

9

THE FAN

a screenplay
by
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from the novel
by
Peter Abrahams

8

POLISH

February 9, 1995

OVER BLACK

A voice over the radio. Under it, the SOUNDS OF TRAFFIC.

BERNIE (v.o.)
We got our first caller on the line.
Is that Gil on the car phone?

A FLASH OF LIGHT and we see where we are:

INT. CALLAHAN TUNNEL -- BOSTON

CLOSE ON THE BACK WINDOW OF A BMW cruising through the tunnel. The car passes under the tunnel lamps and we see a chintzy baseball souvenir sitting in the back window -- the little plastic baseball player with the spring head, nodding up and down. He wears a Red Sox uniform.

A silky voice full of cocky enthusiasm speaks up;

GIL (v.o.)
It sure is!

As the car passes under the tunnel lamps, darkness and light alternate with each other. Flashing on and off like a strobe light. The doll smiles his glassy smile while his head bobs up and down. He looks like a lobotomized Little Leaguer.

A woman's voice joins Bernie's. Sexy and a little mocking.

JEWEL (v.o.)
Whatcha got for us, Gil?

ON THE REAR LICENSE PLATE

a vanity plate reading WNSOX. Light. Dark. Light. Dark.

GIL (v.o.)
Just that I'm psyched.

JEWEL (v.o.)
Tell me something new. Opening Day's tomorrow, we're all psyched.

ON REAR VIEW MIRROR

hanging from it is an autographed baseball card encased in clear plastic, featuring the sunlit, smiling face of a player in Dodger blue -- BOBBY RAYBURN in batting position. Light. Dark. Light.

GIL (v.o.)
This is different. I've been waiting a long time.

ON THE DASH BOARD -- a St. Christopher statue. But this one's wearing a batting helmet and has a tiny Louisville Slugger on shoulder. Light. Dark. Light.

BERNIE (v.o.)

What for?

GIL (v.o.)

This year. It's their year. They got Bobby Rayburn now. The Sox are going all the way.

JEWEL (v.o.)

We been hearing that since 1918. What would you bet on that, if you were a betting man?

The BMW 325i speeds out of the tunnel into BLINDING SUNLIGHT. A Crisp, cool April day in Boston.

ON THE DRIVER -- He looks every bit the respectable salesman -- hair slicked back just so, power tie on (a red field with small dots -- if you look closely, you can see that they're baseballs), face freshly shaved. He wears the best suit he could find at Filene's Basement. His body is athletic and powerful.

The only thing out of place in this corporate facade is a pair of reflective Oakley sunglasses wrapping around his eyes. This is GIL RENARD and he smiles a shark's grin as he answers her question, holding the car phone relaxed in his hand.

GIL

Everything I owe.

The woman on the radio laughs.

JEWEL (v.o.)

Owe? Hey, I like this guy! So you think Rayburn's worth the 40 million?

GIL

A bargain at the price, Jewel. Lifetime batting average of .325? He's worth twice what they're paying him.

JEWEL (v.o.)

I bet he'd love to hear you say that. I'll see if I can get him on the line for you.

Gil's heart skips a beat. Does she really mean it?

JEWEL (v.o. cont'd)

Hang on.

The radio starts blaring The Harry Simeon Singers doing "It's a Beautiful Day for a Ball Game."

CUT TO:

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

BERNIE, heavy-set man in a worn-out suit, is munching a bear claw at the console and looking about due for his second heart attack. Next to him is JEWEL STEIN. She's in her thirties, her hair a tangled mess. She wears sweats and no make-up -- clearly a woman who has just rolled out of bed. . .

Behind them is a poster -- a glamour shot of the pair of them. The caption reads "BERNIE AND JEWEL IN THE CLUBHOUSE -- WEEKDAY MORNINGS AT 7:00" In the picture he looks hail and hearty and she has great hair and movie star make-up -- a real beauty.

Jewel rubs her scalp vigorously to try to get her brain working and yells to the technician through the glass.

JEWEL

Is Rayburn on the line yet?

The tech speaks over the intercom.

TECH

Keep vamping.

JEWEL

I'm vamping. I'm talking to some dipshit on a car phone.

(falling back into her seat)

Who does Rayburn think he is?

BERNIE

Three time National League MVP?

JEWEL

And that gives him the right to screw up my show?

The tech listens to his headphones -- gives Jewel a thumbs up through the glass.

TECH

We got him!

Jewel leans, gratefully, into the microphone.

JEWEL

All right, here he is, the man who carries on his shoulders the hopes and dreams of the entire Boston Red Sox organization, indeed, of all the states of New England!

INT. TARGA -- DAY

A car pulls away from Logan Airport. At wheel of the Targa is WALD, agent and attorney, mid-forties, balding, stocky, but in great shape. Armani suit buttoned over his Hermes tie.

Next to him is BOBBY RAYBURN -- 33, in a J. Peterman t-shirt and sport coat. His body is powerful, but lean and sinewy, like a

There's an air of eagerness about him, a desire to get going, get moving, get started, to shuck off winter and plunge headlong into spring. He's beginning a new chapter in his life and he can't wait to get at it... He holds the car phone, listening to Jewel.

JEWEL (v.o. cont'd)
Ex-Dodger Centerfielder and League RBI
champ for the past three years, local-
boy-come-home, Bobby Rayburn!

Bobby gives an all-American boy grin.

BOBBY
Good to be talking to you!

JEWEL (v.o.)
Listen, we got a lot of rabid fans on
the line. We're going to give them
their shots and let them talk to you.
But first, you glad to be back in Boston?

Wald watches Bobby from the corner of his eye.

BOBBY
Oh, man! You know, I grew up in Saugus,
so the Sox were my team, and the idea
of walking into Fenway and picking up
a bat? Man, I get goosebumps. It's
like being a kid all over again.

Wald gives him a thumbs up.

JEWEL (v.o.)
That's sweet. But let me ask you,--

INT. GIL'S CAR

Driving down the expressway.

JEWEL (v.o. cont'd)
--you spent half of last season on the
D.L. with your ribcage. The contract
dispute with the Dodgers kept you out
of Spring Training, so you're joining
the team ice-cold, the day before
Opening Day.

Gil listens with building anger to her litany.

INT. WALD'S TARGA

Bobby listens -- this one's a little tougher than he expected.

JEWEL (v.o. cont'd)
Goosebumps or not, do you honestly think
you're worth 40 million dollars?

Bobby shoots a look at Wald -- how'd he get him into this?

BOBBY

I'm glad you asked that... as far as the ribcage is concerned, I'm feeling one hundred per cent, and I'm ready to play one hundred per cent and give one hundred per cent.

JEWEL (v.o.)

What about the fans? Won't all this money raise their expectations?

Bobby's getting annoyed by this.

BOBBY

The fans are what it's all about.

INT. GIL'S CAR

He nods a strong affirmation to Bobby's words.

GIL

Damn straight.

INTERCUT WITH BOBBY AND JEWEL

JEWEL

Okay. How 'bout Juan Primo?

Bobby grimaces.

JEWEL (cont'd)

Veteran Sox Centerfielder since '90.
Now you come in and bump him to left.
Lot of people think he resents that.

BOBBY

Well, you gotta be flexible in the game of baseball.

JEWEL

Then why didn't you move to left field?

INT. GIL'S CAR

He listens, anger building as he hears her grill Bobby. Bobby's starting to sound a little rattled.

BOBBY (v.o.)

I've always played Center.

GIL

Bitch.

BERNIE (v.o.)

Let's get to the fans. You still on that

Gil sits upright, gripping the wheel.

GIL
Am I on the air?

JEWEL (v.o.)
You bet! Did you have a--

GIL
Why do you have to be so negative all the time?

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH

Jewel acts hurt.

JEWEL (v.o.)
Hey, I'm a well-known Pollyanna in this business!

GIL
I'm saying give Rayburn a chance. He's just trying to make a living.

JEWEL (v.o.)
And a hell of living it is, too.

INT. WALD'S CAR

Bobby enjoys what this guy has to say.

GIL (v.o.)
Would you say no? If they offered that money to you? You'd have to be nuts. So everybody's down on Bobby 'cause he's not nuts.

Bobby laughs. Wald gives him a thumbs up.

GIL (cont'd v.o.)
Look, Bobby-- Bobby, you listening to me?

BOBBY
I sure am!

GIL (v.o.)
Look, you remember I'm the one who said this first -- and I'm not just some schmuck, I used to play the game, so listen good.

INT. GIL'S CAR

He grips the phone, loving this moment, meaning every word of it.

GIL (cont'd)
I'm from Saugus, myself. I've been following the Sox since I was in my mother's womb and they been breaking

INT. WALD'S CAR

GIL (v.o. cont'd)
I've been following you ever since that clutch performance in the High School State Championship.

Bobby can't believe anybody remembers that.

GIL (v.o. cont'd)
You've never let me down. Now the two of you have come together; Rayburn and the Sox.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH

Jewel listens to Gil's riff -- mimes hanging herself with an electrical cord.

GIL (cont'd, v.o.)
It's a magical conjunction, like when the planets come into alignment. You are going to take us all the way, Bobby. Who said it first?

INT. WALD'S CAR

Bobby's laughing

BOBBY

You did.

GIL (v.o.)

Damn strai--

JEWEL (v.o.)

(cutting him off)

Thanks, Gil.

BERNIE (v.o.)

So, are you going to like playing for the Sox, Bobby?

BOBBY

Hey, if all the fans are like this guy, I'm going to love it!

INT. GIL'S CAR

He hears this and beams. His smile is a beautiful thing. Cocky, full of confidence and hope. Gil climbs out of his car, feeling sorry for all the poor slobs around him who didn't just have a moment like that.

INT. WALD'S CAR

Bobby looks out the window at the passing cars. The ballpark is

BOBBY
Whoops, I'm at the ballpark, gotta go.

JEWEL (v.o.)
We got other people waiting.

BOBBY
Sorry. You wouldn't want me to be late
my first day.

BERNIE (v.o.)
Do it again sometime?

BOBBY
Anytime!
(hangs up and turns to Wald)
Never again.

WALD
Duly noted.

BOBBY
What's with the attitude? 'Are you
worth 40 million?'

WALD
She's off the list.
(mimes drawing a line in the air)
I am crossing her off the list.

BOBBY
Jesus!
(he settles down -- looks over
at Wald)
Am I worth forty million?

WALD
The Pope isn't worth forty million, but
I got it for you.

They laugh. Wald remembers something -- pulls a letter from his
jacket pocket.

WALD
Oh. Mail call.

Bobby takes the letter eagerly and opens it. Inside is a note
written in the large childish scrawl of a seven-year old: "Good
luck, Daddy." There's something else in the envelope -- a
photograph of a healthy, happy seven-year old boy, a lovely woman
and a man in his mid-thirties. Bobby holds the picture up to
Wald.

BOBBY
Who's the geek?

WALD
Mommy's new boyfriend

Bobby grunts, tosses the photo into the back.

BOBBY

But it's all set? I get him for two months in May?

WALD

Two months. Don't know what the hell you're going to do with him.

BOBBY

He's my kid.

WALD

I'm kidding. I love kids. I got two of my own.

Bobby slips the child-scrawled note into his breast pocket, carefully. Looks at the city going by with a happy smile.

BOBBY

When I was a kid I couldn't wait to get the hell of out this town. Now it feels right to be back.

(smiles at Wald)

It's going to be a great year, Wald.

INT. BIG FIVE SPORTING GOODS

Gil, carrying a heavy briefcase in one hand, crosses the store with a purposeful stride. It's one of those huge sporting goods complexes. Everything from baseball bats, to tents, to kayaks, to scuba diving equipment. He stops in front of a counter filled with hunting knives of all varieties.

The CLERK behind the counter is on the telephone, deep in conversation. Beyond him is a large bulletin board in the shape of a target. The clerk doesn't even look up at Gil's approach. Gil swings his case onto the counter and speaks up, smiling.

GIL

Hey, Bud.

The clerk doesn't respond -- stays focused on this phone call. Gil doesn't let this phase him.

GIL (cont'd)

Open for business, Friend?

The clerk pays no attention -- just laughs at a joke from the other end of the line. . . Gil, still smiling, watches the clerk ignore him.

Gil tilts his head to the side a little, stretching his neck -- we hear the vertebrae crack and pop into place. He opens his briefcase and pulls out a knife -- a heavy, soft-steel thrower, with a double-edged blade.

Gil hefts it in his hand. Calmly he lifts his arm and, with the beautiful arc and follow-through of a baseball pitcher, he **THROWS THE KNIFE**.

The knife flashes across the counter, past the clerk and hits the target bulletin board -- A **PERFECT BULLSEYE**.

The clerk looks at him, with wide fishy eyes. Gil, smile still friendly as ever, pulls out a business card and holds it up.

GIL (cont'd)

R.G. Renard, Northwood Fine Knives. May I ask if you're happy with your current supplier?

The clerk just stares.

CUT TO:

INT. FENWAY PARK -- ON THE STALLS

PANNING PAST THE LOCKERS where the ballplayers are dressing for Batting Practice. WE STOP ON BOBBY'S STALL. Stacks of mail. A dozen Adirondack bats, still taped together. Spring Training uniform on a hanger. No name on the uniform, but there is a number -- 33...

Bobby stands there, staring at the uniform, blankly

WALD

A little glitch I forgot to mention.

Bobby shrugs it off -- sits down, good-natured and starts to take off his street shoes.

BOBBY

Ah, don't worry about it. I'm feeling too good to get upset. I'll just wear sweats while they get it switched.

WALD

(after a beat)

Regrettably, it's not that simple.

Bobby looks up. A sweating man with a sunburned bald head (STOOK) hurries toward them, offering his sweaty hand.

STOOK

Stook, equipment manager. Welcome to the team. Anything I can do for you, just holler.

BOBBY

Matter of fact...
(eyes the shirt)
I wear number eleven.

Stook looks at Wald. Wald puts his hand on Bobby's shoulder.

WALD

See, Bobby, there's the glitch. Nobody's fault really. Just one of those things - permutations, if you like - that can happen in complex, drawn-out negotia--

Bobby shakes Wald's hand off his shoulder.

BOBBY

I wear eleven. Ever since high school.

STOOK

Thirty-three's three times eleven.

BOBBY

Is there some problem with eleven?

WALD

Bit of one. He's already got it.

Wald glances to a lean man getting dressed at a locker across from Bobby. The man slips his shirt on -- across the shoulders on the back it reads 'PRIMO.' Beneath that is the number 11. Bobby follows his glance... then, shakes his head, amused.

BOBBY

Well, fuck me.
(to Wald)
Better talk to him.

INT. BULLPEN TUNNEL -- DAY

BOBBY'S POV as we walk down the dark tunnel, accompanied by the thunderous sound of his cleats on the concrete; and into... BRIGHT DAY LIGHT. The sun gleaming off the green grass of the field. It's a chilly day, but clear and bright as ice on a pond.

ON BOBBY

He's wearing plain sweats. There's a smile on his face as he breathes deep, taking all this in. He's really here, in this place. He looks out at the stands -- turns to Wald beside him and points to the bleachers with his bat.

BOBBY

Me and my folks always used to sit up there in the cheap seats... Man, I wish they were here to see this.

WALD

Why didn't you come up with that for the interview?

BOBBY

It's the truth, Wald.

WALD

Bobby laughs and walks up the steps onto the field.

EXT. FIELD -- DAY -- CONTINUOUS

Bobby walks past the other players in their uniforms. One of the players, (TJADER) makes steam with his breath and laughs.

TJADER

Not exactly L.A. is it?

Bobby shakes his head and laughs. He slaps one of the other players -- beefy John Kruk-type (LANZ) on the back. Lanz looks up at him and smiles.

LANZ

Welcome to the bullshit leagues, Rayburn.

BOBBY

Don't spoil it for me.

Bobby looks over and sees Primo getting ready to move into the batting cage. He crosses over to him and offers his hand.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Bobby Rayburn. Thanks for being so decent about this Centerfield thing. An asshole really could have dragged things out.

Primo just looks at him. A cold, steady, disdainful look. Then steps around Bobby, as if he were a turd in the basepath, and walks off. Bobby turns to Lanz, who comes up next to him.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Doesn't he speak English?

LANZ

Seemed pretty fluent this morning when he called you a dumbass, overrated, cocksucker.

BOBBY

Then I guess he's just shy.

Bobby walks into the batting cage and into the batter's box, touches the middle of the plate with his bat, takes his stance. BURROWS, the silvery-whiskered manager, stands behind the pitching screen, smiling at Bobby.

BURROWS

Well, you sure had a long winter.
Feeling rusty?

Burrows winds up and pitches -- a fat one.

WE SEE IT rolling through the air with crystal clarity, growing, coming straight on.

Bobby swings -- the graceful golf-like swing of a Darryl Strawberry. Looks like the most natural thing in the world. CRACK. The ball flies off his bat.

The ball zings through a hole in the pitching screen -- Burrows hits the dirt as it just misses him and sails on into the outfield. Burrows sits up, laughing.

BURROWS (cont'd)
Jesus Christ!

Bobby relaxes, bat at his side.

BOBBY
Any other questions?

INT. GIL'S CAR

Gil reaches up and lowers the visor -- lifts his head to look at his face. The smile, the cocked eyebrow, the look of pure I'm-on-top-of-the-world self-assuredness.

He gives the knot of his baseball tie a tweak (the tie-clasp is shaped like a little baseball bat) and puts a twinkle in his eye.

GIL
Lucky tie, lucky smile. Who could say no to this guy?

CUT TO:

INT. OSHMAN'S -- CLOSE ON A COUNTER

A big Bowie knife, nearly a foot long, with a red-white-and-blue checkered handle, spins on the counter.

GIL (o.s.)
There she is.

WE PULL BACK TO SEE GIL at a hunting knife counter in Oshman's. Joe, the fat man behind the glass counter smiles at him.

GIL (cont'd)
The State-of-the-art workhorse of our new line.

Joe picks up the knife to examine it.

JOE
Going to Opening Day?

GIL
You bet. Company tickets. I'll be right behind home plate with my son, watching the umpire screw up the calls.

They share the good humored laughter of men who barely know each

JOE
Can you believe that they fell for that Rayburn deal?

The smile sours on Gil's face.

GIL
Rayburn's going to take them all the way.
He's what the team needs.

Joe hands the knife back to him.

JOE
This is shit, Gil. You know that.

Gil's smiles hangs suspended for a moment... then he plunges on,

GIL
What about the regular stuff?

Joe flips through the catalog -- he knows what he wants.

JOE
I'll take a dozen Clipits. And three of those folding hunters with big bolsters.

GIL
And?

JOE
That'll do it.

GIL
That'll do it?

JOE
That'll do it.

Gil smiles back at him.

INT. GIL'S BMW

Gil is on the car phone again, explaining, not making excuses, just explaining, with easy confidence.

GIL
Hey, you know how it is with new product, Garrity, you gotta move slow.

The voice on the other end isn't having any of it.

GARRITY (v.o.)
Hey, there's moving slow, and there's not moving at all. There's sitting on your lazy ass.

There's a flash of anger in Gil's eyes. He reaches out to punch

GIL

Oops, got another call, Boss! Gotta go.

The line goes dead. He checks the right rear view mirror -- there's a car there. Hell with it. He changes lanes, abruptly.

The car behind SCREECHS as it skids to avoid him.

Gil drives off, with a gratified smile.

INT. FENWAY PARK CLUBHOUSE

Bobby is standing by his locker -- the number 33 shirt is gone -- talking to Stook.

BOBBY

I need a shelf up here, so I can keep my shoes above my uniform. I always keep my shoes above my uniform.

CHET, a skinny little guy with glasses and frizzy hair walks up as Bobby sits down to tie his shoes.

CHET

Hi, Bobby. Welcome to the team.

(Bobby doesn't look up, so Chet goes on)

I'm the Director of Community Relations. Wonder if you could do me a favor.

BOBBY

What's that?

CHET

They've got a program at the hospital for sick kids, really sick - terminal, you know? They get to make kind of a last wish? The thing is, one of them wants to meet you, Mr. Rayburn.

Bobby doesn't look up, just nods.

BOBBY

Sure.

CHET

(grinning)

That's great, Mr. Rayburn.

Bobby stands and starts collecting his stuff.

BOBBY

Should I bring a ball for the kid?

CHET

Maybe a bat would be nicer.

BOBBY
(concerned)
One of my bats?

CHET
Wouldn't have to be one of yours.

BOBBY
(uncertain)
No, that's okay.

He picks out a bat and hands it to Chet.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

A NURSE leads Chet and Bobby down the hall. Chet carries the bat. The nurse starts to open a door.

BOBBY
What's the kid's name?

NURSE
Sean.

Bobby looks troubled.

CHET
Something wrong?

BOBBY
My son's named Sean.

Chet isn't sure how to respond.

CHET
Oh.

BOBBY
(almost to himself)
That's a bad sign...

NURSE
Mr. Rayburn?

Reluctantly, he walks in.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Chet and Bobby are led into a room by a nurse. Chet carries the bat -- he hands it to Bobby. A woman sits in a chair, fingering a crucifix. She sees Bobby -- stands up.

