

# THE ROOKIE

Written by  
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— FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION —  
BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

FADE IN:

1 EXT. WEST TEXAS HIGH DESERT - DAY

1

A barren landscape that stretches forever, flat-topped mesas in the distant background. No buildings, no people...only a lonely wind that stirs the dust from the desert floor.

JIMMY (V.O.)

There is a story told in the town of Big Lake, Texas. A story of the town's beginnings...

An ancient OIL RIG comes into view; long since dried up, with tumbleweeds choking its foundation.

JIMMY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It is the story of the Santa Rita number one, the birthplace of west Texas oil. As with most oil legends, there was a man who believed oil was right beneath his feet, and, as with most oil legends, there was no one who believed him.

The wind swirls the dust higher, and as it settles...

2 EXT. WEST TEXAS VISTA - DECADES AGO

2

...TWO NUNS, each holding a BASKET OF YELLOW ROSE PETALS. \*

JIMMY (V.O.)

Except, in this case, for two nuns, who in 1923 believed in the man's dream and were willing to invest money no one knew they had. Their priest shook his head and offered only one small piece of advice.

The nuns toss a handful of the petals high into the sky. -

JIMMY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Bless the site with rose petals of yellow and invoke the help of Saint Rita, the patron saint of impossible dreams. \*

The petals flutter to the ground...and in the background...

3 EXT. DUSTY BASEBALL FIELD - DECADES AGO

3

...a BASEBALL FIELD, more accurately a patch of dirt. Oil workers are playing a baseball game...and playing well.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY (V.O.)

And while the workers waited for the oil that would eventually come, they played baseball.

The workers --- dirty, no uniforms --- turn a double play.

JIMMY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Played baseball so well that some were able to give up the dirt and the despair, and went on to play major league ball in the glory days of Ruth and Gehrig.

The oil worker tosses a pitch and the batter HITS IT high, very high, into the air.

And while the ball flies lazy in the dusty air, the blue sky turns gray and the dust turns into snowflakes.

JIMMY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I've told that story many times. The blessing, the baseball, the dreams. Never knowing...that I was really telling it to myself.

TITLE: BASED ON A TRUE STORY

The ball begins to settle...

4 EXT. CONNECTICUT - DAY

4

...and it's caught by a YOUNG BOY in the snow-covered front yard of his home.

JIMMY MORRIS, 12, stands on a pitching mound of snow, ready to throw another pitch.

TITLE: GROTON, CONNECTICUT 1973

YOUNG JIMMY

(whispering the play by play)

First game in the big leagues...and Jimmy Morris has a no-hitter going...

His FRIEND, a snow-covered catcher, is already complaining...

SNOW-COVERED CATCHER

Jimmy, don't throw it so hard. My hands are cold.

Jimmy unloads a fastball and the catcher ducks out of the way. The ball disappears into the snow.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG JIMMY  
Hey! Whatcha doin'?!

SNOW-COVERED CATCHER  
Waitin' till spring. That's what I'm  
doin'.

Jimmy's mother, OLLINE (goes by Ollie), LATE 20'S, calls out  
from the side door.

OLLIE  
Jimmy!  
(he turns)  
Your father and I need to talk to you.

The joy of the moment, of playing in the snow, is gone. Jimmy  
knows the news won't be good.

YOUNG JIMMY  
(to his friend)  
See ya.

5 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

5

Jimmy sits at the kitchen table; his younger brother, KAEL,  
8, a few feet away. \*

Jimmy's father, JIM SR., 30, NAVY THROUGH AND THROUGH, stands  
military upright, sipping coffee as he looks out at the snow.  
When he turns to look at Jimmy, Jimmy realizes he still has  
his cap and on and removes it lest he feel his father's  
wrath. \*

Ollie sets a cup of hot chocolate in front of Jimmy --

OLLIE  
I hear Virginia's real nice.

-- then positions herself at the end of the room next to her  
husband.

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
Least that's what the Navy folks told  
your dad... isn't that right Jim?

Jim Sr. continues to stare out the window.

YOUNG JIMMY  
We'll just be movin' again.

JIM SR.  
(right at Jimmy)  
It's my job to decide when we move. It's  
your job to make the best of it.

\*  
\*

OLLIE  
Jim?...  
(off his hard look)  
Please?

\*  
\*  
\*

Ollie doesn't want it getting worse. She says to her son...

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
Who knows...maybe they won't have as much  
snow down there.

\*

6 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

6

Late at night. Jimmy is in his bed, tossing a baseball into the air...catching it as it falls back.

YOUNG JIMMY  
Jimmy Morris...with another masterful  
pitching performance...

He holds the ball for a second, silently, and as he starts to toss it again...

YOUNG JIMMY (CONT'D)  
...well on his way...

The ball rises in the darkness, reaching its peak, and a blue sky becomes the background. It falls into...

7 EXT. VIRGINIA BACK YARD - DAY

7

...Jimmy's glove. He's outside, a few months older, all by himself...

YOUNG JIMMY  
...to another World Series title.

TITLE: ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

...no catcher, just Jimmy and a chain link fence bent-in a bit by too many hard pitches. He throws...CLANK.

YOUNG JIMMY (CONT'D)  
...and the side is retired...

He runs toward the ball. Through the sliding glass door...

OLLIE  
Jimmy!

Jimmy stops for a moment, hoping it's not...

7 CONTINUED:

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
Your father and I need to talk to you.

...but it is. So much for Virginia being nice.

He drops his head in disappointment... When he raises it,  
we're --

3 EXT. FLORIDA BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

8

...and the solitude of the backyard is replaced by the sounds  
of a Little League baseball game; clapping, encouragement.

Jimmy, a few months older, shakes off a sign, then nods to  
his catcher.

TITLE: HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA

Jimmy scours the bleachers - Dozens of fans. Dozens of  
fathers. But not his own. He collects himself and fingers the  
ball.

VOICES FROM THE CROWD  
C'mon Jimmy!

Jimmy exhales, disappointed, and tosses a pitch. It makes a  
sizzling sound as it sails in and the young batter doesn't  
even swing, overwhelmed.

LITTLE LEAGUE UMPIRE  
Strike three!

And the game is over as teammates run in to congratulate  
Jimmy.

9 EXT. FLORIDA BASEBALL FIELD - LATER

9

Jimmy and two of his teammates, BOBBY and MARK, walk in front  
of the bleachers. Each of the kids is working on a snowcone.

MARK  
I've seen you pitch some good games  
Jimmy, but you were on fire today.

A few of the spectators walk by, one taking a moment to  
say...

LITTLE LEAGUE FAN  
Nice game Jimmy.

YOUNG JIMMY  
Thanks.

9 CONTINUED:

Jimmy's a step or so ahead of his friends, as if he's in a hurry to get somewhere. \*

BOBBY \*

You keep strikin' out that many, Coach'll be buyin' a lot more snowcones... \*

...but Jimmy barely hears a word, tossing the rest of his own snowcone in a GARBAGE CAN and hopping on his BICYCLE. \*

MARK \*

Hey! You aren't comin' to the pizza place? \*

YOUNG JIMMY \*

(already pushing his bike) Nah, I got somethin' I want to do. \*

He pedals off, wasting no time... \*

YOUNG JIMMY (CONT'D) \*

I'll catch up later. \*

...and his friends watch him go. \*

10 EXT. FLORIDA NAVAL BASE - DAY

10

The sun is still high above the palm trees as Jimmy rides his bike, zipping between naval officers walking on the sidewalk.

He drops his bike at a tiny office building...and runs in.

11 INT. NAVY MOTOR POOL - CONTINUOUS

11

Jim Sr., in perfect uniform, is leafing through some files.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG JIMMY  
Hey Dad...

JIM SR.  
Jimmy...

Jimmy waits, anxious for his father to ask him about the game. Jim Sr. opens a file and without looking up...

JIM SR. (CONT'D)  
Mmhmm?

YOUNG JIMMY  
I had a good game. Thirteen strikeouts. \*

JIM SR.  
(without looking up) \*  
You win? \*

Jimmy nods. Jim Sr. realizes it's the wrong file. He puts it back, plucks another and turns toward his desk, not catching the disappointed look of a young man who'd been hoping for more in the way of praise from his father. After a second, Jimmy turns to go. \*

JIM SR. (CONT'D) \*  
I just found out...there's a chance we \*  
may be re-stationed again. \*

YOUNG JIMMY  
(stunned)  
How much of a chance?

Jim Sr. doesn't answer right away, providing Jimmy with all the answer he needs. They've been down this road before.

JIM SR.  
It's in west Texas. The Navy wants me to be a recruiter there. \*

YOUNG JIMMY  
Texas? When?

JIM SR.  
Three weeks.

YOUNG JIMMY \*  
Dad...we still got half our season to \*  
play.

JIM SR.  
I'm aware of that.

YOUNG JIMMY  
Maybe I could stay with...

JIM SR.  
We move as a family.

An awkward break in the conversation as the two stare at each other.

JIM SR. (CONT'D)  
I don't have a choice in this.

YOUNG JIMMY  
(waits a moment before...)  
What kind of baseball they have?

JIM SR.  
(difficult pause)  
They don't.  
(beat)  
I hear they might be startin' some summer ball.

The devastation on Jimmy's face is plain. He whispers...

YOUNG JIMMY  
Yes sir...

...before he gets up and runs from the room, not wanting his father to see him lose it.

12 EXT.- FLORIDA WATER-- DAY

12

Jimmy, Mark and Bobby float on inner-tubes...slowly spinning as they casually splash the water on each side.

YOUNG JIMMY  
San Diego, Persidio, San Francisco, Key West...

MARK  
I thought you were in Key West three times?

YOUNG JIMMY  
Key West, Key West, Key West, Waukegan, Groton, Virginia Beach, Roanoke...

MARK  
Florida...

BOBBY  
...and Texas.

Jimmy doesn't say anything.

MARK  
Your mom said if you're good enough, it  
doesn't matter where you live. Right?

YOUNG JIMMY  
Moms don't know nuthin' 'bout baseball.

13 EXT. WEST TEXAS HIGH DESERT - DAY 13 \*

Texas. Oil rigs rhythmically pump away on the dry horizon.

14 INT. CAR - DAY 14

The Morris family car, U-HAUL in tow, cuts a straight arrow  
path across the barren landscape. Jim Sr. is at the wheel,  
Ollie on the passenger side. Jimmy and Kael sit in the back. \*

KAEL  
What are those things?

YOUNG JIMMY  
What?

KAEL  
Those things goin' up and down.

JIM SR.  
Oil rigs. When those things are movin' up  
and down...means times are good...  
(looks out)  
Looks like times are good.

Kael watches the flat-land pass by...

KAEL  
When do we get to see trees again?

15 INT. CAR - DAY 15

The car approaches a small Texas community, the SIGN outside  
the town limits offering the overly-cheerful words...

WELCOME TO BIG LAKE POPULATION 600

EVERYTHING'S GREAT IN BIG LAKE!

The family stares at the tiny town, seeing nothing more than a smattering of small businesses and dust.

OLLIE

Looks okay.

YOUNG JIMMY

You say that every place.

OLLIE

Yeah, but this time I mean it.

YOUNG JIMMY

You say that every place too.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The station wagon passes businesses and pedestrians.

16 EXT. TEXAS HOME - DAY

16

The back of the U-Haul is open and boxes are spread out on the front lawn. Dry patches of brown grass are scattered around on the bone-dry red clay.

Ollie walks from inside the trailer, her hands on her hips.

OLLIE

We must've left some of 'em back in Florida.

Jim Sr. stacks boxes. Kael checks out the drainage ditch while Jimmy paws through a box.

JIM SR.

Left what?

OLLIE

I packed a couple boxes of socks and things. I coulda sworn...

Jimmy closes the lid on one of the boxes.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

Jimmy? Did you find that one box...  
(and it dawns on her)  
...oh no.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG JIMMY  
It's okay, Mom. \*

OLLIE  
Don't worry honey, we'll find it.

JIM SR.  
I've never known a boy gettin' upset over  
losin' his socks.

OLLIE  
His glove was in there.

Jim Sr. keeps moving boxes and notices the downcast look on  
his son's face.

JIM SR.  
Quit your moping and grab a box. \*

But Jimmy doesn't jump to. \*

JIM SR. (CONT'D) \*  
Did you hear me? \*

Jimmy, for maybe the first time in his life, stares right at  
his father without backing down. Jim Sr. feels it, too, grabs  
a box and carries it over to his son. \*

JIM SR. (CONT'D) \*  
(right at Jimmy) \*  
There are more important things in life \*  
than baseball. Sooner you figure that \*  
out, the better. \*

He forces the box into Jimmy's hands. After another beat,  
Jimmy gives in, turns and carries the box toward the house. \*

17 EXT. BIG LAKE MAIN STREET - DAY 17

Jimmy takes his bike on its first journey into downtown Big  
Lake. The cars are parked in old style diagonal spots.

He spots what he's looking for...a small CLOTHING AND DRY  
GOODS STORE.

18 INT. STORE - DAY 18

Jimmy is giving the socks an ambivalent once-over, but his  
attention is drawn to the sound of voices coming from the  
back room.

(CONTINUED)

He wanders to the opening and finds THREE MEN, all 50 or so, playing dominos. The conversation between HENRY, FRANK and CAL is an animated one.

FRANK

One...billion...dollars. Pay to the order of Chrysler Corporation. Signed, the lame headed Congress of the United States.

CAL

One and a half billion.

HENRY

Gentlemen, let's not forget this is a landmark American business we're talking about.

FRANK

If it's such a landmark business, how come it needs a billion dollars of taxpayer money?

CAL

One and a half billion.

FRANK

'Scuze me Cal. One and a half billion. You wanna answer that one for me Henry?

Henry is dressed a touch more professionally than Frank and Cal, wearing a SHIRT, VEST AND BOW TIE.

HENRY

Because if we don't give them one...  
(looks at Cal)  
...and a half billion dollars, they won't be around when we finally get tired of buying these Japanese cars.

CAL

Cars that are burnin' our oil.

FRANK

Lemme tell you somethin'. This...  
(butchers the name)  
...Lee Ivacocus guy. I guarantee within two years, three tops, he'll run that company right out of business.  
(notices Jimmy)  
Ain't that right young man?

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2)

Jimmy shrugs, not wanting any part of the conversation. Henry turns to help his customer.

HENRY

Eileen?...

(after a beat)

Must be at lunch. Help you find something?

YOUNG JIMMY

Socks.

HENRY

Socks we have...

Henry stands and walks toward the opening into the clothing area. \*

HENRY (CONT'D)

...in contrast to common sense, which we seem to be a little short on today.

19 INT. HENRY'S STORE - SECONDS LATER

19

Henry, the gentleman of the town, points to the socks.

HENRY

Black socks, brown socks, white socks.  
Take your pick.

Jimmy looks.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Visiting?

YOUNG JIMMY

We just moved here.

HENRY

(holds out his hand)

Well then, I'm Henry Sampson.

YOUNG JIMMY

(shakes it)

Jimmy Morris.

HENRY

Welcome to Big Lake Jimmy Morris.

20 INT. HENRY'S STORE - MOMENTS LATER

20

The CASH REGISTER rings. Henry has the socks bagged and ready to go, but Jimmy's still looking around the store.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

I'll know where it is...faster than  
you're gonna find it.

YOUNG JIMMY

Got any baseball stuff?

HENRY

Baseball stuff?

(shakes his head)

Not much call for baseball stuff 'round  
these parts. Now if it was football? Be a  
different story.

Jimmy looks dejected. Henry sees the look...and warms to it.  
He reaches under the counter.

HENRY (CONT'D)

However...might have a catalog that can  
help us out.

The dejected look fades and Jimmy walks to the counter. Henry  
licks his thumb as he leafs through the pages.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Y'know...if you're a baseball fan,  
there's a story in this town you should  
know about.

YOUNG JIMMY

Thought you said nobody here cared about  
baseball?

HENRY

Oh...they care about this.

21 EXT. WEST TEXAS VISTA - DAY

21

Jimmy pushes his bicycle from the road onto the dusty site of  
the Santa Rita. He jumps from his bike and lets it tumble.

The old rig still rhythmically pumps. Up. Down.

22 EXT. WEST TEXAS VISTA - DAY

22

The oil rig is in the background as Jimmy moves to the  
parched old baseball field, barely recognizable.

He sees where the mound once was and lightly scoots his foot  
across the CHUNK OF WOOD that served as the pitching rubber  
decades ago.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

Making certain no one is around, Jimmy goes into a wind-up and throws an imaginary pitch toward home.

He looks to where home plate might have been, but there's nothing to see...nothing except the oil rig's relentless motion.

...up and down...up and down...

DISSOLVE TO:

...and then it's still. Dust has gathered on the Santa Rita and weeds have sprouted all around the historic rig.

Standing on the pitching mound, where a 12 year old boy was playing just seconds before...years before...

23 EXT. WEST TEXAS VISTA - PRESENT DAY 23

...is Jimmy, more than twenty years older, staring at the sun coming out of the east.

He scoots his foot, almost reverently, along the old mound and then walks toward his beaten-up PICK UP TRUCK, parked where the bike had been years ago.

24 EXT. BIG LAKE MAIN STREET - DAY 24

It's early morning, springtime, but the faint shimmer from the town that Jimmy grew up in is now gone.

~~Several of the windows~~ are cracked and dirty, a few of the small shops are out of business.

Jimmy drives his truck along Main Street. He looks straight ahead, having seen it thousands of times before.

24A EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY 24A

Jimmy pulls into the parking lot of Big Lake High, dirt and dust covering most of the vehicles. He parks his truck.

25 INT. BIG LAKE HIGH SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER 25

Jimmy walks the halls of his old school...now as a teacher. He passes the JANITOR, who cleans the glass on the trophy case.

JIMMY  
(...takes time to say...)  
Mornin' Ray.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

JANITOR

Mornin'.

