

M O N E Y B A L L

Screenplay
by
Steven Zaillian

Based on the Book
by
Michael Lewis

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EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - NIGHT

*

From high above. Dark, deserted, silent.

*

We drift across the empty diamond to giant, looming, floodlit likenesses of the Oakland A's premier players painted on concrete - Jason Giambi, Johnny Damon, Jason Isringhausen. As we head toward the A's empty dugout, we begin to hear disembodied cheering crowds and the faint voice of an announcer -

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BRENNAMAN V/O

... one out, nobody on, two and two to Saenz - who has just three at bats in the series, and none of them hits - as he settles back in -

We descend into the dugout and move along it to a tunnel that plunges us into the netherworld bowels of the Coliseum -

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BRENNAMAN V/O

- Rivera looks in for the sign, he has it, the pitch, Saenz swings and -

The announcer's voice and excited crowd suddenly cut off. We continue to move in silence down a cinder-block corridor dimly lit with wire-encased lamps like in a coal mine. In a few moments the sound comes back on:

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STEVE LYONS V/O

- a ground out to second, Thom, is not what the A's were looking for from Saenz - down by two in the ninth.

BRENNAMAN V/O

Eric Byrnes has emerged from the dugout to bat for Menechino -

We reach an underground room - a dank and desolate purgatory - where a solitary figure bench-presses weights with the intensity of a soul expiating sins.

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A TV displays the game we've been listening to, but the man working out - who looks like a ball player, only in better shape than most of them, even at 40 - isn't watching it.

*

BRENNAMAN V/O

- the A's are down to their last strike and this Yankee crowd is on its feet. Rivera squints for the sign, gets it, delivers and -

Again, at the crucial moment, the sound drops out. BILLY BEANE has suspended his workout - or penance - just long enough to mute the TV with a remote.

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He grabs hold of the barbell again and continues his workout like he's trying to sweat out impurities of deed or thought, then finishes, hooks the weights in place above him, and switches the sound back on.

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BRENNAMAN V/O

- it is bedlam in New York. The Yankees have done what no other team in MLB history has been able to do: come back after losing the first two games to win a Division Series.

The outcome of the game seems to have no effect on Billy. He gets up dripping sweat and calmly heads out of the room tossing a towel around his shoulders.

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STEVE LYONS V/O

This is historic not only for New York, Thom, but for Oakland. The A's have just set a new record, too, but not the kind you want: No other team has ever lost a division series after winning the first two games -

In the now-empty room, the TV shows the Yankees constructing a human, celebratory pyramid at home plate while the A's - including the ones we saw pictured on concrete in giant relief - sit glumly in the visitors' dugout, cameras zooming into their shell-shocked faces.

Billy moves along the cinder-block corridor we earlier moved along, reaches an empty locker room, sits on one of its wooden benches and towels off his face.

Legend: October 15, 2001

*

In the other room, images of the Yankees, 3,000 miles away, spraying champagne on one another in a locker room that's wrapped in plastic and packed with reporters and cameramen, play on the TV.

Billy pulls himself up off the bench, walks over to an equipment area, selects a bat, regards his surroundings calmly ... then suddenly swings the bat mightily at an open locker door, ripping it from its hinges -

He attacks another locker, spreading its vents with a violent crash. He slams the bat into another locker, and as wood-splinters fly, there's a sudden disorienting

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CUT TO:

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THE FACE OF A MAN REGARDING US

*

And while he may not exactly despise us, he doesn't respect us much either. He seems to be trying to decide if we're worth speaking to, and leaning toward we're not.

*

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Unlike Billy, this man doesn't look like a ball player - and isn't. He looks like a night watchman - and is - at Stokely Van Camp pork and beans factory.

*

A Chapter Title appears: Field of Ignorance

*

He clears his throat and speaks -

*

BILL JAMES

*

The modern day box score was invented a hundred and fifty years ago by a British-born journalist named Henry Chadwick.

A tintype of Henry Chadwick's face replaces Bill James's. He looks like Ulysses S. Grant.

BILL JAMES V/O

Henry, who I'm sure was a nice enough fellow - knew more about cricket than baseball - and so began counting the things that were easiest for him to count.

Idealized renderings of players on 19th-century baseball fields replace Henry's portrait.

BILL JAMES V/O

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Hits. Home Runs. Batting Average. Earned Run Average. Runs Batted In. Strike outs.

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INT. A'S LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUED

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Silence except for a hiss from somewhere. Several dented or doorless lockers.

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Broken bats lying in pieces on the floor, one jutting from Jason Giambi's locker, and another from Johnny Damon's, like stakes in hearts.

BILL JAMES V/O

And we're still counting them.
And for the same reason: because
it's easy.

We decide to follow the hissing water sound. It leads us to the showers where Billy sits naked against a cement wall, letting the hot spray soak his head as its steam envelopes his body.

BILL JAMES V/O

To this day, the value of a player - not to mention his self-worth - is tethered like a noose to Mr. Chadwick's easy-to-count numbers.

We move with the water streaming down Billy's arm to one of his hands and the stigmata cuts on it from the splintered bats.

BILL JAMES V/O

What no one seems to have noticed for more than a century and a half is that they measure nothing.

As some blood from Billy's hands swirls down a drain -

CUT TO BLACK

INT. OAKLAND AIRPORT - DAY

A blur of shapes and colors as we move through a crush of travelers to a Hawaiian Airlines counter where Billy and his on-again off-again girlfriend Amy check luggage. He's got a cell phone to his ear:

BILLY

Dan. Billy. We need to talk about Johnny Damon.

DUQUETTE

I'm leaving for vacation, Billy.

BILLY

So am I, so what. What are you offering him?

DUQUETTE

Am I offering him anything?

BILLY
Don't be coy, it's a waste of
time. Whatever it is, it's too
much, and in your position, you
can't afford that.

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DUQUETTE
In my position? What's that
supposed to mean?

*
*
*

BILLY
(meaning 'something')
Nothing.

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*
*

DUQUETTE
You know something I don't know?

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*

BILLY
I always know something you don't
know. Hang on a second.
(to the clerk)
What?

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*

TICKET CLERK
You need to hurry.

*
*

The clerk hands over boarding passes. As Billy and Amy
head off with their carry-ons -

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BILLY
Dan. Let's be honest. No one in
our business is secure. But some
of us are less insecure than
others. All I'm saying is look at
the price tag on Damon and give it
a moment's thought. For your
sake. Enjoy your vacation.

