

THE DIAMOND

"Pilot"

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FROM BLACK, THE ROAR OF A CROWD --

TITLE OVER: NOVEMBER 2ND, 2016

The CRACK of a baseball bat echoes.

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
This is gonna be a tough play. The
throw to first.

The roar becomes deafening, electric.

JOE BUCK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The Cubs win the World Series! It's
over and the Cubs have finally won
it all.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - NIGHT

JOE BROOKS, mid 30s, rips off his catcher mask, revealing a handsome face caked with dirt and sweat. The years of playing major league baseball weigh heavily on him, but tonight Brooksy just won a World Series.

Joe runs towards the mound, his arms raised victoriously. The entire Cubs team converges onto the field.

Joe jumps into the arms of JEREMY WILLIAMS, mid 30s, weathered and brawny. REPORTERS make their way onto the field. Reporter KEN ROSENTHAL, bow tie and all, and his CAMERA GUY, stand on the infield dirt.

KEN ROSENTHAL
It's absolutely insane down here,
as you can imagine. There's a lot
of hugging, a lot of tears. I'm
gonna try to grab Joe Brooks here.

Joe, now wearing his 2016 World Series Champions hat, leans forward to hear Ken's questions over the roar of the crowd.

KEN ROSENTHAL (CONT'D)
Joe, Congratulations my friend. How
does it feel?

JOE
Ah, man. It feels unbelievable,
Ken. This team, management, the
fans, everybody. We've all been
waiting such a long time for this,
and it's -- it's just amazing.

KEN ROSENTHAL

Well, the wait is certainly over. You've been a lifelong Cub, a veteran and a leader on this team for so long. This season I'm sure was bittersweet for you. I know you didn't play nearly as many games as you would've liked. If this was your last game as a Cub, how are you feeling about that?

Joe is blindsided by the question, but he stays composed. Brooksy, always the professional.

JOE

I uh -- Look, I'm not even thinking about that right now. All I know is I feel great, I still have a lot of baseball in me and tonight, we're world champions.

Joe gives him a smile and a slap on the back, rejoining his teammates in celebration. Ken turns to the camera.

KEN ROSENTHAL

The great Joe Brooks. Now, I see Andre Leone coming over. Andre --

ANDRE LEONE, late 20s, African American, cocky with a knee-weakening smile, gets right up into the camera.

ANDRE

Wooooo, BABAY! World Champs motha--

INT. CUBS LOCKER ROOM - LATER

POP goes the cork on a bottle of champagne in Andre's hands. He proceeds to shake it, drenching his nearby TEAMMATES with a bubbly shower. The players sport ski goggles (for protection) and their World Series gear.

ANDRE

Who wants a drink?! Willy, I know you do!

Jeremy steps up and Andre pours the champagne directly into his mouth.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Brooksy!

Joe steps up and gets a mouthful of champagne. Other PLAYERS cheers around them. As Andre moves to quench another Player's thirst, Joe slips out of the mayhem towards the:

INT. CUBS CLUBHOUSE TUNNEL - SAME

Joe walks past a few REPORTERS. He finds himself in a quieter spot. He grabs a towel from a nearby bin, wiping the champagne from his face.

BONES MITCHELL, late 50s, walks over to the same bin. He walks like a former player, with more salt than pepper in his beard. He grabs a towel, wiping his eyes.

BONES
Damn, that shit really does burn.

JOE
I know this isn't your first champagne shower, Bones.

BONES
It's been a long damn time.

The men share a laugh before Bones turns the mood.

BONES (CONT'D)
Listen, uh... No matter what happens next year, whatever you decide to do, the team is behind you. Especially if they end up offering me the manager job.

JOE
I appreciate that. Just so you know, I'm not done.

BONES
Good. For now, enjoy this. You've earned it. And take it easy.

Bones gives Joe a slap on the back as he walks towards the locker room. Joe takes a beat, then heads back in himself, disappearing into a sea of flashing lights.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

2 MONTHS LATER.

Heavy snow falls outside. Joe is on top of his wife KRISTEN, late 30s, as they have pretty ordinary, not incredibly passionate sex. You can tell that Kristen loves her husband, but you wouldn't exactly categorize her as happy.

Joe climaxes with a grunt of satisfaction. He kisses Kristen on the lips and rolls on his back. They lie silently as Joe catches his breath. He sits up, grabbing a pill bottle from his bedside table.

KRISTEN
Another headache?

JOE
I'm fine.

Joe pops 2 pills with a drink of water. His feet hit the floor as he walks naked towards the closet, pulling on a pair of mesh shorts and running sneakers.

KRISTEN
It wouldn't kill you to take a day off, ya know? You did just win a World Series. Don't you think you deserve a little break?

JOE
Not the way it works, Kris. You know that by now.

And with that, Joe exits the bedroom, leaving an unsatisfied wife in bed.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - GYM - DAY

Joe is running hard on a treadmill, knees wrapped with support tape. He speeds up, in his element. Suddenly his vision becomes BLURRED. He shakes it off, quickly slows down the treadmill, back to a jog, composing himself.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

MATT, 13, the younger, scrawnier version of his dad, is lying on the couch. His thumbs rapidly move on a PS2 controller. Joe steps into the room, freshly showered.

JOE
What are you playing?

Matt answers him without looking away from the TV.

MATT
Mass Effect.

On the TV, a robot gets eviscerated, exploding VFX guts onto the screen. Joe feigns interest for the sake of father/son bonding.

JOE
Oh. Looks -- interesting. Can I play?

MATT
It's a single player game.

The DOORBELL rings. Joe welcomes the excuse to leave the room.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Joe reaches the foyer just as Kristen is answering the door. Jeremy stands on the other side, in the snow, holding a six pack and a holiday gift bag.

KRISTEN
Jeremy, hey. What are you doing here?

Jeremy steps in, kissing Kristen on the cheek. He shakes the snow off his jacket.

JEREMY
Sorry to just drop in on you like this.

KRISTEN
That's okay. Is Rachel with you?

JEREMY
No, she's home with Evan. But --

He hands Kristen the gift bag.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
From the Williams family. Early Christmas present.

KRISTEN
Oh, you guys didn't have to do that.

Jeremy looks to Joe.

JEREMY

Don't worry, Santa has something
for you too.

He holds up the six pack. Joe smiles, waving him further into
the house.

JOE

Come on back.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - DEN - LATER

Jeremy and Joe sit in leather arm chairs nursing their beers.

JEREMY

Chapman will be a good addition, I
think. Kid's got a strong bat, fast
as hell.

JOE

Yeah, I remember. He stole on me
three times last season.

JEREMY

I think we all remember that.

JOE

Yeah well, your infield is starting
to look like a fucking kindergarten
class.

JEREMY

Yeah.

Jeremy uses the natural segue to unload some unhappy news.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I was uh... talking to my buddy
Holmes.

JOE

That reliever in Seattle?

JEREMY

Yeah. He said there's a lotta
chatter about Mateo Perez getting
traded. And when he talked to
Perez, he seemed pretty confident
he'd be suiting up as a Cub next
season.

Joe's face slowly fills with worry.

JOE
Is it official?

JEREMY
I dunno, man. Even if it is, the
guy started as a first baseman, so
who knows. Maybe they're benching
my ass.

JOE
He caught 75 games for them last
year, Willy. And if you really
believed that, you'd be a lot more
pissed off right now.

Jeremy gives him a look: "I tried". Joe motions to the six
pack.

JOE (CONT'D)
Gimme another.

Jeremy hands him a bottle.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kristen is already in bed reading. Joe gets in next to her,
clearly troubled.

KRISTEN
It was nice seeing Jeremy today.

JOE
Yeah.

KRISTEN
What'd you guys talk about?

JOE
Same old shit.

Kristen looks at him, waiting. But same old Joe; he's not
talking. She closes her book and turns off the light.

KRISTEN
Goodnight.

JOE
Night.

He gives her a mindless peck and she closes her eyes. But
Brooksy can't sleep. Not tonight.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joe is bouncing a tennis ball on the kitchen floor. The clock reads 2:26AM. He looks at his laptop, opened on the ESPN News page. He clicks refresh. Nothing changes.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

The clock now reads 5:15AM. Joe, still grasping the tennis ball is sitting in front of his computer. He hits refresh. One more time. And then --

A photo of MATEO PEREZ, early 20s, comes on the screen. The headline reads: **CUBS ADD CATCHER MATEO PEREZ FROM SEATTLE.**

JOE

Fuck.