It's a diverse ethnic mix: a few blacks, even fewer whites, a majority of Hispanics. TWO YOUNG FEMALE STUDENTS visit in front of their lockers... They notice Jimmy...

FEMALE STUDENTS

Good morning, Mr. Morris.

JIMMY

Karen, first period math starts when?

KAREN

Couple of minutes.

JIMMY

And Lisa, how long does it take to get to the other side of the building?

LISA

Is this a story problem Mister Morris?

JIMMY

It will be if you don't get movin'.

The two girls smile as Jimmy walks away. It's obvious he's not just any teacher to these kids.

26 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

26

Chemistry lab is in session. Jimmy wanders in between the lab stations...working to connect with his kids.

JIMMY

The mass number of an atom is the sum of the...what, Maria?

MARIA

...protons.

JIMMY

Sum means we're adding, so we've got two items, right?

The kids are stumped.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Don't make it too hard. What are we adding? Protons and...

MARIA

Neutrons?

JIMMY

(approaches another station)

And David, those protons and neutrons are inside of...what?

DAVID

The...nucleus?

JIMMY

Don't say it like a question. You think you know it, say it like you know it.

DAVID

The nucleus.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
Congratulations. Go home tonight and tell  
your parents you figured out the mass  
number of an atom.

Jimmy moves on to the next group.

27 INT. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - DAY

27

Jimmy walks into the office, greeting the RECEPTIONIST.

JIMMY  
Mornin' Esther.

ESTHER  
Mornin' Jimmy.

He walks to his MAILBOX, one of about two dozen on the wall.

JIMMY  
Any more rattlesnakes on the playground?

ESTHER  
Not since Tuesday. Maybe it's just me but  
I swear those things show up every time  
the oil business goes bad.

JIMMY  
(leafs through his mail)  
They gonna bring the kids in?

ESTHER  
They're thinkin' 'bout it.

JIMMY  
These families got enough to worry about.

An attractive woman, LORRI, EARLY 30'S, walks through...

LORRI  
Coach.

JIMMY  
Counselor.

As she passes, she surreptitiously pinches his butt...smiling  
as she leaves. Esther's eyes never leave her desk.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Don't report that, Esther.

ESTHER  
I never do.

28 EXT. BIG LAKE PARK - NIGHT

28

The weekly Big Lake softball game is in the late innings, a fact made painfully obvious by the hot and weary looks worn by the slightly overweight, very out-of-shape, competitors. The umpire sits in a lawn chair behind home plate, guarding the beer cooler.

Jimmy is pitching...and loops a very lazy underhand pitch. The bases are full. The batter doesn't swing.

UMPIRE

Ball two.

JIMMY

Sammy...sometimes it helps if you swing that thing on your shoulder.

SAMMY

I'm waitin' for my pitch.

JIMMY

I've been throwin' your pitch.

Jimmy lofts another pitch. No swing. It's close...but...

UMPIRE

Ball three.

From the stands...Jimmy's son, HUNTER, 9, yells out...

HUNTER

C'mon Dad...strike him out!

SAMMY

(starts to work Jimmy)  
Hey Big League. You gonna walk me in front of your own son?

JIMMY

You want your pitch?

SAMMY

Jimmy Morris, gonna walk in a run. Just like back in summer ball.

Jimmy tosses a pitch...and Sammy crushes it. The ball sails beyond the outfielders and the runners clear the bases.

For just the shortest of moments, Jimmy watches the ball sail away...as if watching his own past. The moment's broken by...

(CONTINUED)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

(running)

Hey Morris. Woulda been ball four anyway.

Jimmy, now smiling, tosses his glove toward Sammy.

29 INT. BIG LAKE CAFE - NIGHT

29

Frank's cafe isn't exactly bustling as Jimmy and Hunter walk in for dinner.

FRANK

Hey, hey, boys night out.

JIMMY

Two baskets with fries Frank.

Cal and Henry sit at the counter. Frank cooks in the kitchen, close enough to see them...and, of course, talk to them.

NAT KING COLE'S "THE CHRISTMAS SONG" blares throughout the small, empty restaurant.

CAL

All I'm sayin'...is listen to Sinatra when he was with Dorsey, and listen to him when he was on his own.

(greet's Jimmy and Hunter)

Jimmy knows what I'm talkin' about.

JIMMY

No, no. I'm stayin' out of this one.

CAL

(to Frank)

The man grew as a singer.

FRANK

And Nat King Cole didn't?

CAL

You listen...we'll talk.

Jimmy and Hunter sit next to the two men.

HENRY

Frank and Cal have been discussing the vocal merits of Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole. For about an hour now.

JIMMY

Hey Frank, isn't it a little late to be playing this song?

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

It's 7:30.

JIMMY

It's March. \*

FRANK

It's too good to play for only a month.

(beat)

Hunter, you gonna want cheese on this?

HUNTER

Yes sir.

CAL

Besides...he smoked three packs a day.

HENRY

Who?

CAL

Nat King Cole. Thought it made his voice deeper. —

FRANK

Oh...and Sinatra was the poster child for vocal care?

CAL

Who died in his 40's? You take care of yourself...things work out.

HENRY

Oh, yeah, well what about Jimmy? He took good care of himself. How many surgeries was it, Jimmy? Four? \*

Jimmy doesn't have to answer. They all know that's the number. \*

HUNTER

They put this thing from his ankle up in his shoulder. \*

The three men cringe.

CAL

We're talkin' about singin', not pitchin'. And, Hunter, do us a favor and don't tell us that bit about the ankle anymore. \*

(CONTINUED)

FRANK  
Mel Torme. In June.

HENRY  
What...are you talking about now?

FRANK  
Mel Torme wrote The Christmas Song. On a beach somewhere. Jack Frost wasn't nippin' at any noses that day.

30 EXT. BIG LAKE CAFE - NIGHT

30

Jimmy and Hunter walk to the truck, the rest of the parking spots empty.

HUNTER  
Dad?  
(Jimmy waits for the question)  
Your arm ever hurt anymore?

JIMMY  
Only when I drag you out of bed in the morning for school.  
(sees Hunter was serious)  
I was just kiddin' bud. It hasn't hurt for a long time.

HUNTER  
How long?

JIMMY  
Where's this comin' from?

HUNTER  
I was just wonderin'.

They get in the truck.

JIMMY  
Let's see. It never hurt in high school 'cause we didn't have a team. Never hurt in junior college, which is why I got drafted...  
(long beat)  
...and then... it started hurtin'.

HUNTER  
That why you didn't make it?

JIMMY  
It's never one thing.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

Jimmy starts the truck and brings an end to the conversation.

31 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGHWAY - NIGHT 31

Jimmy's driving back home, Hunter already fast asleep next to him. He slows down as he sees the field where he played his American Legion ball as a young man.

Jimmy pulls the truck to a stop and keeps the headlights on to illuminate the pitching mound.

He gets out, softly closing the door so as not to disturb his son, and reaches in the truck bed. In one hand, a glove; in the other, a BURLAP SACK.

Jimmy gets to the mound, not a soul in sight, and pulls a baseball from the sack.

His arm stretches out, loosening, and then he casually tosses a pitch toward home.

Nothing more than a lazy pitch, a routine that for Jimmy is a way to relax...the same as reading might be for others.

The pattern repeats. Silhouette. The ball clanging into the chain-link backstop.

32 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT 32

A baby's cry cuts through the 4:10 AM darkness; not a painful cry, just the one telling Mom and Dad it's time to get up.

Lorri tosses the covers aside and groans as she looks at the clock. Jimmy stirs as if he might be getting up.

JIMMY

I'll get her.

LORRI

Is this a real "I'll get her"...or are you waitin' for me to say "go back to sleep."

JIMMY

I haven't decided.

LORRI

Go back to sleep.

33 INT. JAMIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 33

Lorri picks up JAMIE, eight months old, and starts to comfort her. She turns and sees a sleepy Jimmy in the door.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
I need to get up anyway.

LORRI  
What you need is more sleep.

JIMMY  
(doesn't protest)  
Okay.

He starts to turn...

LORRI  
How'd everything go last night?

JIMMY  
Sammy took me deep and Hunter and I got  
to listen to Frank and Cal argue about  
whether Nat King Cole was a better singer  
than Frank Sinatra.

LORRI  
I thought they already had that argument?

JIMMY  
(heading out the door)  
'Bout once a week. See ya in an hour.

Lorri smiles and settles into a rocking chair with Jamie,  
quietly singing a lullabye.

34 INT. CHEMISTRY LAB - DAY

34 \*

Jimmy enters his classroom, but it's too early for any of the  
students to be there.

Instead...he finds PRINCIPAL PHIL MCKINNEY, 50, VERY TEXAS,  
using a chemistry burner to warm his cup of coffee.

JIMMY  
Morning Phil.

MCKINNEY  
Mornin' Jim. There ain't nuthin' over  
here gonna hurt me, is there?

JIMMY  
Besides that coffee?

MCKINNEY  
Been Principal for ten years...  
(turns the flame off)  
...still waitin' for a decent cup.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
(knows he's there for a reason)  
What's up?

MCKINNEY  
Thought we might go for a walk.

34A INT. BIG LAKE HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY 34A

McKinney and Jimmy stroll down the hallway, heading for the main doors to the school.

MCKINNEY  
You hear I had to bring the kids in yesterday?

\*  
\*  
\*

JIMMY  
Snakes?

\*  
\*

MCKINNEY  
Sewer.

\*  
\*

35 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 35

McKinney and Jimmy walk in the outfield of the dried-up high school baseball field.

MCKINNEY  
Jimmy, I've always been honest with my teachers... 'cause it's the only way I know.

Jimmy says nothing, listening.

MCKINNEY (CONT'D)  
We gave baseball a try a few years back, basically as a way to keep some of the kids busy between basketball and football.

(beat)  
Football's religion and the basketball program's done fine.

(a short pause)  
Fact of the matter is... we aren't seein' much when it comes to baseball.

JIMMY  
We got a good group comin' back...

MCKINNEY  
...you got ten kids who were lucky to win one game last year. That ain't much of a team.

Jimmy bites his lip and looks away. Both men come to a stop.

MCKINNEY (CONT'D)

One of these kids breaks an arm...or  
their parents have to up and leave  
because the oil's dried up...

(knows it's hurting Jimmy)  
...we can't play.

JIMMY

You sayin' what I think you're sayin'?

McKinney's silence answers the question.

35 CONTINUED: (2)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Phil...the only two things that keep this town goin' are oil and ranching. And ever since I've been here, one of the two's been dried up.

(McKinney smiles at the truth)  
Now they both are.

It's Phil's turn to listen.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Baseball's the only thing some of these kids have. Don't take it away too.

MCKINNEY

(waits a moment before...)  
S'your team.

36 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

36

NINE PLAYERS are scattered around the field, most wearing their year-old BIG LAKE OWL TEE SHIRTS.

Jimmy has a bat over his shoulder and an EQUIPMENT BAG in his hand as he walks to the plate. A TENTH PLAYER runs up...

TENTH PLAYER

Coach...I forgot my glove.

Without a word and without breaking stride, Jimmy hands him the bag. The young player starts pawing through it.

JIMMY

(to himself)  
Ten players. Nine gloves.

37 EXT. DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

37

Hunter shadows his father, as he always does. He props the bats just so against the fence, making certain the batting helmets are in a precise line.

38 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

38

A ball thumps into the catcher's glove as Jimmy arrives at the plate. JOEL, 17 flips the ball to his coach.

JIMMY

How they look?

JOEL

Couple of holes.

(CONTINUED)

Jimmy swats a ground ball to second base.

JIMMY  
Let's get one.

RUDY, 17, scoops up the ball and tosses it to first base where JOE DAVID, 17, catches it.

JOE DAVID  
(tosses it home)  
Coach, they puttin' down any grass this year?

RUDY  
Man...it's a goat track out here.

Jimmy gets set to hit the ball...

JIMMY  
Still waitin' for the seed to take.

...and he sends a lazy grounder to shortstop. JOAQUIN, 17, HISPANIC, is down on one knee, giving the infield dirt a once over. The ball skips right over his head. \*

JOAQUIN  
What seed? \*

Jimmy doesn't even turn to his catcher, but mutters to him...

JIMMY  
One of the holes?

JOEL  
Yes sir.

The ball trickles into the outfield.

JOAQUIN  
Ain't no grass seed here.

He stands up...

JIMMY  
Joaquin... \*

The ball sizzles in from the outfield, but Joaquin's kicking the dirt in front of him. Jimmy yells out his nickname... \*

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Wack! \*

(CONTINUED)

...and Joaquin casually turns just as the ball arrives from the outfield. Had he not turned, it might have hit him in the back of the head, but instead...he snags it effortlessly.

JOAQUIN  
(tosses it home)  
How come we get dirt...

(CONTINUED)

He points to the football field across the street, sprinklers lazily spraying water on the lush carpet of green.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)  
...and the football field looks like  
Tiger Woods' backyard?

RUDY  
They don't even play for six months.

Jimmy sends another grounder toward short...a sharp one.

JIMMY  
Hey guys? Why don't you let me worry  
about the field...

This time the ball rolls through Wack's legs, his hands on his hips.

JOAQUIN  
You plan on worryin' anytime soon?

Jimmy's patience runs thin.

JIMMY  
Wack, what do you say you get some of  
your runnin' in early today.

JOAQUIN  
Yeah...I'll get my runnin' in.

He drops his glove in a manner suggesting it's not the first time this has happened.

Wack takes off in a lazy jog toward the outfield, kicking up dirt and sarcastically coughing as he goes. Jimmy has to suppress a smile. He hits another ground ball...

JIMMY  
Alright, let's bring it home.

39 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - LATER

39

The players are gone, all except for Jimmy, Joel and Hunter. Joel is stacking his gear, while Jimmy gathers some stray baseballs by the mound. Hunter bags everything else.

JOEL  
Hey Coach?  
(Jimmy looks over)  
You wanna throw?

(CONTINUED)

JOEL  
 Hey Coach?  
 (Jimmy looks over)  
 You wanna throw?

Jimmy stands up, dropping the last ball in the burlap bag.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
 I've seen you out at the Legion Field. At  
 night.  
 (beat)  
 Y'know sometimes if you throw...works  
 better if you got somebody catchin'.

\*  
\*

Joel tosses a ball a couple of feet in the air. It plops into his glove.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
 Ball...glove. That kind of thing.

For a second, Jimmy looks as if he'll politely refuse, but...

JIMMY  
 Might throw a couple.

40 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

40 \*

Joel catches one of the warm-up tosses. It's nothing special, producing nothing more than a soft THUD as it hits the glove.

JOEL  
 How come you throw out there? All by  
 yourself?

JIMMY  
 (continues to throw)  
 Been doin' it forever. Helps me relax, I  
 guess.

The lazy game of catch continues.

JOEL  
 So...back when you were really throwin'.  
 How fast could you bring it?

JIMMY  
 I dunno. Eighty-four... eighty-five.

\*

Hunter settles in on the bleachers to watch his father.

JOEL  
 That's not bad.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY

It is when the other guy's throwin' 90.

JOEL

Let's see you bring one.

JIMMY

Can't. Promised too many doctors.

JOEL

C'mon man...one's not gonna hurt ya..  
(opens and closes mitt)

Feed me.

\*  
\*  
\*

Jimmy catches the ball and holds it for a second. Joel digs his cleats in, his glove a tempting invitation.

Hunter leans forward, curious. Joel nods and Jimmy sizzles a pitch across the plate. It hits Joel's glove with a loud POPPING sound.

Joel is motionless, holding the ball right where it hit. Then he shakes his mitt - his hand hurts.

\*  
\*

JOEL (CONT'D)

Whoa.

(he stands to toss it back)

Where'd that come from?

Jimmy catches the ball. His eyes are in a different time.

JIMMY

Forgot how good that sounded.

Joel settles back in...and there is...

...a flurry of pitches: Pop...pop...THWACK. Each crushing into the catcher's glove. One last pop. Joel stands and walks to the mound.

JOEL

How fast you think those were comin'?

JIMMY

Not as fast as you think.

(beat)

Do me a favor...lets keep this one  
between us.

\*  
\*

JOEL

Sure.

Hunter arrives at the mound on Joel's last word.

(CONTINUED)

HUNTER

I could barely see that last one!

JIMMY

Goes for you too. No tellin' Mom, okay?

HUNTER

How come?

JIMMY

That's my job, that's how come.

41 EXT. PARK - DAY

41

Lorri sits on a blanket, trying to make sure the stack of papers she's working on doesn't blow away. Jamie's asleep just behind her.

Hunter zips by, fast enough that he takes a few of the papers with him. Jimmy, not zipping, is a couple of strides behind.

LORRI

Hunter James!

JIMMY

(gathers some of the papers)  
Important stuff?

LORRI

Oh, only some college applications I need to review by tomorrow.

(looks at one)  
Complete with footprints.

JIMMY

S'what happens when you get in the way of a boy headin' for a playground.

He sees them down by the swingset: Hunter climbing aboard while FIVE YEAR OLD JESSICA is already riding high.

Jimmy's father is lightly pushing her. Jimmy's smile fades.

LORRI

(sees the look)  
Be good.

42 EXT. PARK - DAY

42

Jimmy approaches the swingset and Jessica pops out of the swing and runs to him.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Daddy!

JIMMY

(scoops her up)

Hey baby...how high'd you get?

JESSICA

Grandpa pushed me way high!

JIMMY

I saw.

Jimmy glances at his father and the distance between the two is obvious. Jimmy puts Jessica down.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Jessie hon, why don't you go see if your mom needs any help with Jamie.

She scampers away.

JIM SR.

They're growin' fast.

JIMMY

Kids have a way of doin' that.

JIM SR.

(nods)

Things okay at school?

He's trying, but Jimmy won't nibble.

JIMMY

Things are fine.

Hunter's really reaching to the sky.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Hunter, bring it down a bit bud.

HUNTER

But Dad...

JIMMY

I said...bring it down!

JIM SR.

He's okay.