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He flips the phone shut, but only long enough to
disconnect it so he can make another call. As this one
rings, he gives Amy a little kiss and -

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*

BILLY
Soon as we're on the plane, no
more of this. For the whole week.
(into phone)
Brian. Billy. You really sure
you want Giambi?

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CASHMAN
I'm on vacation, Billy. Nothing's
going to happen till I get back.

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*

BILLY

Something is going to happen
before you get back. Boston's
going to sign Damon. And with
him, Martinez, Lowe, and Ramirez,
the Red Sox are going to beat you
for the first time in 80 years
whether you have Giambi or not,
and - hang on a second -

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Billy kicks his shoes off, puts them and his carry-on
onto the x-ray belt, drops his open phone and keys in a
plastic container, steps through the metal detector, and
retrieves the phone -

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*

BILLY

- and when that happens, George is
going to be very unhappy.
(no response)
You there?

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*
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*
*

CASHMAN

Yes.

*
*

BILLY

I might be able to help you avoid
that indignity. I might be able
to steer Damon somewhere other
than Boston.

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*
*

CASHMAN

Why would you do that?

*
*

BILLY

Because I was 35 once, too, and
I know what it's like to make this
big a mistake.

*
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*

He's retrieved his stuff and heads for the gate with Amy.

*

CASHMAN

What do you want, Billy.

*
*

BILLY

Don't do anything for a couple
days. Just sit tight. Enjoy your
vacation.

*
*
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*

He flips the phone closed - and open again - hits
another speed dial button and gives Amy another peck.
The call connects -

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*

BILLY

Arn. Billy. We got to talk about
Giambi.

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ARN
I can't talk about that now. I'll
call you tomorrow.

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*

BILLY
We can talk now. We're talking
now.

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ARN
We can't talk now.

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*

BILLY
You're talking to the Yankees.

*
*

ARN
I'm talking to everybody, but not
today. It's a family thing. I'll
call you tomorrow.

*
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The call disconnects. The Hawaiian Airlines plane is
boarding. As Billy and Amy get in line, he makes another
call.

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SECRETARY
Tellem and Associates. Arn
Tellem's office.

*
*
*

BILLY
Denise. Billy.

*
*

SECRETARY
He's not in today, Billy.

*
*

BILLY
I know. I want to send flowers.

*
*

SECRETARY
Flowers?

*
*

BILLY
Where do I send them?

*
*

SECRETARY
To who?

*
*

BILLY
To Arn.

*
*

SECRETARY
You want to send him flowers?

*
*

BILLY
To where he is now, yes.

*
*

Billy writes down an address she gives him. He thanks her and hangs up. To Amy -

BILLY

I can't go.

AMY

What?

BILLY

You go on ahead and I'll meet you there tomorrow.

AMY

What?

BILLY

I know I said when the season was over, it'd be different, and it is. I just have to take care of this thing. I'll get a flight out tomorrow. Or the next day. It'll be fine.

He kisses her quickly again, steps out of line and strides off the way they came. She steps out of line, too, but only to stare in disbelief as he disappears into the crowds.

INT. OAKLAND AIRPORT - LATER - DAY

Billy, at the Southwest check-in counter now with his carry-on bag. The clerk hands him a boarding pass.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - LATER - DAY

He climbs out of a cab with his bag and heads to -

INT. TEMPLE - LATER - DAY

He plucks a yarmulke from a basket and sets it on his head. He has arrived in the middle of a Bar Mitzvah ceremony and finds a place in the back row, sets his carry-on bag at his feet.

He regards the boy next to the Rabbi, and the boy's father. He fidgets. Taps his foot. Checks his watch. Turns to the person two seats down and whispers -

BILLY

How much longer you think?

GUEST

Excuse me?

BILLY

Never mind.

INT. BANQUET ROOM - LATER - DAY

A rock band plays cover songs. Friends and family members move around the dance floor.

The Bar Mitzvah boy's father, ARN TELLEM, notices Billy in the crowds, a drink in his hand. Billy waves. Arn sighs and comes over and Billy picks up right where he left off three hours ago in Oakland on the phone -

BILLY

I don't want to lose him.

ARN

Billy -

BILLY

Arn -

ARN

We can't talk about this now. Obviously.

BILLY

What did they offer?

ARN

He's not staying in Oakland, Billy. We both know that. I'm trying to be polite about it, but you're making it difficult.

BILLY

I'm trying to make it easy.

ARN

I can make it easy. 17 million.

Billy stares. Takes a sip from his drink. Then -

BILLY

Steinbrenner offered 17?

Arn doesn't say, but they both know he can afford it. And that it's very bad news for Billy.

ARN

Your yarmulke's falling off.

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Billy straightens it on the back of his head and presses it down to try to keep it in place.

ARN

You need a bobby pin. Turn around.

Billy does, and as Arn works to secure the little cap with a couple of hair pins -

ARN

That was a killer in New York, huh? Not the kind of record you want to set.

BILLY

I'll talk to Steve.

ARN

Fine.

BILLY

Fucking Yankees.

ARN

There.

Finished with the yarmulke, he turns Billy around again to admire it. Billy can't hide his depression over this whole situation.

ARN

Sorry, Billy.

INT. LAX - LATER - DAY

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Billy takes a boarding pass from a Southwest ticket clerk and heads for security with his carry-on.

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EXT. BAY AREA - LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

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A very large housing development in mid-construction. Framed skeletons of middle-income houses dot half-paved streets. Bulldozers and workmen move about. A completed model home stands amidst it all like a cheap ring, with plastic pennants on sticks waving in the breeze.

BILLY

We might be able to survive losing Damon. We might. But we can't if we lose him and Giambi.

SCHOTT

Isringhausen's gone, too, don't you think?

BILLY

I can win without a closer. I can't without power.

Schott is Steve Schott - the A's owner, and the developer of this housing project - 60 years old - a college player way back when. He leads Billy into the model house -

INT. MODEL HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

- and wanders through it to see how it's progressing. There's furniture now, and even fake-personal items to make prospective buyers feel at home.

SCHOTT

What'll it cost? To keep Giambi.

BILLY

Seventeen.

SCHOTT

For one year?

Billy nods. Steve smiles. And Billy knows what it means. It means, That makes it easy - there's nothing more to discuss on the matter.

SCHOTT

I have confidence you'll find a way to make it work without him.

BILLY

I can't.

SCHOTT

Sure you can.

BILLY

I need more money, Steve. We can't compete against a 120 million dollar payroll with a 40 million dollar payroll.

SCHOTT

We won 102 games with a 40 million dollar payroll.

BILLY

With Jason Giambi. We wouldn't have without him.