Joe throws the tennis ball across the room. He feels like he's just been kicked in the stomach, trying to catch his breath.

ESPN (OVERLAY)

Big news coming out of Chicago. The Cubs have acquired catcher Mateo Perez for right fielder Scott Franco and two minor league prospects. Perez took over behind the plate after Mariners catcher Ben O'Neil went on the 60 day DL last season.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - GYM - MORNING

Joe is going HARD on the treadmill.

ESPN (V.O.)

The question is now, what does this mean for Joe Brooks?

He's in a fucking rhythm. No hot shot is taking his position away from him. He pushes himself harder and harder and harder. Then -- THWACK as Joe's forehead hits the treadmill with a sickening crack. He winds up in a pile on the tread as it grinds to a halt.

CRASH TO BLACK.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

(muffled)

Joe. Can you hear us, Joe? Hey.

From Joe's POV, his eyes flutter open. We see blue sky and TWO FUZZY FIGURES standing above him. We can make out blue hats with the red C's. He's on a:

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD

JOE (O.S.)
What happened?

MALE VOICE
You gotta foul tip right off the
mask, but you're gonna be okay.
Just take it easy.

The crowd is heard chanting.

CROWD (O.S.)
Brook-sy. Brook-sy. Brook-sy.

Joe's eyes close again and we're back to:

BLACK.

KRISTEN (O.S.)
(muffled)
Joe. JOE. Oh, my God. JOE, can you
hear me?

Joe's POV again as his eyes open. He's looking at the ceiling of his gym and his now relieved wife.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
Oh, thank God. Stay there, don't
move.

No chanting here, just the stuttered grinding of the half halted treadmill. This is real life. Joe closes his eyes again.

BACK TO BLACK.

INT. MERCY HOSPITAL - DAY

Joe is lying in a hospital bed with his eyes closed, a bandage on his forehead. His eyes open as he looks around the hospital room. Kristen comes to his bedside.

KRISTEN
Hey. How are you feeling?

She gives him a kiss. His eyes are a little vacant as he looks at her. She grows concerned.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

Joe. It's me, it's Kristen.

Just then, the DOCTOR walks into the room.

DOCTOR

How are you feeling, Joe?

JOE

Um. Pretty sore. Confused as hell.

DOCTOR

I bet. You know who this is?

He points to Kristen. Joe takes her hand, attempting to soothe her concern.

JOE

Of course I do. She's my wife.

DOCTOR

You took a hard fall, Joe. And knowing your past, one can never be too sure.

JOE

Is it another concussion?

DOCTOR

Yes.

Joe sits back, closing his eyes. Just then, Matt enters with two cans of soda. He looks at his Dad, worried.

JOE

Hey kiddo.

Matt comes further into the room, hands a soda to Kristen, and shakes his Dad's hand.

DOCTOR

Would you mind if I spoke to Joe alone? I just have a few questions for him.

KRISTEN

Yeah, of course. We'll be outside.

Kristen and Matt leave the room, shutting the door behind them. The Doctor pulls up a chair next to Joe's bed.

DOCTOR

So, I know you're training for next season. Kristen said she found you near the treadmill. Were you running?

JOE

Yeah. I guess I slipped.

DOCTOR

Do you remember slipping?

JOE

No.

DOCTOR

Any blurry vision? Dizziness?

JOE

Maybe a little.

DOCTOR

And have you been feeling any depression lately? Maybe trouble sleeping...

Joe lets out a laugh.

JOE

I just won the World Series, Doc.

DOCTOR

That's not what I asked.

Joe's not laughing anymore. His face says yes, but he refuses to say it out loud.

JOE

Just -- tell me when I can get back to work.

DOCTOR

With your symptoms and the scans we've seen over the years after your concussions...I can't clear you to play, Joe. If something like this happens again, or you get another foul tip in the mask, the damage will only get worse.

(beat)

I'm sorry.

Joe's face tightens. On the inside, his heart has been ripped from his chest.

He wipes a tear falling down his cheek, clearing his throat in an attempt to seem fine. But Brooksy is far from fine.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Joe sits at the kitchen table. His entire career -- the dreams, the heartbreaks, the victories -- have been reduced to a pile of index cards. On a fresh card, he writes: **This game means everything to me.**

Joe starts to cry. Not the kind he can shove back in his eyes; real, painful and angry tears. He cries into his hands. Kristen comes into the room, but he doesn't look at her. She slowly walks towards him, putting her hand on his back. After a few seconds he turns to her and sobs into her arms.

JOE (OVERLAY)

Today is obviously a very emotional day for me.

INT. CUBS PRESS ROOM - DAY

Joe sits at a table in front of a dozen microphones. Tears fill his eyes as he struggles to keep his composure, clutching his index cards. Kristen and Matt sit in the front row.

JOE

As a little kid, all I dreamed about was playing baseball in the Majors and winning a World Series. This game means everything to me. The last thing I want to do is say goodbye. But today -- I'm officially announcing my retirement from Major League Baseball.

Cameras flash.

EXT. BROOKS HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Joe, now with a growing beard, is outside with Matt. They're both bundled up, dirty patches of snow lie on the ground.

MATT

What are we doing out here, Dad?
It's fucking cold.

JOE

Hey, language. Once the ground thaws, you're gonna help me with a little project.

Matt looks at his Dad with teenage skepticism.

MATT

What kinda project?

JOE

Well, your Mom has always wanted a deck back here. So we're gonna build one.

MATT

Um. Okay.

JOE

Here.

Joe gives Matt the end of a tape measure and walks backwards, measuring the perimeter of what will one day be a deck.

MATT

Dad... Are you like, depressed?

JOE

What? No. Why would you ask me that?

MATT

I dunno, you've been acting kinda weird since Christmas. And I heard Mom telling someone that you might be.

JOE

Oh. Well, she's wrong. Alright?

MATT

I was reading too... about players that have what you have, the post concussion syndrome, or whatever. Some of them are so depressed, they end up killing themselves.

JOE

Matt, seriously. You don't have to worry about me. I'm okay.

Joe looks at Matt with a sincere, fatherly look. He's lying, but his son will never know that.

MATT

Alright.

Kristen sticks her head out of the sliding glass door.

KRISTEN

Joe. Phone call.

Joe tosses the tape measure to Matt.

JOE

To be continued.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Joe steps into the house and takes the phone from Kristen.

JOE

Hello?

INT. IMG AGENCY - DAY - INTERCUT

CHUCK, 60s, balding head and a Brooks Brothers suit, sits at his desk. His office is filled with sports memorabilia.

CHUCK

Hey, Brooksy. Did I catch you at a bad time?

JOE

Hey, Chuck. No. What's up?

CHUCK

I got something for ya. I'm not sure how you're gonna feel about it.

JOE

It's not a commercial, is it? Because the retired Peyton Manning ones are so goddamn depressing.

CHUCK

Nah, nothing like that. I had lunch with Eric Hodges a few weeks ago, after your announcement. He told me that if he could, he'd like to keep you around the organization.

JOE

Yeah...

CHUCK

How do you feel about being the
Hitting Coach for the Cubs?

JOE

Oh. Uh --

CHUCK

You don't have to answer right now.
Position players report to Mesa in
2 weeks. And they want you there.

Off an irresolute Brooksy --

EXT. SLOAN PARK - DAY

Chyron: Sloan Park: Mesa, Arizona.

Cacti and sunshine surround the pristine baseball stadium. A
red Wrigley-esque sign reads SPRING TRAINING HOME OF THE
CHICAGO CUBS.

Andre, dressed in mesh shorts and a Spring Training shirt,
walks down the dirt path between the stadium and the
clubhouse. He stops for a few autographs and selfies.

INT. ARIZONA HOTEL - GIO'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

GIO CRUZ, early 20s, Latino, is fidgeting with his bag. He's
nervous, but focused. Over his shoulder, he yells:

GIO

Hey, Sarah.

SARAH CRUZ, early 20s, comes into the room. She may be young,
but she's maternal and centered. She carries 2 year old
SOFIA.

GIO (CONT'D)

Have you seen my elbow guard?

SARAH

Check the side pocket.

Gio checks his bag and sure enough, finds it. He throws his
bag over his shoulder.