Jimmy carefully holds his hand out to slow Hunter down.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Let's see what kind of food your mom's  
hidin' from us up there.

HUNTER  
But I just got started.

JIMMY  
We can do some more after dinner.

Disappointed, Hunter trudges off toward the blanket and Jimmy turns to follow his son. Jim Sr. stays behind...and watches them walk away.

42A EXT. MORRIS HOME - NIGHT

42A \*

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Jim and Lorri's home.

\*

43 EXT. MORRIS FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

43

Jimmy and Lorri sit on the steps of their front porch. He has his arm draped around her and she leans against him. Both hold GLASSES OF WINE.

LORRI  
Your dad's tryin' hon. Tryin' to  
straighten out a lot of things.

JIMMY  
Why don't you straighten out the rest of  
that bottle.

She reaches for the bottle and pours the last of it.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Nothing like wine bought with a Chevron  
credit card.

Lorri puts the bottle down.

LORRI  
Well I know what a demanding consumer you  
can be.

JIMMY  
Yeah?

LORRI  
Mmhm.

Lorri rests her head on Jimmy's shoulder again.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
I threw today.

...and she quickly sits upright, turning...concerned.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
I threw today.

...and she quickly sits upright, turning...concerned.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
To Joel. After practice.

LORRI  
You threw? How hard?

Jimmy remembers how good it felt. He wants her to know that, but he also doesn't want her worrying.

JIMMY  
Pretty hard.

There's no settling back on his shoulder, not for awhile. So much for not worrying.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
I'll stop if it starts hurtin'. Promise.

Lorri gets up and opens the screen door.

LORRI  
I gotta check on the kids.

44 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY (GAME ONE - HOME)

44 \*

The season opener. Jimmy encourages his team from the dugout while the rest of the players sit on the bench.

JIMMY  
C'mon Rudy!

The baseball field is still dusty, the stands almost empty. The pitcher on the opposing team tosses a pitch and Rudy watches it go by.

UMPIRE  
Strike three.

Game over. The scoreboard reads: VISITORS 6 OWLS 2

JIMMY  
Alright, good effort.  
(Rudy enters the dugout)  
It's only one.

Wack, who was on deck, takes off his batting helmet.

(CONTINUED)

45 OMITTED

45



46 INT. BIG LAKE HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT 46 \*

Jimmy walks down the hallway, classroom paperwork from after the game tucked under his arm. \*

He passes the JANITOR, already pushing his broom. \*

JANITOR \*

(quietly as Jimmy passes) \*

I know why your grass isn't growing. \*

Jimmy stops...and looks back.

47 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT 47

The janitor flicks on a BANK OF LIGHTS and THREE DEER, not even considering running, raise their heads.

A couple seconds later they drop their heads and resume nibbling away at the baseball field.

(CONTINUED)

JANITOR

Usually get three or four out here every night.

JIMMY

So I put the seed down...they pick it up.

JANITOR

Once it comes in, they don't like it as much. S'why the football field looks good.

JIMMY

Yeah...or maybe the football guys are payin' these deer off with all that budget money.

Both men laugh and the animals perk their heads up...

JIMMY (CONT'D)

(yells)

Hey! Go on...get outta here!

The deer look for another second...and then resume eating.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Thought deer were s'posed to be skittish.

48 INT. HENRY'S STORE - DAY

48

Henry, Frank and Cal are playing cards. Jimmy sits at the table, but is content to sip on a cup of coffee.

HENRY

How many these job applications you plannin' to send out?

JIMMY

Many as it takes, I guess.

HENRY

(shakes his head)

The young man who bought socks from me after a dozen moves. Thinkin' of movin' himself.

JIMMY

That was different.

HENRY

Always is.

Henry examines his cards as he sorts them all out.

(CONTINUED)

Henry examines his cards as he sorts them all out.

FRANK

Jimmy, I hear you have diagnosed the problem with that baseball field of yours.

CAL

You mean his potential field.

JIMMY

Diagnosed part's right. It's the curin' part I'm havin' trouble with.

Cal looks at Frank.

FRANK

I'll take five.

HENRY

Same thing happened at my place couple of springs back.

JIMMY

Yeah? What'd you do?

HENRY

(nods to Cal)

Five.

(to Jimmy)

How many games you have on that field, next couple of weeks?

CAL

(deals himself)

...I do believe I'll take five myself.

JIMMY

We play there on Friday, then we're not back till the end of the month.

CAL

(knocks on the table)

Pot's right.

HENRY

Can you keep your boys off it that long? Practice and everything?

JIMMY

Henry, why do I think this is somethin' I don't wanna know about.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

I'm gonna use two of my old ones, if that's alright with everyone.

Frank grabs two of his old cards. Nobody blinks.

HENRY

Tell you what. Give me three weeks, I'll have that field greener than Dublin on Saint Patrick's Day.

(tosses some chips in)

And I promise...I'll only ask for one thing in return.

49 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

49 \*

A few minutes from the start of practice...and the boys are goofing off. Joe David tosses a wild pitch from the mound, wild enough that Wack almost has to jump to swing at it.

JIMMY

(walking toward the mound)

Where's Rudy?

JOE DAVID

Locker room. Somethin' to do with only havin' one shoe.

Jimmy waves for the ball from Joel.

JIMMY

Gimme the ball.

JOAQUIN

You're throwin' batting practice?

(digs in)

Man...talk about bein' in the right place at the right time.

Jimmy throws a pitch...nothing special. WHAM! Wack tags it deep into the outfield, a scorching line drive.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

(and the trash talk begins)

That ball's gonna land in a new timezone.

(waits for the next pitch)

Hey Coach! Might want to re-set your watch before this next one.

Jimmy looks in at Joel. Joel looks out at Jimmy. They're thinking the same thing. Joel opens and closes his mitt - "feed me". Jimmy drops his head a bit so that Wack can't see the smile on his face.

(CONTINUED)

He wipes it off, goes into his wind-up and brings the heat. The ball comes in so fast it gives off a hissing sound...

THWACK!

...and it hits Joel's glove. Wack's knees buckle. The trash talk is over.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)  
(to Joel)  
What was that man?

JOEL  
Wait'll he warms up.

JOAQUIN  
Lemme see another one of those.

JIMMY  
Nah. This is battin' practice, not  
pitchin' practice.

Jimmy makes a leisurely throw to the plate. Wack knocks it solidly into the outfield, but without the trash talk.

56 EXT. RUN-DOWN HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

56

It's almost dusk as Jimmy pulls his truck in front of Wack's home; a small duplex of sorts featuring a broken gutter and a plywood overhang drooping above the door.

JOAQUIN  
That fastball. That's what I'm gonna have  
to get used to, huh?

JIMMY  
You will. Takes time.

JOAQUIN  
(hops out of the truck)  
Thanks for the ride.

Wack's four-year-old SISTER, delighted to see him, runs from the front door.

SISTER  
Wahkee!

...and the attitude and trash-talking is gone, replaced by the caring brother. Jimmy watches Joaquin scoop his sister into his arms and whirl her around.

(CONTINUED)

JOAQUIN  
(in Spanish)  
Little sister. Whatcha doin' out here?

SISTER  
(in Spanish)  
Waiting for you!

Jimmy gets out and reaches in the bed for Wack's glove. But he doesn't toss it over right away, content to watch...

JOAQUIN  
Go on, I'll be in.

She scampers away. Joaquin looks back at his coach.

JIMMY  
(tosses the glove to him)  
Might need this.

JOAQUIN  
(catches it)  
I'm gonna hit one of those pitches.

Jimmy smiles as he starts to open the door...

JIMMY  
You keep playin' this game.

JOAQUIN  
Don't worry man.

57 INT. CAL'S BARBER SHOP - DAY

57 \*

One of Big Lake's ELDER STATESMEN is getting his hair cut, by Cal, the town barber. The door opens and the bell rings.

Henry and Frank walk in. Henry has two EMPTY GROCERY SACKS tucked under his arm.

HENRY  
Cal, where you keep your brooms?

CAL  
Closet.

They check the closet and Henry hands a broom to Frank and takes another for himself.

They start sweeping the hair from the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CAL (CONT'D)  
(the scissors are motionless)  
Henry?

HENRY  
(as if it happens everyday)  
We'll only be a minute.

58 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - DAY (GAME TWO - HOME) 58 \*

Rudy's pitch is struck deep into center-field (by CORY). The Owl center-fielder (MATT) runs for it but can't quite get there. \*

One run scores...then another. The ball is thrown to Wack, who turns to see that the damage is already done.

Disgusted, he flips the ball toward Rudy. The scoreboard...

VISITORS 13 OWLS 3

59 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS 59 \*

Jimmy walks to the mound where Rudy stands, knowing he's done for the day.

JIMMY  
Not your day Rudy.

RUDY  
(tosses the ball to Jimmy)  
Not my year.

Jimmy waves for the left-fielder (EDDIE) to take over for Rudy, who trots out to trade positions. \*

Jimmy looks around the infield at his players. At Wack. At Joe David. Even Joel. \*

...they've given up...

60 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - MOMENTS LATER 60 \*

Hunter packs the equipment bag as the players gather their stuff.

Joe David and Rudy walk toward the exit of the dugout, close enough that both Jimmy and Hunter hear...

JOE DAVID  
We got three more months of this.

(CONTINUED)

Hunter glances at the two players, and it's that glance that tells Jimmy his own son is getting a first-hand look at losing...at giving up.

JIMMY  
Where you goin'?

They stop and look back.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Take a seat out there.  
(turns to the rest of the team)  
Everybody.

The players come close to rolling their eyes, but they grab their things and do as they're told.

61 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

61

The Owls sit, dejected, on the bleacher. Hunter sits high in the stands, off to one side, a fair distance from the team. Jimmy stands in front of everyone...

JIMMY  
Somebody wanna tell me how we lost that game?

Nope.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
No? How 'bout takin' a good look at the numbers on that scoreboard.  
(beat)  
What do those numbers tell you?

An awkward silence, finally broken by Joe David, who mutters under his breath...barely heard... \*

JOE DAVID  
How to get a hold of Bo's Tire Barn.

A slight ripple of uneasy laughter. Jimmy doesn't have to look to know there's a telephone number on the board.

*He's losing them.*

JIMMY  
You quit out there.

And the laughter is gone.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Quit on me. Worse, you quit on yourselves. \*

Jimmy looks at each player...

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What, you think nobody around here cares about baseball? Is that it? \*

(beat) \*

Think the school's gonna drop the program?

...and he can tell that's what a lot of them are thinking.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Team wins a game a year, never been to the state playoffs. Hard to imagine anyone wantin' to mess with that tradition. \*

(beat) \*

I'm lookin' at some of the best players in this district, on what should be one of the best teams...

(beat)

...and you're makin' it easy for 'em.

They're listening.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Sad part is...I see it. And you don't.

Some of the players look down, not ready to meet his gaze. Jimmy lets the message sink in for a second...

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Y'know,...a whole lot of you are gonna finish up school, work the rigs, work at Bo's Tire Barn, raise a family, retire. \*

And you're gonna do all that right here in Big Lake. \*

Jimmy knows it's his chance.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Nuthin' wrong with that. Lot of real good people have done that.

(beat)

I'm doin' it.

There's no regret in the words...just reality.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

But if you're lookin' for somethin' more after you're done here, you give some serious thought to how you want to play out the rest of this season.

JOAQUIN

Man, ...what difference is it gonna make? It's not like any of us are gettin' any scholarships.

JIMMY

I'm not just talkin' about college. I'm talkin' about wanting things in life. I'm talkin' about dreams.

(taps his chest)

And those things start right here. Okay? Right here. You don't have dreams, you don't have anything.

The light breeze is the only sound as Jimmy takes one last look at his team...and turns to walk away.

He takes only a couple of strides before a voice calls out...

JOEL (O.S.)

How 'bout you?

Jimmy stops. He turns, not sure who spoke up. Joel speaks up again.

JOEL (CONT'D)

You talk about our dreams.

(beat)

Man, I've been catchin' yours every day.

JIMMY

We're not talkin' about me.

JOEL

C'mon Coach. When you throw I have to ice my hand.

(shakes his head)

You're the one should be wantin' more.

Naturally, it's Wack who says...

JOAQUIN

Yeah and the sad part is...we see it and you don't.

Jimmy looks down and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
I had my shot.  
(short beat)  
Alright, we got practice tomorrow. Let's  
go.

He turns away again...until...

JOEL  
So take another shot.

Jimmy looks over his shoulder and sees the team hasn't moved.  
Even his son is watching closely.

JIMMY  
It doesn't work that way.

RUDY  
It does if you throw hard enough.

JIMMY  
(a hint of exasperation)  
Yeah well I don't throw hard enough.  
(beat)  
Now come on, hit the shower.

He turns to walk away...again...and again he's stopped by...

JOEL  
We start winnin',...you try out again.

...and Jimmy slowly closes his eyes, wondering if the showers  
are anytime in the near future. He turns around...

JIMMY  
Last time I checked the scouts weren't  
lookin' for science teachers.

JOE DAVID  
Not many science teachers throw like you.

Jimmy hesitates, sighs...

JIMMY  
S'gonna take more than a couple wins to  
get me to make a fool of myself.

JOEL  
Okay...what if we win district, go the  
state playoffs?

Jimmy stares for a second...and can't suppress a chuckle at  
the notion. No one else is laughing.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
You're serious?

Jimmy can't ignore the sudden spark in their eyes. He waits another moment before saying...

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
And all I do is find some kind of try-out somewhere...

JOAQUIN  
That's it man.

The entire team waits for Jimmy's response. So does Hunter.

JIMMY  
Alright...if you make it to...

But most of the words after "if" are drowned out...

TEAM  
Alright Coach Morris!

The players hop from the bleachers and finally head for the shower. Hunter smiles as the team runs past his father.

62 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH SCHOOL - DUSK 62

Jimmy tosses the equipment bag in the back of his truck and he opens the door to get inside.

Jimmy slips the truck into reverse and looks at Hunter...

HUNTER  
I know. No tellin' Mom.

63 EXT. BIG LAKE GAS STATION - DUSK 63

Jimmy gasses up the truck, Hunter already asleep inside. The sun makes its last reach across the desert surrounding the service station.

He gazes at the town as he mulls the very same things he told his players to think about.

64 INT. TRUCK - NIGHT 64

The truck rolls along on a lonely stretch of road. Jimmy's face is blank...until he notices a RADAR UNIT on the side of the road.

The number flashes...36 MILES PER HOUR...and curiosity pays a visit. Jimmy pulls to the side of the road.

65 INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

65

Hunter stirs, but only for a second. Jimmy keeps the engine running, unsure of whether he wants to see, whether he even wants to know, what the radar unit might tell him.

He glances in the rear view mirror...and notices something hanging on it.

THE SAINT RITA. Jimmy reaches for the medallion, rubbing it between his fingers...

...he puts the truck in reverse and backs up.

66 EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

66

The lights illuminate the short stretch of highway leading up to the radar sign. Jimmy, the burlap sack of baseballs at his feet, stands a few paces in front of his truck...about twenty or so from the radar sign.

He throws a lazy pitch just to the left of the sign and the ball rolls away down the road.

The sign reads...42 MILES PER HOUR.

A CAR approaches and Jimmy rummages through the bag, hoping to look normal. The car passes. 60 MILES PER HOUR.

He grabs another baseball...and this time he throws harder.

70 MILES PER HOUR.

Jimmy throws again...73 MILES PER HOUR.

A look of disappointment with the realization that he's not even fast enough for the minor leagues.

JIMMY

C'mon...

Another pitch...75. Another...76. The exhales become grunts as he pushes himself harder.

Another...75. Again...76. And he stops as the last ball skips away into the darkness.

Out of breath, he picks up the empty bag and walks past the radar unit, hoping to find at least some of the baseballs.

And then...as he walks away...there is a flicker on the green 76 on the screen. Part of the light is burned out.

(CONTINUED)

The "7" fills in, for a second, revealing a "9" instead.

Jimmy never sees the 96, which flashes for only the briefest of moments before settling back onto 76.

67 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT 67 \*

In the distance, the old boys walk around the outside of the field...walking backwards...very, very slowly.

CAL (V.O.)

You sure about this Henry?

68 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS 68 \*

The front view reveals Henry, Frank and Cal sprinkling something from the grocery sacks they're holding.

HENRY

Deer get a whiff of human hair...they keep movin' till they don't smell it.

(beat)

I figure we put a circle all the way around this field...

FRANK

That's a lotta hair.

HENRY

Well, from the looks of things, I'd say Cal isn't cheatin' anyone over at his shop.

69 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS 69 \*

Distant...from the back again.

CAL (V.O.)

I think this might be some of yours Frank.

70 EXT. TEXAS HOME - DAY 70 -

Hunter knocks on the front door of a small, well-kept home. Jimmy stands a short distance behind him.

JIMMY

Maybe he's not home.

HUNTER

(knocking again)

He said he'd be here.

(CONTINUED)

Jim Sr. opens the door and the boy's eyes light up.

HUNTER (CONT'D)  
Hey Grandpa!

JIM SR.  
(opens the door wide)  
Hunter...I was readin' in the paper this morning that someone in your family is having a birthday.

HUNTER  
That's a kid joke Grandpa.

JIM SR.  
A kid joke? No kidding?  
(holds the door open for both)  
Jimmy.

JIMMY  
Sir.

71 INT. JIM SR'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

71

Hunter rips open his gift and pulls out a baseball and a BASEBALL GLOVE.

HUNTER  
Whoa...  
(slips on the glove...too big)  
It's kinda big.

Jimmy hasn't taken a seat. He stands by the fireplace.

JIM SR.  
You'll grow into it...faster'n you think.

HUNTER  
Look, Dad, it doesn't have any fingers.

Jim Sr. is suddenly concerned over his gift.

JIMMY  
It's...a first baseman's mitt.