SCHOTT

Do you like this house?

The non-sequitur throws Billy off his rhythm. He looks at his surroundings for the first time.

BILLY

It's all right.

SCHOTT

It is. For what it is. It's nice for what it is.

He tries the kitchen faucet.

SCHOTT

Oh, good, the water's on.

He fills a glass with water for Billy and another for himself. As they drink -

SCHOTT

You know what this faucet cost? Does it matter? I turn it on and water comes out. It cost a hundred dollars and it works just like one that costs two thousand dollars.

Billy knows where this is going, but also knows he won't be able to stop it -

SCHOTT

I care what it costs - because it's a cost to me - but the family that moves into this house doesn't. And they don't care the counter tops weren't imported from Italy. Or that the molding is 2-inches instead of 6-inches. They can't afford those things, and you know what? It doesn't matter to them because they know it has nothing to do with how happy they're going to be in this house.

BILLY

I'm not happy in our house.

SCHOTT

Our house is our house. It's a small-market house, just like this one.

(MORE)

SCHOTT (CONT'D)

And Giambi - good as he is and as much as we'd like to keep looking at him when we get up in the morning - is too expensive an appointment for our house.

INT. BILLY'S CONDOMINIUM - LATER - NIGHT

A bachelor pad someone was paid to decorate. Silence until the sound of a key in a lock. The door pushes open and Billy comes in after his very long day.

He sets his carry-on bag down. Takes out his cell phone, but doesn't call anybody. Sets it by a charger and stands there like a man trying to place a name or a face. Then notices something on the hallway carpet.

He goes over there and picks it up. It's an eyebrow pencil. He regards it a moment. It's possible meaning pushes him to the bathroom where he pulls open a drawer. Empty. He opens a walk-in closet door and sees a row of hangers. Empty.

He returns to where he set his phone. It's dead. He plugs it into the charger and it chimes to tell him he has a voice message. He checks it and listens to -

AMY V/O

I didn't get on the plane either. I came back to the apartment and waited. Then got tired of waiting. Then left. With my things.

(pause)

Your suitcase is in Maui.

Her voice is replaced by another female voice -

VOICE MAIL VOICE

To delete this message, press 7.
To save it in the archives, press 9.
To hear more options, press 0.

Billy presses 7.

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - DAY

Billy and his scouting department - ten men older than him - all former players who topped out somewhere in the minor leagues - and all tobacco chewers still, each with his own can of Copenhagen and spittoon - have gathered in this large cinder block room where the appointments are even fewer and cheaper than Steve's model home.

Two large white-boards dominate a wall, covered with magnetic strips with players' names on them. On the left board - every player in the A's organization. On the other, even larger board - every player that may be of interest to them from the other organizations.

It's the most complex chess board you will ever see. But what can be easily discerned are the obvious holes in the A's team - the star players they are about to lose - whose names are set apart from the positions they're vacating: Jason Giambi (1B), Johnny Damon (CF), Jason Isringhausen (RP).

GRADY

Let's start with who we like for Giambi. Hoppy?

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*

HOPKINS

Perez. He swings like a man.

PITTARO

He swings like a man who swings at too much.

HOPKINS

There's some work needs to be done. He needs to be reworked a little. But he's noticeable.

GRADY

He's notable?

HOPKINS

Noticeable. You notice him.

PITTARO

I notice him getting thrown out of a lot of games.

HOPKINS

That's not a bad thing.

Billy seems completely disengaged, sitting apart from his scouts, staring at Giambi's name on the board like it's Judas, as the others spit in their spittoons and continue to debate who can hit and who can't.

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*

GRADY

Who you like, Matty?

KEOUGH

Geronimo. Guy's an athlete.

HEATH

Doesn't have a lot of power.

KEOUGH

Good hitters can develop power.
Power hitters can't develop good
hitting.

WHITE

I like him, too. I hate to jinx
it, but if you want to talk about
another Giambi, this guy could be
it.

Billy suddenly hurls his chair across the room. It
crashes against the white-boards, sending the name-strips
flying. Silence. Then -

GRADY

Is that a suggestion, Billy?

BILLY

This is bullshit. This is a
crapshoot, only I could do better
in Vegas. You don't change guys.
You don't have that ability and
neither do they. They either have
it or don't.

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Grady begins picking up the name-strips off the floor.

GRADY

We're trying to solve the problem.

BILLY

Not like this you won't. You're
trying to replace Giambi with
another first baseman like him,
but there isn't another one like
him. And if there were, we
couldn't afford him. We're not
the Yankees. If we try to do what
the Yankees do, we lose every
time. We can't do what they do
with three times less money. So,
forgive me, but you're not solving
the problem. You're just talking.
Like this is business as usual.
It isn't.

Grady doesn't care for what Billy is saying, and even
less for his tone of voice.

GRADY

With all due respect -
(meaning, show me some)
- we've been doing this a long
time.

BILLY

That doesn't mean you're doing it well.

Silence again. Finally -

GRADY

Can I make a suggestion?
 (Billy doesn't stop him)
 Go make a trade. It always makes you feel better. Go get somebody for Isringhausen. Get anybody for Isringhausen since you don't think a closer does anything anyway. Meanwhile, we'll continue to work on the Damon-Giambi problem, and present you with our recommendations when we're done. And you, of course, will then do whatever you want to do.

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The friction between Grady and Billy is so great, everyone in the room knows they may have to duck another thrown chair. Instead, Billy calmly walks out, leaving his scouts to do their job.

INT. OFFICE - CLEVELAND - DAY

Billy's counterpart in Cleveland - Indian's General Manager, Mark Shapiro - 35, and about three weeks into the job - sits behind his desk in tie and shirt sleeves - like Billy.

SHAPIRO

Killer in New York, huh?

BILLY

I want to kill somebody in New York.

SHAPIRO

Do us both a favor. Do Baseball a favor. I'll pay you to kill him.

There's someone else in the room, but neither pays any attention to him: A young man in his late-20's, preppy attire, sitting on the couch with a laptop.

BILLY

He's stealing Giambi from me.

SHAPIRO

Fuck.

BILLY

I know.

SHAPIRO

Fuck him.

BILLY

120 million for 7 years.

SHAPIRO

Fuck Steinbrenner.

This news is bad not just for Billy, but for Shapiro and every other GM. George Steinbrenner makes everyone's life miserable, except his overpaid players'.

BILLY

I'm losing Damon, too. And Isringhausen. It's a disaster.

SHAPIRO

Where's Steve in all this?

BILLY

You know.

SHAPIRO

Building his houses.

