guys as Sugita sings a Japanese song. Jack points to him.

JACK
This is first time I've seen him
standing alone when there wasn't a
camera nearby.

As Yoji translates, the guys nod and laugh. Near them, Yu, drunk, points to Jack and speaks to Duk, who taps Yoji.

YOJI
Wilson Yu want to know: how to meet
Japanese girl.

JACK
All I can say is don't tell em you
slid into someone and killed him...

Yoji explains. Suddenly Uemoto and Sagimoto perk up-- they've used the same line! Duk explains to Yu, Yu laughs. He, too, uses it!

YOJI
They use same line. You
ballplayers. Goddamnit, you all. I
hate ballplayers.

And suddenly Yoji rolls his eyes and PASSES OUT with a clunk.

JACK
Uh oh... now what? We can't talk.

A mic is thrust into Jack's hands. CUT TO:

INT. KARAOKE - BAR - LATER

Everone, led by Jack, SINGS the Japanese cartoon theme "PICARO."

EVERYBODY

"PICARO PIIICARO, PICARO PIIICARO!"

And just when we think it can get no wilder, we CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

The guys, plastered, burst out of the bar (carrying Yoji), still singing the song.

EVERYBODY

"PICARO PIIICARO..."

They turn a corner and squeeze into--

INT. TINY LOCAL BAR - NIGHT

Where they can barely fit the entire group (not to mention the two or three PEOPLE who are already in there). They throw Yoji up onto the bar-counter and order drinks. CUT TO:

INT. DIFFERENT TINY BAR - NIGHT

Yoji, still out cold, now propped up against the wall, the team raises glasses--

TEAM

Kam-pai!

INT. YET ANOTHER TINY LITTLE BAR - NIGHT

Yoji now hanging by his collar to a light fixture, the team raises their glasses yet again.

TEAM

Kammm-paiiii....

This time Jack starts to roll his eyes... and as he falls against one of the other equally-drunk guys, we CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP - JACK

His eyes open wearily. He sits up. Bangs his head. We're:

INT. "CAPSULE" - MORNING

Jack, really hung over, 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 FEET stick out. They stir...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jack lets himself out, looks around.

JACK

My God... I'm dreaming. No, worse:
I've died. I'm in a morgue. What's
next?

(eyes widening)

Autopsy!?

(suddenly relieved)

Oh... wait a minute...

He looks into a NEARBY CAPSULE: Uchida sleeps. IN THE CAPSULE BENEATH HIM: Sugito. 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...

Still hung-over, he shrugs and crawls back in and goes to sleep.

AN HOUR OR SO LATER

Jack reawakes. Gets up. Looks around. This time, none of his team is there.

INT. CAPSULE HOTEL - COMMUNAL TV ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

While 15 or 20 BUSINESSMEN watch one of the 7 different TV sets in the wall above them, Jack staggers in. THE TEAM is there, awake.

JACK

Where are we?

YOJI

Capsule hotel. Many Japanese businessmen use when too drunk to drive home, or too late for train. How we got here, I have no Goddamn idea.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Jack, still very hung-over, staggers onto the field. Sees Uchiyama.

JACK

I'm sorry I'm late. Seriously--

Uchiyama speaks Japanese. Yoji translates.

YOJI

You not late. Practice delayed two hours, from now on. However... since you are here--

Uchiyama points at the foul pole. Screams in Japanese.

UCHIYAMA

Hayaku hashire!

JACK

I'm sorry?

YOJI

He say: Get your lazy ass running!

JACK

Wait, aren't we supposed to have some big hug, and we make up, and you say "Welcome back, buddy, I knew you could do it--"

UCHIYAMA

(pointing)

Hayakyu hashire, to itta daro?!?!

JACK

Great, Jack. You could be in bed, dreaming...

(as Uchiyama screams again)

Okay! Okay!

Jack turns, starts running... Uchiyama nods. Some of the TEAM (still incredibly hung-over) staggers into the field. CUT TO:

VARIOUS SHOTS

Hung-over guys trying to practice baseball: Jack sees TWO BALLS coming at him at first... Uchida, in the outfield, runs RIGHT INTO THE FENCE. Jack offers some chewing tobacco to Sugito.