JIM SR.  
(concerned)  
Is that wrong?  
(trying to explain)  
I can probably find the receipt and we can just get you another one. One with fingers...  
\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

HUNTER

It's okay, Grandpa. I like first base.  
 (to Jimmy)  
 Can I go outside, Dad?

JIMMY

What do we say first?

Hunter stands and hugs his grandpa's neck.

HUNTER

Thank you. I really like it a lot.

Hunter races out with the glove and ball, leaving Jim Sr. and Jimmy to deal with the silence between them. After a beat...

JIM SR.

If he decides he wants one with  
 fingers...

JIMMY

I'll take care of it.

Jim, Sr. nods, a bit hurt.

Jimmy turns to see a collection of PHOTOGRAPHS on the mantel above the fireplace: photos of the grandkids,...and in the middle, THREE PHOTOS OF JIMMY when he was much younger.

...photos of Jimmy playing ball...

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I didn't know you had these.

JIM SR.

Your mother gave me a few.

JIMMY

(matter of fact)

She would've been the one to have 'em.

72 EXT. OLLIE'S HOME - DAY

72

Jimmy, Lorri and the kids flank Ollie and her second husband CHARLES. Hunter is center-stage, lording over his cake.

ALL

(singing)

...to Hunter. Happy birthday to you.

Jessica starts blowing out the candles.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

Jessie! HUNTER

(CONTINUED)

LORRI  
Don't worry baby, your wish still counts.

OLLIE  
Charles, you hopin' that ice cream  
machine's gonna start spinnin' itself?

73 EXT. OLLIE'S HOME - LATER

73

Jimmy and Ollie walk through the neighborhood.

OLLIE  
Seems like five minutes ago I was  
watchin' you blow out those candles.

JIMMY  
You tryin' to make me feel old?

OLLIE  
Come talk to me in twenty years.

She cuts to the chase.

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
Hunter says you spent some time at your  
father's today.

Jimmy doesn't nibble. She turns to him...smiling.

OLLIE (CONT'D)  
You know where I'm goin' with that.

JIMMY  
Yes ma'am, I do.

OLLIE  
Lorri says he's tryin' real hard to be a  
good grandfather.

JIMMY  
Yeah, well, maybe he shoulda tried a  
little harder at bein' a good father.

OLLIE  
Oh Lord Jimmy, I swear...if there is one  
thing you got from him, it's his stubborn  
side.

JIMMY  
Not true.

Ollie gives him a look - busted.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

So I guess I'm just supposed to pretend that everything was perfect?

OLLIE

You've been blamin' your father for too many things, for too many years.

JIMMY

(sarcastic)

What, like managing to move to the only town in America without baseball?

OLLIE

Jimmy, you can sell that story someplace else, 'cause I ain't buyin'.

(beat)

You got your shot, you got hurt. Simple as that. It had nuthin' to do with your father.

Jimmy walks, tight-lipped, but silent...out of respect for his mother.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

You think he didn't have dreams?

JIMMY

And I suppose it's my fault he didn't go after 'em. Story of my life.

OLLIE

We all got stories, Jimmy. Mine says I'm happy; no regrets. But it's harder on a man. One day he carries the world in his palm, the next it's on his back. Can't help but affect those around him.

JIMMY

That why things didn't work out?

OLLIE

(laughs to herself)

I'm gonna need a longer street for that talk.

74 INT. HUNTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

74

Jimmy hikes the blanket around Hunter's shoulders. Already asleep, he kicks his feet, pushing the covers back down.

Jimmy gives up and notices the baseball glove, tied with the shoelaces, next to his pillow.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

He picks it up and squeezes it, making sure it's wrapped just right before putting it back on the bed.

74A INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

74A

Jimmy dumps his stuff on the desk and prepares for a day at school. He looks up to see McKinney at the door.

MCKINNEY

Heard you had another tough loss.

JIMMY

Still gotta lot of season left.

MCKINNEY

Jimmy...

Jimmy stops with the desk prep.

MCKINNEY (CONT'D)

Be careful with the inspiration stuff.

JIMMY

Why's that?

MCKINNEY

A lot of these kids...  
(doesn't want to say it)  
...y'know.

Both men know a lot of the kids will end up right where they are...in Big Lake, Texas.

JIMMY

Yeah Bob, I know. And you know.  
(beat)

But maybe some of these kids don't need to yet.

McKinney decides against pushing the conversation. He nods and walks away, leaving Jimmy alone.

75 INT. CLASSROOM - LATER - DAY

75

Jimmy wanders between the science lab stations, reminding...

JIMMY

It helps if you actually wear those goggles Ms. Martinez...

She slips them on. Jimmy hears a loud whisper from the door.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

VOICE FROM THE DOOR (O.S.)

Coach!

He looks and sees Rudy and Joe David. They wave him over.

76 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

76

Joel and Joaquin are already leaning over the freshly-watered infield, their hands resting on their knees.

Jimmy and the two other boys walk up from behind.

JOAQUIN

That what I think it is?

Sprouting from the soil: the first sprigs of GRASS.

JIMMY

That gentlemen... is Bermuda ryegrass number five.

JOEL

We're gonna have a baseball field.

77 EXT. GRAVEL YARD - DAY

77

Located just beyond the baseball field. The team is doing their best to practice on this make-shift field.

Jimmy fungos a grounder to Wack, who flips it to Rudy at second.

JOAQUIN

How long we gotta practice here? \*

JIMMY

Couple more days.

JOAQUIN

(mutters)

Playin' in a gravel yard.

JIMMY

Okay, Wack, bring it in for some batting practice.

Jimmy heads for the mound, passing Wack, who grabs a bat and steps into the "batter's box".

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Nice easy swings. Turn your hips and throw your hands at the ball.

(CONTINUED)

Jimmy throws a nice, easy ball. Wack drops his bat to the pavement and stares at Jimmy.

WACK

If we're gonna win we need to see better pitching. Are you gonna help us or not?

Jimmy considers - looks around at the faces of his players.

THWACK! Wack swings at a sizzling fastball and misses. And again.

THWACK! Only this time it's Joe David standing in, taking a tentative cut at a sizzling fastball. Very tentative.

THWACK! Rudy swings...and misses.

One after another, no one even coming close to the ball. Pitch after pitch, player after player. sssssSSSSSSS...

THWACK! THWACK! THWACK!

Knees continue to buckle. Players stand as far to the outside of the batter's box as they possibly can. And then --

TICK

Wack gets just a tiny part of the baseball, enough to foul it back behind Joel. It CLANGS against a metal shed. As the sound echoes --

Everything stops. Every player. Every lazy toss. Every breath.

Someone has finally made contact with a pitch thrown by Coach Morris. Wack doesn't know what to say.

JIMMY

(grabs another ball)

Now...get all of it.

He throws another pitch and this time...as it closes in on the plate, there is a resounding...CRACK!

78 EXT. TEXAS BASEBALL FIELD - DAY (GAME 3 - AWAY)

78

...and the instant the ball leaves the bat, the scene becomes a real game. Wack, wearing his road uniform, races around first base as the ball rolls toward the fence. Stand-up double.

Jimmy and the players in the dugout yell out...

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

JIMMY AND THE PLAYERS  
Attaway Wack! Alright!

- 79 EXT. TEXAS BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 79  
JOEL hits a solid line drive down the first base line. The umpire signals FAIR BALL! Wack scores. \*
- 80 EXT. TEXAS BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 80  
Rudy takes a big lead off second base (Matt at the plate) and tries to steal third. The throw sails over the opposing player's head and Rudy strolls home. \*  
Jimmy glances at the scoreboard: VISITORS 7 WILDCATS 3
- 81 EXT. TEXAS BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 81  
A ground ball is hit toward Wack. He knocks it down, scrambles and tosses the ball to second for the force out. \*  
Joe David tosses the ball back to Wack and he silently pumps his fist...their first win so close.
- 82 EXT. TEXAS BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 82  
Rudy pitches to a left-handed batter. The batter hits a foul ball toward the third base dugout. Joel, Ernest and Rudy converge on the ball. Ernest is almost to the ball as Joel's mitt comes out of nowhere to make the play that ends the game. \*
- 83 EXT. GRAVEL YARD - DAY 83 \*  
Another practice. Jimmy throws a pitch and this time it's Joel who gets a piece of it. He hits it deep into the outfield. Everyone cheers.
- 84 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - (GAME 4) DAY 84 \*  
The season continues, the Owls' now dressed in their home whites. The grass is coming in, still light in spots. More fans are in the bleachers.  
The scoreboard reads: VISITORS 5 OWLS 9  
A ground ball is struck toward second base. Rudy catches it cleanly and throws a perfect relay to Wack, who brushes his foot against second base and tosses the ball to first.  
Joe David raises his arms in celebration and the players run off the field...victorious again.

85 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - (GAME 5) DAY  
More fans, more grass. Joel's bat connects...

85

\*

86 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - (GAME 5) DAY 86 \*

Joaquin's bat connects...Joe David's...Rudy's...player after player crushes the ball.

The scoreboard reads: VISITORS 3 OWLS 14

87 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - (GAME 6) DAY 87 \*

The stands are nearly full, the grass is thickening. Joel throws a perfect toss to cut down an opposing runner trying to steal. Wack makes the tag and the umpire calls him out.

Players go around the horn - Wack to Joe David to Miguel to Ernest and back to Rudy. Confident faces everywhere. \*

The scoreboard reads: VISITORS 4 OWLS 20

88 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - (GAME 7) DAY 88 \*

The grass is now completely in, the stands completely jammed. Joel hits a home run over the left field fence and the players celebrate. \*

89 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY 89 \*

The celebration continues and it takes Jimmy a few seconds to get everyone's attention.

JIMMY

Keep it down or folks are gonna think football season's already started.

The players cheer and laugh.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Lot of coaches would say they're proud of you right now. And I am. Lot of coaches would say it's amazing we've won this many games in a row. And it is.

(long beat)

But I'm not gonna say I don't care about tomorrow's game, because I do...

The team erupts...

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Let's finish things up.

PLAYERS  
(chanting in unison)  
State...state...state...state!

90 INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

90

Jimmy walks toward his office. A MAN he's never seen before stands next to the door.

UNKNOWN MAN  
Quite a group you've got there.

JIMMY  
Thanks.

UNKNOWN MAN  
I'm Steve Dearborn. I'm with the Barton  
School District in Fort Worth.

Jimmy's confused, but not for long.

DEARBORN  
Hopin' we might be able to talk about  
that application you sent us.

JIMMY  
(suddenly distracted)  
Sure.

Dearborn walks in the office and Jimmy closes the door. The chanting continues from the locker room, but Wack watches everything going on in Jimmy's office.

91 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

91

Jimmy can't sleep and Lorri's not doing much better. She leans up on one elbow and gazes at her husband.

LORRI  
They'll understand.

JIMMY  
I've got most of 'em comin' back.

LORRI  
Honey, you're always gonna have kids  
comin' back.

JIMMY  
Not these kids.

(CONTINUED)

Jimmy rolls out of bed and heads for the window.

LORRI  
It's Fort Worth. High school coaching  
jobs don't get any better.

He stares out the window.

LORRI (CONT'D)  
You get to coach, get to teach, and not  
that it's the most important thing in  
life, Jimmy, but... it is twice the  
money. And we could sure use it.

JIMMY  
I know.

Lorri isn't sure what to say. She rolls back onto her pillow.

LORRI  
Well I'm done tellin' you to sleep on it,  
'cause that sure ain't workin'.

92 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 92 \*

The baseball field awaits...dew-covered and pristine.

93 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY 93

Silent tension fills the locker room as each player listens  
to Jimmy finish his pre-game speech.

JIMMY  
Three years ago this program finished the  
season with one win. Two years ago one  
more. And last year...same story.  
(looks at his players)  
This year we've won sixteen games.

The only sound is the chomping of gum.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Gentlemen...we need seventeen.

A few nods.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Alright, anybody have any questions?

None...until...

(CONTINUED)

JOAQUIN

Coach?

(long pause)

You comin' back next year?

It's the last question Jimmy wanted to hear.

JIMMY

Let's worry about this year first.

94 INT. BASEBALL FIELD P-A ANNOUNCER BOX - DAY 94

The P-A microphone awaits the call of the game. A few inches away: the school library's REEL TO REEL, spinning an old TAPE of THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER. \*

95 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 95 \*

The brilliant white of the chalk gleams along the first base line. Someone unseen is singing the National Anthem...

VOICE (O.C.)

...oh say does that star spangled banner  
yet wave...

The voice is rich and on-key. The Big Lake team stands in a precise row just on the grass. \*

TITLE: DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIP GAME \*

The man behind the voice comes into view... Henry.

HENRY

...o'er the land of the free...and the  
home of the brave.

The crowd, which now includes fans along the sidelines and behind the outfield fence, cheers in anticipation.

Henry winks at Jimmy, the debt for fixing the field now settled.

Jimmy's team heads for the dugout. He tries to calm them...

JIMMY

We're a different team now than the last  
time we played these guys. They're ripe  
for the pickin'. Just, let's not be  
nervous out there... \*

(nervous himself)

Nuthin' to be nervous about... \*

96 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

96

A ground ball scoots under the glove of a nervous Joaquin and rolls between his legs into the outfield.

One runner scores...then another. Joel catches the ball and holds up his glove, telling his teammates to take it easy.

SCOREBOARD: VISITORS 2 OWLS 0

Wack stands in the infield, disgusted with himself.

97 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

97

A series of sparkling plays as the game draws on, and with each play the contest grows more intense:

1) The Owl third baseman (ERNEST) fields a hot grounder and throws the ball to Joe David for an out.

2) An Owl player (MIGUEL) hits a shot toward the opposing shortstop who stabs the ball. \*

3) An opposing player hits a high pop-up. Joe David waves off several Owl players to make the catch.

4) Rudy, on the mound, checks an opposing runner's lead-off from second base. Joel gives a signal which Wack and Miguel (2nd baseman) catch. Neither covers the bag. MATT (the Owl center-fielder) sneaks up behind the runner and takes the pick-off throw from Rudy, catching the opposing runner unawares.

5) A bloop fly into right field sends Owls scurrying to try and snag it. The Owl right-fielder barely misses a collision to make a diving catch and toss to Joel (covering first) to double up an opposing runner.

6) A long fly ball sails close to the fence, but Matt, the Owl center-fielder catches it over his shoulder.

7) One after another opposing players strike out as Rudy gives his all on the mound.

8) One by one the Owls strike out as the Opposing pitcher finds his groove. And then --

9) An Owl player hits the ball hard and makes it to third base. A triple.

10) Rudy, at the plate, takes a sign from Jimmy and steels himself for his at-bat.

(CONTINUED)

97 CONTINUED:

He digs in, watches the wind-up then bunts - a suicide squeeze. The ball trickles toward third base as the Owl runner slides under the throw.

98 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

98

The scoreboard tells the story. Sixth inning...

VISITORS 2 OWLS 1

Big Lake runners are on second (Joe David) and third. Joaquin digs in at the plate as the crowd stomps its collective feet on the bleachers, encouraging him on...

JIMMY

Your time Wack. It's your time.

The nervousness is gone, replaced by a look of confidence. He patiently watches one strike go by, and then another.

The opposing pitcher looks like he has him...but on the next pitch, Joaquin cracks the ball down the first base line.

FAIR BALL! The crowd erupts as the Owl on first trots in to score. Jimmy gives Joe David the "stop" sign but Joe David runs right through it and scores on a close play at the plate.

Wack stays calm as he stands on second, pulling his batting glove off. But as he glances down, a hint of a smile and a subtle look of pride flashes across his face.

99 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

99

The seventh and final inning. VISITORS 2 OWLS 3

Rudy's struggling. Opposing runners on second and third. He throws a pitch.

UMPIRE

Ball four.

The bases are loaded. Jimmy, Joaquin, Joel, Joe David and the rest of the infielders all walk to the mound.

JIMMY

Last inning. How much you got left?

RUDY

I got nuthin'.

Joe David drops his head, knowing they're now set up to lose. But Joaquin smells the victory...and grabs the ball from Joel's glove, plopping it in Rudy's.

(CONTINUED)

JOAQUIN

You with nuthin' is better than anything  
they got.

Jimmy and Rudy share a look. \*

JIMMY

(a short beat until...)  
Finish it. \*

Rudy nods.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Alright...two more outs. Let's go.

Everyone heads back to their position.

100 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

100 \*

Rudy, dead tired, throws and the batter hits a screamer right  
back at him. He stabs the ball and the runners hold. Two  
down. \*

The next opposing batter (Cory) digs in, crowding the plate.  
Joel notices and gives Rudy a sign. Rudy brushes the batter  
back. Ball one. \*

The batter backs off the plate just a bit - Joel notices -  
and Rudy freezes the batter with a curve. \*

UMPIRE

Strike!!! \*

One and one. \*

Rudy's next pitch is pounded deep, deep, deep over the left  
field fence. Foul. One ball, two strikes. \*

The batter reclaims the plate, digging in, challenging Rudy. \*

Joel gives Rudy a look, then holds his mitt up and opens and  
closes it. "FEED ME!" \*

Rudy nods, squints at the batter, who blows Rudy a kiss.  
Cocky. Rudy ignores, sets his feet and blows a fastball by  
the batter, who nearly jumps out of his shoes swinging... and  
missing. Game over! \*

The game ends and the celebration begins. Jimmy, Hunter and  
the remaining bench players run onto the field as the team  
dogpiles on top of Rudy. \*

(CONTINUED)

Jimmy pats a few of his players on the back, but most don't even see him. Except for Wack.

Joaquin comes over and embraces his coach.

101 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

101

The celebration has moved into the locker room. The players clap and watch Joe David dance. Jimmy watches with satisfaction, leaning against a nearby wall.

Rudy stands on a bench and calls for quiet.

RUDY

Hey! Hey!!!

(they quiet)

To the man who taught us about wantin' somethin' more...Coach Jimmy Morris of the district champion Big Lake Owls!

(cheers, Jimmy smiles)

We wanted it...and now we got it baby.