WOMAN
Oh, thank God you've come.

She takes his hand in hers and draws Bobby to the bed.

WOMAN (cont'd)

Look, baby, look who's come to see you.

The boy is tiny and bald -- his face is hollow and lemon-colored. He fixes his feverish eyes on Bobby and whispers something.

BOBBY

Pardon?

The boy takes a deep breath that makes him wince. Bobby leans in, feeling horribly uncomfortable.

SEAN

Number 11. Bobby Rayburn.

Bobby doesn't know what to say.

WOMAN

Why don't you shake hands with him, baby?

The boy tries to raise his hand -- he can't. Bobby puts his hand on top of the boy's, gingerly. Touching death like this is a little frightening.

BOBBY

Hi, Sean. Brought you something.

Bobby lifts the bat so the boy can see it. The boy raises his hand an inch or two -- Bobby slides the bat under it... The boy tries to raise his head -- it takes all his energy.

SEAN

Tomorrow?

BOBBY

Yeah?

SEAN

Hit a home run for me?

(Bobby doesn't say anything)

Please.

BOBBY

I'll try.

SEAN

You'll do it. I know you will. You're a superstar.

BOBBY

I'll try.

NURSE

We better let him rest.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Bobby is walking as fast as he can to get the hell out of there.
The nurse stops him at the elevator.

NURSE

Thank you Mr. Rayburn, that meant so much to him.

BOBBY

Yeah.

She takes his hand, slipping something to him as he steps into the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR -- CONTINUOUS

Bobby looks at what the nurse slipped him -- a note... It reads:
"I'm off at 8, 780-1985." ... Bobby crumples the note.

CHET

Mind if I have that?

Bobby hands him the note.

EXT. FANEUIL HALL -- DAY

Bobby stands in front of the landmark in a numberless Sox uniform while a photographer takes pictures. Wald lectures Bobby while the photographer moves Bobby's head.

WALD

Why didn't you ask me? I'd'a gotten you out of it. Sick kids are always depressing.

BOBBY

It's not that, it's his name. It's a bad omen.

WALD

(shaking his head)

Ballplayers. Just forget about it.

BOBBY

I promised him I'd hit one out tomorrow. Like Babe Ruth.

WALD

(adjusting Bobby's cap)

That wasn't the Babe, Bobby. That was William Bendix. In the movie.

CUT TO:

INT. GIL'S CAR -- CLOSE ON GIL'S TIE

He gives it another twist -- his hands are tight and the move has a sharp, throttling feel to it.

INT. AMERICAN HUNTER

A hunting goods store. Gil's indestructible smile is starting to show signs of strain as another manager shakes his head 'no.'

INT. FILENE'S -- MEN'S DEPARTMENT

Men's jackets, men's ties. Gil slams his 'lucky tie' down on the counter -- startling the salesgirl. She looks up, wary of the crazy glint in his eye.

GIL

I need another goddamn tie.

INT. GIL'S CAR

Parked outside another sporting goods store -- The Great Outdoors. A huge banner in front of the store: "Grand Opening." It's starting to sprinkle outside. Gil has a BRIGHT YELLOW TIE on and the smile on his face is as bright and optimistic as ever.

GIL

There's my boy! Lucky tie, lucky smile.
They're going to want to kiss you.

INT. GREAT OUTDOORS

A big, corporate store. Gil is relaxed and easy as he walks among the shoppers. He passes a life-sized cardboard standee of Bobby Rayburn in batting position next to a display of Rayburn-signed baseball bats. Gil grabs a brochure and slips it in his pocket as he passes.

ON THE KNIFE COUNTER

Gil listens to the manager (BRETT).

BRETT

We've already got a supplier.

Gil just smiles more broadly.

GIL

If you'll give me three minutes...

He pulls a stop watch from his pocket, clicks it, and sets it on the counter. It's all part of his act.

GIL (cont'd)

I can prove to you that we're competitive
with them in quality, and better in--

BRETT

We've signed a three-year exclusive.

Gil's smile hangs suspended. He picks up the watch, clicks it, and pockets it.

EXT. GIL'S CAR -- DAY

Speeding through the rain. His hand reaches from the window and tosses something out... his 'LUCKY' YELLOW TIE. It flutters in the breeze, hits the asphalt and is run-over by a pick-up.

INT. GIL'S CAR

The Rayburn bat brochure is stuck into the visor, along with other papers. The car phone rings. Gil hits a button. Garrity's voice comes over the speaker.

GARRITY (v.o.)

Gil, I'm looking at these orders. What the hell's going on? I thought you were going to start trying, boyo.

Gil's hands tighten on the wheel, but he keeps the edge out of his voice.

GIL

Just pacing myself, boss. I got my Everest meeting at four. They're always my biggest order.

GARRITY (v.o.)

You better blow my socks off, boyo.

Take a deep breath, keep smiling.

GIL

I'll tell you all about it when I come to pick up the tickets.

GARRITY (v.o.)

Tickets?

GIL

Tomorrow. Opening Day.

GARRITY (v.o.)

You joking with me? Those tickets are perks. Rewards. For Top Performers.

Gil looks poleaxed.

GIL

But my kid. He's all jazzed--

GARRITY (v.o.)

You got more important things to worry about, Boyo.

GARRITY (v.o. cont'd)

Like staying off the unemployment line. I mean it, don't screw up.

Gil feels like he's being suffocated -- but he tries to toe the line and keep the smile.

GIL

Message received, Boss!

INT. GIL'S APT -- AFTERNOON

Gil storms in with a wild look in his eye, SLAMMING THE DOOR and throwing his sample case onto the bed. He grabs the nearest thing to hand -- the TV remote -- and throws it across the room. It HITS THE WALL and batteries clatter out of it to the floor. He sighs.

He walks over and picks up the remote -- slips the batteries back in and turns on the TV set. Keith Oberman is doing a Season Preview special. Gil slumps on the bed and watches, breathing deeply, trying to calm himself.

The apartment is depressingly sparse. Cheap furniture, a few sports trophies on the bookshelf, an old green easy chair. And one very expensive big screen TV, with a Bobby Rayburn poster above it. A set of framed baseball cards flank a window that looks onto a gray sky.

He checks his watch and reaches for the phone, pressing a programmed number.

GIL

Hey, Ellen, it's Gil!

(no reply)

I wanted to talk to Richie...

(there's no reply)

So, is he around?

ELLEN (v.o.)

He's doing his homework.

Gil keeps his tone jovial.

GIL

Then he'll welcome the distraction!

(no reply)

Just tell him his old man's on the phone...

(he swallows, then, quieter)

Please.

ELLEN (v.o.)

Just a minute.

Gil waits. Then the seven year old boy's tentative voice comes on the line and he's all smiles again.

RICHIE (v.o.)

Hi.

RICHIE (v.o.)
Opening Day, tomorrow, Dad! Did you get
the tickets?

GIL
(weakly)
Sure, you bet.

RICHIE (v.o.)
Where are we sitting?

Gil rolls over in the bed, uncomfortable.

GIL
Well, you know... it's a surprise.

RICHIE (v.o.)
I can't wait. I had Little League tryouts
today, but I don't think I did so good.

Gil notices A COCKROACH running along the baseboard and under his
bureau. He'll worry about that later.

GIL
Are you kidding? I bet you killed them.
I've told you about Coop, right?

RICHIE (v.o.)
Your old catcher?

The ROACH runs out the other side of the bureau, its black-brown
back shining and greasy. Gil looks for something to throw at it.

GIL
Finest I ever saw. A natural born
athlete. We called him Coop because we
were sure he was going to wind up in
Cooperstown. Well, we were playing the
Tigers for the championship and this was
right when my arm was starting to give
out, so I wasn't throwing shit--

ELLEN (v.o.)
(cutting him off)
He had to go back to his homework.

GIL
I was telling him that story about Coop--

ELLEN (v.o.)
He has a test tomorrow.

GIL
Oh... then he better study.

That damned roach won't even hide -- he just keeps running along

As he talks, Gil reaches down and pulls up the leg of his pants...

There, strapped to his ankle, we see a LEATHER LEG SHEATH containing a DOUBLE-EDGE THROWING KNIFE. Eyes still fixed on the roach, Gil slowly slides his hand down and toward it...

ELLEN (v.o.)

Still haven't seen last month's check, Gil.

GIL

Not to worry. The company's giving me a bonus. So, I'll pick Richie up tomorrow at eleven...

(no reply)

Opening Day...

(no reply)

I have that right, you know.

ELLEN (v.o.)

Sure, Gil.

Gil's hand is on the knife now -- in one fluid motion, he draws the knife from the sheath, rolls over and throws it, with beautiful form, snapping his wrist just so.

The KNIFE makes half a revolution, flashing across the room.

The KNIFE HITS THE ROACH, obliterating it, and sticks into the floor.

Gil smiles in triumph, rotating his shoulder a little.

GIL

Good talking to you, Ellen!

(hangs up -- then to himself)

The arm feels better than ever.

INT. FENWAY PARK BOX OFFICE - AFTERNOON.

A SCALPER in a white jacket is leaning against the brick wall under the Gate B sign talking to Gil. Gil's car is parked at the curb, motor running. It's cold and breezy -- the sky is clouding up.

SCALPER

Two hundred bucks. Apiece.

GIL

One hundred.

SCALPER

Two hundred.

GIL

One hundred.

SCALPER

(fed up)

Look, you want to fuck somebody, go see your mother. I'm here to do business. Two hundred dollars.

Gil just stares at him. The scalper stares back. There's murder in Gil's eyes. The scalper gives it right back to him.

The intensity in Gil's eyes increases... if looks could kill... The scalper decides it's time to lose patience.

SCALPER (cont'd)

You in a coma, Buddy, or what?

Gil sags, just slightly. No, he can't do it. He has to take the shit, like always. He hands over the money.

The scalper hands him the tickets. Gil takes them and looks at them as he walks to his car. The scalper calls after him.

SCALPER (cont'd)

If I can do you any more favors, let me know.

Suddenly, Gil wheels around. For a second, all the pent-up fury lashes out of him.

GIL

I'm the one who did you a favor, you just don't know it!

The scalper laughs. Gil collects himself, humiliated, knowing he can't back up his words. He gets into his car; slams the door.

INT. GIL'S CAR -- AFTERNOON

As he pulls up in front of an office building. He's rattled and sweating and looks like hell. It's pouring rain outside.

He pulls down the visor and tries for the old transformation. Yes, that's the boy. He looks at his open collar.

GIL

With a smile like that, the boy doesn't need a tie.

EXT. EVEREST AND CO. -- ENTRANCE

Gil running up the steps to the front doors, carrying his sample case and catalogs -- he slips in the rain washed steps, cracking his knee on the pavement.

INT. EVEREST AND CO. OFFICE

Gil steps out of the elevator, soaked and sweating. He's limping from the fall and the knee of his slacks is torn. He looks a lot

GIL

Hi, Angie!

ANGIE

(no sign of recognition)

May I help you?

Gil doesn't let that phase him -- passes her his card.

GIL

Gil Renard. Northwood Knives. Here to see Chuck.

ANGIE

He's gone.

GIL

That's funny. We had an appointment.

ANGIE

At four.

Gil looks up at the clock. It reads 4:08.

ANGIE (cont'd)

He can see you tomorrow, 2:30.

Gil reacts to this.

GIL

Tomorrow? Let's see.

He makes a show of putting his sample case on Angie's desk and taking out his day planner -- an official Red Sox day planner. He flips through the pages...

THE BOOK is filled with scribbled dates -- names of sporting good stores, companies, etc. Every day is full. Except for tomorrow... Tomorrow April 5th is just one empty box with a drawing of a baseball on it -- in big letters he has scrawled over it -- "OPENING DAY!!!"

He looks up at Angie, shaking his head, serious.

GIL (cont'd)

Sorry. All booked tomorrow.

ANGIE

Next month, then. See you.

GIL

(concerned)

Next month?

ANGIE

Not good for you? Then tomorrow at 2:30.

GIL

Just can't. And jeeze, it's Chuck I'm thinking of. We got a new line coming out and if his competition gets hold of it first, his ass is gonna be--

ANGIE

(cutting him off)

2:30 tomorrow then?

Gil smiles back, weakening.

GIL

Couldn't it be later in the day?

ANGIE

Tomorrow at 2:30.

Gil smiles back. A blank, sightless smile now. Anger begins to cloud his eyes. His lips tighten a little, baring his teeth.

GIL

Tomorrow at 2:30.

He turns on his heels and walks out.

INT. ELEVATOR

He slaps angrily at the buttons, then stands staring at the door.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the two tickets for Opening Day.

It reads: "Game time, 1:00 PM."

In a sudden burst of anger, he slams his sample case against the wall of the elevator -- CRASH. The case flies open -- catalogs, knives and order forms scatter to the floor. He clutches at the displaced junk with angry, snatches of movement -- one of the knives cuts him on the knuckle and he starts to bleed.

This makes him more angry. He starts kicking the debris, throwing his case onto the ground and pummeling it. Unleashing all the frustration and fury of the day on these objects.

INT. LOBBY

A small clump of people waits for the elevator.

The doors open -- Gil is inside. He's made some effort to collect himself for the public eye. The mangled sample case is held under his arm, his expression is calm and smiling.

But his hair is wild, his collar is twisted, his face is greasy with sweat and he is breathing heavily -- there's a bloody handkerchief wrapped around his cut hand. He smiles at the

INT. BOBBY'S HOTEL ROOM -- EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

Bobby is asleep next to a lovely, half-naked young brunette. The PHONE RINGS. Bobby grabs it and grunts into the phone.

WALD (v.o.)
They want fifty grand.

BOBBY
Who does?

WALD (v.o.)
Primo's people. For number 11.

BOBBY
God damn it.

WALD (v.o.)
I know.

Bobby stands and carries the phone across the room. The girl sits up, watching.

BOBBY
What's his problem?

WALD (v.o.)
He says it's his lucky number.

BOBBY
It's my lucky number too.

WALD (v.o.)
Then it's going to cost.

BOBBY
Okay, screw him. Forget it, it's just a number.

WALD (v.o.)
That would be my advice. So what number do you want? 33's available.

BOBBY
Come on, Wald! Jesus was 33 when he died! What are you trying to do, jinx me?

WALD (v.o.)
There's also 41.

BOBBY
Is that a prime number?

WALD (v.o.)
Got me there, kid.

BOBBY
I'll take 41. 'Bye.

He hangs up -- sees the girl (DAWNA) looking at him, nude and concerned.

DAWNA
What's wrong?

BOBBY
Just business.

DAWNA
Business?

She covers herself -- struck by a horrible thought.

DAWNA (cont'd)
Aren't you a ballplayer?

CUT TO:

INT. SOUTH SHORE TRIPLEX -- CLOSE ON DOOR

It swings open to reveal Gil standing on the front stoop, decked out in a suit and smiling his best smile.

Opening the door is ELLEN, a weary-looking woman -- Gil's smile doesn't work on her.

RICHIE (seven years old) moves out from behind her -- he's a scared-looking kid wearing a Sox cap. He takes Gil's hand.

ELLEN
When will you have him back?

INT. GIL'S CAR

Gil drives -- Richie's next to him. The boy tosses a ball up and tries to catch it with a squeaky new baseball glove -- he misses it and it rolls onto the floor. The boy tries to retrieve it, but the seat belt stops him. Gil shuts his eyes, pained.

GIL
Where'd you get that glove?

RICHIE
Tim, gave it me.

GIL
Tim.

RICHIE
Today's the Little League draft. I really want to make the majors. Hope I get lucky.

RICHIE

If Mommy marries Tim, will I still be a Renard?

Gil doesn't answer.

EXT. PARKING LOT

A lot close to the park. Gil gives the Pakistani parking attendant a twenty as they get out. He pulls the attendant aside and speaks to him, intently.

GIL

Okay, Friend, I'm going to be back here at two, and I'm going to need my car, Pronto. So keep it unblocked and up front. Okay?

The attendant frowns. Gil gives him another five.

ATTENDANT

(uncertain)

Okay.

INT. FENWAY PARK

Gil and Richie hand-in-hand, through the shaded corridors. Suddenly, they step out of the shade, into the bright sunlight. The field spreads out before them, vibrant and green. It's the CLASSIC AMERICAN FATHER AND SON MOMENT. Gil sneaks a look at his watch... It's 12:37. He takes a breath. It's okay. He can work this out.

EXT. FENWAY PARK DUGOUT -- DAY

Bobby walks through the dugout, wearing number 41. His cleats on the concrete make a SOUND LIKE THUNDER, echoing in the enclosed space. He sits on the bench -- pulls a note out of his pocket.

It's a childish drawing of a ballplayer hitting a ball -- the man's uniform has the number 11 on it. The ball is flying off the bat -- little lines stream from it, to show how fast it's going. Under this: "Good luck, Daddy." Bobby looks at it, then folds it and puts it back in his pocket.

INT. FENWAY PARK PRESS BOX -- DAY

Wald is sitting in the press box, using a pair of binoculars to look through the huge glass window into the stadium below. The seats are filled with people and a fat reporter is helping Wald pick out one particular spectator.

REPORTER

No, three rows down. The blonde with the tank top.

JEWEL

Lemme see.

Wald looks up -- happy to see her. But then, he's a professional, so he's happy to see anyone.

WALD

Jewel! Crashing the party again, I see.

She's looking through the binoculars -- finds the tank top.

JEWEL

Those aren't real.

(lowering the binoculars)

I want an interview with Bobby.

WALD

You've been crossed off the list, my jewel.

JEWEL

(pulling him aside)

No, I'm not going to be an asshole. This is a legitimate article. For the Sunday Globe magazine. 'Who is the real Bobby Rayburn?'

WALD

(mock impressed)

Print journalism! Do we have a budding Roger Angell in our ranks? More of this 'baseball is a metaphor for life' bullshit?

JEWEL

We all want to do something when we grow up.

Wald looks out the window -- at the players practicing on the field.

WALD

Not them.

EXT. THE SEATS

Gil and Richie settle in. The players are just coming off the field from batting practice.

Gil hands Richie a Bobby Rayburn baseball card and a pen -- points to where the players are entering the dugout. A crowd of kids hang over the railing, waving programs, baseball cards, scraps of paper.

GIL

Get Rayburn's autograph.

Richie looks at him, scared.

Gives Richie a playful shove. Richie walks off, uncertain, toward the crowd of rowdy kids. His movements are awkward -- there's not an athletic move to him. Gil calls out to him;

GIL
Come on, hustle, boy! Hustle!

Richie runs off, still clumsy. Gil checks his watch; it's 12:44. Looks up for his boy...

Richie is tentatively approaching the crowd. Tries to push through. He is shoved back. He sits down on the steps.

Gil watches, jaw clenched. Mutters intensely.

GIL (cont'd)
Don't cry.

But Richie is visibly crying.

Gil stands, teeth clenched, and hurries through the empty seats and down the aisle to his son.

He grabs Richie's arm and pulls him up, PULLING ON HIM A LITTLE TOO HARD -- the boy's as light as a bird.

GIL (cont'd)
(sharply)
Stop it!

RICHIE
I don't want any autographs.

GIL
Sure, you do.

Gil pushes his way through the crowd, Richie in tow. Gil breaks through and finds himself RIGHT NEXT TO RAYBURN, on the other side of the fence. Gil catches his breath -- it's emotionally stunning to stand this close to the actual man...

Bobby, the white of his uniform gleaming in the sun, looks like a knight of old as he silently signs autographs for the fans. There he is... so close Gil could reach out and touch him.

Gil silently, takes the card from Richie and hands it out to Bobby. Bobby sees it and looks up. For a moment, Bobby's eyes lock with Gil's. Gil swallows, throat dry.

GIL (cont'd)
(barely audible)
Autograph for the kid?

Bobby doesn't see Richie. He smiles, a little mockingly.

BOBBY

He takes it, signs it and hands it back. The crowd surges around Gil and Richie, swallowing them.

GIL'S SEATS

Gil and Richie take their seats. Richie's eyes are still red. Gil is looking at the card.

GIL
I'll hang onto to this so you don't
lose it.

He carefully slips it into his wallet. Checks his watch again -- 12:54. He wipes a trickle of sweat off his upper lip. Richie looks up at his dad.

RICHIE
Did you and Coop used to give autographs?

GIL
We considered it a privilege.

He pats his boy on the head.

EXT. FENWAY PARK -- HIGH ANGLE

Garth Brooks sings the National Anthem.

IN THE STADIUM

ON GIL AND RICHIE -- Gil lifts Richie's hand to his heart. The kid just doesn't get the ritual.

ON THE FIELD -- The ballplayers, Bobby included, hold their hats over their hearts. The players half-heartedly sing.

CUT TO:

EXT. FENWAY PARK -- A LITTLE LATER

CAL RIPKEN powers one to gap left.

Bobby, in Centerfield, runs for the ball, calling Primo off.

BOBBY
I got it!

But Primo keeps on coming, a look of steel-eyed determination on his face. He has a point to prove.

The two men run like gazelles, following the trajectory of the ball with their eyes, running at full gallop to the exact same spot.

THE BALL smacks into Bobby upraised glove, just as...