GIO

Alright, I'm ready. We gotta get
going.

SARAH

Grab Jackson. I'll go get the car.

Sarah leaves with Sofia. Gio calls out for Jackson.

GIO
Come on, Jack. Daddy's gotta go to
practice.

JACKSON, 4, comes in the room wearing a Philadelphia Phillies
hat. All smiles.

JACKSON
I'm ready!

Gio looks down at his son, letting out a laugh.

GIO
Yeah, we're gonna have to get you a
new hat. Again. Come on.

He takes the Phillies hat off and grabs his son's hand.

EXT. SLOAN PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Skipper "Chappy" CHAPMAN, mid 20s, a fresh-faced spitfire,
walks towards the entrance to the clubhouse. JOSH "AX"
AXELROD, mid 20s, a handsome goofball, approaches him.

AX
Hey, Chappy.

Chappy turns to see him.

CHAPPY
What's up, Ax?

They shake hands/bro hug.

AX
I was psyched to hear you'd be with
us this year.

CHAPPY
Yeah. A year too late, apparently.

AX
Don't you worry. I got 9 more
fingers.

They share a laugh as they enter the building. Behind them --

A modest car pulls up to the entrance with Sarah at the
wheel. She lays one on Gio in the passenger seat.

SARAH
Knock 'em dead, baby.

Gio winks at her. He looks at the back seat to his kids.

GIO
Be good. *Papa te ama.*

Gio gets out. New season, new team. The car pulls away, revealing --

Jeremy pulling his bag out of the trunk of his Porsche. Joe pulls up next to him in his pimped-out Range Rover. Joe gets out of the car and sees his buddy.

JEREMY
Hey, man.

JOE
Hey.

An awkward beat, then --

JEREMY
I'm not gonna ask you how you're doing.

JOE
Good.

JEREMY
I like uh, what you got goin' on here though. Very special.

Jeremy motions to Joe's beard. Joe nods.

JOE
Yeah, well... your mother seemed to like it.

Jeremy cracks a smile, the old Brooksy is still in there.

JEREMY
Glad to have you here, man.

The two head towards the entrance.

INT. SLOAN PARK - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Joe walks in with Jeremy. Andre, Ax, Chappy, Gio and CURTIS HAMILTON, 24, are all at their lockers.

CURTIS

Hey Brooksy. Good to see you, man.

They shake hands.

JOE

Good to see you too, Ham.

He looks at the other guys, everyone seems weird and quiet.

JOE (CONT'D)

What the fuck is up with all of
you?

ANDRE

We got you a little somethin'.

Ax comes over, carrying a cane covered in Cubs C's. He kneels
and holds it out with two hands, like offering a sword.

AX

For you, sir Brooksy. Our old and
wise leader.

Joe shakes his head and takes the cane. Everyone laughs,
including Joe.

JOE

Wow, boys. This is somethin',
really. Thank you. Now, who's gonna
bend over so I can shove it up
their ass?

The guys are cracking up. Joe looks to Jeremy.

JOE (CONT'D)

Is this you, motherfucker?

JEREMY

I had nothing to do with this.
There's probably one with my name
on it too.

AX

Not yet, Willy. Maybe you'll get
one on your farewell tour.

JEREMY

Yeah, go fuck yourself, Ax.

JOE

What'd I miss?

JEREMY

Just Ax running his mouth, as usual.

Bones enters, clapping his hands, getting the team's attention.

BONES

Alright, settle down.

The room goes quiet. All eyes on Bones.

BONES (CONT'D)

Welcome back, fellas. And new guys, welcome to the Cubs. Obviously there's been a lot of changes since last year, me being in charge is certainly one of them. But, we know what we gotta do, work hard and have fun. You're the reigning world champions fellas, go act like it.

Bones walks out of the locker room, leaving the guys a little underwhelmed.

EXT. SLOAN PARK FIELD - DAY

Andre is at the plate hitting. Joe stands behind the backstop watching his swing. LESLIE FERGUSON, 40, the Cubs trainer, approaches. She's well respected and smart as hell.

LESLIE

Hey Brooks.

Joe turns, happy to see her.

JOE

Hey, Les.

LESLIE

Little weird seeing you on this side.

JOE

Better get used to it.

LESLIE

How are you feeling?

JOE

Good. I'm good.

Leslie gives him a prying look.

LESLIE
You know I can tell when players
are lying to me.

JOE
Good thing I'm not a player anymore
then.

Joe gives her a smirk. Leslie rolls her eyes; there's a
history between these two.

LESLIE
Just be careful, alright. I got
enough cocky assholes to worry
about.

JOE
Yes ma'am.

Joe watches as Leslie walks away. His eyes land on Mateo
Perez in catcher's gear talking with Ax. Joe has a twinge of
jealousy but snaps out of it after a CRACK from Andre's bat.
Joe watches as the ball flies over the outfield fence.

JOE (CONT'D)
Nice swing, Dre.

Coach Brooks tries hard to focus on the job he's been given,
but this is uncharted territory.

INT. JULIO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Joe is sitting alone at a table, absentmindedly eating chips
and salsa. He takes out his phone, looking at it for a beat
and calls HOME.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - NIGHT - INTERCUT

Kristen answers the phone, wrapped in a towel. The shower is
heard running.

KRISTEN
Joe?

JOE
Hey. Were you sleeping?

KRISTEN
No, I was just about to jump in the
shower. Everything okay?

JOE

Yeah. I uh... I'm at Julio's, that little Mexican restaurant by the park.

KRISTEN

Oh, yeah. They had really good guac.

JOE

Yeah, that's the one. I was just thinking about you. Maybe you and Matty could fly out for the weekend. Like you used to.

KRISTEN

Oh...

JOE

Jeremy said he might ask Rachel too. Plus, it's 78 degrees here right now.

KRISTEN

Yeah, I'll talk to Matt. We just have a lot going on here, you know...

This crushes Joe. More than he thought it would.

JOE

Yeah, sure. I just thought it might be nice.

There's an awkward beat.

JOE (CONT'D)

Is he still up?

KRISTEN

He slept over at Darren's house.

JOE

Oh, okay.

Another beat.

KRISTEN

You sure you're okay?

JOE

Yeah, I'm good. Things are just...
a little different, obviously,
but... anyway. Get back to your
shower. Love you.

KRISTEN

Love you too.

Kristen hangs up the phone and heads towards the bathroom. When she reaches the shower, it's not empty. A naked man, BRAD, 40s, turns to her as she opens the door. He's nothing extraordinary, but he has kind eyes and a warm smile, especially when he looks at her.

BRAD

Everything okay?

KRISTEN

Yeah.

She drops her towel and steps into the shower. They embrace, kissing passionately as the door shuts.

INT. SLOAN PARK - JOE'S OFFICE - DAY

Joe is sitting at his desk. He opens a drawer and pops a few pills. With a soft knock, HANNAH, 20s, enters. She's dressed like she should be in an office, not a baseball stadium.

HANNAH

Mr. Brooks? Hi, I'm Hannah Burke. I
work for Mr. Hodges in the front
office.

JOE

How can I help you, Hannah?

HANNAH

Mr. Hodges wanted to be here, but
he's dealing with a few things back
in Chicago. He wanted me to ask you
personally if you'd like to throw
out the first pitch on Opening Day.

Joe isn't sure how to take this news. Honored, sure, but
that's what retired players do. And he's not... oh, right.

JOE

Hodges wanted you to ask me?
Couldn't pick up the phone himself?

HANNAH

I'm sure he would have if he was able.

JOE

Of course he sends you to do his dirty work, because he knows I won't yell at you.

HANNAH

I'm not sure what you mean.

Hannah is genuinely confused. Joe isn't interested in explaining himself to her.

JOE

Nevermind. Tell your boss I'll sleep on it.

HANNAH

Okay. Thank you.

Hannah turns around and leaves.

INT. SLOAN PARK - LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Mateo is at his locker. Joe walks past him in street clothes. They make eye contact and Mateo goes to say something, but Joe is not in the mood.

Jeremy is at his locker buttoning his shirt. He sees Joe all pissy.

JEREMY

What the fuck happened to you?

JOE

Hodges sent one of his minions to ask me if I'd throw out the first pitch on Opening Day.

JEREMY

Okay...

JOE

Really, they couldn't find someone else? I've been retired for five fucking minutes.