BILLY

Buying faucets while I slit my wrists.

Both shake their heads in dismay.

SHAPIRO

What can I do for you, Billy? I want to do something for you. No one should have to suffer like this.

BILLY

I need a lefty reliever. I'm thinking Rincon. You've got that Venezuelan kid in North Carolina you're bringing up next year, right? You can live without Rincon.

SHAPIRO

I can live without his salary.

BILLY

I could pay something -
(meaning not a lot)
(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

- or I could show you some of my
kids in Midland.

SHAPIRO

You brought tape?
(Billy taps his
briefcase)
I'll have a look, sure.
(but then:)
Excuse me -

The young man from the couch has come over to whisper something in Shapiro's ear. The GM listens, nods, and the Ivy Leaguer returns to the couch. To Billy -

SHAPIRO

Actually, no.

BILLY

What?

SHAPIRO

Who else you thinking about?
Rincon's a no.

Billy can't believe it. Looks over at the guy with the laptop.

INT. INDIANS' FRONT OFFICE - LATER

Billy comes down the hallway gripping his briefcase, glancing in offices. Stops at a small one inside which the young man sits at a desk, engrossed in whatever information plays across his laptop screen.

BILLY

You.

PAUL

Excuse me?

BILLY

Come here.

Paul DePodesta comes out into the hallway and finds himself regarded with an intensity that would make anyone uncomfortable.

BILLY

Who the fuck are you?

PAUL

I'm Paul, Mr. Beane.

BILLY

I don't give a fuck about your name. What are you doing?

PAUL

Uh ... I'm doing my job.

BILLY

No, I'm doing my job. You - are fucking up my job. You just cost me a left-handed setup man.

PAUL

I like Rincon.

BILLY

You like Rincon. You like Rincon. Was I talking to you in there?

Paul looks frightened; Mr. Beane looks like he might hit him. But then Billy takes a deep breath to bring himself back from the edge, and strides away. As Paul watches him go, he regains enough composure to call out to the fierce GM's back -

PAUL

Rincon has nothing to do with your problem. Your problem is you can't replace Giambi with another first baseman like him, because there isn't another one like him.

Billy slows. That's what he told his scouts. Almost word for word. He stops. And finally looks back.

INT. OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE - CLEVELAND - DAY

The place is dotted with TVs broadcasting basketball games. Billy and Paul sit at a booth with the laptop.

PAUL

Losing Damon will create two obvious holes for you: defense in center field, and offense in the lead-off spot. Of those, his offense is easier to dismiss.

Paul opens a file on the laptop and scrolls down a seemingly endless spread-sheet of numbers. It looks like The Matrix.

BILLY

What is this?

PAUL

Every offensive statistic of every team from the 20th century.

BILLY

Seriously?

PAUL

I plugged them into an equation that correlates them with winning percentage, and there are only two you could say are inextricably linked to baseball success: On-base percentage and slugging percentage. Which led me to this question: Are they of equal importance?

As Billy considers the question, a pretty waitress approaches the table.

WAITRESS

Welcome to Outback Steakhouse. I'm Cammi. I'll be your waitress tonight.

BILLY

Hi, Cammi.

WAITRESS

What can I get you?

BILLY

A mojito. And I guess I have to have a Bloomin' Onion.

PAUL

(without looking up)
7-Up, please.

Cammi smiles at Billy in a way that allows she may eventually bring him more than his order. Paul doesn't notice as he opens another window and angles the laptop so Billy can see the mathematical equations on it.

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PAUL

Here's the math. But the point is, contrary to what everyone thinks, on-base percentage and slugging percentage are not equally important. In fact, an extra point of on-base percentage is worth three times an extra point of slugging percentage. No one pays any attention to this.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Except maybe Bill James. You know
who he -

BILLY

I know who he is. You did this -
study - for the Indians?

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*

PAUL

No. Mr. Shapiro is only
marginally interested in this
stuff. I do it for myself.

*

BILLY

Why?

PAUL

Because it intrigues me. And
helps me win at Fantasy Baseball.

Billy nods hesitantly, all of a sudden unsure he's not
wasting his time.

BILLY

Fantasy Baseball.

PAUL

You say it like everyone in
Baseball says it.

BILLY

Well -

PAUL

The fantasy is that Baseball
thinks there's nothing to it. My
friends and I could run most teams
better than their GM's.

BILLY

You've never played I take it.

PAUL

I played.

BILLY

For who?

PAUL

Harvard.

BILLY

So you never played.

PAUL

Professionally, no. Like every other general manager - except you.

Billy regards Paul a moment, wondering perhaps if he has, in his spare time, dissected Billy's on-base and slugging percentages on his computer, which wouldn't be pretty. Paul scrolls down The Matrix screen and arrives on a name: Johnny Damon. *

PAUL

Back to Damon.

SUDDEN CUT TO -

The back of Johnny Damon's A's jersey as he walks to the plate to adoring Oakland crowds.

PAUL V/O

When Johnny Damon comes to the plate, Oakland fans see a thrilling lead-off hitter.

Damon settles into the box, swings on the first pitch and bangs it into left field.

PAUL V/O

When I look at him, I see an imperfect understanding of where runs come from.

Damon leads off first.

PAUL V/O

His on-base percentage in 2001 was .324. That's ten points lower than league average.

On the next pitch, Damon takes off for second -

PAUL V/O

True, he stole some bases. But attempted steals have to succeed 70 percent of the time before they contribute to run totals.

BACK TO OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE -

Cammi is back with the Bloomin' Onion and drinks. As she sets the glasses on cardboard coasters, Billy notices a phone number scribbled on his.

PAUL

So Damon's offence is not that hard to replace. What about his defense? The short answer is you can't measure it. The long answer is you can get close.

ANOTHER SUDDEN CUT TO -

Damon in center field, poised to break on contact.

PAUL V/O

Over the course of the season, a hundred and twenty-seven fly balls were hit to the Coliseum's center field by A's opponents.

*

As the next pitch is hit -

Paul taps a key and his computer displays an animated graphic that looks like NORAD nuclear bomb trajectories - and -

Damon gets a good jump and makes a dazzling diving catch.

PAUL V/O

By totaling up the outcomes of those fly balls and comparing them to the average, we're able to calculate how many runs Damon saved your team.

BACK TO OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE -

BILLY

You've done that for Damon?

PAUL

I've done it for every outfielder. I couldn't have an average if I didn't.

He scrolls down a spreadsheet.

*

PAUL

Damon in center field saves you one run every ten games. Over the course of a season, that's sixteen runs. Though most of those games you would've won anyway.