The two men bounce off each other and fall to the ground, like rag dolls.

The CROWD GASPS.

Lanz, the right fielder, runs up to them.

LANZ
You guys okay?

BOBBY
Ball still in my glove?

IN THE STANDS -- Gil is standing, motionless, tense, watching, his heart in his throat.

ON THE FIELD -- Rayburn stands, helping Primo up. Bobby lifts his hand, displaying the ball, still tight in his glove. The CROWD CHEERS.

Primo and Bobby stand, arms around each other, laughing.

BOBBY
(through his smile)
You listen to me when I call you off
next time or I'll spike your ass so hard
my cleats'll come out your mouth.

Primo just smiles at the crowd.

IN THE STANDS -- Gil lets out a long breath -- sagging with relief. He turns to his son.

GIL
He's fine. He looks fine.

But Richie isn't watching the game -- the boy is laughing at the club mascot, SOCKO, dancing on the dugout roof. Irritated, Gil takes the boy's chin and yanks it over toward the field.

GIL (cont'd)
Get your eyes off the dumb-ass mascot
and watch the game.

A white-haired woman in the seat next to Richie, wearing pearls and a Harvard baseball cap, looks at them, a little concerned. Gil smiles back -- pats his son on the head. He checks his watch, nervous... 1:11.

ON THE STANDS

A couple of DOOFUS FANS trying to start The Wave. Shirts off, huge beer guts proudly displayed -- one of them has the word "Red" painted on his stomach; the other says "Sox."

EXT. FENWAY PARK DUGOUT

BURROWS

What the hell was that?

BOBBY

A catch.

BURROWS

How's the ribcage? Wanna come out?

BOBBY

Probably a good idea.

Burrows pats him on the back. Bobby starts walking through the dugout -- catches sight of Chet in the tunnel. CHET WAVES AND GIVES A THUMBS UP. Bobby remembers the kid in the hospital. He curses under his breath and turns back to Burrows.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Okay if I stay in?

Burrows looks a little surprised, but nods.

DISSOLVE TO:

HOT DOG VENDOR

Gil stands in the long line, waiting for his dog. He looks up at the clock... 1:48. Gil bites his lip, nervous...

IN THE STANDS

Gil struggles down the aisle, carrying a tray of hot dogs, a Coke and a beer. He slops a little beer on the Harvard lady as he passes. Settles into his seat and hands the dog over to Richie. Richie immediately starts wiping off the mustard.

Gil checks his watch. 2:03. Shit, time keeps passing. He swallows and leans over to Richie, trying to sound off-hand.

GIL

Having fun?

RICHIE

Yeah.

GIL

I've got to go for a little while.

Richie looks a little worried.

RICHIE

Go?

ON THE FIELD -- Lanz at bat. Bobby in the on-deck circle.

ON THE SEATS -- Gil tries to make his tone even more casual, to

GIL
Just make some calls. You sit tight. OK?

RICHIE
(uncertain)
OK.

GIL
Do you have to pee or anything?

RICHIE
No.

GIL
Good boy.

He pats Richie's arm and starts to stand.

ON THE FIELD -- Lanz cracks one to the gap in right.

IN THE STANDS -- The crowd cheers. Gil has his back turned, ready to move down the aisle.

Gil hears the cheers -- Damn, he missed something. He turns back and leans in to Richie, anxious.

GIL
What happened?

RICHIE
Bases loaded.

Gil sits back down, smiling.

GIL
All right! One out.
(hollering)
Sacrifice time!

RICHIE
A home run'd be better.

GIL
Homer's are fine, but a winning team knows how to build runs. Coop taught me that. Man, I wish you could meet him. What a mind. He used to call the sacrifice fly the most beautiful play in the game. You give yourself up to help the team. And the out doesn't even count against your average. That's why baseball's so much better than life -- it's fair.

He checks his watch. 2:04. He starts to get up again.

GIL (cont'd)

PA (v.o.)
Now batting, Number 41, Bobby Rayburn!

Gil hesitates. Bobby walks into the batter's circle. Gil looks over his shoulder -- his collar is damp with sweat. HE CHECKS HIS WATCH... 2:04. He really has to go... but hell, would it kill him to watch one more at-bat?

GIL
Yo, Bobby, let's go!

The Harvard woman looks over at Gil. Gil smiles at her.

HOME PLATE -- Bobby's in his batting stance, totally still. Eyes focused. Mind in perfect concentration.

INT. PRESS BOX

Jewel watching, tense... The pitcher makes his throw.

ON THE BALL

The ball comes in -- we can see it with perfect clarity. Fat, clear, spinning sideways.

Bobby swings, hitting it squarely...

The ball clears the fence, still rising. Foul by 15 feet. The runners moves back to their bases.

THE STANDS -- Gil yells out, too loud.

GIL
All right, Bobby! Go for it!

Gil is blocking the view of the man behind him.

MAN
Excuse me?

Rayburn outside batting circle, tapping his cleats with his bat.

Gil checking his watch -- 2:06. Shit. Wipes a stream of sweat from his eyebrow.

GIL
Hurry up! Let's go, let's go!

INT. PRESS BOX

Jewel is typing away -- turns to the reporter next to her.

JEWEL
Rayburn look like he's moving a little stiff to you?

REPORTER

Can't believe Burrows left him in
after that collision.

JEWEL

That's all we need, our 40 million
dollar man on the DL.

ON THE STANDS

Gil watches Bobby stroll back into the batting box. Gil checks his watch again. 2:07. Why the hell does he have to drag it out like this? Gil calls out, a trace of anguish in his voice.

GIL

Let's go!

The Harvard woman is looking at him concerned.

Ball one, outside. Rayburn steps out again. Shit. Gil checks his watch. 2:07. He wipes the sweat from his forehead. The man behind him is leaning around, trying to see.

Strike two, called. Rayburn gives the umpire a dirty look.

GIL

(screaming)

Are you blind, Ump!?

The man behind Gil tugs on the back of Gil's jacket.

MAN

Down in front.

Gil didn't realize he was standing. He sits. BALL TWO. Gil checks his watch. 2:08. And Rayburn is tapping his cleats again. Shit! Gil is muttering to himself, like a prayer.

GIL

Let's go, let's go.

Bobby moves into the batter's box. Gil is on his feet, not even knowing it, calling out.

GIL (cont'd)

Jesus Christ, let's go!

Richie looks at his dad, concerned. The man behind Gil gives Gil's jacket another tug.

MAN

Down in front.

Gil wheels around, spilling his beer, eyes glaring.

GIL

MAN

How am I supposed to see?

Gil collects himself.

GIL

Just ask politely.

MAN

I did.

The man behind the man calls out.

MAN BEHIND THE MAN

Down in front!

The SOUND OF A BALL SMACKING LEATHER. Gil wheels around.

The umpire calls ball three.

Gil checks his watch. 2:09. God, he has to go.

Rayburn steps out.

Gil yanks at his tie, dying.

GIL

For Christ's sake.

Rayburn fouls one out. Gil yells at the top of his lungs.

GIL

God damn it, let's play some baseball!

He checks his watch again. 2:10.

He stares at it blankly... Then the meaning penetrates. All at once, his tie feels too tight and his heart begins to race.

2:10. Move, asshole. Gil rushes past Richie, who looks up, scared; shoves past the Harvard woman, who looks at him like he's a maniac; shoves his way down the aisle to the steps.

He runs up them, feet pounding on the concrete.

THE FIELD -- BOBBY waits in his batting stance...

The ball comes, clear and fat, a change-up...

He swings, whiffing it. The ball sails past him and SOCKS into the catcher's glove.

UMPIRE

Strike three!

Bobby slumps.

IN THE STANDS -- GIL runs on, hearing the crowd moan. He doesn't even stop to turn and see what happened.

EXT. FENWAY PARK

Gil runs from the stadium, feet pounding on the pavement, heart pounding in his ears.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Gil runs into the lot, looking for his car. No sign of it. He scans the lot, row by row, a helpless look on his face. Then he spots his car -- in the last row, by the fence, totally parked in. He runs to the booth, pounding on it. The attendant looks up from a Pakistani newspaper.

ATTENDANT

Sir?

GIL
(out of breath)

My car!

ATTENDANT

Sir?

Gil grabs him and pulls him outside, pointing.

GIL

Is that what they call unblocked where you come from, Slugger?

The attendant speaks to him in perfect English.

ATTENDANT

But, sir, it is.

The attendant goes to the back of the lot, unlocks a gate by Gil's car -- Gil hadn't noticed it. The attendant starts to climb into the car. Gil hurries to him, snatches the keys from him and climbs in. He BACKS IT OUT himself, scraping the paint against the gate. The attendant calls after him;

ATTENDANT (cont'd)

Do you wish a receipt?

INT. GIL'S CAR -- IN THE CALLAHAN TUNNEL

Brake lights stretch out before him. He's not moving at all. . . He looks at the clock. It reads 2:35. He slaps the wheel. Then hits the horn. Someone honks back. Gil lays on the horn, long and hard, blaring through the tunnel.

EXT. EVEREST AND CO.

Gil speeds down the street. All the parking spaces are taken. He pulls a U-turn and brakes hard beside a hydrant. He jumps out

INT. EVEREST AND CO.

A wall clock reads 2:55. Gil pushes through a group of people by the door, knocks a cup of coffee out of a woman's hand - it spills all over Gil's white shirt. He ignores it, runs to the elevators. All in use. He runs for the stairs.

INT. STAIRWAY

Gil runs up the steep, metal stairs, his footfalls clanging with every step. His breath is ragged and labored.

INT. EVEREST OFFICE

Gil bangs the door open against the wall. He can barely speak.

GIL

Hi, sorry I'm late--

ANGIE

Your name?

Gil stares at her with naked hate in his eyes.

GIL

Gil Renard.

ANGIE

He's not here.

GIL

Shit.

ANGIE

Beg pardon?

GIL

Maybe I can catch him. When did he leave?

ANGIE

Around noon.

Gil stares blankly, breathing hard. He can't have heard right.

GIL

Noon?

ANGIE

For the ballgame.

Gil leans in on her over the desk. A drop of sweat falls from his chin and splats onto her day book.

GIL

(through clenched teeth)

The what?

ANGIE

Yes, a supplier offered him some tickets right after you called. I tried to reach you. He left you this note.

Gil snatches it from her and reads it.

CHUCK (v.o.)

Gil. Sorry about this, but Opening Day only comes once a year.

As he reads, the fury drains from his body, replaced by the weariness of utter defeat.

INT. ELEVATOR

Gil rides it down, the note held limp in his hand.

CHUCK (v.o.)

This is probably a good time to tell you that we will not be renewing the contract with your company. Nothing personal. Just the economy.

EXT. EVEREST AND CO.

Gil steps out into the cool, bright weather and walks to his car.

CHUCK (v.o.)

Been good doing business with you.

Gil looks at his car, in dull amazement.

A mean looking DENVER BOOT is CLAMPED ONTO ONE OF THE TIRES, a ticket flaps on the windshield.

Gil just stands in the deserted street, looking at his car, the wind blowing his hair.

CUT TO:

INT. CAB

Gil is perched on the edge of the back seat, trying to see ahead. The cab is stuck in the middle of the Callahan Tunnel -- nothing but a sea of brake lights ahead. Gil throws himself back in the seat in frustration.

EXT. FENWAY PARK

The cab pulls up to the ballpark. Gil jumps out and runs to the nearest gate. It's closed. He tries to swing it open. It's locked. The lights are out.

GIL

Hey! Hey! My boy's in there! HEY!

He leans against the gate, the chain link making a pattern on his face. He jumps when he feels someone near him.

CABBIE

Twenny-two fifty.

Gil stares at him, uncomprehending.

CABBIE (cont'd)

Your fare.

Gil ignores him and starts walking. The cabbie follows him, confused.

CABBIE (cont'd)

Twenny-two fifty.

GIL

(not looking back)

I haven't got it.

The cabbie reaches out and touches Gil.

CABBIE

Twenny-two fifty.

Gil spins around and faces him. There's a crazed look in his eye -- the look of a man this far from the breaking point. He speaks with quiet intensity -- you can smell the hate on his breath.

GIL

I haven't got your goddamned fare.

The cabbie backs away, sensing the danger of the situation -- this is clearly not a man to mess with. Gil turns and walks on, leaving the cabbie standing there, sweating.

INT. FENWAY PARK -- CLUBHOUSE

Bobby, in a foul mood, is putting on his street clothes in the empty clubhouse. Somewhere, a radio plays.

ANNOUNCER (v.o.)

And in his first game with the Sox,
Rayburn goes oh for four.

Bobby carefully puts his game shoes on the shelf Stook has built for him. He glances at the number 41 shirt hanging in his locker -- he slams the door to spare himself the sight of it. A KID comes by, rolling a hamper filled with dirty clothes. He grabs Bobby's dirty socks off the bench and tosses them in the hamper.

BOBBY

Hey, what you do you think you're doing?

KID

BOBBY
Yeah, right.

Bobby reaches into the hamper and pulls them out.

BOBBY
I've had these since the '88 Series.
I'll take care of them myself.

The kid shrugs and rolls on. Bobby starts putting his street shoes on -- Chet is next to him, handing him a cellular phone.

CHET
Call for you.

Bobby takes the phone. There's a woman's voice on the line.

WOMAN (v.o.)
Mr. Rayburn? I just want to thank you
so much for trying.

BOBBY
Who's this?

WOMAN (v.o.)
Sean's mother.

BOBBY
Oh, yeah. Don't worry. I'll get a hold
of one for him, sooner or later.

WOMAN (v.o.)
He passed away, Mr. Rayburn.

BOBBY
Passed away?

WOMAN (v.o.)
Right after the game. The doctor said
he should have died last night. He just
willed himself to stay alive. Because
of you. Thank you for that extra day.

The line goes dead. Bobby listens to the dial tone for a moment,
then hands the phone back to Chet.

BOBBY
Screen my calls from now on.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE -- CLOSE ON DOOR

The door opens and we see Gil's careworn face.

GIL
Have you got Richie?

Ellen looks at him, barely containing...

ELLEN
Like you care.

GIL
There's a reason for--

ELLEN
No one wants to hear it.

GIL
Richie will.

Gil tries to move past her. A heavy-set man (TIM) steps in next to her, blocking his way.

TIM
He's asleep.

Tim tries to swing the door shut in Gil's face -- Gil throws his fist out, knocking it back so that it cracks Tim's shoulder. Tim stumbles back, a look of surprise on face. Gil steps into the house, keeping his voice even.

GIL
Little early for bedtime, isn't it?
Ellen tries to step into Gil's path.

ELLEN
Gil, he's been through enough!
But, by now, Gil has stepped around her and is hurrying through the living room. He tries to keep a cheerful tone in his voice, but it comes out slightly high-pitched and hysterical.

GIL
I'll just go and have a peek at him.
The old woman in the Harvard cap is drinking a cup of coffee in the living room. She stares daggers at him as he goes by.

INT. RICHIE'S ROOM

Richie is sleeping fitfully, his eyes red, his nose stuffy. Gil opens the door and stands there. The light from the hall falls on Richie's face. Gil moves in closer to him and speaks softly.

GIL
Richie?
(no reply)
Sorry, pal...

He lowers himself to one knee, bringing his face down to his boy's level. He lays his cheeks on the pillow, next to his son's face and whispers.

GIL (cont'd)

GIL (cont'd)
Did you make the majors?

No answer. Gil's eyes drift to a stack of children's books on the bed side table. He reaches out to pick up the one on top -- Margaret Wise Brown's "The Runaway Bunny." He opens the book and starts reading in the darkened room, his voice a whisper.

GIL (cont'd)
"Once there was a little bunny who
wanted to run away..."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GIL'S APT. -- NIGHT

Gil walks in and flips on the light. His steps are a little too deliberate and careful -- he's clearly had a few drinks.

There's a flashing light on his answering machine -- he hits the button as he walks by and disappears into the bathroom.

THE SOUND OF RUNNING WATER in the sink as THE MESSAGE COMES OVER THE SPEAKER.

GARRITY (v.o.)
Just got off the phone with the Everest
people. You coulda had the balls to tell
me yourself, boyo.

Gil steps back in from the bathroom, towel in hand, his face dripping wet. He stares at the machine.

GARRITY (v.o. cont'd)
'Fraid we're going to have to let you go.
Can't say I didn't warn you.

CLICK. The machine shuts off. Gil stares at the blinking red light for a beat... Then he picks up the TV remote and switches on the set. Baseball Tonight on ESPN. Keith Oberman is showing clips of Rayburn whiffing the ball.

KEITH OBERMAN
Not an auspicious Sox debut for 40
million man Bobby Rayburn...

GIL
(weary)
Christ, give a guy a break.

FADE OUT:

A Stadium organ begins playing "You've Got to Have Heart."

Under this, we see GIL sitting in the cheapest bleacher seats at Fenway, a face in the crowd.

And all around Gil, the faces change -- different faces, different games, different times of day. Game after game, Gil sits there, his clothes changing from suit, to shirtsleeves to a Red Sox t-shirt -- looking progressively more raggedy as his face becomes more unshaven and the bags under his eyes deepen as he watches his boys play.

SERIES OF SHOTS

BOBBY AT THE PLATE, swinging with all he's got. WHOOF! Strike!

AGAIN HE SWINGS, in another game, missing again.

AGAIN. AGAIN. Missing every time.

CRACK! He hits it this time.

Out in left the fielder grabs the ball out of the sky.

Bobby running to first in a cloud of dust.

UMPIRE
Yer out!

IN THE STANDS -- the fans hold up signs. "SEND RAYBURN BACK TO L.A." "BOSTON, WE'VE BEEN 'RAY-BURNED'."

A FAN in complete Red Sox garb, wearing a GIANT FOAM RED SOX CAP holds up a picket sign -- there's a picture of Bobby on it with a red circle and a line drawn through it.

INT. GIL'S APARTMENT

Gil is sitting on his bed, ESPN on the TV, cutting out an article from the newspaper. It features a big picture of Rayburn at bat, with the headline "Is Rayburn Past His Prime?"

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Gil stands at the door, holding a bat and ball and glove, ringing the bell... He rings and rings, but no one answers.

INT. GIL'S APT. -- NIGHT

Gil is stretched out on his bed, radio on, open bag of pork rinds on his stomach. Undershirt. Unshaven. Eyes staring from deep sockets. He holds a telephone in his hands and listens to it ring. MUSIC FADES A LITTLE so we can hear:

JEWEL (v.o.)

Big news from the Sox. Bobby Rayburn almost got a hit.. What's that contract working out to, ten million dollars a hit?

BERNIE (v.o.)

But there's our number 11, Primo, suddenly hitting like a...

JEWEL (v.o.)

I guess left field agrees with him.

Next to Gil on the bed is a crumpled letter.

CLOSE ON THE LINE that reads: "YOU ARE ORDERED NOT TO CONTACT THE PLAINTIFF or any child(ren) listed below...: "CHILD(REN): Richard G. Renard, Jr."

WE PULL BACK to see Gil on the bed -- papering the walls all around him are dozens of newspaper and magazine clippings, posters and magazine covers -- all about Rayburn; his amazing career, the multi-million dollar deal, his slump, etc. Faces of Rayburn seem to surround Gil, all smiling at him with mocking confidence.

The phone in Gil's hand just keeps ringing.

EXT. FENWAY PARK PLAYER'S EXIT -- NIGHT

The die-hard fans wait at the gate for autographs of the stars. Primo stands there, mobbed by admirers, smiling, signing away. Bobby makes his way through the crowd, ignored. Bobby walks out through the parking lot to his huge car.

One figure peels off from the crowd to follow him. Gil. He walks after him, as if he's going to go up to speak to him. But when Bobby gets to his car, Gil stops, watching him from a distance, eyes full of pain.

INT. SPORTS BAR (CLEATS)

The players (LANZ, PRIMO, ZAMORA) gathered around a table, drinking and laughing.

Bobby walks in from the street. Looks at the other players for a moment, then goes to sit at the bar, alone. Bobby summons the bartender (LEON). MUSIC FADES A LITTLE so we can hear;

BOBBY

Seven and seven.

The front door opens again. Gil walks in. Sees Bobby sitting at the end of the bar. He sits himself at the opposite end, watching Bobby. Leon approaches him.

LEON

What can I get you?

GIL

(nodding to Bobby)

I'll have what he's having.

MUSIC BACK UP -- SERIES OF SHOTS:

BOBBY AT THE PLATE -- he hits a pathetic grounder for an easy

INT. FENWAY CLUBHOUSE -- Bobby is giving instructions to Stook, showing that he now wants his shoes stowed under his uniform.

BOBBY AT THE PLATE -- tips one foul, the catcher nabs it easily.

BOBBY AT HIS LOCKER --- slipping a rabbit's foot pendant over his head.

BOBBY AT HIS LOCKER -- slipping a St. Christopher medal over his head.

BOBBY AT THE PLATE -- DAY -- He hammers one past the pitcher...

Lanz on first tears toward second -- the second baseman picks up the ball, tags Lanz and throws to first. Double play.