More yelling and cheering. Rudy steps down and walks up to his coach. He holds out a BASEBALL signed by each player.

RUDY (CONT'D)

Now it's your turn.

Rudy shakes his hand and Jimmy is visibly moved. Each player walks up, shakes his hand, and says the same words...

PLAYERS

Your turn Coach.

Jimmy shakes the hand of each player. No tears, but his eyes can't hide what he feels for these kids.

102 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DUSK

102

Their hats on backwards, Jimmy and Hunter walk across the lush grass. Father and son are by themselves, Jimmy's hand resting on Hunter's shoulder.

HUNTER

You knew they were gonna win today.

Didn't you?

JIMMY

Sometimes when you want somethin' bad enough, it works out that way.

(CONTINUED)

Jimmy looks out at the field, part of him knowing he may not see it again. The sun dips below the horizon...and it's the same look he had as a kid back in Florida. He slows down.

HUNTER

What?

JIMMY

It's been a good field.

They walk again.

HUNTER

Can we get a slurpee?

JIMMY

Maybe later.

HUNTER

But you said if you wanted somethin' bad enough...

JIMMY

Yeah, well, I wasn't talkin' about slurpees. \*

FADE TO BLACK.

103 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

103 \*

The school parking lot is nearly vacant. The marquee on the SIGN out front reads: HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

104 INT. LOCKER ROOM - COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

104 \*

The room is empty as Jimmy packs his things. He holds a box under one arm and is pulling some newspaper articles off a bulletin board with the other.

The headline from the first article reads: OWLS HEADED FOR STATE TOURNAMENT.

Jimmy smiles as he pulls it down. He reaches for the next...

OWLS LOSE STATE TOURNEY OPENER 6-4. He tucks it in the box and reaches for the third: a small advertisement...

OPEN TRY-OUT TAMPA BAY DEVIL RAYS

JUNE 15TH SAN ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY

Scrawled in the corner, a handwritten note from one of his players: YOUR TURN COACH!

(CONTINUED)

The smile fades, Jimmy knowing his players expect him to keep his end of the bargain. He tosses the ad in the box.

105 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

105

Jimmy, Hunter and Jessica sit at the small kitchen table eating cold cereal. Jamie is in the high chair, sloshing oatmeal everywhere. Lorri zips in, late for work.

LORRI

First day of summer registration and I'm gonna have to skip breakfast.

JESSICA

(points to a box of cereal)  
You can take some Mister Crunch with you.

JIMMY

He's a Captain Jessie. Don't go bustin' rank on him.

LORRI

Thanks anyway honey.

Lorri gathers her things from the counter and asks Jimmy...

LORRI (CONT'D)

You got anything goin' today?

JIMMY

Me? Nah.

LORRI

We need to go see the real estate guy.

HUNTER

He's been a Captain forever. Why don't they make him something better?

JIMMY

You thinkin' Admiral Crunch?

LORRI

Just say "yes ma'am" so I at least know you heard me.

JIMMY

Yes ma'am.

LORRI

Make sure you take 'em all if you go. You kids mind your daddy, okay?

(CONTINUED)

She's out the door, barely hearing the "okay's" coming from the kitchen table. Jimmy pours some more cereal.

JIMMY

(to Hunter)

Remind me not to forget Jamie if we go see the real estate guy.

106 EXT. BIG LAKE HIGHWAY - DAY

106

An endless highway stretches out of Big Lake, straight as can be into the early morning high desert. Jimmy's truck rolls past a sign that reads...

SAN ANGELO 97 MILES

...quickly fading into the heat rising from the asphalt.

107 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

107

Jimmy and the kids are in the old truck; Hunter in the front, Jessie and Jamie in the tiny extended cab seats in the back.

The truck moves closer to the try-out field and, for a short moment, it looks as if only a handful of players are there...

...until they get closer and see the field filled with young players. What little confidence Jimmy had...slips away.

JESSICA

They got lots of players Daddy.

Jimmy reluctantly pulls in, as far from the field as he can get. He sits inside, staring at the players, each with the drive and conditioning he had years ago.

The truck idles for a few seconds...and Jimmy's hand slides on to the stick shift, ready to slip it into reverse. He glances at Hunter...and the look from his son tells him everything.

The truck stays. The keys turn...the engine falls silent.

108 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

108

The young player at the front of the registration line signs in. The BASEBALL SCOUT behind the fold-out table says...

BASEBALL SCOUT

We'll call your name.

Jimmy moves to the head of the line; Hunter and Jessie on each side of him, Jamie in a STROLLER in front of him.

(CONTINUED)

BASEBALL SCOUT (CONT'D)  
Have your players get in-line Coach.  
Everybody signs in.

Another scout seated nearby recognizes Jimmy.

BASEBALL SCOUT #2  
Jim Morris?  
(Jimmy turns)  
Doug Gassoway. I saw you when the Brewers  
drafted you...must have been, what?...

JIMMY  
Awhile back. How you doin' Doug.  
(shakes his hand)  
You still lookin' at players?

GASSOWAY  
Lookin's the easy part. It's the findin'  
that gives me trouble.  
(smiles, short beat)  
You bring some kids?  
(glances at Hunter and company)  
'Sides your own?

JIMMY  
(hesitant)  
I'm here for me.

GASSOWAY  
(laughs)  
For you?

109 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - LATER 109

The sun rises high in the sky as Jimmy and the kids sit in  
the bleachers watching the other players try-out.

The infielders make sparkling plays, the outfielders easy  
grabs.

110 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - LATER 110

Jimmy and the kids now sit on the grass beyond the fence,  
catching the shade from the scoreboard.

The try-out goes on. Jessie has a sheet of paper filled with  
TIC-TAC-TOE games.

JESSICA  
You can be "X" this time Daddy.

(CONTINUED)

Jimmy sits next to her and absently scribbles an "X," most of his attention directed toward the field.

111 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 111

The baseball scout holds a RADAR GUN on one of the prospects. The pitch comes in...and the number flashes: 84.

The young pitcher catches the ball. He tosses again...

112 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - LATER 112

...and Jimmy catches the ball, as he plays a lazy game of catch with Hunter. Jessie and Jamie slumber in the shade.

113 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS 113

The weather is hot, hot enough that a few of the players toss water on their head to cool down.

114 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 114

Another pitch comes in. The radar gun lights up...85.

115 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS 115

Hunter sits on the open tailgate of the truck. He's working on a can of soda...looking down...at something.

It's his father...changing Jamie's diaper.

HUNTER

We're outta diapers.

JIMMY

(reluctantly cleaning)

We're outta here...soon as Jamie's good to go.

HUNTER

But Dad...

JIMMY

...no "but dad's", okay? I'm dealin' with enough "butts" as it is.

Jimmy looks up and knows he has to be delicate.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Listen Hunter,...I promised to try out. There's nuthin' I can do if they don't want to look.

(CONTINUED)

From the field...

GASSOWAY (O.S.)

Jim!

Jimmy stands, wet wipe in hand, and sees Gassoway waving him in from the pitching mound. He looks at Hunter...

HUNTER

I'm not doin' it.

JIMMY

Just...keep her here. This won't take long.

He tosses the wipe in the truck bed and grabs his glove.

116 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

116

Jimmy jogs the last couple of steps to the mound.

GASSOWAY

You need to warm up?

Jimmy, knowing it won't take long, stretches his arm behind his head...not even close to your textbook warm up.

JIMMY

Nah, I'm good.

GASSOWAY

(flips him the ball)

Don't hurt yourself.

Gassoway walks away, leaving Jimmy alone on the mound.

He stretches his arm out again and looks in; the catcher already crouched behind the plate, the scout holding the radar gun behind the back-stop.

BASEBALL SCOUT

Whenever you're ready.

Jimmy takes a deep breath. He hears Jamie let go with an impatient cry and closes his eyes.

JIMMY

Whenever I'm ready...

And Jimmy lets loose. ssssssSSSSSS...THUMP! The ball smacks hard into the catcher's glove, loud enough that a couple of heads turn from around the field.

(CONTINUED)

Hunter, standing in the truck bed (so he can see), smiles. \*

The catcher holds the glove still for a moment, surprised by the sound. Without a word, he slowly throws the ball back.

Jimmy catches it and scuffs the pitching rubber with his foot. He exhales, letting his shoulders fall, and throws again...

THWACK! More heads turn. The scout with the radar gun shows little reaction, aside from his eyes quickly reading the unseen number.

Another pitch...POP! Players continue to turn and stare. The pitches come faster...and faster.

THWACK! THWACK! Gassoway moves alongside the baseball scout, checking out the radar gun numbers without expression.

Pitch...pop. Pitch...pop. Jimmy looks in...now relaxed.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

You want me to keep goin'?

GASSOWAY

Couple more. \*

All of the remaining players are now watching. Both Gassoway and the scout are holding radar guns.

Each pitch piles on top of the other, faster...faster...

GASSOWAY (CONT'D)

That's good, Jim. \*

The try-out ends. Jimmy walks from the mound and the young man who was catching pulls off his mask and jogs out.

YOUNG CATCHER

You were throwin' hard man.

JIMMY

(scuffs)

C'mon...

YOUNG CATCHER

Yeah, well you got 'em talkin'.

Jimmy looks behind the plate and sees that Gassoway and the scout are talking...intently.

117 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

117

Jimmy buckles Jamie inside. He holds a diaper in one hand as he heads for the garbage.

Gassoway is waiting for him.

GASSOWAY

Jim, how fast were you throwin' fifteen years ago?

JIMMY

Slow enough that scouts stopped usin' the word "fast."

He tosses the diaper in the garbage and as it hits the bottom...the question is asked again.

GASSOWAY

Jim...

(Jimmy turns)

...how fast were you throwin'?

JIMMY

(sees he's serious)

84, 85. Why?

GASSOWAY

You just threw 98 miles an hour.

JIMMY

(stunned)

What?

GASSOWAY

Dozen straight pitches. Two radar guns. Same thing on both.

JIMMY

Doug...there's no way I was throwin'...

GASSOWAY

...I know. I've been a scout for a long time and rule number one is...arms slow down when they get old...

Jimmy can't say a word.

GASSOWAY (CONT'D)

Listen Jim, ...I call the office and tell 'em I got a guy almost twice these kids age...I'm gonna get laughed at...

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GASSOWAY (CONT'D)

...but if I don't call in a 98 mile an  
hour fastball...I'm gonna get fired.  
(another beat)  
I'm just lettin' you know there's a  
chance you'll get a call on this.

Gassoway shakes his head and starts to walk away.

GASSOWAY (CONT'D)

You figure out what I saw out there  
today, you let me know...okay?

JIMMY

(still stunned)

Okay.

Jimmy is left alone with about a million thoughts. He glances  
over at the now empty field, then turns his eyes to his truck  
where Hunter and Jessie are chasing each other round and  
round. When Jamie starts crying the picture is complete.

Jimmy's not 20 anymore. What the hell, he smiles anyway.

118 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

118

Lorri uses her back to shove open the kitchen door, grocery  
sacks taking up both arms. She plops down the sacks on the  
counter and punches the TELEPHONE ANSWERING MACHINE.

She starts pulling groceries from the bag...

JIMMY ON THE MACHINE (V.O.)

Hey...don't fix dinner, we're gettin'  
some pizza.

...but the next few messages stop her cold.

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)

Jim, this is Dan Jennings with the Tampa  
Bay Devil Rays. I'll try back later...

(beep)

Jim, Mark Peterson with the Tampa Bay  
Devil Rays. Doug Gassoway told me about  
this afternoon. I'll try you first thing  
in the morning...

(beep)

Jim, it's Doug. We're gonna have you  
throw again in a couple of days, just to  
make sure. They're sendin' out one of the  
boys from Tampa...

She stares at the machine.

119 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

119

The kids pile through the door, Jessica barely able to hold the pizza. She puts it on the counter, proudly announcing...

JESSICA

Daddy told me to give you the pizza and not say anything else.

LORRI

Thank you sweet pea...

(eyes Jimmy as he enters)

...I'm sure that's exactly what he told you.

Lorri looks at Jimmy as she opens the pizza box. Jimmy's smiling like the cat who ate the canary.

Hunter is silently bursting...

JIMMY

Alright, go ahead...

...and the story floods out. Hunter spills beans everywhere as Jimmy and Lorri share a look.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Pizza-stained plates surround the table, the kids already in bed. Jim and Lorri remain...

JIMMY

(still in disbelief)

...and when he said 98...

(shakes his head)

Do you know how many guys throw 98 miles an hour?

His side of the conversation has an almost dreamy tone to it, as if he's still recalling every pitch as he gazes at the candle in the middle of the table.

LORRI

Not many?

JIMMY

Count 'em on one hand.

(beat)

I still can't believe it. I mean, those are major league scouts on our message machine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORRI  
I know. It's great.

She asks delicately...

LORRI (CONT'D)  
Listen hon, um, why didn't you tell me  
about all this?

JIMMY  
Well, I was worried there might be quite  
a bit of laughter involved.

Lorri smiles, politely.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
It was just this...this thing to get the  
kids playin' is all. I figured I'd throw  
a few pitches and I'd be done with it.

LORRI  
(keeps it together)  
So...you're considering this?

Jimmy's been so wrapped up in the warm memory of the try-out  
that he realizes he hasn't given that part of it a lot of  
thought.

JIMMY  
I don't know.... It's just...never thrown  
that hard before.

Lorri nods, tries to smile.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
What?

LORRI  
Hmm?

JIMMY  
You just don't seem too excited.

LORRI  
No, I am. Really.

She walks around the table and hugs Jimmy from behind.

LORRI (CONT'D)  
It's just been a long time since you  
played.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JIMMY

You know what was the hardest thing about  
givin' it up?

(after a beat)

Givin' it up without knowin'.

The look on Lorri's face shows she's conflicted about the whole thing.

122 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

122

The glow of the television set shines on Jimmy's face as he watches a baseball game.

On the screen...the gate to the bullpen opens and a relief pitcher jogs toward the pitching mound. Jimmy watches the short journey...

... "givin' it up without knowin'" ...

123 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

123

It's pouring rain, a warm Texas storm dumping heavy drops on the try-out field from two days earlier.

Jimmy wears a TEE-SHIRT and WORKOUT PANTS, already soaked, as he throws from the mound. His foot slips a bit in the mud...but the ball sails in hard.

Gassoway and TWO OTHER SCOUTS stand behind the backstop and all THREE RADAR GUNS read 96 miles per hour.

Hunter sits in the bleachers behind the three scouts, trying to read the speed.

The pitches keep coming...96...97...

GASSOWAY

So much for his arm falling off.

124 EXT. SAN ANGELO BASEBALL FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

124

The try-out ends. Jimmy walks toward the dug-out and smiles at Hunter, waiting with his duffel bag and a towel...a look of pride on his face.

He reaches for the towel, playfully using it to rub his son's head. And as he starts to dry his own face...he notices...

...an OLD TRUCK discreetly parked beyond the outfield fence. His father's truck. It slowly backs up and pulls away.

(CONTINUED)

Jimmy gazes out, but not for long. Gassoway walks in the other side of the dug-out.

GASSOWAY

Jim...

Jimmy turns...and waits...

GASSOWAY (CONT'D)

We're ready to sign you.

125 EXT. BURGER JOINT - DAY

125 \*

Joaquin, Joe David, Rudy and Joel are close to finishing off their burgers. Jimmy sits across the table.

RUDY

You said you'd think about it?

JOAQUIN

You're crazy man. Thinkin's what women do when someone wants to marry 'em. There's no thinkin' when someone wants you to play baseball.

JIMMY

Just because I sign a contract doesn't mean they put me in the major leagues.

JOEL

What's wrong with the minor leagues?

JIMMY

You ever seen a minor league contract?

(Joel shakes his head)

There's no guarantee of anything and the money they pay is next to nothing.

JOE DAVID

So what? You're a teacher. That's what you get paid anyway.

JIMMY

Teachers make a lot more than minor league pitchers. A lot more.

(short pause)

I've got a few more people to think about than just me.

The absence of an immediate wisecrack seems to indicate that the boys understand...

...except for the fact that it's a short-lived absence.

(CONTINUED)

RUDY

Man, I ain't ever gettin' married.

126 EXT. TEXAS HOME - NIGHT

126

Jimmy sits in his truck, parked on the street opposite his father's small home. His dad's truck is parked in the driveway.

127 EXT. JIM SR'S HOME - NIGHT

127 \*

The door opens and Jim Sr. sees Jimmy on the landing (through a screen door).

JIM SR.

Jimmy...

Every conversation between the two is awkward...even as they exchange greetings.

JIMMY

I was drivin' through...saw the light on.

Jim Sr. opens the screen door.

JIM SR.

They'll be on for a few more hours.  
(another awkward break)  
You wanna come in?

JIMMY

No, that's okay. I've gotta...get headin'  
back here. I was just...  
(hesitates)  
I just wanted to thank you for comin' out  
today.

Jim Sr. nods and says...

JIM SR.

You looked good.

...his way of saying "you're welcome." Jimmy starts to back up, knowing the conversation's over...

JIMMY

Anyway...

...but Jim Sr. surprises him with...

(CONTINUED)

JIM SR.

Lorri called.

(beat)

Guess the scouts saw what they wanted. \*

...hoping he'll stay for a moment. And Jimmy does.

JIMMY

I don't know what to do.

He looks at his father...his expression asking...

JIM SR.

Give it some time.

JIMMY

I don't have much of that.

JIM SR.

You're askin' me?

JIMMY

(waits a moment before)

Yeah.

Jim Sr. considers the request for several seconds... \*

JIM SR.

Your grandfather once told me it was okay to think about what you want to do, until it was time to start doin' what you were meant to do.