JACK

Just remember, don't spit it on the field.

Sugito nods. Takes a chaw. Suddenly gets GREEN...and THROWS UP.

JACK

Well, at least you didn't spit.

A CAMERA FLASHES on green-faced, bent-over Sugita. Jack smiles.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - AFTERNOON

Practice is ending. Jack comes up to Uchiyama, holding his bat.

JACK

Shutto.

Uch nods.

EXT. STADIUM - TWILIGHT

Jack smiles despite the rapid-fire Japanese instructions from both Uchiyama and Atachi. Yoji translates.

YOJI

Basically it's just a shorter stance, with body weight shifted slightly. And knuckles rotate a bit, so you not swing up so much.

JACK

That's it? You mean, we're not going to meditate and burn incense? Or learn aikido and walk backward with our eyes blindfolded? Or cut grass with samurai swords?

They shake their head.

JACK

I can do that.

And he begins swinging... CUT TO:

EXT. STADIUM

Jack swings at the plate-- A HIT. And a smile. CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

No one there, just the TV. A REPORTER babbles on:

REPORTER'S VOICE (SUBTITLED)

Dragons have won six of last eight games, and though it's too late in the year to win the pennant, enthusiasm is at its highest and ticket sales are up. The big surprise is first baseman Jack Elliot-- Mr. Besuboru!

Jack staggers in-- the last in from practice. He catches his name and looks at the PHOTO. Shakes his head--

JACK

I can't believe they used that photo.

And continues into the bath.

INT. TEAM BATH ROOM - EVENING

Jack, squatting on the little plastic yellow stool, is singing to himself as he soaps up...

JACK
...PICARO, PIIICARO...

Yoji pops his head in.

YOJI
Jack-san. Owners need see you.

Jack's slight smile drops...

JACK
Uh oh.

INT. HIROKO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jack, excited, moves around the apartment while Hiroko, just home from work, watches.

JACK
... a two year extension! I can
play for two more years! For...
guess how much. Guess.

HIROKO
(smiles)
Five hundred dollars.

JACK
No, come on, seriously.

HIROKO
Five billion dollars.

JACK
Oh, now it's gonna make my figure
seem stupid. Ready? Two million.
Dollars.

HIROKO
Wow.

JACK

To play. Two million dollars TO
PLAY. La la la la la la!! Yes
yes yes.

(now dancing around)

I'm rich! I'm rich! I'm... oh,
God. Am I being an asshole? Wait,
excuse me, you don't happen to have
change for a two million dollar
bill, do you? I do!

(plopping on the couch next
to her)

And... I can stay in Japan.

(then)

So how was your day?

HIROKO

I've been offered a job.

JACK

You too? That's great!

HIROKO

In America.

JACK

(beat)

What? You mean, like, the United
States of America?

HIROKO

I got huge opportunity for company.
The "big time"-- my dream job. I
always want to go, but before,
always for wrong reasons. But now,
I think, I ready. And they make
offer-- not nearly big like yours.
In fact, not even close. But great
start for me.

JACK

Well, the money doesn't mean that
much-- well, it does... I mean--
IT'S TWO MIL... but, that doesn't
matter. Does it? Oh, God...
What's more important? I mean, I
really like you. I mean, "like"
like. Or more. Oh, man. Just when
I thought things were settled I have
to go and think again.

HIROKO

Don't worry, Jack. It's not
thinkable.

Jack looks at her. What exactly does she mean? CUT TO:

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 KIBUKI 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. People buy "Aura" cologne. Everyone is wearing Dragon-blue...

The GUY IN THE CAR (remember him?) looks at his dashboard TV. When the jammed traffic moves, he carefully holds the wheel and creeps forward, then stops when the car in front of him does. And he gets rammed from behind.

EXT. STADIUM - DUGOUT - GAMETIME

It's the last inning. Jack and the players have yelling cones.

JACK
FROOOO-ZEN ROPE!

RESERVE GUYS
"FUROOOZENU ROPPU!"