INT. FENWAY PARK PRESS BOX -- SAME TIME

MUSIC GOES DOWN. Reporters are slumped over their lap top computers, watching the game. Jewel is on the phone. Wald leans against the corner wall, looking weary. The reporters react to Bobby's double play with a cynical laugh. One of them speaks up;

REPORTER

All right, that 40 million is paying off!

The reporters all laugh. Wald listens, with a pained expression on his face. He leans in to Jewel and whispers.

WALD

Still want to do that interview with the real Bobby Rayburn?

JEWEL

(surprised)

Wasn't I crossed off the list?

WALD

When you're hitting .183 you don't get to have a list.

INT. LOGAN AIRPORT -- ARRIVAL GATE

Bobby waits in the terminal, a kid's Red Sox cap in his hand, watching the in-coming passengers pour out of an arrival gate. He smiles when he spots his son.

SEAN (a bright, happy-looking seven year old) holds the hand of a Flight Attendant and sports a set of wings pinned to his Red Sox sweatshirt. He sees his Bobby and smiles, broadly -- breaks loose of the Flight Attendant's hand and runs to his father.

SEAN

Daddy!

Bobby smiles and opens his arms to hug his son as Sean runs to him -- just then a BEEFY GUY in a Celtics sweatshirt steps in

BEEFY GUY
Bobby Rayburn! My man!

Sean stops running as the man blocks his path. He stares up, waiting for the man to stop talking to his father. The beefy guy pulls out a parking lot ticket and a leaky Bic pen.

BEEFY GUY (cont'd)
Gimme an autograph

Bobby smiles, a little tense. He signs the ticket and hands it back to the guy.

BEEFY GUY (cont'd)
Thanks, man!

Bobby nods, then darts around the guy and picks up Sean, slipping the cap on his head.

SEAN
I'm glad you're here. Mommy said you'd probably just send somebody.

BOBBY
Of course I'd be here. Has Mommy been telling you other things about me?

SEAN
No... How come you haven't been hitting?

Bobby tries not to react -- the MUSIC COMES BACK UP.

BOBBY AT THE PLATE -- misses by a mile.

INT. METHODIST CHURCH -- Bobby sits, praying.

BOBBY AT THE PLATE -- STRIKE THREE!

MUSIC ENDS

INT. BOBBY'S CAR -- DAY

A Hummer. Bobby is driving. Wald's in the passenger seat. Sean's in the back listening to a Walkman.

BOBBY
I gotta shake this thing.

WALD
How's the ribcage?

BOBBY
The ribcage is fine, the ribcage is sick of people asking about it.

WALD

BOBBY
That's bullshit.

WALD
-- and you shoulda come out, but you
were hotdogging it and now you're screwed
for the entire season.

BOBBY
That is such bullshit.

WALD
I know that... I could put a positive
spin on this.

BOBBY
How?

WALD
We could do a little interview. Tell the
people why you stayed in. For that kid
in Chemo

Bobby doesn't answer for a beat -- checks his kid in the rear
mirror -- Sean's looking at a Waldo book.

BOBBY
Is that like, exploiting it?

WALD
I will not let it look like that.

BOBBY
I'm not asking what it looks like. Is
that what it is?

WALD
You're not comfortable with it?

BOBBY
Should I be comfortable with it?

WALD
I'm comfortable with it.

BOBBY
I'm not talking about you, I'm talking
about me.

WALD
You want to know if you're comfortable
with it?

BOBBY
Yeah.

BOBBY
I don't think I am.

FENWAY -- NIGHT

Primo rounds the bases at an easy trot. The crowd, on its feet in wild excitement, cheers loudly enough to shake the building. Electronic fireworks go off on the score board around the words HOME RUN!!!

BOBBY watches from the dugout, hating every minute of it.

INT. FENWAY PARK -- CLUBHOUSE

Jewel stands in the doorway, wearing her make-up and 'good clothes' -- she watches quietly while Bobby, all alone in there, angrily rips up his shirt -- tearing the hated #41 off it. He flings the shredded bits into his stall.

JEWEL
Through?

BOBBY
I can see the bastard coming right at me.
I just can't connect.

JEWEL
Everybody goes through slumps.

BOBBY
Not me. Never.
(then)
Who the hell are you?

JEWEL
Jewel Stein.

BOBBY
Oh, shit. This better be off the record,
'cause you have no right--

JEWEL
Off the record. But I do want to interview you.

BOBBY
Off the record, why the hell would I want
to talk to you?

JEWEL
Because I'm really a sweetheart.

Wald speaks up from the doorway.

WALD
It's a class piece, Bobby.

WALD

The city's turning on you, Bobby.

Bobby stops and stares at Wald.

JEWEL

If you let them see the real you, maybe you can win them back.

BOBBY

What if they don't like the real me?

JEWEL

Well, then you're screwed. I'd love to come by your house tomorrow after the game, if that's convenient.

BOBBY

(dismissing her)

Sure, it's great.

He gets up and walks toward Wald, pulling him out into the hall, leaving Jewel behind, jotting the date in her day book. Bobby speaks to Wald, very quietly, very intently.

BOBBY (cont'd)

I'll pay.

WALD

Excuse me?

BOBBY

Primo. The fifty grand. For number 11. I'll pay it.

Wald just looks at him.

EXT. FENWAY PARK -- PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Bobby walks away from the crowd of autograph seekers at the Player's Exit and climbs into his Hummer.

EXT. PARKING LOT EXIT -- CONTINUOUS

Bobby pulls his Hummer up to the Stop sign at the exit, checks the traffic and pulls out into the street... after a beat, another car pulls up to the Stop sign -- Gil's BMW. Gil checks the traffic, then pulls out into the street, following Bobby.

EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE -- PRIDE'S CROSSING -- NIGHT

A Tudor mansion. Sitting by the shore, surrounded by trees. There's one light on in the living room.

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE -- DEN

Bobby has Sean on his lap in front of a home computer, playing

Bobby keeps clicking the mouse -- all he sees are other walls.

BOBBY
How do I get out of this library?

SEAN
It would be cheating if I told you, Dad.

A PHONE by the computer RINGS. Bobby picks it up.

WALD (v.o.)
They turned you down.

Bobby is still clicking the mouse -- the room on the computer is still spinning, showing him nothing but walls.

BOBBY
What do you mean?

WALD (v.o.)
Primo's people. I made your offer and they turned it down.

BOBBY
But it's what they wanted before.

WALD (v.o.)
I know.

Bobby's still clicking, getting nothing but walls.

BOBBY
They're breaking their word.

WALD (v.o.)
So what do we do? Sue Primo?

BOBBY
Offer them more money.

WALD (v.o.)
How much?

BOBBY
(clicking furiously)
Get the number!

Sean looks at his dad -- a little scared by the intense tone in his father's voice.

SEAN
Dad? It's just a game.

Bobby switches off the computer.

EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

WE PULL BACK and see that we are inside Gil's car, parked across from Bobby's house. Gil sits in the silence of the car, watching.

INT. FENWAY PARK CLUBHOUSE -- NEXT DAY

Bobby is standing by his locker, looking furtive. He pulls a paper bag out of his stall. Takes a t-shirt out of it. He unfolds the shirt -- it has number 11 printed on it. Making sure no one sees him, he pulls the shirt on over his head, then quickly slips his uniform shirt over it. Burrows comes over and sits down next to him.

BURROWS

How's the ribcage, big guy?

BOBBY

Fine. Never was anything wrong with it. Jesus.

BURROWS

Hey. Gotta ask. Valuable commodity. (hesitates for moment, then:) Thinkin' about resting you today... Just for the day.

Bobby just stares at him.

INT. DUGOUT - DAY

The players in their game shoes are walking through. Their cleats making that THUNDEROUS SOUND on the concrete. Bobby walks through. No cleats on his feet. The sound of his footfalls is humiliatingly silent.

INT. CLUBHOUSE

After the game. The guys are joking and laughing. Bobby sits by his stall, watching the guys come up to congratulate Primo. Another player (ZAMORA) comes by and slaps his ass.

ZAMORA

Way to crush 'em, Primo.

Bobby gets up and walks over to Primo, who stands by his stall, shirtless and sweating. Primo looks up at Bobby.

BOBBY

Is there a place we can talk?

Primo just stares at him.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE PARK -- THAT DAY

An ordinary neighborhood Little League park. Gil's son Richie is in a green uniform that reads Padres. Richie runs back to the

In the visitor's stands across the field, we see a figure climb up to sit in the row second from the top. IT'S GIL. He looks for Richie. He turns to a father behind him.

GIL

Is there a score?

The father (BILL) laughs.

BILL

Twelve to nothing. These Padres are a joke.

GIL

(bristling)

Game's not over yet.

BILL

Get a load of this one.

Richie is moving up to bat. The boy is having trouble carrying his helmet and the bat, he stumbles slightly.

GIL SHUTS HIS EYES, PAINED. Richie moves to the plate. It's coach-pitch, so a grown-up lobs him the ball, underhand. The pitch is way outside. Richie swings at it anyway, flailing. Misses it by a mile.

BILL (cont'd)

Christ, this kid'll swing at anything.

Gil flinches. The pitcher gets ready to throw again. Gil mutters to himself, as if in prayer.

GIL

Wait for a good one, kid.

The pitch is outside again -- again Richie swings at it, missing. Bill snorts with laughter. Gil stifles his anger. Richie makes a practice swing. Bill laughs out loud.

BILL

Jesus! What a--

All at once, GIL IS ON HIS FEET, pushing his face into Bill's face, grabbing him by the collar -- Bill flinches, trying to press himself back into the bleachers, frightened by the hate in Gil's eyes. Other parents slide away as Gil speaks in a piercing whisper.

GIL

"Shut up about my son, or your kid's going to be looking for another ride home!

Bill swallows, his voice cracks as he speaks.

BILL

ON ELLEN

In the home stands. She looks across the field at the visitor's stands. Sees Gil standing there, looming over Bill, threatening.

ELLEN

Oh, shit.

She hurries down the bleachers, toward Richie.

IN THE VISITOR'S STANDS, Gil looks back toward his son -- sees Ellen hurrying from bleachers toward Richie. He releases Bill, who sags into the bleachers, wet with sweat. Gil starts running down the bleachers, leaping from seat to seat.

ON THE FIELD, Ellen sees Gil running toward Richie, a wild look in his eye. She panics -- starts to run, calling through the dugout fence.

ELLEN

Richie!

Richie, in his batting stance, looks up, surprised -- he sees Gil running toward him. He looks back to his mother and sees the look of fear on her face. He begins to run to her -- running away from his father. Gil sees this.

Gil picks up his speed, a look of anger on his face. He easily overtakes his son and grabs his arm. Richie yelps in pain.

GIL

Where do you think you're going?

Richie starts crying. He calls out:

RICHIE

Help!

At that, Gil freezes.

GIL

What!? What did you say?

The boy looks up at him -- there's pure fear in his eyes.

All at once, ELLEN LEAPS ON GIL'S BACK, screaming.

ELLEN

Run, Richie!

Gil flings her off -- she lands, crumpled on the ground. He turns on her.

GIL

He's my son! Why did you do this?

ELLEN

Please don't hurt him.

Gil just looks at her... he looks at Richie who stands there crying, terrified. Terrified of his own father. Gil tries to think of the right thing to say, something to make it all better.

GIL

(gently)

Don't... don't just swing at anything.
Wait for a good one.

Then Gil turns and runs across the field, across the street... out of sight...

EXT. GIL'S CAR

Speeding down the expressway. Changing lanes recklessly.

INT. "CLEATS" SPORTS BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Primo, Zamora, and a couple of other players are sitting around a table near the back, conversing in Spanish. In the background, GIL steps up to the bar.

AT THE BAR

Gil sits at the bar. He's had way too many Tequila shots for this early in the day and he doesn't look too good. LEON, the bartender, looks at Primo.

LEON

Wish we had a whole team like him.

Gil glances toward Primo in disgust -- mutters under his breath.

GIL

Asshole hits a couple home runs,
suddenly he's Hank Aaron.

Leon shrugs -- the customer's always right.

LEON

Ever heard of a player named Onsay?

(Gil shakes his head)

They keep joking about him. Primo says
'Onsay' and the other guys crack up.

GIL

Got the Encyclopedia?

Leon pulls out the Baseball Encyclopedia; flips through it.

LEON

Nope. There's a Curly Onis. One at bat
for the '35 Dodgers. That's his whole

GIL

What do you mean? That's enough. One play in the bigs? You can live the whole rest of your life off that. And none of this other shit matters.

LEON

Sure, but you gotta pick the right play.

The door opens sending BRIGHT MID-DAY LIGHT into the room. The customers shrink from it like vampires. BOBBY RAYBURN comes in and walks right past Gil. Gil feels a little shiver of recognition as he passes. Once Bobby's out of earshot, Leon shakes his head and mutters.

LEON (cont'd).

What a waste of space.

Gil looks at him in bleary-eyed anger.

GIL

So he's hit a bad patch... We all hit bad patches. Didn't you ever hit a bad patch?

LEON

No, this is my dream job.

GIL

I've hit some bad patches in my day. Some damn bad patches. But look at me.

There's glint of madness in Gil's eye.

GIL (cont'd)

I come through it fine. And if I can come through it, so can he.

Leon swallows, a little nervous as he watches Gil's eyes.

LEON

Sure he can.

GIL

I'm gonna go talk to him. I know what he's going through. We both been through the same shit.

Gil starts to get up and go over to him. Leon stops him.

LEON

Please, man! You bug them, they'll stop coming in here.

GIL

It's OK, I know him. We talked on the phone.

GIL (cont'd)
I'll just send them a round of drinks.

Leon rolls his eyes.

AT THE TABLE -- MOMENTS LATER

Primo and Bobby are arguing. They stop when Leon comes over with a tray full of beers. He points to Gil at the bar.

Gil smiles at the table. The players look up for a second. Gil waves, smiling. They look away without acknowledging him. His wave droops and his smile fades. Leon comes back.

LEON
They're impressed.

Gil feels a little sick. Gets to his feet.

GIL
Be right back.

INT. BATHROOM

There's a TV above the urinals showing baseball highlights.

INT. STALL

Gil is slumped over the bowl. He eases down to sit on the floor, staring blankly ahead. He HEARS SOMEONE ENTER the bathroom. A man's voice speaks -- it's Bobby.

BOBBY
Let's not dick around. Just tell me what you want.

Gil puts his eye to the crack between the stall door and the frame.

GIL'S POV -- He can see Bobby and Primo.

PRIMO
I want nothing.

Bobby and Primo are squaring off.

BOBBY
Maybe you just don't understand the way things work here. There's a thing called a pecking order? Someone like me, coming to a new team, things get worked out.

PRIMO
Forget it.

BOBBY

What the hell is it to you? Pick another number! What was your number down in...

PRIMO

The Dominican Republic?

BOBBY

Sure, what was your number down there?

PRIMO

Once. (pronounced 'Onsay.')

ON GIL -- still watching.

BOBBY

'Onsay?'

PRIMO

Eleven.

Bobby paces the room. . . On the TV screen, Bobby hits a ball almost over the wall -- a Chicago fielder leaps and catches it. Primo points at the TV and laughs.

PRIMO (cont'd)

Almost got lucky.

Bobby moves into him, grabbing his shirt.

BOBBY

Name your price. It's my number.

PRIMO

No price. The pecking order has changed.

BOBBY

Meaning what?

PRIMO

Meaning check the averages in the morning.

Bobby TAKES A SWING AT PRIMO. He knocks Primo half into the sink, splitting his lip. Bobby moves in to hit him again -- The next instant, Primo is halfway across the room, with a stiletto in hand, crouched and ready.

GIL watches... His hand eases down to the knife strapped to his leg. He pulls the knife out -- puts a hand to the door, ready to jump out and help Bobby.

Primo is half smiling as Bobby backs a step away. The bathroom door opens and a patron comes in. The knife disappears and Primo backs out the door, smiling. The patron gives Bobby a 'what-the-hell's-going-on' look as Bobby walks out.

INT. BAR

Primo is laughing and telling Zamora what happened in Spanish. Gil walks from the bathroom and sits back at the bar -- there's a new determined look in his eye. Leon hurries to him.

LEON

What the hell happened in there?

GIL

I found out what my play is.

Gil sips his beer, triumphant.

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE -- DEN

Bobby into the den, in a foul mood. He's surprised to see Sean at the computer play Myst -- with Jewel working the keyboard. Sean looks up at him happily.

SEAN

Daddy, Jewel figured out how to get out of the library!

YOLANDA, the Argentine nanny, hurries up to him.

YOLANDA

She said you were expecting her.

Bobby remembers the conversation at his locker.

BOBBY

Crap.

Yolanda hurries away. Jewel smiles at him.

JEWEL

May I quote you on that?

BOBBY

Can't do it now. You're going to have to go.

SEAN

Aw, Dad!

Bobby takes her arm and starts to lead her out of the room.

JEWEL

Yeah, the kid likes me.

BOBBY

All right, we'll do it on the way to the door. I can do the questions too, I know them by heart.

Bobby leads her through the house talking rapidly.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Are you enjoying Boston? Very much.
How are you getting along with the new
teammates? Peachy. Are you frustrated
by your slump? Sure, but it'll pass.
Do I feel pressure because of the new
contract? No.

(stops at the front door)

Did I cover everything?

Jewel looks at him -- really looks. It sets him off-balance.

JEWEL

What kind of ballplayer do you think
Sean will be?

BOBBY

I wouldn't want him to be a ballplayer.

JEWEL

Why not?

Bobby shuts his eyes and rests his head against the wall.

BOBBY

Just... I wouldn't.

JEWEL

Are you saying that because of the slump?

Bobby opens one eye and smiles, 'catching' her.

BOBBY

'Sure, but it'll pass.'

JEWEL

(smiling back)

I'll be following the team to New York
after the game tomorrow. Maybe we can
talk down there.

Bobby considers, then nods. She turns to go. He stops her.

BOBBY

How did you get out of that library?

JEWEL

I could tell you, but that would be cheating.

INT. GIL'S CAR -- NEXT DAY

He grips the wheel and smiles with gritted teeth. He changes
lanes, suddenly. The car behind him squeals and skids. Jewel's
voice is on the radio.

JEWEL (v.o.)

--for a few more calls before we take you
to Fenway, where the Sox meet the Blue
Jays in the last game of this Homestand.

Gil laughs.

EXT. FENWAY PARK TICKET BOOTH -- DAY

A rheumy-eyed ticket seller in a pull-over V-neck berates Gil.
As he speaks, we can hear the loudspeaker announce the game,
already in progress; "NOW BATTING FOR THE JAYS, NUMBER 21..."

TICKET SELLER

You think you can waltz in here and pick
up Field seats? Don't you know anything
about baseball?

GIL

(too loud)

I know baseball!

He walks off, hearing a roar from the crowd inside the stadium.
Then he sees something that makes him stop.

The scalper in the white jacket is at his station under the Gate
B sign.

Gil stands, dead still, watching him.

The scalper checks his watch, looks around. No more action
today. The scalper walks off through the parking lot.

Gil watches him go... then follows him.

EXT. ALLEY

The scalper is far from the paying parking lots. He strolls into
an alley behind a restaurant, up to an old Camaro parked by the
dumpster.

GIL

Got anything behind the dugout?

The scalper spins around to see Gil. He breaks into a broad
smile.

SCALPER

You just might be in luck, man.

(reaching into his pocket)

I got a couple of great ones. Two
hundred apiece.

GIL

(calmly)

Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't
they listed at eighteen dollars?

The scalper is holding the tickets in his hand -- he just looks at Gil. Then he laughs.

SCALPER

Hey, you want to fuck somebody, go see your--

In a flash, Gil is on him, pushing him against the car, grabbing a fistful of his hair and HOLDING THE THROWING KNIFE AGAINST HIS THROAT. He whispers in the scalper's ear.

GIL

For your information, my mother was a saint.

The scalper's eyes are wide with fear.

Gil pulls the scalper's head up by the hair, takes the knife from the man's throat, and moves it slowly up the man's face, still holding it close to him, past his mouth, his nose, his eyes... the scalper tries to follow the blade with his eyes.

SCALPER

Sure, man. I--

Gil leans into him, his breath hot on the scalper's face. He presses the knife into the scalper's forehead, right below the hairline.

GIL

You know what really burns me?

The knife draws a glistening bead of blood. Gil runs it slowly along the hairline, cutting a fine red line in the scalper's forehead. The scalper shuts his eyes, trying not to wet himself.

SCALPER

What?

GIL

You don't even stay for the games.

Swiftly, Gil pulls the knife back and cuts... slicing at the fistful of hair he holds in his hand, chopping it away so that the scalper falls to the ground, with a gasp, clutching his head, thinking he's been scalped for real.

Gil drops the swatch of hair, take the tickets from the cringing man's hand and walks off.

CUT TO:

INT. FENWAY PARK ENTRANCE

Gil hands the ticket taker his ticket, smiling broadly.

TICKET TAKER

GIL
(cheerfully)
I'll still see the best part.

EXT. FENWAY PARK -- SEATS

An usher is leading Gil down the stairs for the Field seats while the loudspeaker blares out:

LOUDSPEAKER
Now pitching for the Blue Jays, Duane Ward.