(beat)

May not be what you wanted to hear... \*

...and the faint and cautious hope on Jimmy's face goes away, replaced by the look of someone hearing what they expected to hear...what they knew they'd hear. But he doesn't bite back. Not tonight. \*

Jimmy fights back a smirk, backs up, turns and walks away. \*

INT. MORRIS KITCHEN - NIGHT \*

Lorri puts the dishes in the sink. Jimmy's in the dining room behind her, collecting glasses. \*

JIMMY \*

I swear I think sometimes he stays up at night, figuring out the one thing he can say that'll hurt the most... \*

Jimmy enters with the rest of the dishes. \*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
 (quietly mocking the advice)  
 ...your grandfather once told me...

He places the glasses in the sink.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
 I was this close to thinking he was about  
 to give me some good advice.

LORRI  
 (quietly)  
 Maybe he did.

The words stop Jimmy cold.

JIMMY  
 What?

LORRI  
 (knowing it's out)  
 Oh boy...

She turns to face Jimmy. She's not angry...just trying to be realistic.

LORRI (CONT'D)  
 Jimmy, I love you and Lord knows I think  
 it's great you goin' out and showin' up  
 those kids at the tryout...

Jimmy leans against the counter, stunned.

JIMMY  
 I don't believe this.

LORRI  
 ...but I'm a little concerned you might  
 be losin' sight of the fact you got a  
 family that needs you...

The conversation heats up just a bit.

JIMMY  
 Losin' sight?

LORRI  
 ...and that you've got a pretty decent  
 job waitin' up in Fort Worth.

JIMMY  
 Listen, for the record, I never said I  
 was gonna do this...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LORRI  
 (give me a break)  
 C'mon Jimmy...

JIMMY  
 ...although I was hopin' for just a  
 little more support on the homefront.

LORRI  
 Oh, so this doesn't concern me? Or the  
 kids? You can't eat dreams Jimmy. And  
 they don't pay for clothes or shoes or  
 gas or babysitters.

The words sting. And she sees that they do.

LORRI (CONT'D)  
 I'm not tryin' to be the bad guy on this,  
 but somebody around here's gotta start  
 bein' rational.

JIMMY  
 That's all I been. My whole life.

LORRI  
 And what about my life? I was there too,  
 remember?  
 (shakes her head)  
 Every time you got hurt, I got a front  
 row seat to watch you shut yourself off  
 from the rest of the world. And me.

Her voice lowers just a bit.

LORRI (CONT'D)  
 Truth is, I was happy when you quit.

JIMMY  
 (stunned)  
 Happy? Why in the world would you --

...and her composure cracks.

LORRI  
 -- because I didn't want to see you get  
 hurt again!  
 (the emotion floods out)  
 Okay?

She grabs a towel and wipes her hands as she heads out, not  
 wanting Jimmy to see her cry. He's left alone.

127B INT. HUNTER'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

127B

Lorri enters to find Hunter in bed, asleep, light on, a baseball picture book lying open beside him.

Lorri moves to turn off the lamp, then stops, kneels down, leans against the bed, close to her son's face. Just watching him sleep. Then her eyes go to...

Hunter's wall - on it are several photos of Jimmy in his manager's uniform as well as posters and cut-outs of baseball players. A shrine to his father and his father's sport.

Lorri stares at the wall, then looks back to Hunter before turning out the lamp.

128 EXT. MORRIS FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

128

Jimmy sits on the porch, staring out into the night. Lorri appears at the door. Jimmy senses her presence...

JIMMY

Kids down?

LORRI

For awhile at least.

After a pregnant beat...

JIMMY

I'm sorry.

LORRI

Me too.

JIMMY

I've been thinkin'.

LORRI

Me too.

(off his look)

I'm thinkin'...you should do this.

JIMMY

(gently)

No, you were... [right] --

LORRI

("let me finish")

-- Just...

(off his look)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LORRI (CONT'D)

We've got an eight year old boy inside  
this house...who waited all day in the  
sun, and the rain, to see his daddy try  
to do something nobody believed he could.

(beat)

What are we tellin' him if you don't try  
now?

JIMMY

I can't leave you here with all this.

LORRI

Jimmy Morris, I'm a Texas woman...which  
means I don't need a Texas man to keep  
things runnin'.

(off his look)

Alright?

JIMMY

(after a beat)

Alright.

She walks back inside leaving Jimmy to ever so slightly  
smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

129 INT. JESSICA AND JAMIE'S BEDROOM - DAY 129 \*

Jimmy has a DUFFEL BAG over his shoulder. He softly kisses  
Jamie on her forehead, then does the same with Jessica,  
making sure not to wake them up. \*

130 INT. HUNTER'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER 130 \*

Hunter squirms, but stays asleep, as Jimmy puts his son's  
baseball glove next to the pillow. He whispers...

JIMMY

See you soon little man.

He turns, sees Lorri in the doorway. They share a  
bittersweet look.

130A EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 130A

Empty. Green as can be. It becomes...

131 EXT. FLORIDA BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 131

A small-town MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL STADIUM.

TITLE: AA SOUTHERN LEAGUE

132 INT. FLORIDA LOCKER ROOM - DAY

132

Jimmy, new uniform in hand, shoulders his way through the middle of a room too small for the twenty or so players, young players, passing the time.

The players listen to music on their headphones, flip through magazines, play cards...only casually glancing at Jimmy as he approaches the space that serves as his locker; nothing more than two hooks on the wall.

A PLAYER next to him pulls the headphones from his ears...

PLAYER ON HEADPHONES

You the old guy?

JIMMY

(hanging his uniform)

I'm the old guy.

(eyes the room)

Pretty tight in here.

PLAYER ON HEADPHONES

Wait'll everybody gets here.

He slips the headphones back on.

133 EXT. FLORIDA BASEBALL FIELD - (GAME 1 AWAY) DAY

133

The game is well underway, maybe three hundred fans scattered around the entire stadium. Beer sales are brisk.

Jimmy throws some lazy warm-up pitches; not in a bullpen, but on the small part of the field along the right field line.

A BATTER slams an Orlando pitch deep into right field and it bounces off the "HIT IT HERE - WIN A LUBE AND FILTER" sign. \*

The Orlando manager has seen enough. He rambles out of the dugout and motions to Jimmy...

134 EXT. FLORIDA BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

134

Jimmy runs to the mound, but the moment doesn't come close to the emotional experience he dreamed of as a young man.

P-A ANNOUNCER (DISTORTED V.O.)

Fans, this innings lucky number is 1-5-7.

1-5-7. If that's your number, you've just

won a ten dollar gift certificate to

Paul's Pizzeria.

(CONTINUED)

The lucky fan stands, program in one hand, beer in the other. Half the beer sloshes out, tempering his celebration.

The spectators couldn't care less about the pitching change, instead focusing their attention on the THREE REMOTE CARS that race around the infield.

P-A ANNOUNCER (DISTORTED V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Now it's time to guess the winning car!

Jimmy reaches the mound, the cars kicking up dirt behind him. The manager hands him the ball...

ORLANDO MANAGER  
Work fast. We got a long bus trip.

Jimmy nods, but can't hide his nerves.

135 EXT. FLORIDA BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

135 \*

The young batter at the plate digs in and Jimmy gets ready to throw his first pitch. He tosses it...

...and it sails high, a good three feet out of the strike zone. Even the umpire flinches...

ORLANDO UMPIRE  
Ball one.  
(to the catcher)  
He always like this?

CATCHER  
(throws the ball back)  
We're findin' out together.

Jimmy tries to calm down, but no luck. The next pitch sails over the umpire's head.

ORLANDO UMPIRE  
Mother Mary.

136 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

136 \*

A few of the players are getting dressed for the long bus ride, the steam still coming out of the shower.

Jimmy talks to Lorri on a wall-mounted PAY PHONE.

LORRI (V.O. ON PHONE)  
I can't believe they let you pitch in  
your first game! How'd you do?

\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
Not bad. Had a couple get away from me.

BEGIN INTERCUT WITH:

137 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

137 \*

Lorri sits cross-legged on the bed back at home.

LORRI  
Did the fans yell when you ran in?

JIMMY  
Yeah, they were yellin' alright.

LORRI  
Aw honey, that's so great. You want me to get the kids up?

JIMMY  
Nah. Tell 'em I'll call tomorrow...from wherever we're goin'.

LORRI  
I will.  
(long beat)  
I love you.

JIMMY  
I love you too.

Jimmy hangs up, and there is a flash of uncertainty on his face, uncertainty about all of it: being away from his family, his shaky performance,...his own future.

138 INT. BUS - NIGHT

138

The team bus rumbles along, most of the players asleep. Jimmy stares out the window, until he notices the reflection of someone sitting down in the seat next to him.

ORLANDO MANAGER  
Trouble sleepin'?

JIMMY  
Little bit. You?

ORLANDO MANAGER  
I got two players snorin' behind me and a third base coach louder'n both of 'em sittin' right next to me.

Jimmy smiles.

(CONTINUED)

ORLANDO MANAGER (CONT'D) \*  
Was quite a fastball you were tossin'.

JIMMY  
It'll get better.

The words hold a quiet concern...enough that the manager now knows why Jimmy can't sleep.

ORLANDO MANAGER \*  
When I was a boy, my father used to take me out in the woods to cut firewood for the winter...

A slightly bemused look on Jimmy's face. The manager smiles back, knowing Jimmy's indulging him...

ORLANDO MANAGER (CONT'D) \*  
Bear with me now. Anyway, the two of us'd be out there, and I wanted so bad to cut more wood than he could. I'd be swingin' away...  
(smiles at the memory)  
And there he'd be, a few feet away, with this smooth and graceful swing, didn't even look like he was workin'.

Jimmy listens.

ORLANDO MANAGER (CONT'D) \*  
Every time he'd end up cuttin' more than me. Every time. I'd be standin' all out of breath, wonderin' how he did it. And you know what he'd tell me?

Jimmy shakes his head.

ORLANDO MANAGER (CONT'D) \*  
You're tryin' too hard.

JIMMY  
(smiles, knowing)  
Your father ever coach baseball?

ORLANDO MANAGER \*  
Nah, he was too smart for that.  
(a wistful look)  
Sure could cut wood though.

He looks at Jimmy.

(CONTINUED)

ORLANDO MANAGER (CONT'D)  
So why you ridin' on a bus with an old  
baseball coach and a bunch of kids?

JIMMY  
(waits a moment before...)  
Well, when I was eighteen years old...and  
bear with me on this...  
(the manager smiles)  
I got a phone call tellin' me I was gonna  
be a professional baseball player.

Jimmy's smile fades a bit.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Figured I'd be in the big leagues in a  
few weeks, until they started tellin' me  
I wasn't throwin' hard enough. So, I did  
what any kid woulda done...

ORLANDO MANAGER  
You threw harder.

JIMMY  
And a few operations later I was a high  
school science teacher.  
(looks at his manager)  
Didn't have anyone to tell me I was  
tryin' too hard.

The manager stands up...

ORLANDO MANAGER  
Well...I'm gonna go see if things are a  
little quieter up front.  
(beat)  
Remember...smooth and graceful.

JIMMY  
Smooth and graceful. Yes sir.

139 EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - (GAME 2) NIGHT

139 \*

Smooth and graceful, Jimmy throws a pitch past an opposing  
batter.

ORLANDO UMPIRE  
Strike!

...and there is a rapid sequence of pitches, Jimmy now on top  
of his game, with a command over the opposing hitters.

The Orlando manager claps, appreciative of what he's seeing.

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED:

...smooth and graceful.....overpowering...

Until he throws...

140 EXT. DURHAM BASEBALL FIELD - (GAME 3) NIGHT 140

...and the pitch is hit into centerfield for a solid base hit. Smooth and graceful only goes so far at...

TITLE: DURHAM - AAA - TWO MONTHS LATER

Jimmy wears the familiar hat of the DURHAM BULLS. He holds his glove up, not so patiently waiting for the ball.

The DURHAM MANAGER, MAC, LATE 40'S, comes out to the mound.

JIMMY  
(gives him the ball)  
Sorry Mac.

MAC  
You gave me two good innings. Don't worry about it.

Jimmy slowly runs to the dugout, a tired and worn-out look on his face.

He winces as he descends the steps, pulling his glove off and wearily tossing it on the bench.

141 EXT. MOTEL - PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT 141

Jimmy stands in the neon phone booth in the parking lot, making a long distance call.

JIMMY  
Okay, how 'bout five times four? \*

Another DURHAM PLAYER, BRANDON BROOKS, 21, walks up and impatiently RAPS on the glass. Jimmy acknowledges him with a look and holds up a finger - "Gimme a sec."

BEGIN INTERCUT WITH:

142 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 142

Hunter is at the living room table, doing his homework.

HUNTER  
I already did my fives.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
You wanna learn how to multiply, you  
gotta practice bud.

Hunter quietly punches the keys on his CALCULATOR...

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
And no calculator. Okay?

...and scribbles the answer on his sheet.

HUNTER  
Okay.  
(closes his notebook)  
Hey Dad?

JIMMY  
Yeah partner.

HUNTER  
They told you when you're goin' to the  
big leagues yet?

JIMMY  
(short pause)  
Put your mom on, okay?

HUNTER  
Okay.

Hunter passes the phone across to Lorri, who is dealing with  
a much different type of homework: bills covering the table.

LORRI  
Jessie says they left you in one too many  
pitches.

JIMMY  
Jessie needs to learn how to keep a  
secret with her father.  
(beat)  
How things goin'?

LORRI  
Things are good. Hunter's got a field  
trip next week and the rest of us...

JIMMY  
...that's not what I meant.

LORRI

I know.

(hesitates)

It's not bad. We're a little behind.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY

How much? -

LORRI

Well, ...nobody's called for a couple of days if that's what you mean.

JIMMY

Look, maybe I could call Mom and--

LORRI

-- Speaking of calling, you talk to Fort Worth yet?

Jimmy doesn't say anything for a second, knowing Lorri only changes the subject when things aren't okay.

LORRI (CONT'D)

Jimmy, they can only hold that job so long.

JIMMY

(rubs his eyes)  
I'll call tomorrow.

LORRI

(concerned)  
You alright?

JIMMY

I'm just tired.

LORRI

Jimmy...  
(beat)  
Just remember why you wanted to do this, okay?

From outside the booth we see Jimmy slowly hang up--

EXT. MORRIS HOUSE - NIGHT

Through a window we see Lorri do the same. She sits still for a few seconds, in repose.

EXT. MOTEL - PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Jimmy stares out at the night, his head full, until his concentration is broken by...

A KNUCKLE RAPPING ON THE GLASS

(CONTINUED)

It's Brooks again, now waiting with a couple of other PLAYERS. Jimmy opens the phone booth door...

BROOKS

Listen man, this is the only long distance phone we got here at the Plaza. You see somebody' waitin'? Keep it to ten minutes, okay?

Jimmy stares at Brooks for a second, and then, without saying a word, walks away. Brooks follows him with his eyes...

BROOKS (CONT'D)

What? So now you're all talked out?  
(nothing from Jimmy)  
Use it all up on your girlfriend?

Jimmy stops, turns...

JIMMY

My son. He needed some help with his homework.

Brooks is shut down by the simple mention of Jimmy's son. He watches as Jimmy turns to walk away, and holds off on saying anything more. \*

143 EXT. DURHAM BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

143 \*

One of the young players, KENNY JUSTIN, takes his swings at batting practice. A half dozen others wait behind the backstop.

CRACK! He laces a hit up the middle...and as he digs in for his next swing, he glances over toward the first base line.

A TELEVISION CAMERA CREW is setting up for an interview. A confident smile crosses Justin's face...

JUSTIN

Little screen time comin' for Kenny  
Justin.

CRACK! Another routine line drive. He glances again and this time sees the DURHAM P-R DIRECTOR motion toward...

(CONTINUED)

DURHAM P-R DIRECTOR

Jim!

...who is taking part in a casual game of catch in the outfield. Kenny Justin's smile is gone.

144 EXT. DURHAM BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

144

Jimmy reaches the interview area...

DURHAM P-R DIRECTOR

Jim, I'd like you to meet Aaron Brown of ABC News.

AARON BROWN

(shakes Jimmy's hand)

Hi Jim. Thanks for taking a couple of minutes for us.

JIMMY

Sure.

Jimmy waits, not comfortable in the spotlight. He steals a glance toward the batting cage, knowing they're watching.

145 EXT. DURHAM BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

145

Justin swings and misses, distracted. He walks out of the batting cage and passes Brooks...amused at Justin's frustration.

JUSTIN

I go four for five last night, look where they got the camera.

BROOKS

Man's been pitchin' good enough to talk about it.

They look at Brooks, amazed at his defense of Jim.

PLAYER BEHIND BACKSTOP

Dude's old enough he should be talkin' 'bout retirement'.

Brooks digs in at the plate, shaking his head and laughing.

BROOKS

Murdock. You ever hear of Satchel Paige?

He swings. CRACK! A monumental drive leaps off his bat.

146 INT. BUS - DAY

146 \*

The journey continues. The young players visit in the back of the bus, while Jimmy sits toward the middle...alone.

An open envelope is on his lap and he holds a CRAYON DRAWING of himself...pitching. At the bottom, in bold letters...

LOVE YOU DADDY JESSIE

He looks out the window, not wanting anyone to see him.

147 INT. BUS - DAY

147 \*

Jimmy pulls himself out of his seat, grimacing as his muscles stretch out. He's easily the last one off the bus...

148 EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY

148 \*

...almost groaning as he takes the final step. Jimmy lurches ahead, unaware that Brooks is leaning against the bus.

BROOKS

Old Man River...you are movin' slow.

JIMMY

Six hours on a bus and you'd be...

BROOKS

(catches up with ease)  
I'd be what?

JIMMY

Never mind.

BROOKS

(catching up again)  
C'mon man, I got just the recipe to  
loosen those bones up.

Jimmy stops, looks at Brooks. Brooks gives him a look that says, "Come on."

149 INT. RIBS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

149

The place is hoppin'. Music, chatter and plates full of ribs everywhere.

Jimmy sits at a table with Brooks and another teammate, JOE RIVERA, 20'S. Ribs and beer crowd the table.