JEREMY

Well, maybe they wanted to give you a little recognition, you know.

(MORE)

JEREMY (CONT'D)

The fans didn't really get to send you off properly.

JOE

That's who I'm doing it for? The fans? I already feel like a fucking joke.

JEREMY

Jesus Christ, man. You're taking this way too personally.

JOE

It's bullshit, Willy. And you know it.

JEREMY

Take the honor. Not everyone gets it. You're being an asshole.

Joe takes a deep breath, collecting himself.

JOE

I need a fucking drink. Wanna grab a beer?

JEREMY

I thought you said you weren't supposed to be drinking.

JOE

Funny, you don't look like my wife.

JEREMY

Whatever, man. I'm just looking out for you.

JOE

I don't need anyone looking out for me. Are you coming or not?

JEREMY

Um... nah, I think I'm just gonna turn in early. I'll see ya tomorrow.

Jeremy heads out, leaving Joe a little burned. He looks over at Ax who's leaving with Gio, Chappy and Andre.

JOE

What are you guys up to?

AX
Hitting Ocean Seven. You wanna
come?

Off Joe --

EXT. SLOAN PARK - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ax, Andre, Chappy, Joe and Gio head into the parking lot. Sarah pulls up just as the guys are crossing the lot. Gio looks to his teammates.

GIO
Yo, I'll catch up with you in a
minute.

He walks over to the car and talks to Sarah in the open passenger side window.

GIO (CONT'D)
Didn't you get my text?

SARAH
No, I've been driving. What?

GIO
I was gonna go out with some of the
guys.

A crying wail is heard from the backseat. Sarah turns to her daughter.

SARAH
Sh, Sofia. Don't cry, baby.

GIO
What's the matter with her?

SARAH
Well, Jackson has been coughing all
day, I was gonna pick up medicine
on the way back to the hotel, and
now I think Sof has it.

Gio stands, utterly torn. He looks towards the guys.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Gio...

He looks back at her. Her look says "get the fuck in the car." Gio shakes his head.

GIO
 (to the guys)
 I'm out guys, sorry. Next time.

Gio gets into the car. Kinda huffy. Sarah drives away, shaking her head.

INT. SEVEN OCEANS NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

UNCE.UNCE.UNCE.UNCE.

The club music is pounding, lights are strobing. Andre and Ax are living it up on the dance floor. They are surrounded by BEAUTIFUL GIRLS like a group of sharks circling their prey. One of the WOMEN grabs Andre by the hand and they head over to a --

VIP SECTION with couches. Chappy has a girl, JESSICA, 20s, on his lap. It's dark, but we can see that Jessica and Chappy might actually be having a real conversation.

Unlike Andre, who's got a tongue down his throat. When he comes up for air, he pulls a nearly empty bottle of champagne out of an ice bucket and tops off his Girl's glass.

AT THE BAR. Joe is sitting on a stool nursing a scotch. His eyes wander to the end of the bar, where a few COLLEGE GIRLS are ordering drinks. They're certainly out of Joe's appropriate age range, but he's not breaking any laws by looking, right? Besides, it's not like they're giving him any attention anyway.

Behind him, Andre approaches with the empty ice bucket. He gives Joe a slap on the back.

ANDRE
 Havin' fun?

JOE
 Loads.

ANDRE
 Come on now, I saw you back in the day. The girls couldn't get enough of you.

JOE
 Things change, Dre.

ANDRE
 They sure do. With you and Willy out, I get an awful lot of attention these days.

He looks back at the Girl who's waiting for him, giving her a seductive wave.

JOE

Well, you still got Jeremy "ladies man" Williams to worry about.

ANDRE

Didn't he tell you? He's hanging it up after this year. Told a bunch of the guys today and will probably tell the press soon.

Joe stifles his anger.

JOE

No. Didn't mention it.

ANDRE

If you ask me, he just wants that farewell tour. Like Jeter and Big Papi. Did you see how much shit they got?

Andre looks to the BARTENDER.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Hey, lemme get a few more bottles. The good shit.

He hands the Bartender the empty ice bucket, which is quickly filled with Moet and handed back. One of the College Girls approaches Joe.

COLLEGE GIRL

Excuse me. Are you Joe Brooks?

Andre raises an eyebrow at Joe.

ANDRE

There you go, Brooksy. Excuse me.

Andre heads back to the VIP section. Joe, not sure where this question will lead, answers.

JOE

Yeah, I am.

COLLEGE GIRL

Great!

She turns to a COLLEGE GUY standing nearby.

COLLEGE GIRL (CONT'D)

It is him!

College Guy seems really excited and comes over. Joe wasn't expecting that.

COLLEGE GUY

I thought it was you. You were like, my favorite baseball player growing up. Can I get a picture with you?

JOE

(reluctantly)

Sure.

College Guy gives his phone to his girlfriend. As she snaps, a flash blinds Joe. It's a less than flattering photo.

COLLEGE GUY

Thanks, dude. I'm totally making this my default.

They leave. Joe has hit rock bottom, and the bottom of his glass. He takes out his phone and texts Kristen: **You up?** A few seconds pass, no response. He gets up from the bar, looking out at his former teammates, having the time of their lives. Joe heads for the exit.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR

Chappy is kissing Jessica. He pulls away, they speak in shouting tones.

JESSICA

Do you wanna get outta here?

CHAPPY

Yeah.

He takes her hand and they leave the dance floor.

INT. ARIZONA HOTEL - GIO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gio is sitting on the couch. Sarah comes out of the bedroom.

SARAH

She's finally down.

Gio doesn't say anything, just sulks.

SARAH (CONT'D)

What's your problem? You still mad
you missed boys night?

He stays silent.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Look, you wanna go grind up on some
girl instead of taking care of your
kids, you go right fucking ahead.
We'll be just fine here.

GIO

I came home, didn't I?

SARAH

Yeah, but your pouty ass is not
what I need right now.

Gio gets to his feet, irritated. He tries to make his case to
his wife.

GIO

You know how important it is for me
to make this team. Not just for me,
but for us.

SARAH

Yeah, I do know. And I knew it in
Gwinette, Allentown, Des Moines --

GIO

What the fuck do you want me to
say? Huh? You knew what you were
getting into.

SARAH

You're right, I did. And, even when
you're at your fucking worst, like
right now, we're still proud as
hell of you.

Gio takes a breath. He goes over to Sarah, taking her hands.

GIO

I just... don't want to blow a shot
because the guys don't know me. I
bust my ass, but I'm always the
first they think of that's
replaceable, and they send me back
down. It's more than just shit on
the field.

SARAH
I understand.

Gio gives her a look "do you?". She answers his silent question.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I really do. We'll leave tomorrow.
Give you a few more days with the team.

GIO
I don't want you guys to go.

SARAH
I know. But maybe, this is how things are gonna have to be.

She gives him a kiss and heads into the bedroom, leaving a conflicted Gio in her wake.

INT. SLOAN PARK - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Chappy enters, walking past Andre and Ax.

AX
Where'd you disappear to last night, Chappy?

CHAPPY
Nowhere.

ANDRE
Don't play, I saw you leave with that hottie. She give you some, or what?

Chappy flips him off.

ANDRE (CONT'D)
Come on now, don't play us like that! Give us somethin'.

CHAPPY
Nothing to give.

The guys finally let up and Chappy starts to get dressed.

EXT. SLOAN PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Joe walks from his car towards the entrance. He sees Jeremy talking to the PRESS. He finishes up and heads to the entrance, running into Joe.

JOE

You just announce your retirement?

JEREMY

What?

JOE

Hey, it's cool. Maybe you'll get that farewell tour you've always wanted.

JEREMY

What the fuck is your problem?

JOE

Don't have one. Really, congratulations.

Joe gives his buddy a slap on the shoulder. More like a "fuck you" than a "congratulations".

INT. SLOAN PARK - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Bones is at his desk when he sees Joe walk by the doorway.

BONES

Hey, Brooksy. Come in for a second.

Joe comes in, closing the door behind him.

JOE

What's up?

BONES

I just got a call from the Front Office. What did you do last night?

JOE

Went out, had a few drinks, came home. Why?

Bones holds up his phone and shows Joe the picture of him with the kid from last night. He looks absolutely wasted, not reflecting at all what his night was truly like.

JOE (CONT'D)

Jesus. Where'd you get that?

BONES

It's uh... trending.

JOE

What?