Gil glances up at the scoreboard -- Sox 0, Blue Jays 2

ON THE FIELD SEATS

A shirtless SOX FAN, with a big red sock painted on his face and the SOX logo painted across his beefy chest, sits in a terrific seat -- front row, just over the Sox dugout. The Sox Fan is hollering incoherent male bellowings.

SOX FAN
Come on, let's get some runs, assholes!

A voice speaks up next to him.

USHER
Excuse me, sir?

The Sox Fan looks up to see the Usher and Gil next to him.

USHER (cont'd)
May I see your ticket?

SOX FAN
Shit.

He stands and slides past them, pauses to speak to Gil.

SOX FAN (cont'd)
Showing up at the bottom of the eighth.
Helluva fan you are.

Gil smiles at him and settles into his seat. A YOUNG FATHER in khaki pants and a Banana Republic jacket, bounces his little boy, done up in a full Gap for Kids outfit, leans over to Gil.

YOUNG FATHER
Thanks for getting rid of that guy.
I was going to have to speak to him.

GIL
Obnoxious?

YOUNG FATHER
Oh, man! Doesn't set a very good example

GIL

People don't care about that anymore.

He reaches down and adjusts the knife strapped to his ankle.

ON THE FIELD -- TJADER (the Sox lead off man) hits a grounder down the third base line. He tears down to first. Safe! The crowd roars!

The organ booms TA-DA-DA-DUNT-TA-DA! and scoreboard flashes with "CHARGE!!!" The crowd roars that too.

Gil's eyes move to the on-deck circle -- Lanz steps from there to home plate.

Primo strolls out of the mound and moves into the on-deck circle, weighted bat on his shoulder.

Gil turns to the young father, concerned.

GIL

What's Primo doing?

YOUNG FATHER

Burrows is finally letting him bat clean up.

GIL

But where's Rayburn?

The little boy speaks up.

LITTLE BOY

Rayburn sucks.

Gil represses the urge to smack the kid. He comes to his feet and stares at the on-deck circle. He judges the distance in his mind. Too far.

He sits back down, making a point of dropping his souvenir program.

He reaches down to pick it up, CAREFULLY SLIPPING THE THROWING KNIFE OUT OF HIS ANKLE SHEATH and slipping it into the program.

He sits, waiting.

ON THE FIELD -- Lanz hits a powerful single, advancing Tjader to second.

THE CROWD CHEERS, wildly. Except for Gil, who sits and waits.

PRIMO moves to the batting circle.

THE CROWD begins to chant PRIMO! PRIMO! PRIMO! "CHARGE" booms again from the organ and the scoreboard.

GIL watches, eyes fixed steady on Primo, his hand holding the knife hidden in the program.

PRIMO nails the first pitch. The ball explodes off the bat.

The whole crowd comes to its feet, holding its breath.

PRIMO holds the bat, gracefully extended and watches it go.

IT'S OUTTA HERE.

The CROWD ROARS

The SCOREBOARD flashes with a pyrotechnic display. HOME RUN!!!

PRIMO trots around the bases, confident, cool.

GIL watches him, the crowd jostling around him, bellowing with joy. Gil is silent and poker-faced. Just waiting for Primo to come closer.

PRIMO rounds third and starts trotting toward home.

GIL, surrounded by the crowd, brings the program up to chest level, gripping the knife in his hidden right hand.

PRIMO tags home and trots to the dugout.

GIL's FINGERS tighten on the knife.

PRIMO stops for a moment to tip his hat to the cheering crowd.

NOW! Gil whips the program away and moves to throw. But--

SUDDENLY his view is blocked by a GROTESQUE MONSTER, covered with yellow fur, prancing around on the dugout roof like a maniac. The damned mascot SOCKO.

Gil tries to move to see around the damned thing -- it shadows his movements like an annoying street mime.

Then Socko jumps into the stands, grabs Gil around the waist and starts dancing with him. The crowd around Gil breaks up, laughing.

Gil struggles in the mascot's grasp, trying to hide the knife from view, trying to see Primo.

Over a furry shoulder, he sees Primo trotting into the dugout. Safe.

An EXPRESSION OF FURY on Gil's face.

Gil pulls the knife back, ready to thrust it into Socko's big yellow gut.

Gil glances down and sees the little boy next to him, right at

Gil slips the knife up his right sleeve.

Socko sits Gil back in his seat and pats him on the head, as if he were a child at Disneyland. Then the mascot goes galumphing onto the dugout, looking for someone else to annoy.

Gil sits, fuming, humiliated. He grips the arm of the seat tightly with his hands. So tightly that the knife hidden up his sleeve cuts into him -- a small trickle of blood, which drips, unseen, from his right hand onto the floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. GIL'S CAR -- DAY

Gil is driving South down Route 95, window open, breeze in his hair. He passes a sign reading 'New York City -- 200 Miles.' Over this, we hear Jewel on-air;

JEWEL

The Sox are coming to you tonight from Yankee Stadium.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM -- NIGHT

OVERHEAD SHOT, MOVING OVER THE STANDS while the loudspeaker plays "Na Na Hey Hey."

The crowds in the stands, the players on the field. The whole place glitters in the night like a Christmas ornament. Over this, we hear a radio announcer.

RADIO (v.o.)

Even with the powerful hitting of Juan Primo, the Sox are still 12 games out of first.

ON THE FIELD -- NIGHT

Bobby steps to the plate. The crowd begins to jeer -- shouting a mocking "Bah-bee!" like the "Da-a-rryl" of Strawberry fame. Bobby ignores it; takes his stance.

ON THE STANDS

A section between first and home. The crowd is chanting "Bah--bee!" Among the hecklers is one silent man, Gil staring calmly at Bobby.

BOBBY waits for the ball. It comes at him, spinning. He swings, crushing the ball.

IN THE STANDS all heads turn to follow the ball. All but Gil, who stays fixed on Bobby.

The ball flies into the outfield. Bobby makes it to first.

INT. YANKEE VISITOR'S CLUBHOUSE

Bobby sits on a bench, alone, watching a crowd of interviewers surrounding Primo, asking him questions.

JEWEL

Primo hit for the cycle. Quite an achievement.

Bobby looks up, surprised to see Jewel standing next to him.

BOBBY

We still lost.

JEWEL

And all you think about is the team, right?

Bobby smiles at her -- he knows she's on to him. Their eyes meet -- a friendly moment.

BOBBY

You want to finish that interview?

She smiles.

THE REPORTERS shout questions to the smiling, confident Primo. The CAMERA MOVES PAST THEM, out of the club house.

PLAYER'S ENTRANCE -- NIGHT -- CAMERA STILL MOVING, past security to the crowd of fans waiting outside... To a trashy girl in a Sox jacket and a lot of make-up... To the man behind her -- Gil.

GIL

Know what hotel they stay at?

GIRL

The Four Seasons.

EXT. MANHATTAN -- NIGHT

Bobby and Jewel walk along through the noisy crowd.

JEWEL

You've had a helluva year, haven't you? The divorce, contract dispute, the custody fight, the slump.

BOBBY

(finding the pat response)
Yeah, it has been a trial, but--

JEWEL

This is the first real trouble you've ever seen isn't it?

BOBBY

JEWEL

Oh, yeah? Upper middle class childhood. High school star. Drafted out of college, didn't spend a day in the minors. Rookie of the Year. Three championships. It's not fair.

BOBBY

Now, don't get jealous.

JEWEL

No, I mean to you. It's given you a very false idea of what life's like.

Bobby stops and looks at her. Looks straight at her, with eyes so open that she almost has to look away.

BOBBY

What's life like, Jewel?

JEWEL

It's not easy.

BOBBY

And you think it's always been easy for me?

JEWEL

Yeah.

He watches her for a moment.

BOBBY

Why the hell couldn't it have stayed that way?

He takes her arm and starts leading her through the crowd.

INT. THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL LOBBY -- THAT NIGHT

Gil is sitting in the lobby, drinking a glass of Tequila and watching the door. The team arrives -- everyone but Bobby. They are quiet and surly. Some of them split off toward the bar. The others, including Primo, go to the elevators. Young women join them, falling into step, like dancers executing a well-rehearsed routine. Gil steps up and joins them. The elevator doors open -- they start piling in. Primo hangs back.

PLAYER

Coming?

PRIMO

Gonna go have a steam.

PLAYER

(squeezing one of the girls)
Me too.

Gil stands as if waiting for another elevator, watching Primo from the corner of his eye.

INT. JEWEL'S HOTEL ROOM

Not fancy. Nothing like the place the players are staying. Half-finished room service is on the table. Jewel takes notes next to the salmon while Bobby sips a beer.

BOBBY

What they don't tell you about having a kid is that, it's great and all, but you worry all the time. When he was two he was like, running around, all over everywhere, heading straight for the electrical outlets, and the scissors, climbing the stairs, and I'm following him around like Roger Rabbit making sure he doesn't kill himself. It's like, I don't know, it's...

JEWEL

Responsibility.

BOBBY

Yeah. Jesus.

He shudders and puts the glass down. He feels uncomfortable, as if he's opened up too much to this woman. Defensively, he starts putting the old barriers back in place. The slick, confident Bobby Rayburn-mask returns. He keeps his distance by coming on to her.

BOBBY (cont'd)

(using an old line)

It's really nice talking to you.

(puts his hand on hers)

This life can be so isolating.

Jewel's bullshit detector goes off. She gives him an icy stare and pulls her hand away.

JEWEL

For a second I thought you weren't bullshitting me.

Bobby looks a little ashamed.

BOBBY

I wasn't.

JEWEL

Then why'd you start?

BOBBY

It... it felt more comfortable that way.

JEWEL

I like you better uncomfortable.

Bobby laughs.

INT. HEALTH CLUB -- FOUR SEASONS HOTEL -- THAT NIGHT

A woman drops a wet towel in a basket and walks out through a pair of double doors. Gil stands in the hall; she walks by, not noticing him. Gil walks in.

He walks past the bright blue pool -- it's empty. His tasseled loafers echoing on the tile floor.

OUTSIDE THE STEAM ROOM

Gil walks up to the doors and looks in through the little round window. He smiles.

INT. STEAM ROOM

Primo's the only one there. He's lying nude on a bench, eyes closed. He doesn't pay attention to the door opening. Footsteps come across the room -- feet wearing shoes... They stop right in front of him. He opens his eyes to see a man, fully dressed in a business suit standing in front of him. The man offers his hand, smiling.

GIL

Gil Renard!

Primo sits up, uncertain.

PRIMO

Hi.

Gil sits next to him, using his best salesman demeanor.

GIL

Having a pretty good year with the Sox.

PRIMO

Thank you..

GIL

But, Juan, did you ever notice how just one man doing well can throw off the rest of the players?

PRIMO

What?

Gil is slowly reaching into his jacket pocket -- pulling out a huge Bowie knife.

GIL

What I'm saying is, sometimes you gotta

In a flash, Gil swings the knife around, to bury it in Primo's chest. But Primo's too fast -- he blocks it with his arm and shoves Gil across the room. Gil moves at him again.

Primo kicks Gil's wrist -- the knife goes flying.

THE KNIFE sails through the air -- Primo's hand snatches it in mid-flight.

PRIMO stands crouched and ready.

Gil is in the corner, on the floor. Primo moves toward him.

GIL reaches to his leg sheath, pulls out the throwing knife and throws it...

ON THE FLOOR

the Bowie knife clatters on the tile floor. Followed by Primo, hitting the tile with a thud -- the throwing knife is buried in his throat.

GIL comes to his feet, looking down at the stream of blood flowing past his legs. He walks to Primo and bends down... We hear a the SICKENING SOUND of him pulling the knife from Primo's throat. He stands again, holding the wet knife.

OUTSIDE THE STEAM ROOM

Gil opens the door and slips out. Behind him, the steam is tinged with red.

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S HOTEL ROOM -- MIDDLE OF THAT NIGHT

Bobby walks in to find a man sitting at the desk in a suit and tie. The man stands and pulls out a badge.

KANT
Detective Kant. NYPD.

Bobby stares at him.

BOBBY
Jesus, so I'm late for curfew. Burrows is siccing the cops on us now?

KANT
..It's not about curfew. I understand you and Juan Primo got into a fist fight a few nights back.

BOBBY
What, the prick wants to press charges?

KANT
What was the fight about?

Bobby hesitates.

BOBBY
Well, it sounds stupid... We both wanted
the same number.

KANT
Number?

BOBBY
On our uniform.

KANT
That would be a new one.

BOBBY
New what?

KANT
Reason to kill somebody. Somebody knifed
Juan Primo in the steam room downstairs.

Bobby stares at him.

KANT (cont'd)
Say, Bobby, you think you could give me
an autograph? My kid's a big fan.

Bobby's face is blank with shock... slowly, he takes out a pen.

CUT TO:

INT. YANKEE VISITOR'S LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

The whole team is gathered, still in street clothes. Burrows is
standing before them. Zamora is speaking.

ZAMORA
I say we play. We play for Juan.

There is a murmur of agreement.

BURROWS
Anybody else?... Then let's vote. All
those in favor of playing today?

ON THE TEAM

Most of them raise their hands... WE MOVE OVER the faces and
upraised hands until we see BOBBY, sitting among them, still
stunned, staring at the floor. His hand is not raised.

BURROWS (v.o. cont'd)

Bobby doesn't raise his hand now, either. He doesn't seem to hear.

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S LOCKER -- CLOSE ON THE DOOR

Bobby swings it open. Something he sees inside makes his blood freeze in his veins.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- ON BOBBY

Bobby stares into his locker... slowly he reaches in to touch his uniform, to touch what has been freshly sewn onto the right sleeve -- A SMALL NUMBER 11, CIRCLED IN BLACK.

A voice speaks up beside him.

VOICE

Onsay.

Bobby looks up, startled, to see Zamora standing next to him -- there's a black number 11 on his sleeve as well.

Bobby looks around the locker room at his teammates -- all with black 11s on their right sleeves.

ZAMORA (cont'd)

Looks like you got your number after all.
For free.

Bobby just stares at him.

INT. VISITING MANAGER'S OFFICE -- A LITTLE LATER

Bobby, still in his street clothes, sits slumped in a chair in front of Burrows, who sits on the edge of an old metal desk.

Wald leans against the large glass window in the wall, looking out into the lockers.

BURROWS

We held a vote, Bobby.

BOBBY

I'm not talking about the team. I just... I can't play today.

There is an uncomfortable pause... Burrows looks over at Wald.

WALD

He doesn't feel up to it. It's the ribcage.

BOBBY

It's not the ribcage!

BOBBY (cont'd)
I just can't play after this!

BURROWS
Shit, Bobby, I didn't even think you
liked Primo.

BOBBY
I didn't like him! He was a smug little
asshole! But that doesn't mean--

He looks up to see his some of his teammates staring at him
through the glass wall. He pounds on the glass.

BOBBY (cont'd)
Enjoying the show!?

BURROWS
What are you telling me, Bobby?

BOBBY
...Look, I just need to sit out a day.
Burrows stares at him, impassively.

BURROWS
Sorry, son.
Bobby gives a little laugh.

BOBBY
I'm not hitting anything anyway, what's
the difference?
Burrows stands, bellowing.

BURROWS
It's your goddamned job, son! I traded
a kick-ass shortstop and a Triple A
pitcher who's burning up minor leagues
for your sorry ass, the least you can
do is get out there and play some
baseball!

He ends this tirade three inches from Bobby's face. Bobby just
stares back at him in disbelief.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM -- DAY

The Sox run out onto the field for a day game.

ON THE STANDS

Gil in the crowd, hand over heart, singing with full lung-power.

GIL
"What so proudly we hail"

ON BOBBY -- LATER

stepping up to the plate. Taking his stance. But then he holds up his hand and steps out of the batter's box. He shakes his head, vigorously, trying to jog himself out of this funk. . . The catcher looks up at him.

CATCHER

You okay?

Bobby ignores him. He steps back into the batter's box -- takes his stance. But the looks of concentration we've seen on his face before seems clouded now by doubt and uncertainty.

The pitcher goes into his wind-up -- throws.

BOBBY'S POV -- The ball comes at him -- clear and fat.

BOBBY swings. Perfect. Graceful. CRACK.

The ball zooms off into the sky, hangs there, and arcs slowly toward the right field stands.

BOBBY watches the ball go, in stunned disbelief.

RIGHT FIELD STANDS

A bunch of beer-guzzlers move for the ball. It goes down among them and they fall in a pile, fighting for it. One of them, sporting a beer gut and bright red hair, comes up, holding the ball, triumphant.

ON BOBBY:

He just stands there at home plate, the look on his face, an uneasy mixture of shock, triumph and fear.

The Umpire leans into him.

UMPIRE

You gonna tag the bases, son?

Bobby looks back at him, as if this were a new idea. He turns and begins trotting to first base, the sick, uneasy look still on his face.

IN THE VISITOR'S DUGOUT, Zamora watches Bobby, resentfully.

INT. STADIUM PUBLIC RESTROOM -- LATER

The red-haired guy who caught the ball (RALPH) is standing in front of the urinal trough, unzipping. We hear the game outside -- other men come and go. A large man moves in next to him -- Gil. Ralph glances over, annoyed. All at once, his eyes widen. Gil is pressing a knife into his ribs.

GIL

RALPH

What?

GIL

Rayburn's homer.

RALPH

You can't--

Gil digs the knife in a little.

GIL

I want it.

Trembling, Ralph takes a hand from his dick, reaches into his Yankee's jacket and pulls out the ball. Gil takes it.

GIL (cont'd)

Don't forget to shake.

Gil slips out the door. Ralph sags against the pipes, terrified.

STADIUM HOT DOG STAND

A young boy stands with his father, waiting in line for a hot dog. There's another man in front of the boy -- his hand is right at the boy's eye level. The man's fingers hold a baseball -- they move about it expertly, wrapping around it for a fastball, a curve, a knuckler, a sinker. The little boy is fascinated. He looks up and speaks to the man.

BOY

Did you used to be a baseball player?

The man leans down -- we see that it is Gil. He whispers to the kid with a conspiratorial grin.

GIL

I'm working for the Sox right now.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- set to John Fogerty's "Centerfield" booming over a PA system...

Bobby, smashing the ball...

A Fielder leaping for the ball -- it sails over his glove...

Bobby running the bases in Toronto...

Bobby hitting a powerful line drive at Anaheim...

Bobby sliding into third at Camden Yards...

Bobby at Fenway -- smashing one out of the park. Fireworks go off on the scoreboard...

Bobby runs the bases -- the look on his face seems more haggard

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH - BOSTON

Bernie and Jewel are at their posts.

BERNIE

Don't try to tell me baseball isn't a Russian novel. The Sox come back from the road winning six straight. Bobby Rayburn's suddenly on fire. Sixteen for twenty-one with seven homers and fifteen RBIs. How do you explain it?

JEWEL

I think it's character, Bernie. The Primo tragedy made the team pull together and really start living up to their potential. It's inspiring.

BERNIE

(stares at her for a beat)
Ladies and gentleman, Jewel Stein has been replaced by aliens from the Planet Little Mary Sunshine.

INT. RADIO STATION -- A LITTLE LATER

Jewel is pouring herself a coffee. Bernie hurries to her.

BERNIE

You gotta see this.

INT. OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Jewel, Bernie and a bunch of hangers-on are watching TV. Zamora is being interviewed by mobile reporters.

REPORTER (on TV)

Do you know if they had any other fights?

ZAMORA (on TV)

Rayburn punch Juan in the mouth.

The reporters clamor around him, all shouting "Why?" "What was it about?" "Were there drugs involved?"

ZAMORA (on TV cont'd)

Rayburn want his number. He offer Juan a hundred thousand dollar for it. Juan said no.

The TV cuts to a shot of an anchor woman.

ANCHORWOMAN (on TV)

New York police have confirmed that they did question Rayburn after the murder but refuse further comment.

JEWEL

Shit.

INT. GIL'S APT.

Gil sits on his bed, watching the big screen, munching from a bag of pork rinds resting on his stomach.

On the TV, Bobby and the team are at Logan Airport, coming through an arrival gate. Bobby, bewildered and looking like shit, is surrounded by a swarm of reporters.

REPORTER #2 (on TV)

Tell us about your fight with Juan Primo.

REPORTER #3 (on TV)

Primo's murder sure seems to have helped your hitting, hasn't it?

Bobby turns on the reporter with an explosion of fury.

BOBBY (on TV)

I'm not getting hits 'cause some whacko killed Juan Primo! Get away from me!

Gil stares at the TV, looking offended.

GIL

A 'thank you' would be nice!

BOBBY'S HOUSE -- WATERFRONT -- DAY -- SEVERAL DAYS LATER

The lawn slopes down from the house to a sandy beach. . . . Sean is playing in the sand with a boogie board -- getting ready to jump in. Bobby hurries down from the house, calling:

BOBBY

Sean, what are doing!?

SEAN

Lookit, Dad!

BOBBY

Not now. Get away from there.

Sean walks back to his dad. Bobby is looking out at the water.