(CONTINUED)

BROOKS  
(raises his glass)  
To the diet that put Babe Ruth in the  
Hall of Fame.

All three glasses go up.

RIVERA  
Hey River...tell us what it was like  
watchin' the Babe play?

Brooks and Rivera laugh. Jimmy smiles.

JIMMY  
You sure you want to do this?

BROOKS  
The game is on baby.

JIMMY  
(takes a sip)  
Alright. Best shot...each of you. Loser  
buys.

BROOKS  
Oh...so you get a free beer outta this?

JIMMY  
I take the shots, I make the rules.

BROOKS  
Okay, okay.  
(thinks)  
I got it. What was it like before you had  
buses and you had to walk to games?

RIVERA  
(clinks glasses with Brooks)  
...in the snow!

JIMMY  
Not bad. How 'bout it Rivera?

RIVERA  
I'm takin' my first one. The one 'bout  
you watchin' the Babe.

JIMMY  
Already used it.

BROOKS  
It was like an exhibition game. Doesn't  
count.

(CONTINUED)

RIVERA

But it was the best one!

JIMMY

Where's the waitress?

RIVERA

Alright man, but I'm playin' under protest.

(thinks)

How many fans did you guys lose when you raised ticket prices to fifty cents?

JIMMY

'Bout as many as we lose when you're pitchin'.

BROOKS

And...this game is over baby.

Rivera raises his glass toward Jimmy.

RIVERA

River, if you were this funny all the time, I swear...nobody'd be sayin' nuthin'...

The beer-induced words trail off, Rivera already sorry...

JIMMY

What do you mean?

Jimmy looks at Brooks.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What are they sayin' Brooks?

BROOKS

Some of the guys figure...y'know with the team pushin' your story and all.

JIMMY

(laughs)

...what, they think I'm a publicity stunt?

(then realizes they are)

That what they say? They think I'm takin' up a spot?

Brooks and Rivera don't say anything, knowing their answer will only make it worse.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
What do you think?

BROOKS  
You're too fast for me. S'all I know.

150 EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

150

Rivera, looking a little shaky from the night out, opens his motel room door. He has trouble pulling the keys out.

JIMMY  
You got it? You okay?

RIVERA  
I got it.

JIMMY AND BROOKS  
G'night Rivera.

The door closes.

BROOKS  
Wish I was swingin' against him tomorrow.

JIMMY  
Unfortunately, the team we're playin' gets to...

They laugh and start walking again...slowly.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
How long you been here Brooks?

BROOKS  
Durham? All year long man.

JIMMY  
You won't finish it here.

BROOKS  
Yeah? How you know that?

JIMMY  
C'mon, everybody knows the big team'll call up one guy and it's gonna be you.  
(beat)  
And don't tell me you haven't thought about it...

BROOKS  
...man, the only thing I think about is gettin' my hits. S'all I can do.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY  
Who taught you that?

BROOKS  
A patient man.

JIMMY  
(smiling)  
Your father play?

BROOKS  
Some. Wasn't good enough.  
(beat)  
But man, he loved it. \*

A warm memory.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Every night before I'd have a game, last  
thing he'd say was...son, you know what  
you get to do tomorrow?  
(short pause)  
You get to play baseball. -

They stop walking as they approach Jimmy's room.

JIMMY  
Your dad still around?

BROOKS  
Oh yeah. Put a few thousand miles on the  
car to watch me play this year.

Jimmy doesn't want to spoil the moment.

JIMMY  
G'night Brooks.

He turns toward his door and starts to unlock it.

BROOKS  
Hey Riv?  
(Jimmy looks)  
How you figure all this? You throwin'  
faster'n you ever did?

JIMMY  
You a religious man?

BROOKS  
I guess.

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED: (2)

JIMMY

(opens the door)

S'the only thing I can come up with.

(beat)

Get some sleep, I gotta feelin' you're gonna be runnin' down a lot of balls tomorrow.

151 EXT. DURHAM BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 151 \*

The season rolls on as Brooks rips a wicked line drive into left field. He rounds first base, sprints for second and makes a head-first dive.

152 EXT. DURHAM BASEBALL FIELD - BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS 152

Jimmy sits in the bullpen and claps his hands a couple of times. The rest of the players are barely watching.

The BULLPEN CATCHER walks up...

BULLPEN CATCHER

Morris...wanna loosen up?

Jimmy nods and heads for the bullpen mound. He stretches out, catching the ball tossed his way...and then notices...

...in the stands...

...a father and son watching the game.

Jimmy throws his first warm-up pitch and after he lets it go he looks to see the father helping his son adjust the oversized glove on his hand.

153 INT. HUNTER'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK 153

Jimmy puts the glove next to Hunter's pillow...

154 EXT. DURHAM BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 154 \*

Jimmy throws another warm-up pitch...and again steals a look into the stands.

...the father...the son. Jimmy...his kids...his family.

155 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY 155 \*

Jimmy talks on the pay phone, his head almost touching the wall as he shields the conversation from the room.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY (ON THE PHONE)

...yes, well...thanks for holding the job as long as you did.

(listens)

No, I wanna get there sooner. Set up the classroom.

(listens some more)

Okay. Yeah. Thank you Mr. Dearborn.

He hangs up and looks toward the manager's office.

156 INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

156 \*

Jimmy walks into Mac's office, a small and bland room barely large enough for a desk and two chairs. There are miniature PORCELAIN LIGHTHOUSES scattered throughout. Mac is busy painting a new one, set on a newspaper on his desk.

JIMMY

Looks nice.

MAC

They make the windows too small. Might be easier for someone who didn't bust their hands up catchin' for twenty years.

JIMMY

(sits down)

Morrison says he's ready to throw again. Give you another arm in the bullpen.

Mac looks up, knowing Jimmy's getting at something.

MAC

My bullpen's okay.

JIMMY

- Mac. We both know it's gonna be Brooks.

MAC

I've had more than one player called up before.

JIMMY

Anybody my age?

Mac knows they haven't.

MAC

So what are you thinkin'?

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY

I'm thinkin' I got a pile of overdue bills, a good job back home and a family I haven't seen for three months.

Hard to argue.

MAC

Still got some season left. You sure?

JIMMY

Somebody once told me it was okay to think about what you want to do, until it's time to start doin' what you were meant to do.

MAC

(waits a moment before...)

Just so you know. You were my best relief pitcher this past month.

JIMMY

(shakes his hand)

Thanks Mac.

157 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

157 \*

Jimmy stands at his now-empty locker, tucking the last item into his duffel bag. About a half dozen players, including Brooks, sit at their own lockers...the farewells already spoken.

Jimmy peels his name from the top of the locker, nothing more than a piece of masking tape. He turns to Brooks, gives a nod of respect, and walks out the door.

Brooks, disappointed, watches him leave.

158 EXT. MOTEL - PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

158

Jimmy is again in the phone booth.

JIMMY

(on the phone)

Hey...

BEGIN INTERCUT WITH:

159 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

159

Lorri pulls the phone from the kitchen to get away from the noise of the kids.

(CONTINUED)

LORRI  
Hey...I didn't think I'd hear from you  
till tomorrow.

JIMMY  
(waits, then cuts to the chase)  
I'm comin' home.

LORRI  
(a touch of alarm in her voice)  
Did you get hurt?

JIMMY  
No. I'm fine. It's...it's just time.

She hears the hurt in his voice.

LORRI  
You called Fort Worth. Didn't you?

JIMMY  
I told 'em I'd be there in two weeks.

LORRI  
So pitch for two weeks.

JIMMY  
There's too much to do...

LORRI  
I'll take care of it. We've been okay for  
three months, we'll be okay for...

JIMMY  
Lorri...  
(she stops)  
I'm wastin' my time out here.

LORRI  
(a pause)  
Listen Jimmy...Lord knows I'm ready for  
both sides of the bed to be warm again.  
But if you're gonna do this...you make  
sure you're doin' it for the right  
reasons. 'Cause you're the one who's  
gonna have to live with it.

JIMMY  
(unconvincing)  
I'll be fine.

...and she's there once more. Seeing her husband hurt again.

(CONTINUED)

LORRI  
You still love it, Jimmy?

Jimmy fights off his emotions, leaving silence between the two.

LORRI (CONT'D)  
Just think about that, okay?

JIMMY  
(after a beat)  
I'll be fine.

160 INT. BAR - NIGHT

160

Jimmy nurses a beer in a bar that's short on customers. The TV is tuned to the network news, Jimmy the only one watching. CHARLIE GIBSON, the anchor, introduces the final story...

CHARLIE GIBSON  
Finally tonight, dreams that don't die.  
In 1983, the Milwaukee Brewers drafted a pitcher named Jim Morris. You never heard of him, arm troubles.

161 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

161

Lorri is on the couch, watching with a sad awareness...

CHARLIE GIBSON  
He quickly dropped out of baseball, got married, had three kids, taught high school chemistry.

162 INT. HENRY'S STORE - NIGHT

162

Henry, Frank and Cal sit in the back room...the TV on.

CHARLIE GIBSON  
But then this past year, he found out he was throwing faster than he could years ago.

163 INT. JOAQUIN'S HOME - NIGHT

163

Joaquin tries to keep his kid sister and brother quiet...

JOAQUIN  
Quiet, okay?

CHARLIE GIBSON  
He doesn't know how that happened, but guess what that did to his dreams?

164 INT. BAR - NIGHT

164

Jimmy continues to stare at the TV, the rest of the bar not aware, not caring.

CHARLIE GIBSON  
Here's ABC's Aaron Brown...

The TV news segment shows Jimmy, in his Durham uniform, climbing the steps from the locker room to the field.

AARON BROWN (V.O.)  
Jim Morris is afraid to tell his own mother he quit his old job, as a teacher in Big Lake, Texas, for his new job as a relief pitcher in the minor leagues...

JIMMY  
(to himself)  
There's another call.

165 EXT. BAR - NIGHT

165

Jimmy leaves the bar. He reaches in his pocket, rummaging for his room key...when he notices...

...the glow of lights a few blocks away.

166 EXT. NORTH CAROLINA LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - NIGHT

166

A LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL GAME is underway. Jimmy walks up to the chest-high chain link fence that surrounds the playing field...and leans against it.

And he watches...watches the 11 and 12 year old faces that still love the game because IT IS still a game.

...do you love it, Jimmy?...

They toss the ball from one player to the next, the difficult choices in life still so very far away.

167 INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

167

The locker room is filled with the regular sounds: rap music and loud voices.

Jimmy walks in. Slowly, all eyes turn to him...and the voices fade, the rap music is turned down.

Brooks looks up as Jimmy puts his duffel bag in his locker.

(CONTINUED)

167 CONTINUED:

JIMMY  
You know what we get to do today Brooks?  
(turns to look at him)  
We get to play baseball.

BROOKS  
The River flows again.

168 EXT. DURHAM BASEBALL FIELD - (GAME 5) NIGHT 168

The umpire barks out...

MAJOR LEAGUE UMPIRE #1  
Strike!

...as Jimmy notches another strikeout. The crowd cheers. His teammates on the field give him that subtle nod, letting him know he's got it goin'. The joy is back...

169 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT 169

Lorri and the three kids sit at the computer desk. They're hooked up to the INTERNET, listening to the game from the Durham Bulls' website.

RADIO ANNOUNCER ON THE WEB (V.O.)  
Jim Morris with his fourth strikeout of the night and he is overpowering the heart of this Charlotte lineup...

Hunter hangs an 8x11 sheet of paper with the letter "K" on the wall, right next to the three he's already taped up. \*

LORRI  
Daddy's havin' a good night kids.

170 INT. BIG LAKE LIBRARY - NIGHT 170

Joel, Wack, Rudy and Joe David huddle around one of the school computers, listening.

RADIO ANNOUNCER ON THE WEB (V.O.)  
That last pitch...97 miles an hour.

RUDY  
Coach is bringin' it tonight.

171 EXT. DURHAM BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT 171

The batter hits a pop fly, still in the infield.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
...popped to short...

(CONTINUED)

Jimmy watches the shortstop fade back and make the catch.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...and that'll end it. Jim Morris closing  
it out as Durham wins six to two.

...and instead of turning for the dugout, as he might have done a few days ago, Jimmy stays behind and congratulates each of his teammates. A win...a game.

172 INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

172

Jimmy, already dressed, grabs a couple of things from his locker. Rivera walks by...

RIVERA  
Thanks for cleanin' up my mess tonight.

JIMMY  
You threw seven good innings Rivera.  
Don't ever call that a mess.

Mac steps out of his office.

MAC  
Jimmy.

His look tells Jimmy that they need to talk. Jimmy grabs his bag and walks over to the...

173 INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

173

Mac looks serious for a manager who just picked up a win.

MAC  
Just got off the phone with the big club.  
(long beat)  
They're callin' up Brooks.

Jimmy takes the news gracefully, happy for his friend.

JIMMY  
That's great. He won't be comin' back.

MAC  
He respects you. I thought you might want  
to tell him.

JIMMY  
Sure.

...and it's at that moment that Mac surprises him with...

(CONTINUED)

MAC

...bein' as you're goin' too.

Astonishment. Jimmy stares in wonder, overwhelmed.

JIMMY

They're callin' me up?

MAC

Two of you fly out tonight. You'll catch up with the team tomorrow.

JIMMY

Where?

MAC

They're on the road right now.  
(smiles)  
In Texas.

174 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

174

The phone rings. Lorri has the MAC AND CHEESE boiling on the oven, the kids playing on the table a few feet away.

She picks up the phone and cradles it to her shoulder.

LORRI

Hello?

BEGIN INTERCUT WITH:

174A INT. DURHAM LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

174A

Jimmy talks on the phone; low voice, big smile.

JIMMY

You know that blue sport coat I never wear?

LORRI

Hang on a sec, I'm boilin' over.

Lorri moves the dinner to a cool burner.

LORRI (CONT'D)

What about the blue sport coat you never wear?

JIMMY

You mind bringin' it to Arlington tomorrow?

(CONTINUED)

LORRI  
Arlington? I thought you were...

It dawns on her.

LORRI (CONT'D)  
(quiet shock)  
You tell me right now Jimmy Morris.

JIMMY  
Apparently...there's a dress code in the  
major leagues.

And Lorri can't say a word. She doesn't cry, but the emotion  
on her face is obvious.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Lorri?

LORRI  
I'm here.

JIMMY  
They're flyin' me out in an hour. Can you  
tell everybody?

LORRI  
Only if you tell one person first.  
(holds the phone to her chest)  
Hunter?

Hunter wanders in from the living room.

LORRI (CONT'D)  
Your daddy's got somethin' to tell you.

She hands him the phone.

HUNTER  
Hey Dad.

Lorri steps back and watches her son's face light up...

HUNTER (CONT'D)  
Really?

...and it's at that moment her eyes well up with tears.

175 EXT. BIG LAKE MAIN STREET - NIGHT

175

The quiet of the kitchen is replaced with a noisy celebration  
down Main Street in Big Lake.

Rudy and Joaquin drive down the street, honking the horn and  
yelling out the window to anyone who will listen.

(CONTINUED)

175 CONTINUED:

175

RUDY

Coach made it! Coach Morris is goin' to  
the big leagues!

Joe David, Joel and TWO OTHER PLAYERS are right behind,  
laying on the horn as well.

The procession approaches Henry's store.

176 INT. HENRY'S STORE - CONTINUOUS 176

Henry is in the front of his store, tidying up the displays.

He hears the noise from outside and curiosity gets the best  
of him. He walks out...

177 EXT. CLOTHING STORE - CONTINUOUS 177

...and Joaquin yells to him from the passing car.

JOAQUIN

Mister Sampson! Coach got called up! \*

A smile spreads over Henry's face, a proud smile, and even  
though no one can hear him...he claps in appreciation.

178 EXT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT 178

Joe David's car pulls into the parking lot. The boys pile  
out.

RUDY

Boys, I think it's time we put together a  
little road trip to Arlington.

JOE DAVID

We get a few pizza's, make a few phone  
calls...

RUDY

...get a few more pizza's...

They rush toward the door...but Wack suddenly stops. The boys  
turn and see a look of realization and disappointment.

JOEL

What?

JOAQUIN

Coach's first game is tomorrow night? The  
football team's first game is tomorrow  
night. Here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

(beat)

Nobody's gonna drive anywhere man.

Resignation and disappointment all around. Joe David, knowing it's true, slams his hand on the hood of the old car. But once again...

JOEL

Hey! This is Coach we're talkin' about.

RUDY

C'mon Joel, Coach could be pitchin' next door and this town wouldn't go.

JOE DAVID

You try askin' people to drive four hours on a football night. Waste of time man.

JOEL

Yeah? Then you call Coach's wife and tell her we didn't do anything.

(beat)

Anybody wanna do that? Anybody wanna tell her it's a waste of time?

That would be no. The friends look at each other...

JOAQUIN

Alright then...

179 INT. BIG LAKE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

179

The four boys huddle over the school COPYING MACHINE. Sheet after sheet spits out...

COME WATCH COACH MORRIS IN THE BIG LEAGUES

TONIGHT IN ARLINGTON

MEET AT THE BASEBALL FIELD AT 2 O'CLOCK

The last sheet is printed and a hand reaches for the stack. McKinney gives a handful to each of the boys and smiles as they race out the door.

180 EXT. BIG LAKE MAIN STREET - DAY

180

A MONTAGE of images as the boys slap the sheets onto anything they can find: business windows, telephone poles, under window wipers on cars.

181 EXT. ENTRANCE TO THE BALLPARK AT ARLINGTON - DAY 181

A CAB pulls away, leaving Brooks and Jimmy just outside the arches that grace the entrance to the park.

Brooks walks toward the stadium, while Jimmy lingers for a moment...looking...taking it all in.

182 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY 182

Jimmy and Brooks enter the empty Texas locker room, the only other person...the LOCKER ROOM ATTENDANT who guides them in.

The room is spacious, plush...a contrast to the minor league locker rooms that have been home the past few months.