BONES

It usually isn't a big deal, except that some of the players were seen there too. And Hodges doesn't think it's a good look for you to be partying with players, given your new position.

JOE

I wasn't partying with anyone. The kid asked me for a photo, what was I supposed to say?

BONES

Look, I don't like this any more than you do. I'm just sayin' you gotta be careful with this kinda thing, alright?

JOE

Fine. Anything else?

BONES

Yeah. Give Perez a chance, talk to him.

JOE

He has bullpen coaches for that.

BONES

Yeah, but he'll learn the most from you.

JOE

What makes you think he wants to learn anything from me?

BONES

Just do it. We're five days out from Opening Day. If he blows you off, fuck him.

EXT. SLOAN PARK - FIELD - DAY

Mateo is putting his gear on. Joe approaches with authority.

JOE

Perez.

Mateo stands up straight to greet him. Mateo can speak English, but has a thick Cuban accent. He's the guy that's grateful to be there and will work his ass off, for real.

MATEO

Mr. Brooks. It's a pleasure to meet you.

JOE

Look, I don't need the ass-kissing, alright.

MATEO

I didn't mean to... ass kiss.

JOE

Well, Bones thinks you want to hear tips from me, so --

MATEO

Yes. Please.

Mateo's eager personality doesn't match his talent.

JOE

I've seen tape on you. You're quick. You know how to play this game, mechanically. You've got a fucking cannon, but sometimes you're afraid to use it. Don't be. If a guy is taking a big lead on you or is dumb enough to steal on you, send him to the fucking bench.

MATEO

Okay. I can do that. What else?

JOE

Also... you're too goddamn nice.

MATEO

Too nice?

JOE

Yeah. Let me ask you somethin'. A guy comes up to the plate, taps your shin guard, says 'hey Mateo, buddy, how's the family?' What do you do?

MATEO
I say hello back.

JOE
No. You don't say a fucking thing.
I don't care if it's your best
friend, your brother, or the girl
you fucked last night. You don't
say a fucking thing.

MATEO
Okay.

JOE
And if you have to say anything,
you say 'don't fucking touch me.'
He's trying to loosen you up, take
you out of the game. But you need
to stay competitive. You need to
keep your shit together on the
field. You understand?

MATEO
Yes, I do.

He really does understand. Grateful, passionate, hungry. Not
so different from a young Brooksy.

MATEO (CONT'D)
Thank you.

JOE
Alright. Get outta here.

Mateo puts his helmet on and heads over to where the pitchers
and catchers are.

INT. SLOAN PARK - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The team is clearing out of the locker room. Gio is sitting
in front of his now empty locker. He gets a text from SARAH:
Anything?

Gio types back: **Nothing.**

He hears the door open to Bones's office, holds his breath.
Bones shakes hands with another PLAYER, then looks towards
Gio.

BONES
Cruz. You're up.

Gio gets up and heads over.

INT. SLOAN PARK - BONES'S OFFICE - DAY

Gio sits down, Bones settles in to his chair.

BONES

This day was the one I feared the most when I became manager. Kids like you come up, they bust their ass for six weeks and then what am I supposed to say to them? Sorry kid, go back to Des Moines to work construction during the off season.

Gio just nods, bracing himself.

BONES (CONT'D)

I mean, Frasier has three kids. It's heartbreaking.

Gio is profoundly confused.

BONES (CONT'D)

The day has its silver lining too, when I get to tell a hard working, talented kid that he made the Opening Day roster for the Chicago Cubs.

He flashes a smile to Gio, who is stunned.

BONES (CONT'D)

Congratulations, Gio.

Gio exhales, practically in joyful tears. He shakes hands with Bones.

GIO

Thanks, Skip. I'm not gonna let you down, I promise.

BONES

That's what I like to hear. Now, go get your stuff. Plane leaves for Chicago in two hours.

EXT. CHICAGO JR. HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Matt is at bat, swings, sending a line drive into center field. Kristen is sitting in the stands with a now clothed Brad. They stand up and cheer as Matt safely reaches first base.

In the nearby parking lot, Joe pulls up in his car. He spots them and heads over to the stands. Kristen sees him first. She's a little surprised, but happy. She steps off the bleachers and walks over to him.

KRISTEN

Hey. Did you just get in?

JOE

Yeah. Came right here.

Kristen doesn't go to hug him at first, which feels weird to Joe.

JOE (CONT'D)

Come here.

Kristen goes to him and he wraps his arms around her, practically breathing her in.

JOE (CONT'D)

I missed you.

He pulls away and kisses her. Kristen smiles and they head back over to the bleachers. They climb up to where Kristen was sitting and when Joe sees Brad, he holds out his hand.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hey Brad. How's it going?

Brad shakes his hand. Totally normal. What a douche.

BRAD

Good to see you, Joe. Matt just got a nice little single.

Joe looks out into the field and sees Matt on first base.

JOE

(yells)

Thatta boy, Brooks!

Matt looks over, shakes his head at his embarrassing Dad. Kristen sits back down in her seat, flanked by Joe and Brad. Poor Brooksy has no clue.

INT. CHAPPY'S HOUSE - FOYER - EVENING

Chappy unlocks the front door of his house. He pauses, almost like he walked into the wrong house. There's furniture, pictures and art hung on the walls, candles are lit. It looks amazing, like a home.

KATE (O.S.)
Do you like it?

Chappy turns around to see, KATE, early 20s. Even in her pajamas, she looks like she just stepped out of a J. Crew catalog. Perfect... maybe too perfect.

CHAPPY
Babe, what is this?

KATE
Well, I can't take all the credit.
Your parents came and helped out a
little. We just wanted you to feel
like you had a home here.

Chappy is speechless, which Kate wasn't expecting.

KATE (CONT'D)
Is something wrong?

CHAPPY
No no... it's amazing. Thank you.

He wraps his arms around her and they kiss. She pulls away and whispers in his ear.

KATE
Welcome home.

Out of Kate's view, Chappy's eyes are troubled.

INT. GIO'S HOUSE - EVENING

Gio enters a more humble house. It's dark and quiet. No one is there to greet him at the door.

GIO
Sarah?

He takes a few steps further.

GIO (CONT'D)
Hello?

He flips on a light and his kids and Sarah yell:

CRUZ FAMILY
Surprise!

Gio drops his bag with a smile, happy to see his family. They're all wearing Cubs gear.

JACKSON
Yay Daddy!

Jackson runs into his arms and he gives him a big hug.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Come on, we have cake!

GIO
Cake, huh?

Gio puts him back down. Sarah approaches, hugging him too.

SARAH
Congratulations, baby.

GIO
I'm sorry you weren't there when I
found out.

SARAH
Me too. But, that's okay. This team
will always have your back.
Together, or apart.

Sarah signals at her and the kids. Gio smiles and gives her a kiss.

JACKSON
Cake!

GIO
Alright alright. Get this kid a
piece of cake already!

Sarah cuts the cake and doles out slices. The perfect little family. Wonder how long this will last...

INT. JEREMY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

A fridge opens, revealing 4 out of 6 Bud Lights, some stained Chinese food take-out containers and a rotting banana. Jeremy reaches in and takes one of those beers, popping off the top.

He sits down on the couch. A sparse apartment surrounds him. This looks like a bachelor pad. He looks over at a side table that has a picture of him with his family, who we'll come to meet as RACHEL and EVAN. He takes his cell phone out of his pocket, dialing, waiting. A faint youthful voice answers on the other end and Jeremy lights up at the sound.

JEREMY
Hey Ev. How's it going?

He smiles, eyes pooling with tears as he listens.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
God, that's great buddy. I wish I
could've been there. Hey, guess
what? You're coming to Wrigley
tomorrow... Yeah, I know. I can't
wait to see you either...

We can hear an adult woman voice now, muffled. Jeremy's face
fills with worry.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Wait, no... Rachel, just let me --

The call ends, infuriating Jeremy.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
FUCK.

He throws the phone across the room, his face falling in his
hands. He sits back, taking a self-medicating gulp of Bud
Light.

EXT. CHICAGO JR. HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - EVENING

The teams finish their "good game" high-fives in the middle
of the field. Matt is packing his bag in the dugout. Joe
approaches the chain-linked fence.

JOE
Nice game.

MATT
Thanks.

JOE
You should've had that grounder in
the 6th, though. Gotta keep that
glove down.