*

*

ANOTHER CUT TO -

Damon, back in the dugout, joking with his A's teammates in his usual good-natured way.

PAUL V/O

So, yes, he's got a good glove, he's a decent lead-off hitter, he steals bases, and I'm sure is a delightful human being and a pleasure to be around.

BACK TO OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE -

PAUL

But he's not worth the 8 million Boston's paying him. You're lucky to have him off your payroll. It opens up all kinds of interesting possibilities.

Billy sips his mojito. This is all very interesting. And it, or the drink, or the waitress who keeps glancing his way, or all three, is making him feel better.

BILLY

I know a lot about statistics, Paul. As a GM, and as a player. But this is psychotic. You realize that.

*
*
*
*
*

PAUL

Is it?

*
*

Billy glances off at nothing, perhaps to imagine the reaction by Baseball if he pursues this any further. Then, deciding he will -

*
*
*

BILLY

What about Giambi?

*

INT. MARK SHAPIRO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Shapiro sits in front of his TV reviewing one of the tapes Billy left with him: Minor league pitchers in the A's organization. His phone rings -

*

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CLEVELAND - SAME TIME - NIGHT

Cammi, not surprisingly, has ended up in Billy's hotel bed - her Outback Steakhouse shirt and the rest of her clothes scattered on the floor. As she sleeps, Billy stands by the window listening to the call he just placed connecting -

*
*
*
*

SHAPIRO V/O

Hello.

*
*

BILLY

Mark. Billy.

*
*

SHAPIRO V/O

I was just about to call you.
I've been thinking about Rincon.

*
*
*

BILLY

I don't want Rincon. I want Paul.

SHAPIRO V/O

Paul Shuey? He's a right-hander.
You said you wanted a left-hander.

BILLY

Paul DePodesta. Your stats guy.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - SAME NIGHT

The glow of Paul's computer illuminates him. He's looking at Billy Beane's pro ball stats. A phone rings somewhere else in the apartment. His wife, cradling an infant, brings it to him.

PAUL

Hello?

BILLY V/O

Shapiro just cut you. Pack.

TO BLACK

INT. STOKELY VAN CAMP FACTORY - NIGHT

Bill James, seated behind his night watchman's desk, regards us again, as before, like we're idiots.

*
*
*

A Chapter Title appears: The Enlightenment

*

BILL JAMES

In Henry Chadwick's Church of
 Statistics - where Baseball has
 prayed ever since he founded it -
 the sermons are not just
 unenlightened; they lie.

*
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*

EXT. OAKLAND - DAY

*

The Coliseum from high above again, and the industrial
 sprawl around it. Off in the distance, the San Francisco
 skyline and Golden Gate sparkle like unattainable jewels
 as a paint roller on a long pole lays a white stripe down
 the middle of Jason Giambi's giant concrete portrait.

*

BILL JAMES V/O

And these lies lead the congreg-
 ation of men who run major league
 ball clubs - and they are always
 men - to misjudge their players
 and mismanage their teams.

*
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*

INT. SCOUTING ROOM - DAY

*

Giambi's name on a magnetic strip on the board, set
 apart from thousands of other names. Paul regards it
 from the far corner of the room he has tucked himself
 into, computer on his lap, wall flower at the dance,
 then glances around at the old scouts, and the A's
 manager Art Howe, as they assemble and arrange their
 spittoons for what will surely be a long meeting.

BILL JAMES V/O

Why would these men whose job it
 is to accurately evaluate players
 worship a gospel of arcane numbers
 that warps the truth?

*
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*

Neither curious nor challenged by the stranger's
 presence, none of the scouts acknowledges Paul. He
 simply doesn't exist in their world.

BILL JAMES V/O

They don't - not completely.
 They take wine with their wafer.
 They augment it with something
 else. But unfortunately, this,
 too, is just as unreliable:
 Their eyes.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Billy, arriving late, as he does to every party he has
 ever attended, comes along the underground corridor where
 he is intercepted by Art outside the scouting room door.

*
*
*

BILLY

Hey, Art.

ART

Can I talk to you a second before
you get started.

BILLY

I got a lot to do.

ART

I know.

Whatever it is, Billy knows it can't be as dire as his
other problems, but also knows that to ignore Art would
be to insult him. His look to him says, Okay, what.

ART

I have to tell you it's not easy
working under a one-year contract.

BILLY

I know. I been there.

ART

I know you have. And a 1-year
contract says the same thing to a
manager as it does to a player:
There's not a lot of faith there.
Which is strange after a 102-win
season.

BILLY

I talked to Steve about it. I
told him, basically, exactly that.

ART

And what did he say?

BILLY

He said he'd get back to me.

Art studies Billy, not sure he believes him. Billy
pats him on the back and steps into the room, greets his
scouts and ignores Paul as he pulls up a chair to receive
the scouts' report, which Grady, as always, will lead.
Art wanders off.

GRADY

Do we have Rincon?

BILLY

No.

The news bothers no one. Billy's trip to Cleveland wasn't much more than a wild goose chase engineered by them.

BILLY

We have Bradford.

Few, if any of them, have heard of Bradford and begin leafing through their printouts and notes.

BILLY

He's a Double-A Charlotte Knights right-hander.

GRADY

We needed a left-hander, Billy, not another right-hander. *

BILLY

He's really an under-hander.

CUT TO -

Chad Bradford on the mound in a Knights uniform. His delivery is bizarre. His hand drops down, not just side-arm but so low it almost scrapes the ground. He is, in the parlance, a submariner.

BACK TO THE SCOUTING ROOM -

- where the scouts aren't sure what to say, and so say nothing. Eventually -

GRADY

Well, we, I think, have fared better. We have some good ideas for Giambi.

BILLY

I'm listening.

Grady begins putting names on the board. Several established, though not stellar, first basemen from other clubs. The scouts watch Billy regard the names, and listen to him say nothing. Eventually -

GRADY

Which do you want to talk about first?

BILLY

None of them.

Grady looks like a man who can't take much more. He shakes his head at one of the other scouts. *

BILLY

You're still looking to replace him. I told you that's not going to work. We can't recreate the individual. What we might be able to do is recreate him in the aggregate.

If Billy has ever used this word before, the scouts haven't heard him do so.

BILLY

Giambi's on-base percentage was .477. Damon's was .324. And Olmeda's - bless his heart - was .291. Add that up and you get -

He looks to Paul who says something too softly for anyone to hear.

BILLY

Speak up.

PAUL

Ten-ninety-two

BILLY

Divided by three -

PAUL

Three-sixty-four.