BOBBY'S POV -- REVERSE ANGLE on the water. The water is filled with boats, all containing men with cameras. Telephoto lenses. All pointed right at Bobby.

BACK TO SCENE -- Sean holds his dad's hand and looks out at the boats.

SEAN

I think it's nice now that you're hitting, people want to take your picture again.

Bobby leads him back to the house.

ON THE BOATS

The CAMERA MOVES ALONG THE ARMADA of reporters. Small boats, large boats, all variety. Camera lenses glint in the sun.

WE STOP on one small fishing punt -- a rod hanging off one end, the occupant watches the shore through binoculars -- IT'S GIL.

EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Jewel's old Alpha Romeo drives up to the house -- reporters converge on it as it makes its way into the garage.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Bobby is sunk deep into an easy chair, nursing a beer. Jewel has a can of her own -- she's peeking out through the drawn curtains at the platoon of reporters, camping in front of the house.

JEWEL

Look, those assholes will be gone inside a week. They got the attention span of gnats. I know, I'm one myself.

BOBBY

I don't care about them.

She looks at the circles under his eyes.

JEWEL

Something's keeping you up nights.

Bobby looks at her -- hesitates before deciding to tell her.

BOBBY

I'm hitting.

JEWEL

(taking this in)

Well... that happens to every ball player at some point.

He doesn't laugh.

BOBBY

Primo's dead and all of a sudden I can't miss the damn ball.

JEWEL

Oh, that's bullshit, Bobby.

BOBBY

(shaking his head)

I wanted him out of my life.

She sits down next him.

JEWEL

Did you kill him, Bobby?

BOBBY

No.

JEWEL

Then what are we talking about?

It's an effort for Bobby to put it into words.

BOBBY

What if I'm hitting because I'm happy
he's dead?

JEWEL

You don't look happy to me.

BOBBY

I wanted to start hitting. I didn't
want it this much.

JEWEL

Come off it, Bobby. I wish about five
people dead on the drive in to work
every day. It's human.

BOBBY

How would you feel if one of them died?

JEWEL

I'd feel pretty shitty, but I wouldn't think
it was my fault. I know I'm not God.
Hasn't that gotten through to you yet?

Bobby isn't having any of it.

BOBBY

If Primo was alive, I'd still be in the
toilet.

JEWEL

You don't know that. Maybe you're seeing
the ball better. Maybe the humidity
changed. Maybe you found something else
to worry about and got your mind off it.

Bobby looks at her -- she's surprised to see a sheen of tears glistening in his eyes as he speaks, voice choked with emotion.

BOBBY

I hate going in, Jewel. Every time I put on the uniform, I...

Wald speaks from the doorway.

WALD

What the hell is she doing here?

Bobby pulls it all back in -- replies, brusquely.

BOBBY

I asked her here. As a friend.

WALD

Right, a reporter friend.

(to Jewel)

You're signing a release, that anything--

BOBBY

(firmly)

I trust her.

Sean runs in from the den and up to Jewel, happy to see her.

SEAN

Jewel! Wanna play a game?

BOBBY

Daddy needs to talk to Jewel, son.

SEAN

You didn't want to talk to her last time.

WALD

Things change, Kid.

JEWEL

I'll play with you in just a few minutes, I promise.

BOBBY

Why don't you go play with Yolanda?

YOLANDA

(bustling over)

Come on, darling.

She opens the door to the back yard. Sean mopes his way out.

SEAN

Okay.

WALD

If your friend Jewel's on the team, maybe she can help us figure out what to tell the press out there.

BOBBY

I don't care what you tell them.

WALD

You better start caring! They control public perception. Perception's all that matters in this game.

BOBBY

I thought getting hits was all that mattered.

WALD

I'm not talking about baseball, Bobby.

EXT. BACK YARD -- DAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Sean has his boogie board under his arm and is running down the hill to the beach.

YOLANDA

Slow down!

INT. LIVING ROOM

Wald is talking, reasonably. Bobby paces around the room, hating every minute of this.

WALD

I say we hold a press conference. One of those Michael Jackson numbers where you set the record straight and deny everything.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Sean waves to the boats. Takes his boogie board and jumps into the water, paddling like crazy. Yolanda calls out to him from the beach, gesturing for him to come back.

SEAN paddles. A swell tips the boogie board -- he slips off into the water. The boy gasps -- grabs onto the board for a moment.

THEN SEAN LOSES HIS GRIP AND GOES UNDER. He comes back up gasping. He swims a little, then flounders again -- he's clearly struggling.

ON THE BEACH, Yolanda flounders into the water -- struggling. It's clear that she can't swim.

THE REPORTERS' in their boats lower their cameras for a moment.

INT. LIVING ROOM

They are still talking.

JEWEL

If he can deny everything honestly,
then he ought to deny it.

WALD

(it's simplicity itself)
He can deny it.

Bobby stops pacing to stare out the window at the water.
Suddenly, HE BOLTS FOR THE DOOR.

EXT. BACK YARD -- DAY

Bobby runs down the lawn -- the powerful lope of an athlete.
Jewel and Wald follow but can't keep up.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Yolanda sits on the sandy beach, holding the soaking, semi-conscious Sean in her arms and weeping. She looks up, eyes wet with tears and sobs to a man standing above her.

YOLANDA

Thank you! Thank you!

WE TILT UP to see Gil standing over the two of them, soaked from the ocean. He smiles the smile of the modest hero.

GIL

I was there.

Suddenly, an armada of small boats loaded with reporters pulls up the shore. Many of them leap into the water and clamber up the beach to Gil and the boy, taking pictures. It looks like the landing at Omaha Beach.

SEAN IS CRYING. Bobby runs onto the scene. He slides next to Sean, taking him in his arms. Gil steps aside. A reporter shoves a microphone in his face.

REPORTER

Is the boy all right?

Gil shoves the reporter away, exploding in righteous anger.

GIL

Get the hell out of here! Who are you people!?

He turns on the whole crowd of reporters, shoving them away.

GIL (cont'd)

Sean is sobbing in Bobby's arms. Jewel is next to him. Bobby watches Gil taking on the whole mob of reporters. He reaches up to stop Gil, half-laughing.

BOBBY

Cool it, man.

Gil stops and turns to Bobby, feeling his hand touching him.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Thank God you were here.

Jewel takes Sean in her arms, comforting him. Bobby stands. Gil stares, amazed. Bobby -- Bobby Rayburn himself -- is standing there, offering Gil his hand and smiling at him with a look of open, trusting gratitude.

BOBBY (cont'd)

What's your name?

The old salesman smile comes back to Gil's face as he takes Bobby's hand.

GIL

Onis. Curly Onis.

INT. DEN -- LATER

Gil is sitting at the wet bar, sipping a Coke. Through an archway we can see the living room where Sean is on the sofa talking to Jewel and Bobby. He's looking better.

BOBBY

How're you feeling?

SEAN

Can Jewel stay and play on the computer?

Bobby laughs and nods -- he notices Gil sitting at the bar in the den. Bobby crosses over to Gil, looking at him as if he's a walking miracle.

BOBBY

You saved his life, man... What the hell do I say?

GIL

I was just out fishing. You'd'a done the same thing.

BOBBY

There must be something I can do for you. Are you a baseball fan?

GIL

(shrugs)

GIL (cont'd)
 ('realizing')
 Hey, are you a player?
 (he's got it)
 Roger Clemens!

BOBBY
 (with a laugh)
 Bobby Rayburn.

GIL
 (as if it barely registers)
 Oh... Hope I didn't hurt your feelings.

BOBBY
 Are you kidding? It's a relief.
 (leans in 'confidentially')
 Those die-hard baseball fans are some of
 the biggest losers you'll ever meet.

Bobby laughs. Gil feels an icy chill in his heart as he hears Bobby say these things. Gil tries to make him remember something he said during the phone interview.

GIL
 Aren't the fans what it's all about?

BOBBY
 They'd eat you alive if they could.

Bobby snaps out of it -- gives Gil a friendly slap on the back.

BOBBY (cont'd)
 Anyway, you want to come to the game
 tonight? You could sit in the dugout
 with the players.

Gil shrugs as if it doesn't mean a damn thing to him.

GIL
 Sure, I guess.

Bobby laughs, good-natured, at how unimpressed this man is with the trappings of stardom.

BOBBY
 That's great! Look, you gotta get some
 dry clothes on. Yolanda?

Yolanda comes in, still crying and apologizing in Spanish.

BOBBY (cont'd)
 It's okay, it's okay. I don't blame you.
 Take Mr. Onis up to my closet. Get him
 some clothes. Okay?

SEAN

Daddy!

Bobby hurries over.

BOBBY

You okay?

SEAN

I wanna call Mommy.

Bobby looks at the boy, stricken. He hadn't even thought about how she'd react to this.

BOBBY

... Sure, okay... Try not to make it sound so bad.

JEWEL

Bobby, she'll see it on the news.

BOBBY

Yeah. Just... say 'hi' for me.

Sean picks up the phone. Bobby moves out of earshot to the bar. Wald sits next to him.

WALD

Time to count our blessings, Bud.

Bobby pats his shoulder, smiling, feeling a fondness for Wald.

BOBBY

You said it.

WALD

This is really going to turn public sympathy in your favor.

A pause. Then Bobby looks at Wald, smiling blandly.

BOBBY

So... it's a good thing this happened, huh?

Wald is suddenly defensive.

WALD

No, I didn't meant that, I--

Bobby's smile grows cold.

BOBBY

Get out of my house.

A pause. Wald bursts out laughing. Bobby stands, with quiet intensity.

BOBBY (cont'd)

I mean it, get the hell out of here.

Wald's laugh fades..

WALD

Come on, I'm just looking at the reality--

Years of suppressed anger bursts out of Bobby. He grabs him by the collar and drags him into the living room, toward the front door. Wald pulls free.

BOBBY

I said get out of my house!

WALD

Fine! You think I like wiping your ass every time you--

Bobby opens the door -- reporters are covering the lawn. Bobby shoves Wald out -- the cameras are on them.

BOBBY

Get your five percent somewhere else!

WALD

Six percent. You don't even know how much I take, you stupid jock!

Bobby slams the door. Bobby takes a deep breath and empties his lungs in a sigh of relief. Then Sean calls from the sofa.

SEAN

Daddy! Mommy wants to talk to you!

Bobby shuts his eyes. What's next?

INT. BOBBY'S ROOM

Alone in the room, Gil opens Bobby's closet -- he takes a sharp breath, hardly believing what he sees.

ON THE MIRROR -- MOMENTS LATER

A full-length mirror. Gil steps in front of it, pulling on a dry shirt. But it's not just any shirt -- it's Bobby's spring training t-shirt from the Dodgers.

Pure, blinding white, with blue letters. And the number 11.

He looks at himself in it, smoothing the material over his chest, feeling it against his skin. He stands straighter, taller. Like a giant. Like a knight from old. Like a baseball player. He closes his eyes and feels himself transformed...

INT. LIVING ROOM

Sean is sleeping on the sofa. Bobby is looking through the blinds at the reporters lining his front yard.

BOBBY

I guess I still have to figure out what to say to them.

GIL

What do they want to know?

Bobby looks up to see Gil -- Gil has pulled a sweater over Bobby's spring training shirt to hide it.

BOBBY

They, uh, they want to know if I got into a fight with a guy in a bar.

GIL

Did you?

BOBBY

Yeah.

Jewel looks surprised.

GIL

Then tell them. Truth can't hurt you.

Bobby looks to Jewel.

JEWEL

It's better coming from you.

Bobby nods.

EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Bobby opens the door and steps out into the front lawn. The reporters converge on him. Lens, cameras, microphones.

BOBBY

Hi, guys. What do you want to know?

ON THE DOORWAY -- Gil stands, watching Bobby -- the focus of all that attention. He nods, proudly.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Gil walks back into the room. Jewel is sitting on the arm of the sofa, stroking Sean's hair. The boy is asleep.

GIL

He's a beautiful boy.

JEWEL

GIL

No. No, I wasn't that lucky.

Gil smiles at the boy. Jewel looks at him, thinking.

JEWEL

'Curly Onis'. Any reason I would have heard of that name?

He gives her his best aw-shucks smile.

GIL

I don't think so, Ma'am. I've barely heard of me myself.

She laughs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Bobby's Hummer pulls out, through the crowd of reporters. Bobby, Gil, Sean and Jewel inside.

INT. FENWAY PARK DUGOUT -- DUSK

Bobby, Gil and Sean walk down the tunnel into the dugout. For Gil it's a religious experience -- he's a Catholic entering St. Peter's. The park spreads out before him, green and glittering under the bright lights. The crowd sounds like a thunder storm. His breath is short and his heart is in his throat. He has to control himself for Bobby's sake. Bobby introduces him to Sid Burrows.

BOBBY

Sid. Friend of mine, Curly Onis.

BURROWS

(shaking his hand)

Hair looks pretty straight to me.

GIL

When I was a kid it was curly, so my brothers called me Curly.

BURROWS

My brothers called me Dumbshit, but I changed it.

Burrows wanders off. Socko the Mascot runs over and dances for Sean, who giggles like it's the funniest thing in the world.

BOBBY

I hate those damn mascots.

GIL

Me too.

Bobby pats him on the shoulder -- a kindred soul.

INT. PRESS BOX

Jewel is in the press box, fielding calls.

CALLER (v.o.)

--now that Rayburn's come clean, maybe we can put this behind us and go back to watching the man play ball.

BERNIE

Well, judging from our calls, most of the listeners agree with you.

JEWEL

Got another opinion? Call us on FANLINE. We're going to be broadcasting from right here at Fenway for this entire homestand.

INT. DUGOUT -- LATER

Game in progress. Gil and Sean are sitting in the 'guest section' of the dugout, a little railing separating them from the players. Bobby sits right next to them. Sean is throwing a ball into his glove -- he always catches it. Gil watches the pitcher, intently. He strikes out Lanz. Bobby stands up, grabbing his bat. Gil moves next to him.

GIL

This guy's going to start you with a breaker.

Bobby gives Gil an odd look.

BOBBY

Thought you weren't a fan.

GIL

I'm not. I used to play the game.

Bobby looks at him, puzzled. Then he heads out to the on-deck circle.

ON BOBBY

taking his stance in the batter's box. The ball coming at him -- a breaker.

BOBBY -- FROM ABOVE

A beautiful swing -- he crushes the ball.

THE RIGHT FIELD STANDS

The ball sails into the stands. The crowd erupts in cheers.

Bobby heads for the dugout, coming up to Gil to shake his hand.

BOBBY

Thanks, man.

Gil is sitting with his arms crossed on the bench, looking like the King of the World.

GIL

Don't mention it.

EXT. DUGOUT -- LATER

The team is high-fiving, walking out of the dugout. The crowd is leaving the stands. The P.A. is booming.

P.A.

Final score, Red Sox 7, Blue Jays 3.

Gil and Sean are still sitting on the bench. Gil looks around, grinning.

He doesn't see anyone to stop him -- grabs a glove, a ball and a bat. He takes Sean's hand.

GIL

Come on!

EXT. FIELD

Gil runs with Sean out onto the field. He places him in the batter's box.

SEAN

Are you sure we should do this, Mr. Onis?

GIL

C'mon, how many times do you get the chance?

Gil runs to the mound. He stands there -- takes his position.

GIL (cont'd)

Ready?

Sean takes his batter's stance -- looks pretty damn good for a seven-year-old. Gil goes into his wind up -- very professional form. The years seems to melt off him as he moves -- suddenly he's a graceful athlete. He makes his throw -- the same form he uses when he throws the knife.

SEAN HAMMERS THE BALL -- a heroic effort for a kid. It arcs high over Gil's head and lands WAY OUT IN RIGHT FIELD, far past the infield line. . . . Gil stands staring, dumbfounded... He looks back at the kid... He walks off the mound and comes right up to him, kneeling to be at eye level with him.

GIL (cont'd)
Sean, if I ever had a son, I'd want him
to be just like you.

SEAN
(not sure what to say)
Thanks, Mr. Onis.

OVERHEAD SHOT -- Gil takes Sean's hand and leads him to the
dugout.

GIL
You know why baseball's so much better
than life, son? It's fair.

EXT. BEACH --- NIGHT

The beach behind Bobby's house. Gil is standing on the dock,
getting ready to untie his boat.

SEAN
You gonna take me fishing sometime, Mr. Onis?

GIL
Sure, I know a few spots.

BOBBY
I can't let you go home like this, Curly.

GIL
Why not? That's how I got here.

BOBBY
Come on up to the house, have a drink. You
can borrow my car, I got a couple of them.

Tosses Gil a set of car keys. Gil shakes his head, amused.

GIL
A couple of cars.

BOBBY
Yeah, disgusting, isn't it?

SEAN
Can Mr. Onis read me a bedtime story?

BOBBY
That's up to Mr. Onis.

INT. SEAN'S ROOM

Sean is tucked into bed. Gil sits by his side reading Sean's
copy of 'The Runaway Bunny,' in a soft, even, silky whisper.

GIL
Once there was a little bunny who wanted

GIL (cont'd)
 So he said to his mother, "I am running away." "If you run away," said his mother, "I will run after you. For you are my little bunny."

Gil's eyes come off the book, fixing on Sean. He must know this story by heart.

GIL (cont'd)
 "If you run after me," said the little bunny, "I will become a fish in a trout stream and I will swim away from you."

Gil's eyes are locked on the beautiful child.

GIL (cont'd)
 "If you become a fish in a trout stream," said his mother, "I will become a fisherman and I will fish for you."

INT. DEN -- LATER

Bobby and Gil are sitting by the bar -- it's clear they've had a few beers by now. Bobby's voice is hoarse, in imitation of the sick Sean in the hospital.

BOBBY
 'Hit a home run for me.'

GIL
 Shit.

BOBBY
 It was creepy.

GIL
 And you couldn't hit it.

BOBBY
 Suddenly it was like it was the most important thing in the world. I couldn't hit a thing.

GIL
 What'd the kid say?

BOBBY
 He died.

GIL
 Shit. So how'd you get over the slump?

Bobby looks out at the water -- the reporters still floating in their boats. He doesn't want to talk about this now.

BOBBY

Gil looks at him, smugly.

GIL
You don't, huh?

BOBBY
So, what organization were you with,
Curly?

GIL
Braves. Drafted right out of high school.
Had a cup of coffee, as they say. Hurt
my arm. I was a pitcher.

BOBBY
Tough.

GIL
It's like my old catcher Coop used to say.
Enjoy it while you got it, then just move on.

BOBBY
Good philosophy.

GIL
He's a good man.
(taking in the rich surroundings)
O'course, you got a lot more to enjoy
then we did in my day.

Bobby feels a little embarrassed by his conspicuous wealth.

BOBBY
I guess things have changed.

GIL
I guess.

Gil leans in to Bobby, dying to tell him.

GIL (cont'd)
You really don't know why you got over
that slump?

Bobby ponders for a long moment....

BOBBY
I think I stopped caring.

Gil stares at him -- this is nothing like the answer he expected.

GIL
You stopped caring?

BOBBY
Yeah. I had other things on my mind.

GIL
(in disbelief)
You stopped caring?

BOBBY
There's more to life than baseball,
Curly.

GIL
Stop caring? Is that your fucking
insight into life!?

The sudden anger in Gil's eyes surprises Bobby. He tries to laugh it off.

BOBBY

Hey...

Gil tries to contain himself before he spoils the moment completely. Smiles weakly.

GIL

Sorry...

(then)

I just... I really hate that attitude.

Gil's attempt to contain himself has been only partially successful. There's still a look in his eye that makes Bobby wonder if he hasn't seriously misjudged this guy.

BOBBY

What do you say we call it a night?

Bobby stands.

GIL

I don't think you can hit me.

Bobby hesitates -- really not wanting this man to turn out to be such an asshole.

BOBBY

Why would I want to hit you, Curly?
You saved my kid's life.

GIL

I meant hit my pitching.

Bobby laughs out loud.

GIL (cont'd)

What's so funny?

BOBBY

Nothing. Sorry. No one ever said that
to me before.

GIL
I'm saying it.

BOBBY
Okay, if you really want to, someday.

GIL
Now.

BOBBY
Come on, Curly, it's the middle of the night.

GIL
Sounds to me like you're looking for an excuse.

Bobby sighs... then laughs.

BOBBY
Okay. Batter up.

EXT. BACK LAWN

The flood lights are on, giving the yard an eerie glow. They're on the flat part of the lawn at the bottom of the slope -- from here the lawn stretches to the beach. Bobby has a bat -- Gil has his glove and a bucket of balls.

BOBBY
Pace off sixty feet. If any get by me, they'll just roll up the hill.

Gil paces off. On the opposite shore, in the distance behind him, a lighthouse beacon cuts through the night. Gil takes his position, then strips the sweater off, revealing Bobby's Dodger shirt underneath.

Bobby gives him a wry smile of surprise.

BOBBY (cont'd)
Looks good on you.

GIL
Thanks.

Gil takes a ball from the bucket.

GIL (cont'd)
All set?

BOBBY
You've got the ball, Ace.