JACK
LET'S GO NOW, LIIIIINE SHOOTER!

RESERVE GUYS
"RETTSU GO NOW, RINNNNNE SHOOTERU!"

Sugita gets a hit. CHEERS. Jack turns his hat inside out.

JACK
Rally caps! Rally caps! Come on
guys, let's play some guts ball!
We're down by one run!

The guys turn their hats inside out. Hiraizumi rushes to the lip of the dugout and takes Uchiyama's and turns it inside out.

The CROWD CHEERS... and Uchiyama leaves it that way.

Only the PETULANT FAN keeps shouting at Uchiyama. Finally Uchiyama turns, grabs a bat, and running up--

INTO THE STANDS

He smashes the bat against the seat all around PETULANT FAN, who, for the first time since we've seen him, actually shuts up.

Uchiyama then regains his composure and begins down the aisle. As he does, the CROWD starts to suddenly CHEER. As Uchiyama reaches the last step before the field, he turns to them and raises his arms in the air, and lets out a yell:

UCHIYAMA

Yaaaaahhh!

More cheers. Jack smiles. The team can't believe this.

On base, Sugita takes advantage of a distraction to STEAL SECOND BASE! He grunts and wheezes, running as fast as he can. It'll be close-- but he does something we've never seen him do-- he grits his teeth and DIVES, head first. There's a big crash. A beat... then:

UMPIRE

Safe!

MUCH CHEERING. Sugita takes off his cap, waves it. Even does a little knee-wigglin' "Jack Dance." Wilson Yu steps to the plate.

IN THE DUGOUT

Jack watches, pleased. Grabs his bat, as Uchiyama approaches him.

UCHIYAMA

Today strategy. Wilson Yu: bunt.
Runner three.

JACK

(not happy, but trying)
... then... I bunt?

Uchiyama smiles. Shakes his head.

UCHIYAMA

Today, we have fun.

Yu looks to Uchiyama for the sign. Uchiyama steps out of the dugout and-- VERY OBVIOUSLY-- gives him the bunt.

The GIANTS MANAGER sees it, but doesn't know what it is. But when the pitch comes in and Yu bunts... he knows.

Sugita now on third and the Dragons down by one run, Uchiyama calls Jack over. He speaks Japanese.

YOJI

Now we see if other team thinks
you've changed.

JACK

I don't get it.

YOJI

He say: If league accept you as one of them-- like a Japanese-- then they think you follow sign, neh? So last batter he show them sign. When you go up, he do same same. So if people think you follow it, then people think you gonna bunt. And if they thnk you bunt, then what pitch you get?

JACK

Well, they'll want it to come off the bat hard... so a fastball.

YOJI

And you swing hard. And home run wins game.

JACK

(nods)

Ah-so desuka... I think I can do that.

AT THE PLATE

Jack looks for the sign. Uchiyama gives the bunt sign.

The Pitcher looks to his Manager, thinking they've read the sign. They exchange nods. The Pitcher sets. Delivers... and it's...

A FASTBALL.

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.

JACK

Stops halfway down the first base line... and turns around. He passes Uchiyama.

JACK

What now, Coach?

UCHIYAMA

You decide. But we must win.

MOMENTS LATER - AT THE PLATE

Jack prepares. The Pitcher sets.

Jack looks at Atachi, adjusts his stance.

The pitcher delivers. SLOW MOTION: It's clearly a shutto.

Jack waits at the plate... cocks... swings... and--

--CRACK! It's a BASE HIT TO THE OPPOSITE FIELD! CROWD GOES WILD!
Uchida crosses the plate. The game is tied!

Jack, on first, reacts to CHEERS FROM THE CROWD. He tips his hat.

VARIOUS SHOTS - AROUND THE COUNTRY

Giants' fans are bummed. Dragons' fans are excited. As--

EXT. STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Uemoto steps up. Jack and he exchange glances. Uemoto adjusts his stance.

The pitcher sets. Delivers. Jack watches as...

Uemoto RAPS IT. Long.

Jack, proud, slows and raises his arms into the air...