BILLY

So that's what we're looking for. And that's what we'll find. Three players whose average OBP is -

PAUL

Three-sixty-four.

The others aren't sure what confuses them more - the logic, or the guy with the computer who shouldn't be in this room.

GRADY

Billy?

BILLY

Yes.

GRADY

Who's that?

BILLY

That's Paul.

And that's all he's going to tell them about Paul. He takes a Marks-A-Lot, jots down three names on strips, and approaches the board.

BILLY

Here's who we want. One. *

He puts the first strip up. It reads: JEREMY GIAMBI.

BILLY

Jason's little brother Jeremy -
who we all know and love - has had
his problems on the field -

CUT TO -

Jeremy, in the outfield in an A's uniform, loses a ball in the lights. It falls next to him.

In another game, he tries to jump over Yankees catcher Jorge Posada instead of sliding under him, and is out at the plate - the infamous Jeremy-Giambi-non-slide.

BILLY V/O

Not to mention his problems off
the field -

McCarran Airport, Las Vegas, where an inspector pulls a baggie of marijuana from Jeremy's carry-on luggage.

A camera flash bleaches the screen white before an image appears: Jeremy's Nevada mug shot.

BACK TO THE SCOUTING ROOM -

BILLY

But his on-base percentage is all we're looking at now, and he has a knack for getting on base, especially for someone who makes two hundred and eighty-two thousand a year.

He puts up another name: David Justice.

BILLY

Two. David Justice. David, unlike Jeremy, has everything. Talent. Looks. A Yankees uniform. Halle Berry.

CUT TO -

David Justice out on the town with Halle Berry, surrounded by paparazzi. The cameras flash around them, but the picture that appears on a tabloid cover comes with the screaming headline: HALLE & DAVID - DIVORCE!

BILLY V/O

I should say, had everything.

BACK TO THE SCOUTING ROOM -

BILLY

What he has now is a movie star ex-wife, 36 candles on a birthday cake and an owner willing to eat half his salary if someone will just take him off his hands.
Three -

Billy puts up the third name: Scott Hatteberg.

HEATH

Who?

BILLY

Six years with Boston. One with Colorado. Decent catcher until he ruptured a nerve in his elbow.

CUT TO -

Scott Hatteberg, in a Red Sox uniform, leaps from a crouch to throw out a base stealer. The ball bounces two times before it reaches 2nd - the runner safe by a mile.

BILLY V/O

But we don't want him for his arm any more than we wanted Giambi for his.

BACK TO THE SCOUTING ROOM -

One of the scouts has found Hatteberg in a media guide.

HOPKINS

He's a career .270 hitter, Billy.

BILLY

Look at his on-base.

HEATH

All right. He walks a lot.

BILLY

He gets on base a lot. Do I care if it's a walk or a hit?

PITTARO

I hear the Rockies want to cut him and no one wants to pick him up.

BILLY

That's good news for us.

The scouts aren't sure what to say. Eventually one tries:

POLONI

These three players, by your own admission, are defective in one way or another.

BILLY

Which is why we can get them. If they weren't, we couldn't.

POLONI

You want to replace Jason Giambi with not one, but three defective players.

BILLY

Yes.

Some of the scouts look over in Paul's direction, no doubt wondering if he's had something to do with their general manager's peculiar ideas.

WASHINGTON

I understand what you're saying about their averages, but there's something you're forgetting. None of them play first base.

BILLY

I haven't forgotten that, Wash. One of them is going to have to learn.

WASHINGTON

Learn.

BILLY

You're going to have to teach him.

WASHINGTON

Teach.

Washington looks like a man thrown a curve when he was expecting fastball.

WASHINGTON

Which one?

EXT. PACIFIC NORTHWEST - NIGHT

Christmas lights and angels dangle across a downtown street. It's late and deserted, and the signal lights switched to blinking yellow reflect off the rain-slicked pavement.

Legend: Tacoma, Washington

EXT. GOLF COURSE, TACOMA - NIGHT

A wet greens-flag hangs limp against its pole. The windows of the houses that line the fairway are dark. Except one.

INT. HOUSE - TACOMA - NIGHT

A Christmas tree. Four stockings hanging from a mantle. A sleeping 4-year-old girl in a bed. A sleeping infant girl in a crib. Have we wandered into *It's a Wonderful Life*?

No. This Silent Night is accompanied by a relentless ticking as we now regard some gold-plate-peeling trophies on a bookshelf in a den, some retired catchers' mitts, balls in Lucite cubes, and, finally, the oppressive grandfather clock.

The little girls' parents listen to the ticking clock. Then to its chime at midnight. Then to the ticking again as they stare at the phone that's not ringing.

They regard each other then. Neither speaks. When the phone has remained silent long enough to mean 'bad news,' Scott Hatteberg gets up.

SCOTT

I'm going to bed.

His wife nods with a manufactured smile she hopes convinces them both that 'it'll be okay,' but neither buys it. As her washed-up ballplayer husband trudges up the stairs, the phone rings.

He comes back down. Looks at the phone. Looks at his wife. Picks it up.

SCOTT
Hello?

BILLY V/O
Scott?

SCOTT
Yes.

BILLY V/O
It's Billy Beane. Oakland A's.

Scott was expecting someone else obviously, and can only manage a hesitant -

SCOTT
Yes?

BILLY V/O
Can we talk?

SCOTT
Yes.

BILLY V/O
You want to invite me in?

SCOTT
What?

BILLY V/O
I'm outside. I can see you in the window.

Scott goes up to the window and cups his hands against the glass to see outside: Two silhouettes on the edge of the fairway. One of them waves.

INT. SCOTT HATTEBERG'S HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

Elizabeth Hatteberg sets out some cookies shaped like stars and bells for the late-night guests: Billy Beane and Ron Washington.

BILLY
Thank you, ma'am.

WASHINGTON
Thank you, ma'am.

She leaves them with her husband but listens in on their conversation from the next room, nibbling on a cookie of her own.

BILLY

How's the elbow?

SCOTT

It's feeling good.

Billy produces a baseball from his windbreaker and hands it to Scott. His fingers curl around it like a claw. Washington looks to heaven.

BILLY

I don't care about your elbow actually. Far as I'm concerned you've thrown your last baseball from behind the plate. I want you at first.

Scott is so thrown by this, all he can do is stare at Billy - then at Washington. Washington's shrug tells him, This wasn't my idea.

SCOTT

I've been a catcher since I was nine years old.

BILLY

You aren't any more. If you were, mine wouldn't have been the only call you got when your contract expired at midnight.