Gil rotates the ball in his hand, gets his grip, goes into his windup. Hip turn. high leg kick. back bent step. drive -- Gil

Bobby isn't sweating. He doesn't move. Then, at the last instant, he swings. CRACK. The ball whizzes over Gil's head. There is a distant SPLASH from the water behind Gil.

Gil looks at Bobby. Bobby is in his stance, waiting. Gil picks up another ball.

He goes into his windup, even better than before, and throws a blazing fastball.

Bobby waits again -- CRACK! Again the ball goes by Gil so fast he can't even see it -- WHIZ! Again from behind him, SPLASH...

Gil twists his neck -- crack, we hear the vertebrae pop back into place -- and takes another ball. He gives this one all he's got, putting his whole body into it.

Again Bobby slams past Gil -- SPLASH!

BOBBY

That one had a little wiggle on it.

Gil looks at Bobby -- still as a statue in his stance. Gil reaches into the bucket for another ball.

He throws -- a curve. Bobby swings. CRACK. WHIZ. SPLASH...

BOBBY

(with a laugh)

Man, when you had an arm, you must've been something!

Gil stares at him, infuriated by Bobby's patronizing tone. He reaches into the bucket -- the last ball. He stares intently.

GIL'S POV -- Staring right at Bobby's head. Right at that bland smile. Bobby clearly hasn't broken a sweat.

GIL throws the ball with all his force.

THE BALL flies like a bullet for Bobby's head.

BOBBY leans back, just a little, and swings. CRACK!

The ball whizzes past Gil's ear -- he flinches.

BOBBY re-takes his stance. SPLASH, as the ball hits the water...

GIL

No balls left.

BOBBY

That was kind of fun. It's been a while since I enjoyed hitting like that.

GIL

BOBBY

I don't think I have any more.

Bobby shoulders his bat and starts walking up the hill.

BOBBY (cont'd)

That was cool, though. Listening for the splash. The guys'll get a kick out of that.

Gil just stands, watching him go.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The phone is ringing. Bobby steps through the patio doors and answers it.

BOBBY

Hey, Jewel.

INTERCUT WITH JEWEL IN HER APARTMENT

It's a mess -- housekeeping is not a priority for her.

JEWEL

Great game.

BOBBY

Can you come over?

JEWEL

Too much work.

BOBBY

Oh, well--

Bobby has a strange feeling. He turns around to see -- GIL standing right next to him, staring at him. Then, Gil breaks into a smile and offers his hand. Bobby cups his palm over the receiver and shakes Gil's hand.

GIL

I'll show myself out.

BOBBY

Fine, you still taking the car?

GIL

If it's still offered.

BOBBY

Be my guest. And Gil? No hard feelings out there, right? I'm a pro.

Gil's smile is bigger than ever.

GIL

Hey, it was an honor just to pitch to you

Gil walks into the hall, heading for the door. Bobby goes back to phone.

BOBBY

Curly's just leaving. Can you believe he used to play pro ball? Jesus, don't let me turn out like that.

INT. HALL

Gil stands outside the door, listening to Bobby's words. Gil's face blushes red with humiliation. His eyes shift to the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE

The reporters are still waiting. The garage opens and Bobby's Hummer pulls out, with Gil at the wheel. He waves to the reporters as he drives on through.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- LATER THAT EVENING

Bobby is playing that damn CD-ROM game again. Still can't get out of the library. The phone rings. Bobby picks up.

BOBBY

Hello.

INTERCUT WITH JEWEL IN HER APARTMENT -- she has the Baseball Encyclopedia on the bed with her and she looks worried.

JEWEL

I looked up Curly Onis.

BOBBY

What?

JEWEL

I was sure I knew that name from somewhere. It was in the Baseball Encyclopedia. He played for the Brooklyn Dodgers... in 1935.

Bobby sits, staring, confused.

BOBBY

Must be his father.

JEWEL

There's only one 'Onis' in here.

BOBBY

Why would he lie?

His mind goes to the one thing he always worries about -- Sean.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

He hangs up the phone and runs for the stairs.

INT. SEAN'S ROOM

Bobby runs into Sean's room, switches the light on... THE BED IS EMPTY.

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S HUMMER

Gil is driving. Sean sits up in the back seat -- half asleep.

SEAN

Why couldn't Daddy come with us?

GIL

He's going to meet us at the fishing hole. Soon as we get everything set up.

INT. BOBBY'S GARAGE

Bobby stands in the doorway, looking at the empty spot where the Hummer was.

INT. KITCHEN

Bobby hurries in from the garage and grabs the phone. He punches a pre-set number.

INTERCUT WITH GIL IN THE HUMMER

as the car phone rings. Gil looks at the phone... considers... then hits a button so that the call comes over the speakers.

GIL

'Lo!

Bobby grips the phone, trying to sound calm.

BOBBY

Hi, Curly!

GIL

Bobby! How ya doing? Say 'hi,' Sean.

SEAN

(sleepy)

Hi, Dad, we're going fishing.

Bobby tries not to scare Sean.

BOBBY

Say, that's great.

Gil picks up a section of the newspaper from the passenger seat.

GIL

Hey, did you pick up the evening paper?
We're in it.

Above the fold on the City section there's a shot of Gil, Sean, and Bobby on the beach, just after Sean was rescued -- Gil is turned away from the camera and his face is obscured. The headline reads, 'Unidentified Man Saves Rayburn's Son from Drowning.'

GIL (cont'd)

Not a very good shot of me, but, you know, you're the star.

BOBBY

Curly, could you pick up the phone so we could talk?

GIL

Sure thing, Slugger.

Gil puts a Lion King tape on, switching it to the back speakers. Sean curls up in the back. Gil picks up the phone.

GIL (cont'd)

What's going on?

BOBBY

(still trying to stay calm)
Curly, what are you doing?

GIL

Oh, all the reporters, the pressure. I thought he needed to get away.

Bobby knows he can't afford to make him angry.

BOBBY

Well, that's cool. But you should have... that is, I don't think--

GIL

You don't think at all, do you? You're just a lucky idiot.

BOBBY

(angry)

Listen--

GIL

Don't get angry with me, Kid. That's the first thing you learn in sales. But then, you don't know about sales. You don't know about working. You're just a freak, you know that?

GIL (cont'd)

With your speed and your eye and your honey swing and you think the world owes you everything. Do you think you deserve anything you have? Do you?

BOBBY

No, I don't deserve it. I just want Sean back.

GIL

He's the last thing you deserve.

BOBBY

What do you want?

GIL

What do you think I want? I'm just a fan. I want your autograph, I want the honor of watching you play, I want you to make life fair!

BOBBY

Jesus, Curly, I don't know what I did to you, but if you're pissed at me, okay, the kid doesn't--

GIL

It's not what you've done to me. It's what I've done for you, number 11. You owe me.

BOBBY

I don't know what you mean.

GIL

How were you hitting with Primo on the team?

Bobby finally realizes... this man killed Primo.

BOBBY

Oh, God.

GIL

He finally figures it out, ladies and gentlemen! Man, it's true what they say, sluggers really are stupid. Well, I'm a pitcher. Pitchers use their brains.

Gil hangs up. . . BOBBY stares at the phone, helpless. He presses redial. Listens for the ring. A taped voice answers.

PHONE

The subscriber is unavailable or has travelled outside--

Bobby slams the phone against the computer screen -- against the damned library. The glass cracks and the screen blacks out.

EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Police cars are at the scene, lights flashing. The reporters are talking to their cameras.

REPORTER

The police will not confirm if their presence here is related to the Primo murder investigation or some other matter--

INT. BOBBY'S LIVING ROOM

Police everywhere. Putting a tap on the phone. Taking pictures. Bobby is pacing furiously. Jewel watches him. Two detectives, BAKER and LEWIS, are addressing him.

BAKER

And he made no ransom demands?

BOBBY

He said he wanted me to make life fair.

LEWIS

Do you have the Lo-Jack system in your vehicle?

BOBBY

Yeah. Yeah, Wald took care of that.

JEWEL

Does that mean you can find him?

EXT. CITY STREET

An industrial part of town. Three police cars converge on an intersection, sirens blaring.

Bobby's Hummer is parked mid-street. The squad cars surround it, lights flashing. . . THE COPS JUMP OUT, GUNS DRAWN. One of the cops speaks on a microphone -- his amplified voice blares out of the car.

COP

You are under arrest.

INT. HUMMER

Empty. The CAMERA PANS slightly, from the empty driver's seat to the empty passenger's seat.

Sticking into the back rest is a huge BOWIE KNIFE -- it is stuck right through a Bobby Rayburn trading card. It's the card Bobby signed for Richie at the game. The knife impales it, right through Bobby's chest.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

Gil's 325i, battered and bruised, drives along through the night. The Beach Boys are blaring from the radio -- the lovely opening 'Ahh-ahhs' of "Don't Worry Baby."

INT. GIL'S CAR

Gil is at the wheel -- Sean's asleep in the passenger seat. Gil is drumming on the wheel, singing along with the radio, along with those sweet, eternally youthful harmonies.

GIL

"Well, it's been building up inside
of me for, oh, I don't know how long!
I don't know why but I keep thinkin'
somethin's bound to go wrong!
But she looks in my eyes
And makes me realize
When she says Don't Worry Baby.
Don't Worry Baby
Everything will turn out all right."

Sean opens his eyes.

SEAN

Mr. Onis? Are we really going fishing?

Gil looks over at the boy.

GIL

Of course. But first I got a real treat
for you. You're going to meet one of the
finest athletes who ever played the game.

SEAN

What game?

GIL

There's only one game, son.

EXT. TRAILER PARK -- MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

A scuzzy trailer park in Saugus, on the Northern edge of Boston's urban sprawl. A TELEPHONE LINEMAN'S TRUCK is parked next to a particularly run-down motor home. Gil's BMW pulls up next to it and Gil leads Sean out.

GIL

Now, I'm going to pull a little joke
on him, so you just play along.

Gil and Sean walk up to the motor home. Gil stops and looks at the PHONE COMPANY TRUCK, shaking his head, sadly. He leads the boy to the door and knocks. No answers. He knocks again. . . The door is FLUNG OPEN by A HUGEY FAT MAN, about Gil's age, with

He has just been wakened from a beer induced sleep.

COOP

The hell do you want!?

Gil smiles, overjoyed.

GIL

Coop!

(hands on Sean's shoulders)

I'd like you to meet my son, Sean.

CUT TO:

EXT. COOP'S TRAILER -- LATER

Gil and Sean are sitting at a little picnic table, a Coleman lamp lit in the middle. Sean sips a generic soda, Gil a generic beer. Coop just walks around and around Gil's car.

GIL

So, Bouchard, the Yankee cleanup hitter is at the plate. Bottom of the ninth, two on, two out, we're up one to nothing.

COOP

Is this really your car?

GIL

My first pitch is a ball, way outside. So Coop comes out to talk to me. 'Member this, Coop?

Coop is still marvelling at the car.

COOP

Man, you done good.

GIL

'Maybe we should walk him,' I says. And Coop says, 'Screw that, if you want to put him on, at least hit him in the head!'

Gil bursts out laughing. Sean laughs too, pleasure at being treated like a grown-up counter-balancing his uneasiness for the moment.

COOP

Man with a car like that. You really made something outta yourself, didn' ya?
(to Richie)

I remember when your daddy was a white trash lineman like me. Couldn't even hold onto that shit job.

Gil looks at his friend, sadly.

GIL

You should've left when I did. Realized your potential. I always thought you'd be managing by now.

COOP

Managing?

GIL

In the majors, Coop.

Coop just stares at him. Then he breaks out in a big grin.

COOP

Nobody calls me 'Coop' anymore, you sick son of a bitch.

Gil jumps to his feet, full of enthusiasm.

GIL

Come on, let's take your company truck. We'll show the kid some tricks.

Gil grabs Sean's arm and leads him to the phone company truck.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

Coop's phone company truck pulls to a stop -- next to a green telephone terminal box.

INT. COOP'S TRUCK

The three of them are crammed into the front seat.

GIL

Just be a minute.

He climbs out of the truck.

EXT. TRUCK

Gil opens the back of the truck and pulls out a repair box. He walks across the road to the terminal box and opens it.

INT. TRUCK

Coop sits behind the wheel. Sean looks up at him. Coop tries a smile -- it's a little scary.

SEAN

You know, that's not my real dad.

COOP

No?

SEAN

My real dad is Bobby Rayburn

COOP

Yeah. When I was a kid my real dad
was Johnny Bench.

EXT. ROAD

Gil is hooking the phone up to the box.

INT. BOBBY'S LIVING ROOM

Baker is on a police radio. Bobby is pacing anxiously behind him. A uniformed cop (FRANKLIN) speaks to Bobby, solicitously.

FRANKLIN

You oughta get some sleep, you know.

BOBBY

(confused)

Why?

FRANKLIN

You got that big game with Oakland
tomorrow.

Bobby explodes.

BOBBY

I'm not playing any goddamned game tomorrow!

The phone rings. Bobby leaps for it -- the police listen in on
head phones.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Hello!

GIL (v.o.)

You on another call?

BOBBY

No.

EXT. TERMINAL BOX -- NIGHT

Gil has his phone plugged into the box.

GIL (v.o.)

It's just, you answered so fast.
Feeling a little edgy?

INT. COOP'S TRUCK

Coop looks in the rearview mirror. Sees Gil at the terminal box.
Curses under his breath and opens the door. To the kid:

COOP

Be right back.

EXT. ROAD

Gil is listening on the phone -- Coop comes up to him.

COOP

You can't be using the equipment. I--

Gil holds up a finger to Coop, smiling as if to say 'this'll be good.'

GIL

I'm telling you, the kid's fine.

He moves the plug, switching the connection to another line.

GIL (cont'd)

You'll see him if you pay my ransom.

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE

Bobby is on the phone.

A cop, wired to the phone, is looking at a portable computer -- the screen displays a grid of the whole Boston area. There's a blinking in the Everett area -- suddenly it switches to Brookline and begins blinking there.

BOBBY

Just tell me what you want.

COP

Shit.

EXT. ROAD

Gil switches the connection again.

GIL

All right, Bobby. You're so sure you can hit anything.

INT. LIVING ROOM

CLOSE ON BOBBY as he listens. Gil's voice suddenly goes hoarse.

GIL (cont'd, v.o.)

'Hit a home run for me.'

BOBBY

What the--

INTERCUT WITH GIL

Coop is staring at Gil, scared.

Gil smiles at him, loving letting him in on this.

GIL

Those are my demands. One little home run in the game tomorrow. Then you'll earn that boy.

GIL

And no cheating. If I see that pitcher taking it easy on you, I promise you'll never see Sean again.

(Bobby swallows)

Oh, Bobby?

BOBBY

(controlling himself)

Yeah?

GIL

Now do you care?

Gil hangs up.

EXT. ROAD

Gil disconnects the phone and sits on the ground, laughing. Coop stares at him, terrified.

COOP

You know, you could get in a lot of trouble for that. People could think you're serious.

Gil just looks at him.

INT. BOBBY'S LIVING ROOM

Bobby is clicking the receiver, furious. One of the detectives leans into the cop on the computer.

COP

He was moving all over hell. He must have been plugged into a terminal box.

BOBBY

You mean you didn't get him?

(shouting)

You didn't get him!?

COP

I didn't get him.

INT. GIL'S CAR

Gil is driving now. Sean is sitting on Coop's lap. Coop is sweating, trying to think of a way out of this. Sean can sense Coop's fear -- he's beginning to worry himself.

COOP

You know, I got work tomorrow.

Gil stops the car and pockets the keys. They are parked by a ratty, old municipal ballpark -- chained up and neglected.

GIL
Come on, the night's young! I thought
we'd play some ball.

He gets out -- but the other two stay put. Gil's getting pissed.

GIL (cont'd)
Well?

SEAN
I don't want to play ball. We were going
fishing.

GIL
We'll go fishing. But first I want you
to show my friend Coop what you can do.

SEAN
No.

GIL
(a stern father)
Excuse me?

SEAN
I'm not going.

GIL
When I talk to you, you mind me!

Gil grabs the kid by the arm and drags him out of the car. Sean
begins to cry. Gil grabs his shoulder.

GIL (cont'd)
Stop it! My boy does not cry!

He takes the kid's hand and drags him to the fence, calling back
over his shoulder.

GIL (cont'd)
Comin', Coop?

INT. AMVETS' FIELD -- CLOSE ON SUPPLY CLOSET DOOR

Gil kicks open the door.

ON THE FIELD -- The lights blaze on, illuminating the field.

OVERHEAD SHOT -- Gil walks onto the field, a bag of equipment
under his arm, bucket of balls in his hand, still dragging Sean
by the hand. Coop stands by home plate, nervous.

ON GIL AND COOP

Gil walks up to Coop and drops the equipment -- a bat, a
catcher's glove.

COOP

Maybe we want to have a beer first, huh?

GIL

You're not going to believe what this kid can do.

(slipping on his glove)

Now, come on! Get in position, Coop.
Just like old times.

Gil turns and walks to the mound. Coop hands the bat to Sean.

SEAN

That's not my real daddy.

COOP

It's OK.

He puts Sean in batting position and whispers into his ear.

COOP (cont'd)

Let the first one go.

Coop crouches behind the plate.

GIL

I'm waiting.

Coop looks up to see Gil on the mound, standing in profile, ball in glove. Coop swallows.

GIL (cont'd)

The signals. What the hell happened to you, Coop, did you forget everything?

Coop gives him a signal for a slider. Gil shakes it off. Coop blinks his eyes, stinging from sweat -- gives him the signal for a curve. Gil shakes it off. Coop gives him the signal for a fastball. Gil nods once. Goes into his windup -- hip turn, high leg kick, step drive -- he whips it.

Sean stands, watching the ball sizzle past his face -- SMACK it lands in Coop's glove. Coop rises and hurls the ball back to Gil with all his might.

The ball ROCKETS STRAIGHT AT GIL. Gil twists, but he can't avoid it -- the ball hits him on the arm. He flinches in pain.

Coop grabs the boy in his big arms and runs toward the fence. He's a big man and with the extra weight, he can't run too fast. He makes it to the high chain link fence -- lifts the kid as high as he can. Sean grabs the fence and scrambles up it.

GIL looks up from his hurt arm -- sees what Coop is doing.

GIL

Coop! What are you doing?

Sean makes it to the top of the fence. Coop tries to climb after him, but it's hard for a man his size.

GIL reaches to his leg and grabs the thrower -- he slips it out and throws with deadly accuracy.

ON THE FENCE

Sean drops to the ground on the other side just as the knife lands, THWACK, in the middle of Coop's back.

He hangs on the fence for a moment... then drops to the ground, the chain link TWANGING as he lets go of it.

Gil runs to Coop, turning him over. Gil has tears in his eyes as he looks at his old catcher. How could this have happened?

GIL

Why the hell did you do that? What are you joining them for? We're teammates, man. We could have made it to the bigs.

Coop opens his eyes and looks up at Gil.

COOP

Fuck off. That was Little League. We were twelve years old.

Coop's head falls back. Gil looks up.

GIL'S POV -- Through the fence, we can see Sean running off down the road.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT -- MOMENTS LATER

Sean is running with all his might. He's a healthy kid and he's scared to death, so he can run pretty fast.

From behind him, a large car drives up, passes him, goes ahead away -- then turns across the road and stops, blocking his path. Sean stops -- it's Gil's 325i.

The trunk of the car pops open. The front door opens and Gil steps around to face the boy.

Gil crouches a little, hands on his knees -- the knife is in his hand, the blood shining black under the street lights -- and smiles proudly at the boy:

GIL

Good hustle, kid.

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE -- HALLWAY -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Jewel walks down the darkened upstairs hallway. She reaches the

A little boy's room, filled with toys and books and computer games. Bobby is there... looking down at the empty bed. He looks up when she walks in.

BOBBY

Remember when he was born?

JEWEL

Top of the eighth, one-nothing Giants.
1989.

BOBBY

Valerie was in labor for fifteen hours. I was with her for ten of them. But... we were two games out of first with four games to go, I had to play. Valerie understood...

He gets up and looks out the window into the night.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Somebody brought a little radio into the dugout, so I got to hear Vin Scully announce that it was a boy, seven pounds, eight ounces.

JEWEL

I was watching on ESPN. They flashed "It's a Boy" on the scoreboard and everybody in the stadium sang "Happy Birthday." It was quite a moment.

Bobby smiles as he remembers.

BOBBY

Yeah...

Then he looks at her, really wanting to know.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Why did I play that game?

JEWEL

.... The whole season was riding on it.

Bobby turns away and sits on the bed.

JEWEL (cont'd)

You're going to hit it out of there tomorrow.

He lays back on the bed, staring at the ceiling.

BOBBY

Why couldn't I have been great at math?
This kind of shit doesn't happen to
accountants.

She sits on the bed next to him.

JEWEL

Different shit happens to accountants.

Bobby turns his head to look at her... their eyes meet in a moment of understanding... in that moment, all his barriers drop and he sits up, wrapping his arms around her, burying his face in her hair. She just reaches up and gently strokes his hair.

CUT TO:

BOSTON SKYLINE

A MOVING SHOT over it, over to Fenway, into the empty stadium. The sky is heavy with dark, ominous clouds. There is a distant RUMBLING OF THUNDER.