Matt doesn't respond. His teammate DARREN approaches. Darren
has a more naive, childish quality to him, different from
Matt.

DARREN
Hey Mr. Brooks.

JOE
Hey Darren. Great pitching out
there.

DARREN

Thanks.

Kristen and Brad come up next to Joe.

BRAD

Come on, D. Let's get home.

DARREN

You're not making dinner, are you?

BRAD

Your Mom's working late. I was gonna make my chicken surprise.

Darren rolls his eyes. No thanks.

JOE

How about we all go out for pizza? My treat.

Brad looks to Kristen. She tries.

KRISTEN

I dunno, don't you boys have homework to do?

MATT

Nah, I finished mine on the bus.

DARREN

Me too.

JOE

Great. Let's go.

Joe heads to the car, blissfully unaware of the awkwardness that will undoubtedly follow.

INT. PIZZERIA - NIGHT

A few lukewarm pizza slices sit in the middle of the table. There isn't much conversation happening, until --

BRAD

So, Joe -- how's the team looking this year?

JOE

Pretty good, I think.

DARREN

You think we'll bring home another ring?

JOE

Let's see how we do tomorrow first. One game at a time.

DARREN

Well, Matt and I are gonna be like you and Jeremy Williams. Best friends playing in the majors.

JOE

Is that right?

Joe looks to Matt who is sitting next to him. He doesn't share his friend's enthusiasm, at least not in this moment.

JOE (CONT'D)

Well, you keep throwing, Darren. You might have the arm of a major leaguer. This guy --

He nudges his son.

JOE (CONT'D)

We gotta convince him to keep his glove on the ground.

BRAD

Maybe if he starts wearing his prescription goggles, he'd see the ball better.

Kristen makes an "oh shit" face. Matt shakes him off.

MATT

I'm not wearing those things. They make me look stupid.

Joe, caught off guard, looks to Kristen.

JOE

Prescription goggles?

KRISTEN

I took him to the eye doctor and he needs glasses. But, he refuses to wear his goggles on the field.

JOE

You didn't tell me about that.

KRISTEN
I thought I did.

JOE
No. You didn't.

BRAD
Sorry, I didn't mean to --

JOE
No, it's fine. Clearly there are
things my wife feels aren't
something I need to know.

KRISTEN
Joe, we can talk about it later.

MATT
She didn't tell you because I
didn't want her to.

Joe looks at his son, genuinely perplexed and hurt.

JOE
What? Why?

MATT
Because, you're always up my ass
about playing and being the best, I
just didn't wanna hear it.

JOE
What are you talkin' about?

Brad, in an attempt to be helpful, intervenes.

BRAD
I'm sure Matt is just trying to
make you proud, Joe.

JOE
Can you just mind your fucking
business, Brad?

Brad is taken aback, Kristen looks at Joe, mortified.

KRISTEN
Joe -- stop it.

Brad wipes his mouth with his napkin.

BRAD
You know, I think it's time for us
to get home. Darren.

Brad gets up from the table, Darren follows.

DARREN
Thanks for dinner, Mr. Brooks.

Matt gets up too.

KRISTEN
Matt, where are you going?

MATT
Going to hang out at Darren's.

KRISTEN
No, sweetheart. Not tonight. Your father just got home.

MATT
So?

JOE
Let him go. It's fine.

Brad, Darren and Matt leave the pizzeria, leaving Kristen and Joe alone at the table.

INT. ANDRE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A modern mansion. Andre sits on his couch, wearing sweatpants and a tank top, huge gold chain around his neck. ESPN plays on his 90 inch TV. The doorbell rings. He turns the TV off and walks to the door. He opens it to find -- Leslie on the other side.

ANDRE
Wasn't sure if you were gonna come.

LESLIE
Me neither.

Andre flashes her a smile. God, that smile.

ANDRE
Come on in.

She steps in, looking around at the house. She sees a huge portrait of Andre in a heroic swinging stance hanging on the wall. She laughs.

LESLIE
Why am I not surprised?

ANDRE

Come on now, that was a gift.
Besides, look at my fucking biceps.

Leslie turns to him, sincere.

LESLIE

You didn't tell any of the other
guys I was coming here. Did you?

ANDRE

Nah. Except for the four guys
waiting for us in the bedroom.

LESLIE

Dre.

ANDRE

I didn't, I promise. We made a
deal.

Leslie nods, appreciative.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Come on. This way.

Andre walks down a hallway, stopping at:

INT. ANDRE'S HOUSE - ANDRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

They step into the room, both a little tentative.

ANDRE

Do you need anything, or --

LESLIE

Just drop your pants, Dre.

ANDRE

Damn, Les. Always getting right to
the point.

Andre undoes the drawstrings on his sweatpants, turning around. He pulls his pants from his waist, exposing his certainly fine ass. He puts both hands on the bed. Leslie comes up from behind him, pulling something out of her purse, stabbing him. Andre winces.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Ah, motherfucker.

LESLIE

All done.

Andre takes a breath, pulling his pants back up. A SYRINGE is in Leslie's hand. He turns to her, sincere. A rare thing to see from Dre.

ANDRE

Thank you.

Leslie puts the syringe in a ziplock bag and back in her purse. Andre opens the drawer of his bedside table. He pulls out his check book and begins to write.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

This should cover you for a while.

He rips the check out and hands it to her. Her eyes widen at the number.

LESLIE

Dre, this is too much.

ANDRE

I know you need it. And I need you.
Consider it an advance.

Leslie, clearly conflicted, but takes the check.

INT. CHAPPY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chappy is lying in bed watching ESPN. Kate comes in and lies down next to him.

KATE

So, you like your new teammates?

CHAPPY

Yeah, they seem like a good bunch
of guys.

KATE

I can't wait to meet them.

Chappy turns to her with a "yeah, sure honey" look. She cuddles up next to him.

KATE (CONT'D)

While you were gone, I called a few
of the venues we talked about. The
Royal Hawaiian said they have the
first two weekends of October open.

Chappy looks at her with a furrowed brow.

CHAPPY
October?

KATE
Yeah, our anniversary.

CHAPPY
Um...

KATE
What's wrong?

CHAPPY
Look, I'm tired. Can we not talk
about this right now?

KATE
Yeah, sure.

Chappy shuts the TV off. He rolls over, facing away from her.

KATE (CONT'D)
You're not gonna go down on me?

CHAPPY
What?

KATE
(very matter of fact)
You always do the night before
Opening Day. I even wore the same
underwear, like you said.

Chappy rolls over on his back.

CHAPPY
Right.

KATE
I mean, don't if you don't want to.
It's your stupid superstition.

CHAPPY
No no... You're right.

He sits up, pulls the covers back, exposing Kate in her
underwear. Chappy positions himself between Kate's legs.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Joe and Kristen walk into the house. Joe's finishing a
Brooksy tirade. Kristen has had enough.

JOE
What a fucking asshole, seriously.
Like he's fucking Dad of the Year.

KRISTEN
You were the asshole, Joe.

Kristen goes up the stairs.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kristen enters, taking her shoes off. Joe follows her in.

JOE
Why wouldn't you tell me about
Matt?

KRISTEN
He told you why.

JOE
Yeah, but he's our kid, Kris. You
could've told me.

KRISTEN
Well, sorry I didn't. Alright? Is
that what you wanna hear?

A beat, then -- what's REALLY bothering him.

JOE
Why didn't you guys come to
Arizona?

KRISTEN
Because we had a lot going on. I
told you that.

JOE
Well, I needed you there.

Kristen doesn't want to hear the sob story. She undresses
further, getting ready for bed.

JOE (CONT'D)
Do you know how fucking hard it was
for me? To watch my best friends
still playing? To see a younger,
better player taking my spot? I'm
fucking miserable.

KRISTEN

Then why did you take the coaching job? We barely talked about it before you were packing your suitcase.

JOE

Because what else was I gonna do?

KRISTEN

Well, if you don't know the answer to that, I can't help you.

JOE

Baseball has been in my blood since I was seven years old. Do you know what it feels like to have something ripped away from you like that? You have no fucking clue what that's like.

KRISTEN

I don't know what you want from me, Joe. I've been with you for eighteen years. The whole time, I was standing right by you. And when I needed you, you weren't there. And I got used to that. So, forgive me if I wasn't there for you this one time.

Joe's fists clench at how cold his wife is being.