SCOTT

I appreciate that -

BILLY

Thank you -

SCOTT

But -

BILLY

You don't know how to play first base. Of course you don't. That's why Wash is going to teach you.

Scott looks to Washington again, who shrugs again. Then something even more troubling occurs to him -

SCOTT

Wait a minute - what about -

BILLY

Jason Giambi's gone, Scott. And you know what I say? Good riddance.

SCOTT

I'm taking Giambi's spot at first? How can I do that?

BILLY

I told you. Wash'll teach you.

SCOTT

No, but the fans.

BILLY

The fans? The fans run my ball club?

SCOTT

No, but they'll -

BILLY

They won't hate you. They'll hate Giambi. They hate anyone who makes 17 million a year.

SCOTT

He's making - ?

BILLY

Yeah. Yankees.

Billy takes a contract out of his windbreaker and sets it on the table next to the cookies.

BILLY

This is my Christmas present to you and your wife. A copy's on its way to your agent. Discuss it with him in the morning and let me know.

(he gets up; calls off)

Thanks again for the cookies, ma'am.

ELIZABETH O/S

You're welcome.

EXT. PARK - TACOMA - NEXT DAY

Little League field. Elizabeth Hatteberg at the plate with a plastic laundry hamper full of balls, a batting tee, and her younger daughter in a stroller. Her older daughter is down the line backing up Scott at first base.

As she whacks grounders off the tee, Billy and Washington watch unseen from a parked rental car. A ball takes a bad hop and hits Scott in the chest. Another goes between his legs and rolls to his 4-year-old daughter who scoops it up. Washington looks at Billy.

WASHINGTON

Maybe you should sign her.

Billy says 'very funny' with a look, glances back out the car window. As Hatteberg's wife hits another ball -

*
*

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - SAN DIEGO - DAY - 1980

*

- it jumps off a bat here as the young man at the plate drives it deep.

*
*

We take a second to regard the field and realize there's something idealized about the color of the grass and the dirt, like we've stepped out of the real world and into The Natural.

*

We are in another time, with scouts from another time, each with a clipboard and stopwatch, watching high school prospects being put through paces.

A Chapter Titles appears: The Curse of Talent

*

The young man at the plate only has a number on his jersey, but as we come around to the other side, there's no question it's Billy, 20 years younger, easy-going and confident.

*

He smacks the next pitch into the right field gap and some high school girls on the sidelines cheer. One is his girlfriend, and she watches him line the next pitch over the shortstop's head. And the next over the first baseman's head -

*

Now he's in a line with four other young players, throwing to home from the outfield. His arm is strong and his throw in line. Same with the next throw. And the next -

Now he's running, stealing 2nd, diving head first ahead of the throw from the plate. He does it again and again, beating the throw each time.

Two of the scouts - Jongewaard and Bogard - are particularly impressed, and you can tell by the way they try to pretend not to be.

*
*

SCOUT

You got his stats there?

*
*

The scout tries to hand Bogard some stats paperwork.

*

BOGARD

Keep your voice down. I don't need that. He's premium grade - he's the whole package. I can see it.

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*

As Bogard checks "1 to 10" boxes on his clipboard, Jongewaard - sitting well apart from him - checks boxes on his, and we notice their respective team logos: Astros and Mets.

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INT. SCOUTING ROOMS - DAY - 1980

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Split Screen: Two roomsful of scouts - who look and spit a lot like our scouts - sitting around two 1980's speakerphones.

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SPEAKERPHONE

Seattle. Draft Number 0121. Coles, Darnell. Right-handed third baseman. Eisenhower High School, San Bernardino, California.

Bogard is in the Astro's scouting room; Jongewaard in the Mets. Both hoping the next team doesn't want who they each want for themselves: Billy Beane.

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*

SPEAKERPHONE

White Sox. Redraft Number 0014. Espy, Cecil. Right-handed outfielder. Point Loma High School, San Diego, California.

Relieved, Jongewaard leans closer to the speakerphone -

JONGEWAARD

Mets. Draft Number 0170. Beane, William. Right-handed outfielder. Mount Carmel High School. San Diego, California.

*

INT. CHURCH - SAN DIEGO - DAY - 1980

The bride is one of the girls from Billy's tryout in San Diego. He slips a wedding band on her finger and kisses her and everyone applauds. *

EXT/INT. SAN DIEGO - PRESENT DAY *

The applause fades as the door of a suburban house opens, revealing the same woman, twenty years older. *

BILLY
Hi. *

SHARON
Hi, Billy. *

She pulls the door open so he can come in. As he does - *

BILLY
She home? *

SHARON
You think I'm listening to that? *

The muffled power chords of 'London Calling' from somewhere upstairs. *

BILLY
You used to. *

SHARON
Casey! Your father's here! *

Their daughter - a 13-year-old indie-rock girl - bounds down the stairs and gives her father a huge hug. *

INT. SAN DIEGO HOUSE - LATER

Casey has curled up with Billy on a couch next to a twinkling Christmas tree. His ex-wife and her boyfriend share another, holding hands. *

SHARON
How's the team shaping up?

BILLY
Not so good. Damon and Giambi are gone. *

SHARON
Boston and the Yankees. I heard. *

BILLY
Big loss for us.

SHARON
You going to be okay?

BILLY
I'm going to have to be. Players
move on. It's the story of my
life.

It's the story of their life, too. And you can tell in
the silence and the way they look at each other that they
sometimes wonder if they shouldn't have moved on.

BOYFRIEND
Hey, that was some bad luck in New
York, huh?

Billy regards the guy. What kind of guy brings that up
the first time he meets you?

BILLY
You a baseball fan?

BOYFRIEND
Football more than baseball.

BILLY
Football.

The guy nods. Billy nods, but has no more breath to
waste on a football fan, and his look to his wife says,
How could you go out with one?

INT. GUITAR CENTER - LA MESA - DAY

The place reverberates with metalhead kids mimicking
Kirk Hammett on Ibanezes, while Casey Beane tries out a
Fender strat.

CASEY
What do you think?

BILLY
I think in a couple of years
Sleater-Kinney better watch out.

CASEY
The guitar.

BILLY
I think it's you.

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CASEY

Me, too.

*
*

BILLY

Merry Christmas.

*
*

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - DAY

In the subterranean video room - an even less elegant place than the rest of the stadium - someone has put up a scraggly Christmas tree. There, Paul watches a tape of a minor leaguer on the Lowell Spinners, a Single-A Boston affiliate. Billy comes in.

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*

PAUL

How'd it go?