The sparkling clean TAMPA BAY UNIFORMS hang in each locker, the names of each player sewn on the back of each jersey.

LOCKER ROOM ATTENDANT

Team won't be here for a couple hours.  
Feel free to look around.

...and then they see them: two lockers, side by side, with their jerseys hanging in front. MORRIS. BROOKS.

Two different paths. Two dreams...realized.

BROOKS

(touches his jersey)  
We ain't in Kansas anymore...are we Riv?

Jimmy moves closer as well, carefully lifting the jersey off its hook. The SPORT COAT is behind it, already delivered.

In the pocket...a single YELLOW ROSE. Draped over the hangar, the SAINT RITA MEDALLION. \*

183 EXT. BIG LAKE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 183

Joaquin, Joe David, Joel and Rudy lean against their cars in silence.

There are only five cars waiting to make the trip.

JOAQUIN

(disappointed)  
Let's go.

Dejected, the kids slowly get in their cars and drive out of the parking lot. Joaquin and Joel are in the lead car.

They turn the corner...

184 EXT. BIG LAKE MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

184

...and as they do, they notice a LINE OF CARS, dozens, backed up down the street. Signs supporting Jimmy, streamers and banners decorate several of the cars.

Joaquin stops, stunned at the sight. He opens his door and gets out...and so does Henry from the lead car.

HENRY

Any you boys know how to get to  
Arlington?

JOAQUIN

(a broad smile)  
Yes sir.

He quickly gets back in and the five cars pull out onto Main Street, the line of cars falling into place behind. Horns honk. The community is one.

185 EXT. THE BALLPARK AT ARLINGTON - JULY SHOOT - NIGHT

185 \*

The lights are on, the stadium is alive.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Glorious night here in Arlington as the  
Rangers host the Tampa Bay Devil Rays...

186 INT. ARLINGTON LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

186

Jimmy, now wearing his uniform, nervously sits in front of his locker.

His new teammates mill around, having seen all of it so many times before. A PRO PLAYER comes over...

PRO PLAYER

You the new pitcher?

JIMMY

(surprised he's talking to him)  
Um, yeah.

PRO PLAYER

Great story man.

JIMMY

Thanks.

187 EXT. BULLPEN - NIGHT

187

Jimmy stands on the bullpen mound, throwing a warm-up pitch to the bullpen catcher.

The DEVIL RAYS MANAGER and the TAMPA BAY PITCHING COACH stand a short distance away, casually talking while watching Jimmy at the same time. \*

Jimmy tosses the next pitch with a purpose. The manager keeps on talking, his expression unchanged. \*

188 EXT. BULLPEN - NIGHT

188

Jimmy walks to the far side of the bullpen where THREE RELIEF PITCHERS lean back in their chairs, spitting sunflower seeds.

RELIEF PITCHER #1

Jim, as chairman of this distinguished panel of athletes, you should know that after much discussion and very careful deliberation...

(nods at the two pitchers)

...and I do think I speak on your behalf.

RELIEF PITCHERS #2 AND #3

Absolutely.

RELIEF PITCHER #1

We've decided that's a pretty fair fastball you're packin'.

JIMMY

(grabs a towel)

Can't stop sweatin'.

RELIEF PITCHER #2

- Need to learn to pace yourself.

RELIEF PITCHER #3

(spits out a shell)

Like us.

Jimmy grins and tosses the towel to the side. And as he turns to head back to the mound...he hears...from above...

LORRI (O.S.)

Jimmy...

He turns at the sound of her voice. There she is, standing against the railing that runs above the pen.

(CONTINUED)

Lorri holds Jamie with one arm, Hunter and Jessie stand at her side.

...it all hits her...

The sight of her husband after three months apart, the sight of him finally wearing a major league uniform.

Overwhelmed, her eyes fill with tears and her voice cracks...

LORRI (CONT'D)

You look great.

Jimmy's eyes well up.

LORRI (CONT'D)

(to Hunter and Jessica)

Doesn't your daddy look great kids?

The kids nod. Jimmy climbs on one of the seats, reaching up...just close enough to touch Lorri's hand...

JIMMY

Hi.

LORRI

Hi.

...the quiet greeting is short, but it's the look they exchange that says everything. He touches Jamie's hand.

JIMMY

Hi honey.

Jessie's already reaching through...

JESSICA

Hi Daddy.

...and Jimmy pauses a moment as he sees Hunter, a young man so proud of his father. Three hard months melt away.

JIMMY

Hey partner. Missed you.

HUNTER

Me too.

LORRI

Alright kids, let's let your Daddy get to work.

(she looks at Jimmy)

We'll see you after, okay?

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY

Okay.

Misty eyes aren't in short supply. Down below, in the pen, relief pitchers #2 and #3 are trying to hide the fact that they have some extra moisture in their eyes.

RELIEF PITCHER #1

Tom Hanks would be very disappointed with both of you.

189 EXT. BALLPARK SECTION 305 AND 306 - NIGHT 189 \*

Joaquin and the other players enter the stadium, stopping at the opening of the tunnel.

Their jaws hang open at the combination of sounds and sights all around the stadium.

The SEATING ATTENDANT reaches for their tickets and motions to a section a few rows above.

190 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - NIGHT 190 \*

Henry, Frank and Cal share a pair of binoculars, trying to catch a glimpse of Jimmy in the bullpen.

191 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - JULY SHOOT - NIGHT 191 \*

The game begins. The Texas pitcher throws a pitch and the Tampa player doesn't swing.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

First pitch of the game...low. Ball one.

192 EXT. BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS 192

Jimmy sits with the rest of the relief pitchers. Most don't even care about the game, but Jimmy gazes intently at the game on the field...taking in every moment.

193 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - JULY SHOOT - NIGHT 193 \*

The game continues...a series of plays unfolding...

\*\* A ground ball struck to the Texas shortstop, who scoops it up and turns a precise double play.

\*\* The Tampa Bay pitcher throwing a dazzling curve ball and the umpire calling out...

MAJOR LEAGUE UMPIRE #2

Strike!

- 194 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS 194 \*  
Lorri and the kids applaud.
- 195 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - JULY SHOOT - CONTINUOUS 195 \*  
\*\* A Texas batter laces a single into the outfield and the runner on third base trots home.
- RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
...and the Rangers break through in the third inning to take a one nothing lead.
- 196 EXT. RANGER DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS 196  
The RANGERS' MANAGER and the other players congratulate the runner who scored as he steps into the dugout.
- 197 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - JULY SHOOT - NIGHT 197 \*  
The game continues...
- \*\* A Tampa batter hits a long fly ball, but it's short of the fence. The Texas outfielder catches it.
- \*\* A Texas batter hits an even longer fly ball and this one sails over the fence for a home-run.
- RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
...that one is gone! A three run homer and that gives Texas a four nothing lead in the sixth.
- 198 EXT. BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS 198  
Jimmy's head drops. The bullpen phone rings and the TAMPA BAY PITCHING COACH answers it. He nods and yells out... \*
- TAMPA COACH  
Blanton, Rodriguez
- Two relief pitchers get up and start to throw. \*
- 199 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - JULY SHOOT - NIGHT 199 \*  
The Texas surge continues as a batter drives a Tampa pitch deep into the outfield. It drops in and the Devil Ray fielders scramble to throw it back in.

- 200 EXT. BULLPEN - NIGHT 200
- Blanton is called in...and he walks through the open gate onto the field.
- Jimmy watches his teammate jog out from the bullpen.
- 201 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - JULY SHOOT - NIGHT 201 \*
- \*\* A Tampa batter, Canseco, finally gets hold of a pitch and drives it deep into the upper deck of the stadium. He breaks into his home-run trot.
- \*\* Blanton throws a pitch, but it misses the mark. The batter strolls to first.
- 202 EXT. BULLPEN - NIGHT 202
- Jimmy continues to wait in the bullpen...and it's at that moment that the PHONE RINGS AGAIN. The coach picks it up, listens, and hangs up. He nods toward Jimmy.
- TAMPA BAY PITCHING COACH
- Morris. Start warmin' up.
- Jimmy blinks, but without any more hesitation, stands up and pulls off his windbreaker. He starts to throw...
- 203 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS 203 \*
- ...and the players and the townspeople spot him immediately, cheering and pointing his way.
- 204 EXT. BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS 204
- Jimmy throws, hoping to shake away the nerves as well as the stiffness that's set in from sitting all game.
- 205 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - JULY SHOOT - NIGHT 205 \*
- Blanton, the fatigue obvious, wipes his forehead with the back of his jersey sleeve.
- He throws one more pitch. A ball.
- 206 EXT. BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS 206
- Jimmy throws...the ball smacks the catcher's glove.
- 207 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - NIGHT 207 \*
- Lorri's enough of a fan to know what might happen. She stands up.

208 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - JULY SHOOT - NIGHT 208 \*

Blanton throws another pitch. Another ball.

209 EXT. BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS 209 \*

Jimmy throws...

210 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - JULY SHOOT - CONTINUOUS 210 \*

Blanton throws. Ball four.

210A EXT. TAMPA BAY DUGOUT - NIGHT 210A \*

The Tampa manager runs from the dugout and then looks out at the bullpen. He points to his left arm, a signal that he wants the left-handed pitcher...

...Jimmy...

210B EXT. TAMPA BAY BULLPEN - NIGHT 210B \*

The pitching coach turns and looks right at Jimmy...

TAMPA BAY PITCHING COACH

Morris. You're in.

...and Jimmy sees the gate swing open, only this time, it's for him. The noise seems louder, more intense. He jogs through the gate and runs toward the field.

211 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS 211 \*

The Big Lake section is delirious....

212 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS 212 \*

...while Lorri holds her hands to her lips in a stunned, almost prayer-like fashion.

213 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS 213

The dream moment. Jimmy makes the run he thought he'd make so many years ago; the lights bright, the colors vivid, the sound embracing.

213A INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS 213A \*

The moment is captured on the video monitors inside the press box...reporters watching, more than a few caught up at the sight...

(CONTINUED)

213A CONTINUED:

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
And here he is, the high school science  
teacher from Big Lake, Texas, Jim  
Morris...making his major league debut...

\*  
\*

213B EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

213B

Jimmy arrives at the mound, the Tampa manager and the catcher  
waiting for him.

He's scared...and the manager knows it. The noise of the  
crowd surrounds him.

(CONTINUED)

TAMPA MANAGER  
Little louder than back home?

JIMMY  
A little, yes sir.

TAMPA MANAGER  
Well then, let's not make this too hard.  
R'member that fastball you were showin'  
me before the game?

Jimmy nods.

TAMPA MANAGER (CONT'D)  
I need three of 'em.

The manager gives him the ball. The catcher nods in support  
and runs back to home plate...and Jimmy is all alone.

214 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS

214 \*

Joaquin and the kids yell out...

KIDS  
C'mon Coach!

215 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS

215 \*

Henry, Frank and Cal watch...

FRANK  
Let's get 'em Jimmy!

216 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

216

The Texas batter digs his feet into the batter's box, eyeing  
Jimmy with confidence.

Jimmy steps from the mound for a second, his back to home so  
that he can work the ball with both hands...and keep the  
hitter from seeing the nervous look on his face.

He turns back...and puts his foot on the pitching rubber.

The batter stares out...calm, assured.

Jimmy throws...a fastball. The batter doesn't swing.

MAJOR LEAGUE UMPIRE #2  
Strike!

- 217 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS 217 \*
- Jimmy's cheering section yells out. Lorri, the kids...
- 218 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS 218
- Jimmy catches the ball and paces around the mound again. He rubs the ball some more.
- The Texas batter steps back in...still confident.
- Jimmy goes into his wind up and throws again. This time the batter swings...but misses.
- 219 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS 219 \*
- Jimmy's old team and the townspeople are on their feet, their applause even louder than before.
- 220 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS 220
- The Tampa catcher throws the ball back and Jimmy takes another lap around the mound.
- The batter's look of confidence isn't what it was a couple of pitches ago.
- Jimmy comes back to the mound and the catcher signals for another fastball.
- Another hard pitch to the plate. The batter swings...and hits a foul ball.
- 221 EXT. RANGER DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS 221
- The Texas manager calmly looks out, his catcher seated next to him.
- TEXAS MANAGER
- Well?
- TEXAS CATCHER  
(matter-of-fact)
- He can pitch.
- 222 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS 222 \*
- Lorri and the kids nervously wait...
- 223 EXT. ARLINGTON BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS 223
- Jimmy comes to the mound one more time, surrounded by a crowd noise he's never experienced before.

(CONTINUED)

The look of confidence on the hitter's face has been replaced with a look of sheer concentration.

Jimmy looks in...

...throws...

...and the batter swings. And MISSES.

The crowd erupts. Jimmy exhales and walks from the mound, the shortstop coming up behind and giving him a simple pat on the back.

224 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS 224 \*

But there's nothing simple about the celebration in the stands as Jimmy's high school team exchanges high-fives with older folks from the town.

225 EXT. ARLINGTON BALLPARK STANDS - CONTINUOUS 225 \*

Lorri claps...so proud of her husband.

226 EXT. TAMPA BAY DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS 226 \*

Jimmy walks into the dugout and receives the congratulations of his new teammates, the final pat on the back coming from BROOKS.

The applause surrounding him now comes from Tampa and Texas fans alike...paying tribute to his accomplishment.

He sits on the bench and shakes his head, suddenly realizing what just happened.

227 INT. JUST OUTSIDE THE LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT 227 \*

Jimmy stands in front of his locker, surrounded by REPORTERS. The showers have long since grown quiet...and he wears the blue sport coat and tie, a duffel bag draped over his shoulder.

REPORTER #1

Jim...what pitches did you throw to get that strikeout.

JIMMY

Fastball, fastball, fastball...and...  
(pretends to think)  
...fastball.

The reporters laugh.

(CONTINUED)

REPORTER #2  
How'd it feel? Pitchin' in the major  
leagues?

JIMMY  
(waits a second before...)  
Like I hoped it would.

The reporters are packed so tightly around Jimmy that he can only see faces, cameras and microphones.

But through a tiny crack in the pack of reporters...he sees, standing in the hallway, very patiently, watching...

HIS FATHER

...and the remaining questions go unheard.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Excuse me.

Jimmy cuts through the swarm of reporters and out into...

228 INT. NEAR THE LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

228 \*

His father offers an awkward smile, uncertain of what to say, or perhaps worse, uncertain of what he might hear...

JIMMY  
I didn't know you were here.

JIM SR.  
Wasn't missin' this one.

Jimmy doesn't respond...doesn't want to hurt him anymore. Jim Sr. struggles with the words, barely making eye contact...

JIM SR. (CONT'D)  
Watchin' you tonight...

The look in his eyes softens. He's seeing it again, so proud.

JIM SR. (CONT'D)  
...not many fathers get a chance to do  
that.  
(as close as he'll come to  
breaking)  
Guess I let too many of those things get  
away.

A long pause. Jimmy bails him out.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY

So did I.

The words are out. Jimmy gazes at his father with a respect that was always just below the surface.

A half-nod from Jim Sr., his expression showing how very proud he is to be Jimmy's father.

JIM SR.

Well then...

He turns to walk away...

JIMMY

Dad?

Jim Sr. stops and looks back. Jimmy reaches in a pocket of the duffel bag and pulls out THE BASEBALL from the game.

Instead of the hug, instead of the handshake, Jimmy hands the most precious item from his most precious moment...to his father.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Thanks for comin'.

The gesture says everything for both of them. Jim Sr. nods again, a nod of acceptance and respect.

He walks away and Jimmy watches him go. And for the first time, his expression offers hope for their relationship.

Jimmy glances the other direction, just a glance, and sees Lorri standing there. She saw it all.

He hikes the duffel bag higher on his shoulder and walks over...

229 INT. STADIUM TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

229

...and Lorri smiles as he moves closer.

LORRI

Does this mean I don't get a ball?

He kisses her.

JIMMY

S'all I got left.

LORRI

Girl could do worse.

(CONTINUED)

They start to walk.

LORRI (CONT'D)

So...how's it feel bein' the oldest  
rookie in the last thirty years?

JIMMY

Let's see...I'm tired, my back's sore, I  
got reporters everywhere...so, all in  
all...

(beat)

...I'd say things are pretty good.

LORRI

You looked good out there. For an old  
guy.

She reaches for his hand.

JIMMY

Where the kids?

LORRI

Well...Hunter's with Henry, Jessie's with  
Frank and Jamie's with Cal.

JIMMY

You left Jamie with Cal?

LORRI

He's got a little help.

Lorri pushes the door open...

\*

229A EXT. STADIUM LOADING RAMP - CONTINUOUS

229A

\*

...and Jimmy sees half the town of Big Lake waiting to greet  
him.

\*

He walks into the crowd of familiar faces: young and old, men  
and women, all sharing the same joy at having seen one man's  
dream come true. At having seen their dream come true.

The celebration goes on for a short time more and the sound  
fades toward silence as a spray of CONFETTI fills the air. We  
hear the first piano chords of "THE CHRISTMAS SONG" by Nat  
King Cole as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

229B A BLUR OF DUST WHICH CLEARS TO REVEAL...

229B

229C EXT. BIG LAKE HIGH SCHOOL - WIDE - DAY

229C

WE MOVE toward the school - past the sidewalk, past the sign,  
past the flagpole, across the lawn, up to the window and --

229D INSIDE THE SCHOOL MAIN HALLWAY

229D \*

Where we move in on --

The TEAM PHOTOGRAPH of the Big Lake Owls; five players kneeling in front, five standing in back, with their coach, Jimmy Morris, standing on the right hand side. As we pull back --

...the song continues...

The photo slowly grows smaller, revealing a frame around it. It grows smaller still, revealing a TAMPA BAY JERSEY mounted behind.

And as the black and white photograph slowly grows distant, the other items in the school trophy case come into view.

A smattering of football trophies...pushed to one side...

SUPER: tbd

FADE OUT.