JACK

Yesss!! Sayonara home-run!!

... only it isn't! It bounds off the top of the wall.

JACK

Oh, shit.

And suddenly Jack has to run. Hard. Grunting, sweating, he runs as fast as he can, rounding second, heading for third.

The Fielder picks up the ball. Turns to throw.

Jack rounds third, heads for the plate. The ball sails across the field. Jack digs toward home.

BASEBALL'S POV - RACING JACK toward the plate.

Closer... closer... here comes the ball...

And Jack dives head first... and we CUT TO:

THE DUGOUT

Goes wild. The Dragons have won!

ON THE FIELD - A MOMENT LATER

Jack waits for Uemoto. Walks him to the dugout. Intermixes a little **Japanese** with what he says in English.

JACK

Nice job, pal. Nice hitting.
Guttsu ball, hai?

(then, to Uchiyama)

Hey, Uch... you know what I'm thinking?

(slapping Uemoto again)

This guy is your future number four hitter. In fact... **hompono kotoo yuto**, he's actually your future first baseman. I mean, when I'm through with it, of course...

The team swarms around them. CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In silence and darkness, Jack lies awake, in bed. Really awake. Thinking. Rolls over. Again.

He sits up. Then finally speaks.

JACK

You should take that job.

REVEAL that Hiroko is in bed next to him.

HIROKO

What if I don't want to leave you?

JACK

Seriously, I've played seventeen professional seasons. And I've had thirteen or fourteen really good ones. And I think soon I'm going to be thirty eight. I'm going to try and find something else to do other than play. I mean, it wouldn't be the money, but I'd much rather be with you, and, well... I think it's time I took a look at the rest of my life. Because I think I llll... lllll... wait.

(grabs his phrase book...

but leaves it shut when he says, in Japanese)

Bokuwa anatoa aishite imasu.

Pause. Both let this register. (He said "I love you.") Then:

JACK

Also: Please to marry me and bear
my children?

Long silence. Then:

HIROKO

(in Japanese)

Sorewa iie desune.

JACK

What-- you'd rather poke your eyes
out with a stick?

HIROKO

No. **Sorewa iie desune** mean "that
would be nice."

Jack looks at her. Smiles. They kiss... and as they fall into the
darkness, we DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DREAM BASEBALL FIELD - USA - DAY

HOOK, JACKSON and THE ROOKIE (from the first scene) all turn toward
camera.

ROOKIE

Who's this Rookie?

JACKSON

Hey, man-- what position are you
playing?

REVERSE ANGLE - JACK is walking toward them.

JACK

First base.

(beat)

Coach.

HOOK

Get outta here.

The others echo Hook's sentiments. Jack, however, just nods.

JACK

In fact, I'm here to tell you...

(pointing to the foul pole)

Hayaku hashire!

ALL THREE (OVERLAPPING)

What? What are you saying? What
the hell are you--?

JACK
It means: "Get your lazy asses
running!"

The guys look at him. Then, complaining like hell, they all begrudgingly turn--

ALL THREE (OVERLAPPING)
Oh, man... what the hell... Christ,
it's only spring...

-- and start running.

CLOSE-UP - JACK

His eyes popping open from being asleep. He looks around. He is:

STILL AT THE DREAM BASEBALL FIELD

Where he is dozing under an umbrella during SPRING TRAINING. He's in the USA. And Hook, Jackson, the Rookie and others are looking at him.

HOOK
(out of breath)
Are you gonna just sit there while
we do wind sprints?

JACK
I coach... is important.
(then)
Hayaku hashire!

They start running again. Jack smiles. The lazy fuck. CUT TO:

EXT. BALLPARK - USA - DAY

Jack coaches first. The CROWD is full behind him.

JACK
Let's go, Hookie now, hum-now big
guy, frozen rope, little bingo-
now...

He takes a pause. Looks around. The crowd, the lights, the noise... His pal LEFTY GROUSE in the dugout. He takes a deep breath. There is the OS CRACK OF A BAT and Jack turns...

JACK
Yessss!

And we FREEZE FRAME, and the FADE OUT.

THE END