JOE

You don't even appreciate that I quit for you. I gave up the thing I love the most for this family, because I couldn't live with the thought of you not recognizing the man you married.

KRISTEN

I haven't recognized you for a long time, Joe. I don't even miss you when you're gone anymore.

JOE

You don't mean that.

KRISTEN

Yeah. I do.

Joe walks over to her, taking her in his arms.

JOE
Come on, don't say that.

He kisses her and starts groping her. She's not feeling it.

KRISTEN
Stop it, Joe.

He reaches for his pants, not hearing her.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
Joe. Stop. JOE.

Kristen pushes him off.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
You need to feel like a fucking
man, go do it somewhere else.

Kristen goes into the bathroom, slamming the door shut,
leaving a dejected Joe as he collapses onto the bed.

INT. CHAPPY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Chappy comes into the kitchen with his bag. He grabs a
protein shake from the fridge. Out on the patio he sees Kate
on the phone. She looks happy. He pauses for a beat, but then
decides to leave without saying goodbye.

INT. BROOKS HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Matt is sitting at the table. Kristen is making breakfast at
the stove. Kristen notices Joe walk in and sit next to Matt.
She puts a spoonful of eggs on two plates, setting them in
front of the guys.

JOE
Thank you.

Kristen gives him a nod and goes back to the stove. Joe looks
at Matt, his eyes glued to his plate as he eats.

JOE (CONT'D)
You know, Dom DiMaggio wore glasses
on the field. No one really talks
about him, because he was Joe's
brother, but he was a seven-time
all star for the Red Sox. Great
ball player in the 40s and 50s.

Matt looks up from his plate at his Dad.

JOE (CONT'D)

Just wear the damn things, Matt.
You don't want to end up like me
because you couldn't see the ball.
Trust me. Alright?

MATT

Yeah.

Kristen looks at Joe, appreciating this rare moment of good parenting. They share a look, a silent apology of sorts.

KRISTEN

Will our tickets be at the stadium?

JOE

Yeah. Same place.

Off this semi-rebuilding family moment --

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

Establishing shot of Wrigley Field.

Chyron: GAME #1 - APRIL 4TH

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - TUNNELS - DAY

STADIUM WORKERS are busy getting things together for Opening Day. Throughout the game, we'll hear the velvety voice of Joe Buck... because who doesn't love Joe Buck?

JOE BUCK (V.O.)

Defending World Series Cubs take on the St. Louis Cardinals today here at Wrigley for their season opener. Starting for the Cubs is southpaw phenom Josh Axelrod. He was 12 and 4 in the regular season last year and of course led the Cubs to a World Series victory.

Down the hallway, a cart filled with AX bobble-heads goes by.

INT. CUBS PLAYER LOUNGE - DAY

Chappy is sitting on a couch watching film on his iPad. A text comes up, interrupting the tape. It's from KATE:

Good luck today baby! Love you xoxoxo

Chappy doesn't text back, but lingers for a second. Instead, he composes a new text. He takes a piece of Arizona hotel stationery out of his bag that says JESSICA - 412-653-2521. He types in the number and then a text:

Hey. It's Chappy. How was the rest of your vacation in AZ?

He waits a beat, and then sends it. He doesn't get an immediate response, goes back to watching film.

On the other side of the room, Gio approaches the microwave. He puts his baseball glove in, hits some numbers and the thing runs. Yes, he's microwaving his glove. Mateo is nearby at his locker.

MATEO

Be careful. I saw a guy's glove catch fire once in there.

GIO

Shut the fuck up. Really?

MATEO

That was a sad day.

GIO

Shit. I bet.

Gio stops the microwave and takes it out, petting his mitt like it's the most precious thing in the world, which it is, to him.

GIO (CONT'D)

This is Angelina. Brand new this year. She's gonna be my good luck charm.

He kisses it. Mateo reaches up onto the shelf of his locker and pulls out his catcher's mitt. It's broken in, worn.

MATEO

Lola 2.

GIO

Oh, she's a beauty. What happened to Lola 1?

MATEO

Lola 1 was my first glove. I lost her when our raft went overboard. The second I made it to the US, I bought a new one. And she's been with me ever since.

GIO

That's crazy man. Can I --

Gio goes to touch Mateo's glove, but Mateo pulls it away.

MATEO

I will cut your *cojones* off if I
ever see you touch her.

Both of the guys laugh. Off this bonding bro moment --

INT. CUBS CLUBHOUSE TUNNEL - DAY

Joe walks down the tunnel. A photo of him jumping into Jeremy's arms during the World Series win covers the wall. The bittersweet nostalgia causes him to pause for a beat to look at it.

ANNOUNCER (OVERLAY)

We are honored to welcome two time
National league MVP, Six time All-
Star, the winner of 10 Golden Glove
awards, and now World Series
champion. Ladies and gentlemen --

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DUG OUT/FIELD - DAY

The stadium is filled to capacity. Joe stands on the steps of the dug out as the team filters in and out.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Please welcome back, Joe Brooks.

Joe steps out onto the field with a huge smile. He lifts his hat to the crowd, hamming it up for everyone. Mateo heads to the plate as Joe hits the mound for the ceremonial first pitch. A weird dynamic. Joe throws the ball, hard, and it hits Mateo's glove with a snap.

The crowd goes wild, Joe raises his hands as a thank you to the fans. Mateo jogs over to him and they shake hands, which looks good for the camera.

ANNOUNCER

Your starting line-ups...

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - WIFE SECTION - DAY

We now meet Rachel, mid 30s, and Evan, 7, in the flesh. Evan's youthful excitement contrasts Rachel's jaded apathy. Kristen and Matt are sitting in the same row next to them.

Kate, carrying a tupperware container, rocking her Cubs jersey, stops at their row. She finds her seat, which is right next to Rachel.

KATE

Hi there, are you a player's wife?

Rachel looks at Kate. Who is this perky thing that's going to be sitting next to her for 9 innings?

RACHEL

Yeah. Jeremy Williams is my husband.

KATE

Oh my God, you must be so proud of him. He's one of my Chappy's heroes.

RACHEL

Oh, you're Skipper Chapman's wife?

KATE

Soon to be.

She flashes her ring at Rachel before shaking her hand.

KATE (CONT'D)

I'm Kate.

RACHEL

Rachel.

Kate looks to little Evan with a huge smile.

KATE

And you, little sir, you are so handsome.

Evan beams back at her. Kate holds up the tupperware container.

KATE (CONT'D)

Is it alright if he has a cookie?
They're homemade chocolate chip.
And gluten free.

RACHEL

Uh yea, sure. Only one, buddy.

Kate pops the top off of the container and Evan takes a cookie out. Rachel looks to Kristen, rolling her eyes at robo-fiancee.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - GAME IN PROGRESS - DAY

The team is set in the field. Ax is on the mound.

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
Axelrod is ready. And let's do it
here at Wrigley. The first pitch -

Ax winds up and throws, sending the batter swinging and missing.

JOE BUCK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
A beautiful strike thrown by Josh
Axelrod and we are under way.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - GAME IN PROGRESS - LATER

Chyron: BOTTOM OF THE 3RD : CUBS 0 - CARDINALS 0

Gio is at the plate.

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
Still no score here at Wrigley. Gio
Cruz at the plate. He's 0 for 1
today after flying out in the
first. He's got a 1-2 count with a
man on 2nd. And the pitch.

Gio readies himself and swings. He pops it up into the infield.

GIO
(to himself)
Fuck.

Gio drops his bat and runs hard to first, but the ball is caught and he's out.

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
Cruz flies out for the second out
of the inning.

Gio heads back to the dug out:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DUGOUT - SAME

Gio removes his batting gloves and helmet. He goes up to Joe who's sitting on the bench.

GIO
Brooksy. What pitch was that?

JOE
Hanging curve. Same one you swung
at in the first.

GIO
What the fuck am I doing wrong?

JOE
You're moving your hands too fast.
Keep 'em back. If it's a strike,
it'll be right there when you need
it to be.

Gio nods, appreciative. Gio goes to say something when CRACK.
Everyone looks towards the field as a home run flies over the
centerfield wall, hit by Jeremy.

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
It's outta here! First home run of
the season for Jeremy Williams, and
the Cubs take a 2 - 0 lead here in
the 3rd.