EXT. BATTING CAGE

Set up around home plate. Bobby is in his batting stance -- Burrows pitches to him from behind his net. Bobby swings and misses. Burrows throws again -- again, Bobby misses.

BURROWS

You got something on your mind, kid?

Bobby lowers the bat and leans against the cage.

EXT. STADIUM

The crowds are arriving.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Gil pulls his car into the same lot he did the last time he came. The same Pakistani attendant is there. Gil's wearing a suit and a Sox cap -- he gives the attendant some money.

GIL

You can park this car wherever the hell you want.

EXT. STADIUM -- SERVICE ENTRANCE

Gil walks up to a service entrance. He's carrying a large cardboard box with a clipboard balanced on top.

He knocks on the door with his foot. An old man in a red blazer opens the door.

RED BLAZER

Yeah.

GIL

Package for Socko, the mascot. It's urgent.

RED BLAZER

(laughing)

Urgent?

GIL

Yeah, it's a head. A new head.

The man reaches for the box.

GIL (cont'd)

He's got to sign for it.

RED BLAZER

I can sign.

GIL

No way, I almost got canned for that once.
(the old man just stares)
Come on, give me a break for once in my
life.

The old man smiles and lets Gil in.

INT. FENWAY PARK -- CORRIDOR

Gil walks past the old man, into the inner workings of the stadium. He reaches into his back pocket and pulls out his throwing knife, SLIPPING THE KNIFE UP HIS SLEEVE.

EXT. PRESS BOX

There's a police sniper lying on the roof, talking into his headset. The CAMERA MOVES DOWN to the window -- Jewel and Bernie are doing their pre-game show.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH

Bernie is doing his best, but Jewel looks quite distracted. The organ is playing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" over the P.A.

BERNIE

I've never seen security so tight at a ball game. I assume it's due to the Primo murder investigation, but the police refuse to comment.

JEWEL

Game's about to start. but I think we have

BERNIE

We got Gil from Back Bay on the line.

Bernie signals to Jewel, asking if she wants coffee. She shakes her head, Bernie walks out into the press box next door -- a large window separates the two rooms. All the reporters are in there, working on lap tops, picking out women in the stands.

JEWEL

Hey, Gil, how's it hanging?

GIL (v.o.)

Rayburn isn't going to make it. He's a spoiled kid and he's going to pay the piper.

Jewel's face freezes as she recognizes the voice.

JEWEL

Why are you so sure he's going to fold?

GIL (v.o.)

He hasn't got what it takes.

She moves back from the open window that lets in the sounds from the stadium. She covers her ear and listens on the headset.

JEWEL

He's doing pretty well, lately.

She listens -- she can hear the sound of the stadium organ along with Gil's voice. The call is coming from inside the stadium.

GIL (v.o.)

He can't take the pressure.

Jewel tries to signal through the window to the other reporters in the press box -- no one is looking.

JEWEL

Tell me more, Gil.

Jewel is gesticulating wildly at the window -- no one sees her.

INT. STADIUM -- THE STANDS

Gil is standing at a pay phone by one of the souvenir booths -- the cardboard box is on the counter next to him. . . From his vantage point, he can look up and see the broadcast booth. He uses a pair of cheap souvenir binoculars to get a better look.

GIL'S POV, -- ON THE BROADCAST BOOTH

Jewel is waving her arms like a mad woman, trying to get someone to see her. Gil stifles his laughter.

GIL

I think the pressure's getting to you a

INT. PRESS BOOTH

Jewel is still trying to get their attention.

JEWEL
Don't hang up!

The line disconnects.

CUT TO:

INT. FIELD LEVEL

She stands next to Detective Baker. They listen to the National Anthem and survey the huge stadium, filled with people.

BAKER
You're sure he called from inside?

JEWEL
He's here.

BAKER
Don't worry, we have everything under control.

ON THE FIELD Bobby stands out in the middle of centerfield -- vulnerable and alone. He scans the seats that surround him.

BOBBY'S POV -- on the thousands of eyes staring at him.

The batter hits a high fly -- Bobby runs for it. Looks like it's going into the seats.

Bobby's at the fence -- he leaps into the air and nabs it, CRASHING INTO THE FENCE. He steps forward, holding the ball up in his glove. The crowd goes wild.

IN THE STANDS -- ON JEWEL AND BAKER

The crowd is roaring, stamping their feet. The whole structure vibrates from the impact. Jewel gives Baker a skeptical look.

JEWEL
Under control?

BAKER
(shrugs)
We'll try.

ON THE FIELD

Bobby back in position, feeling his chest with left hand -- he grimaces in pain. Lanz calls out to him from right.

LANZ
Ribcage okay?

BOBBY

Fine.

Bobby smiles, trying to cover his discomfort.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE FIELD

Bottom of the first. The Sox fielders are heading to the dugout. Bobby walks to the steps, still feeling the pain in his ribs. A plainclothes cop pats Bobby's arm as he passes.

COP

Nice catch out there.

Bobby nods. There is a pounding sound from the roof of the dugout -- they both look up, startled. When he sees what's up there, the cop laughs. Bobby looks disgusted.

BOBBY

Stupid mascots.

The CAMERA PANS UP to the roof of the dugout. SOCKO IS UP THERE, dancing while the children around him laugh.

EXT. FIELD

Bobby walking up to the plate, full of determination. Bobby gets into batting position, feeling a flare of pain from his ribcage. He forces it from his mind. . . The A's Pitcher goes into his wind-up. Throws.

THE BALL COMES RIGHT AT US.

BOBBY swings, giving it all he's got. CRACK!

THE BALL sails away from him... foul. The right fielder nabs it -- an easy pop up.

BOBBY throws his bat down, furious. The Umpire stands, yanking off his mask and yelling at Bobby.

UMPIRE

You want to stay in this game, son!?

BOBBY

(immediately chastened)

Yes.

UMPIRE

Then act like it!

Bobby picks up his bat and walks back to the dugout. Burrows meets him at the steps.

BURROWS

Jesus, Bobby, you don't have to rip the cover off the ball every time. Just get the hit.

He walks past without answering and takes his seat in the dugout. He overhears Tjader talking by the rail.

TJADER

Did you feel a raindrop?

Bobby looks stricken.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PRESS BOX

Two radio reporters (JOE CASTIGLIONE, JERRY TRIPIANA) sit at their microphones. A light sprinkling of rain blows on them.

JOE CASTIGLIONE

Bottom of the sixth, two on, two out.

ANGLE ON THE FIELD -- Athletics have the field. Sox runners on first and second. Bobby Rayburn is moving to the plate and the crowd is screaming his name -- "Bobbee! Bobbee! Bobbee!"

JERRY TRIPIANA (v.o.)

Rayburn's oh for two so far today, and I must say, he looked pretty darned unhappy about it after that last strike out.

JOE CASTIGLIONE (v.o.)

Well, he's got a chance to redeem himself now.

ON BOBBY -- in batting position, ignoring the light rain on his helmet and the dull ache in his chest.

His jaw is set in grim determination as he waits for the pitcher to make his move.

To his surprise, the A's catcher stands and steps to the side of the plate. The pitcher lobs it to him, way outside. An intentional walk. Bobby is horrified.

BOBBY

What are you doing!?

The pitcher throws another Ball.

BOBBY (cont'd)

You can't do that!

The catcher doesn't even look at him as he lobs the ball back to the mound.

CATCHER

Consider it a compliment, dickhead.

Bobby sags, watching helpless as the ball goes by him again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DUGOUT -- LATER

Bobby on the bench, arms wrapped tight across his ribs, watching TORRENTS OF RAIN pour on the field. He looks at the scoreboard.

BOBBY'S POV -- MOVING ACROSS THE SCOREBOARD -- all the inning stats are filled in until we get to the bottom of the eighth.

ON BOBBY -- He comes to his feet, wincing in pain. He overcomes it with a look of determination and grabs a bat.

ON THE FIELD

Bobby, a little stiff from the pain in his ribcage, steps out of the dugout into the pouring rain and walks to the on-deck circle. Looks out to the crowd.

BOBBY'S POV -- The crowd. And the sound of the rain and the cheering and the pounding in Bobby's head is beginning to blend together into something like the roar of a menacing animal.

ON BOBBY -- he notices the Oakland catcher trotting past him. He calls out to Bobby.

CATCHER
Come on! Rain delay!

Bobby can't believe it.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FIELD

The ground's crew is rolling out the tarp.

INT. CLUBHOUSE LEVEL CORRIDOR

Bobby is alone, pacing the corridor like a caged animal. He stops and pulls up his shirt to examine his ribcage. There's a huge, ugly, black and purple bruise below his left nipple. Bobby curses under his breath and pulls the shirt back down. No time to worry about that now.

ON THE SCOREBOARD

As the sun starts to break through the clouds above it.

THE STANDS -- FIELD LEVEL

Socko climbs onto the dugout roof and starts dancing in the puddles, to the amusement of the wet children.

The old man in the RED BLAZER walks past and Jewel grabs his arm.

JEWEL

What's going on? They're not going to call the game, are they? It's clearing up.

RED BLAZER

They're taking the tarps up now.

She heaves a sigh of relief. The old man looks out at the field.

RED BLAZER (cont'd)

His head doesn't look any different to me.

JEWEL

(laughs)

Whose head?

RED BLAZER

Socko. Some guy came in bringing him a new head. Looks like the same dumbass one to me.

The old man wanders off. Jewel looks at the mascot. Then it comes to her.

JEWEL

Shit!

She runs to the stairs.

INT. CLUBHOUSE LEVEL CORRIDOR

She bursts through doors into the corridor -- she's out of the public area and into the player's area.

She runs down the narrow dingy hallway -- heading for the tunnel that leads to the Sox dugout. Detective Lewis is standing at the entrance -- she pushes by him.

JEWEL

He's on the field!

DUGOUT TUNNEL

Jewel runs -- the light from the field dazzling in front of her.

DUGOUT

The day is bright and clean from the rain. Jewel runs into the dugout, pushing by Bobby who has just picked up his bat.

BOBBY

Jewel runs up the steps onto the dirt. Detective Lewis chases her. She turns and looks up to the top of the dugout -- Socko isn't there.

She turns, eyes on the field.

JEWEL'S POV -- The groundskeepers are just finishing with the tarp. Socko is out in the field now, walking this way. His absurd cartoon head staring right at her.

ON JEWEL -- Lewis runs up to her.

LEWIS

Are you--

Jewel, out of breath, grabs his arm and points.

OVERHEAD SHOT

On the field -- on Socko doing his funny walk to the bullpen. On Lewis talking animatedly into his headset.

IN THE LEFT FIELD STANDS

A uniform cop gets a call on his radio, listens -- then leaps onto the field.

ON THE FIELD -- OVERHEAD SHOT

Two more cops run onto the field near the bullpen -- several more run out of the dugout.

They all converge on Socko -- who breaks and starts to run between them, LIKE A PARODY OF A BASERUNNER CAUGHT IN A RUNDOWN, his huge feet slapping up cascades of water from the wet grass. The cops grab him, pull him to the muddy ground.

ON SOCKO

The cops roughly pull his costume head off -- it's not Gil.

SOCKO

What the hell is this!?

OVERHEAD SHOT

The cops pick Socko up and hustle him off the field. THE CROWD CHEERS.

IN THE DUGOUT

Lewis shoots a disgusted look at Jewel. She shrugs. Then she looks over at Bobby, who is slipping on his helmet -- he looks back at her, gives her a weak smile. Their eyes meet for that moment -- she tries to give him all the strength she can.

ON THE FIELD

The game is settling back down. The players and officials are on the field. Lanz is back at bat. Bobby moves to the on-deck circle. Takes a few practice swings, wincing under his breath. But his mind isn't on it. His eyes sweep the stands.

BOBBY'S POV -- ON THE STANDS -- the die-hard Boston fans are still there. The wet kids screaming and pelting each other with peanuts...

The idiots chanting, with their rally caps on upside down...

The couple with the baby dressed as the living baseball...

The guy with the multi-colored wig holding the sign reading "GENESIS 22:10"...

The pack of shirtless, screaming rowdies, their faces painted with Red Sox colors, now running from the rain...

BOBBY'S eyes keep moving -- they all look insane to him now.

UMPIRE

Strike three!

Lanz walks by Bobby on the way back to the dugout.

LANZ

He's throwing more of a hard slider.

Bobby nods and moves to the plate. Taps the bat against his cleats, rolls his head back to relax.

ON BOBBY

CLOSE AND STRAIGHT ON, from the pitcher's point of view. He assumes batting position, bending slightly. Over his shoulder, we can see the umpire. We can make out the umpire's eyes through the mask -- they are GIL'S EYES.

BOBBY'S POV -- The ball coming right at him.

BOBBY swings, hard -- we can hear the bat cut through the air. Bobby misses the ball by a mile -- actually loses his footing from the force of his swing and slips in the wet grass.

UMPIRE (GIL)

Strike!

Bobby rights himself and gets back into position -- face impassive. He waits for the next one.

The ball comes at him... He lets it go -- SOCK, it hits the catcher's mitt.

Bobby gives a quick glance back at the umpire, irritated. Doesn't take a good enough look. Back in his stance.

BOBBY'S POV -- The ball coming at him.

BOBBY swings -- CRACK. The ball flies off his bat, high in the air... high and far... sailing for the stands... it goes out of the park... just foul.

Bobby re-takes his stance -- starting to sweat, starting to breathe a little too hard.

The pitcher goes into his windup -- another ball comes at him. Bobby lets it go by...

UMPIRE (GIL)

Ball!

Bobby lowers the bat and rubs his aching ribs -- steps back in... Another ball comes at him.

Bobby swings -- way too eager. He pops up, foul. The catcher rips off his mask and runs for it, up against the stands behind home plate.

JEWEL sits in the dugout, willing the catcher to muff the play.

Bobby watches the ball, appalled. The catcher reaches for the ball... it lands in the stands. Just out of reach.

Fans scramble for the ball among the seats.

Bobby heaves a sigh of relief and re-takes his stance.

The pitcher stands, still, straight as a rod... He throws...

Bobby watches it come at him... lets it go.

UMPIRE (GIL)

Ball two!

JEWEL, in the dugout, takes a breath, rolling her eyes.

Another ball comes at Bobby. It's in the dirt. The catcher scrambles for it.

UMPIRE (GIL)

Ball three!

Bobby steps out of the batter's box, takes off his hat and wipes the sweat from his eyes. Puts the bat under his arm and wipes his hands on his pants. Grabs the bat, steps back into position. The crowd is silent with tension.

The Umpire twists his head to the side -- there's a cracking sound as his vertebrae pop into place. Bobby can just barely hear this but it bothers him for a second. There has he heard

The pitcher goes into his windup and throws.

OVERHEAD SHOT OF BOBBY -- The ball is way outside -- Bobby leans in, reaching for it. He SMACKS it.

The ball sails into the stands. Foul.

JEWEL, in the dugout, lowers her head. She can't look. Lanz is behind her, talking to Zamora.

LANZ

What the hell's he swinging at that for? Why doesn't he take the walk?

Bobby is in position... The pitcher throws...

BOBBY'S POV -- The balls sail straight at him...

BOBBY swings -- CRACK. The ball flies off the bat.

ON THE BALL

as it sails high into the air -- high and far -- it's going out.

ON THE FIELD -- Bobby's expression is joyous.

He starts to run, tearing toward first base.

ON THE GREEN MONSTER

The high green wall in the Fenway outfield.

The ball sails through the air -- it's going over it... but not quite. The ball just tips the top of the wall and drops into the field.

BOBBY sees this as he's rounding first -- he can't believe it. The fielders run for the ball.

BOBBY puts on more speed, tearing past second. The Sox coach is frantically signalling for him to HOLD UP. He runs on to third.

THE LEFT FIELDER snatches up the ball right at the wall -- he makes a mighty throw to the shortstop.

BOBBY rounds third. Ignoring the coach. Making for home, trying to stretch it into an inside-the-park home run.

THE SHORTSTOP catches the ball and relays it to the catcher.

ON BOBBY

As he runs for home, trying to beat the throw. . .

OVERHEAD SHOT

Bobby slides into home and flings his arms out.

A split-second later, the catcher snatches the ball from the air and brings it down on Bobby's leg.

AT THE PLATE

Bobby falls back on the ground -- the crowd starts to cheer. The Umpire jerks his thumb back;

UMPIRE (GIL)
You're outta here!

ON JEWEL

The ecstatic expression dies on her face.

ON THE FIELD

Bobby leaps to his feet.

BOBBY
What?

He confronts the umpire in the time-honored manner -- body back, shoving his face in the umpire's mask.

BOBBY (cont'd)
Are you blind, you son of a--

The umpire rips off his mask -- REVEALING GIL'S FACE.

GIL
Arguing my call, Mister?

Bobby steps back, stunned. GIL PULLS THE THROWING KNIFE from his umpire's padding.

Bobby dives for Gil's wrist -- Gil swings the knife up, slicing Bobby's shirt.

Bobby falls back, a thread of blood on his white home shirt -- he drops to one knee. Gil runs into the infield...

Cops race into the field from the dugout, from the bullpen, from all directions...

Bobby, still on one knee, watching Gil. He sees his bat still laying in the basepath. He grabs it and struggles to his feet.

Gil has made it to the pitcher's mound -- he turns to Bobby.

GIL (cont'd)
Good effort on the base running, though.
Nice to see you putting out for a change.

Gil raises the knife and throws it, right at Bobby...

BOBBY'S POV -- The knife, clear as a baseball, flies toward him

ON BOBBY

his sharp eyes focusing on the knife... it's coming right for his chest...

At almost the same instant, Bobby sticks out his bat, as though he's trying to bunt a high, inside pitch.

ON THE BAT

swinging into place. THE KNIFE HITS THE BAT -- the blade sinking deep into the center of barrel, right below the sweet spot.

ON GIL

as he stares in amazement.

ON BOBBY

as he throws the bat aside and runs for Gil.

ON THE FIELD

The cops are starting to converge on Gil. Gil pulls out another knife and gets ready to throw it at Bobby.

One of the cops FIRES his weapon.

BOBBY

No!

Gil is hit in the chest -- he drops at the edge of the pitcher's mound.

Bobby runs to Gil. He bends over him, lifting his head -- Gil's eyes are shut.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Where's Sean? Where's Sean?

Gil opens his eyes, and looks at Bobby.
It takes all his remaining strength to speak.

GIL

You're a bum.

Gil falls back, eyes still.

Bobby stands, helpless.

ON JEWEL

In the dugout. She watches, drained. Then she turns and runs, back into the tunnel.

INT. STADIUM CORRIDOR

BERNIE
What the hell is--

Jewel flings open the door that reads "Umpires."

INT. UMPIRE'S LOCKER ROOM

A man is stretched on a bench, his throat slit. The lockers are ransacked. A set of clothes hangs from the shower door -- Gil's clothes. Jewel is going through the pockets as Bernie and Detective Baker rush in.

BERNIE
Shit.

JEWEL
He killed the umpire.

BERNIE
No jury in the country would convict him.
Bobby hurries in. Sees the body and gags.

BOBBY
Sean?

JEWEL
Not here.

Jewel goes through Gil's wallet -- reads his driver's license.

JEWEL (cont'd)
'Gil Renard.'

BAKER
(to Bobby)
Know the name?

BOBBY
No.

Baker takes the driver's license and calls on his radio.

BAKER
We need a unit at 8621 Highgate,
apartment 4G--

Jewel pulls something else out of the pocket -- a ticket from a parking lot. She holds it up for Bobby to see.

EXT. STADIUM

Jewel and Bobby race at full speed across the street. Across to the parking lot.

ATTENDANT'S BOOTH

The attendant holds the ticket and searches through the keys hanging on the rack.

EXT. PARKING LOT

The parking attendant points out Gil's 325i. Bobby and Jewel race to the car, Bobby's face twisting in pain as he runs. Jewel runs to the windows looking in.

Bobby looks at the WNSOX license plate -- slips the key in the trunk and pops it open...

Sean is in there, hands tied behind him, a gag in his mouth. The boy is completely motionless. Bobby reaches down to touch him... Sean's eyes fly open. He looks up at his father and begins to cry. Bobby holds him, holding on for dear life.

ON JEWEL

She stands watching, shuddering with relief. She glances down and sees something in the front seat... she reaches for it.

ON BOBBY AND SEAN

Bobby is carefully lifting the tape off Sean's mouth.

BOBBY

It's okay. It's okay, Sean. We're all right.

The parking attendant walks up, bewildered. Sean holds onto his father, crying. Jewel comes around and hands the object she found to Bobby. A baseball. Bobby's home run ball -- the one Gil stole from the man in the Yankee's men's room.

Bobby takes it and looks at it.

CLOSE ON THE BASEBALL

It's autographed with great flourish, "Gil Renard."

BACK TO SCENE

The attendant cranes his neck to read the ball.

ATTENDANT

Gil Renard? Who did he play for?

Bobby grips the ball, then he throws it as hard and as far as he can. The ball arcs over the parking lot and flies out of sight.

FADE OUT.

THE END