The team stand on the top step cheering as Jeremy rounds the
bases. Joe is affected, but on the outside he's applauding
his friend.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - WIFE SECTION - SAME

The wives are going crazy cheering. Evan is clapping and
cheering. He looks to Rachel who claps half-heartedly.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - GAME IN PROGRESS - LATER

Chyron: TOP OF THE 5TH: CUBS 2 - CARDINALS 0

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
Two outs here at Wrigley with a
runner on first. Axelrod digs in.

Ax goes into his wind up and as he releases, the runner
(BYRD) TAKES OFF. Mateo pops to his feet and throws the ball.
It's a beautiful throw, but it BOUNCES off the glove of
Curtis Hamilton and rolls into center field.

JOE BUCK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The ball gets past Hamilton, and
Byrd is gonna try to take extra
bases.

Andre gets the ball just as Byrd rounds 3rd base and GUNS it
home.

Mateo is ready at the plate and catches the ball just before Byrd drives his body into him. Mateo goes down but has the ball. The UMPIRE calls Byrd out at the plate.

JOE BUCK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
What started as an error turns into
an incredible play by Andre Leone
and Mateo Perez for the third and
final out of the inning.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DUGOUT - LATER

Curtis Hamilton walks over to the dugout phone, picks it up.

CURTIS
Hey, who'd you give that error to
just now? Nah, that throw was wide.
Give it to Perez.

Curtis hangs up to find Joe standing right behind him.
Busted.

JOE
I really fucking hope you didn't
just do what I think you did.

CURTIS
Uh...

JOE
Perez gave you a fucking silver
platter throw and then got fucking
tackled to save your ass. And you
wanna give him the error? Own up to
your own fuck ups and don't you
ever let me catch you pulling that
shit again. You understand me?

CURTIS
Yeah.

Joe walks away, revealing Mateo on the other side of the water jug, fully aware of what just went down. Joe looks to him, not exactly a thawing, but a mutual understanding.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - GAME IN PROGRESS - LATER

Chyron: TOP OF THE 7TH: CUBS 2 - CARDINALS 0

Ax is back on the mound. A cocky player ALBERTO SANTOS, 22, comes up to the plate. He taps Mateo on the shin guards.

SANTOS
Que pasa, Perez?

Santos looks at him, waiting for a response, but Mateo stays silent. Santos is clearly bothered, but shrugs it off.

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
 Here's Alberto Santos. He's 2 for 2
 today against Axelrod.

Santos steps into the box, but he's not settling in, moving his feet, moving his bat, just fucking around. Ax takes a sign from Mateo and goes into a wind up, just as Santos puts his hand up.

SANTOS
 Time.

The UMPIRE raises his arms just as Ax releases the pitch, a beautiful strike. Santos steps out of the box, smirking at Ax.

AX
 What the fuck?

Boos are heard from the crowd. Mateo throws the ball back to a frustrated Ax. He takes a breath and delivers. Santos SWINGS hitting a line drive right back at Ax. He raises his glove hand to catch it, but the ball hits him right in the wrist with a CRACK.

Ax goes down, not fielding the ball. Chappy runs over from third, trying to make the out, but Santos is safe at first. Leslie, Bones and the entire infield meet at the mound, surrounding Ax.

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
 Santos makes it safely to first,
 but Josh Axelrod is down. It looks
 like that line drive hit him right
 in the wrist.

AX
 FUCK. It hurts.

LESLIE
 Easy, Ax. Take it easy.

Leslie gingerly takes Ax's wrist in her hands. It's blowing up swollen.

AX
 How bad is it?

LESLIE

I don't know yet, Ax. At least it's not your pitching hand though, right? Come on, let's go get it looked at.

With tears in his eyes, Chappy and Jeremy help him up and Ax walks off the field with Leslie to a standing ovation.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DUGOUT - SAME

Bones gets back to the dugout and looks at his Pitching Coach, DOUG KELLY, 60s, a portly guy with an 80s mustache.

BONES

Who's warm?

DOUG

Rizzo and Kuroda.

Bones takes a beat to think about it.

BONES

Bring in Kuroda.

Doug nods and picks up the phone. Bones walks past Joe who's sitting further down on the bench.

JOE

Why not Rizzo?

BONES

Scuse me?

JOE

Randall's up next. He's 3 for 26 against Rizzo. Kuroda's never seen him.

BONES

But Kuroda has great numbers against lefties.

JOE

Yeah but --

BONES

I thought you were hired for hitting, not for questioning my decisions about pitchers.

Joe sits back, not winning this one. Bones turns and watches as HIDEO KURODA, mid 20s, warms up on the mound. He's tall, built and focused.

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
Up now is Jerry Randall. This will
be the first time he's faced Hideo
Kuroda.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - GAME IN PROGRESS - SAME

Kuroda throws his first pitch to Randall, who ROCKETS a ball into the right field stands.

JOE BUCK (V.O.)
Randall with the two run home run
and we have a tie ball game here in
the 7th.

The faces of the players drop. As Randall rounds the bases --

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - LOCKER ROOM - LATER

The attitude is somber. The players are in different stages of undress. A complete 180 from the last time they were in this locker room after a game.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - GAME IN PROGRESS - EARLIER

Jeremy is at the plate. He swings and misses STRIKE THREE. Frustrated, he walks back to the dugout, scanning the stands for his wife and Evan, but they're nowhere to be found.

INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

There's a knock on the door. Rachel opens it to find --

RACHEL
Jeremy.

A very drunk Jeremy, looking like a total mess.

JEREMY
Where'd you go? I thought I was
gonna see Evan.

RACHEL
He was tired.

JEREMY
Bullshit. My kid wants to see me.

RACHEL
Go home, Jeremy. You're drunk.

JEREMY
This is my home.

RACHEL
Not anymore.

JEREMY
Just let me in, Rachel. I've done everything I can without taking back what happened. What more do you want from me?

RACHEL
We had a deal, Jeremy. You keep your distance and I keep quiet about the divorce until after your retirement. Until then, there is no us.

Jeremy has heard this before, but it rips him to shreds every time he does. Rachel closes the door, leaving Jeremy out in the cold.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - GAME IN PROGRESS - EARLIER

Chappy runs into left field to try and catch a blooper fly. It drops between him and the Left fielder. The foot of a Cardinal's runner hits home plate.

Chyron: TOP OF THE 8TH: CUBS 2 - CARDINALS 5

EXT. CHAPPY'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Chappy is walking to the door. His phone buzzes and he sees a text from Jessica's number:

You mean after the night I got to spend with THE Skipper Chapman?? How can anyone top that? ;) BTW, rough game but you looked great out there, and I don't just mean in pinstripes.

Chappy laughs at her clear sarcasm and humor. Then he looks up at the house, no longer smiling. He makes the contact name CLUBHOUSE GUY and puts his phone back in his pocket.

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - TUNNELS - EARLIER

Joe is walking down the tunnel and sees Doug walking by.

JOE
See ya, Doug.

Doug doesn't answer, mumbles something inaudible, but it causes Joe to turn back.

JOE (CONT'D)
Is there a problem?

Doug turns back to Joe, clearly bothered.

DOUG
Look, you were a good catcher, so I don't mind you talking to Perez, but don't let me hear you ever question a pitching choice again.

JOE
I just want to win, same as you.

DOUG
Don't bullshit me, Brooks. You might've been able to call the shots when you were a player, but that ain't how it's gonna work anymore. You better learn your place here.

Doug walks away. Off Joe, exasperated and in need of a --

INT. CHICAGO BAR - NIGHT - LATER

Joe is nursing a whiskey at the bar. The TV is playing SportsCenter. The great LINDA COHN is giving highlights.

LINDA COHN
(on the TV)
A tough one at Wrigley today with the Cubs losing their home opener to the St. Louis Cardinals 6 - 3. Not the best start for the reigning World Champions.

Joe takes out his phone, looking again at an already read text from 2 hours ago. Matt: **Mom and I left early.** Joe is nearing the end of his glass when the BARTENDER brings him another.

BARTENDER

Courtesy of that pretty lady over there.

The Bartender points down the bar to a MYSTERIOUS WOMAN enjoying a martini and they share a look. Joe's eyes are intrigued, inviting, and he flashes her a Brooksy smile, tipping his glass to her. She gets up from her seat and sits on the stool next to Joe. With an alluring smile:

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN

Hello stranger.

END OF PILOT