BILLY

How'd what go?

PAUL

Scott Hatteberg.

BILLY

He can barely hold a baseball.
But he's our guy now.

Billy sits. Says no more. Which is uncharacteristic.

PAUL

What's wrong?

BILLY

Nothing. Who's that?

PAUL

This is the guy we want more than
anyone else in the world.

Billy watches the guy on the screen. He's an overweight right-handed batter with a peculiar stance that makes him look like he's dancing the hula.

BILLY

He looks like a white guy trying
to imitate Gary Sheffield.

PAUL

And he can't run, throw or field.
But he gets on base more than
anyone in baseball except Barry
Bonds.

(MORE)

On the TV, the batter takes another pitch just off the edge of the strike zone. Billy looks at the name on the back of his jersey -

BILLY

Youkilis?

PAUL

I tried to get Shapiro to draft him last June. He said he waddled like a duck. Boston took him.

BILLY

I can try to get him.

PAUL

I don't think they'll let him go yet.

BILLY

Then what are you watching him for?

PAUL

I guess I got a crush.

GRADY O/S

Billy?

Grady Fuson has appeared behind them at the door.

GRADY

Can I talk to you a minute?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Grady closes the video room door for privacy. The only other person in sight is manager Art Howe, in his office in street clothes. He shuts his windowed door so Grady and Billy can talk in confidence.

GRADY

Paul and I had a talk while you were in Tacoma. I didn't like much of what I heard.

BILLY

No?

GRADY

No.

Silence except for the whir of a tape machine rewinding in the next room.

BILLY

You're unhappy, Grady. Why?

GRADY

I'm unhappy because you got a kid with a Harvard economics degree in that room, and a scout with nineteen years baseball experience in this room, and you're listening to the wrong one.

BILLY

I don't listen to anybody, you know that.

GRADY

This isn't a joke.

BILLY

I can see that.

GRADY

This isn't how you run a ball club. With a fucking computer. Baseball isn't just numbers. It isn't a science. If it was, anyone could do what we do. They can't because they don't have the knowledge we have. Or the intuition. Or the constitution to eat at Dennys twice a day and sleep in Motel 6's every night, putting 60,000 miles on their car to get to Bumfuck Idaho to watch some high school kid someone said has a twelve-to-six curve. If baseball isn't that - if it isn't experience and wisdom and gut feeling and Kirk Gibson's aching legs and everything else we love about it - if it's spreadsheets and math equations and players being lab rats - then I'm in the wrong game.

They regard each other a moment.

BILLY

You want me to get rid of him.

GRADY

I'm going to have to insist. I'm sorry, he seems like a nice kid, but you don't learn what I know by reading Bill James and playing Fantasy Baseball.

Grady's impassioned and well-delivered plea for Baseball to remain Baseball seems to have made its intended impression on Billy. Seems ...

BILLY

Only one of us has the perspective on this of someone who's actually played Major League Baseball. And it isn't you.

GRADY

Major League Baseball will be happy to crucify you and Sancho Panza if you keep doing what you're doing here. Major League Baseball thinks like I think.

BILLY

I don't care what Major League Baseball thinks.

*
*
*

Meaning he doesn't care what Grady thinks. Meaning he won't stop what he's doing. Meaning he has made Grady's decision for him.

GRADY

Goodbye, Billy.

BILLY

I guess so.

On Grady's way out, as he passes Art Howe's windowed office, they exchange a commiserating look.

INT. VIDEO ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Billy pokes his head in. Paul is still watching tapes and making notes.

BILLY

Around here? Don't ever say the words Fantasy Baseball again. Or Bill James. Even though some of what he says makes sense.

PAUL

All of what he says makes sense.

BILLY

Fine. Keep it to yourself.

Billy leaves. Paul looks back to the TV where Youkilis takes ball four and waddles down to first base.

BILL JAMES V/O

Our friend Henry Chadwick was no friend of the walk.

BILL JAMES

is in a different place now - a cluttered home office - wearing a sweater vest that makes him look professorial - but he is still no more fond of us than before. *

A Chapter Title appears beneath his face: The Walk *

BILL JAMES

There are no walks in cricket, so this concept - and its value - was more than a little foreign to him.

The portrait of Henry Chadwick again replaces Bill James.

BILL JAMES V/O

In his view, walks were caused entirely by the pitcher, and he recorded them as errors against the pitcher.

Old black and white footage of pitchers, sometimes hitting the strike zone, sometimes not.

BILL JAMES V/O

But even back then, as the game was just developing, Baseball knew enough to criticize Henry's lack of understanding on this point.

A player with good eyes - before he was dead - trots down to first base in the archival footage.

BILL JAMES V/O

So he solved the problem by creating a bigger one. He removed The Walk altogether from the record books - and in so doing, skewed a player's batting average - the chief measure of his offense - and his value - to the point of being meaningless.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

A Saguaro cactus, misshapen like Scott Hatteberg's nerve-ruptured arm, stands akimbo alongside a two-lane highway stretching off toward nothingness.

Suddenly, a late-model Mercedes convertible breaks the stillness, roaring past blasting Mariah Carey.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE STADIUM - DAY

The Mercedes pulls into a sparsely-filled parking lot. Its driver grabs a sports bag, climbs out and crosses toward the little stadium. We follow him from behind, but can still tell from back here he's a well-built, ultra-confident big league ballplayer.

Legend: Phoenix Municipal Stadium - A's Training Camp

INT. CLUBHOUSE - ARIZONA - DAY

He strides into a locker room that is already full of players. Jeremy Giambi's boombox - and Jeremy himself, who always has a smile on his face despite a salary that's 80 times less than his brother's - entertains the new A's team suiting up.

Some of the players acknowledge the new arrival. Most - like Scott Hatteberg, and a baby-faced young man with the name Bradford on the back of his jersey - are too shy to.

JEREMY

Hey, Dave.

DAVID

Hey.

Dave reaches a locker on which someone has already hung his A's jersey. It says: Justice.

EXT. PHOENIX MUNICIPAL STADIUM - DAY

Spring training has begun. Various stations have been set up at which infielders scoop grounders, outfielders - like Justice - shag flies, and pitchers warm up.

Billy, Paul, and Steve Schott sit together in the almost-empty stands - where no one pays them the least attention - taking their first look at the new bargain-basement 2002 Oakland A's Billy has assembled.

David Justice chases down a fly ball perfectly and fires it back in with an arm that seems a decade younger than its 36 years.

BILLY

He's still got it.

Jeremy Giambi is another story. The next poke off the bat sends him scrambling back like a postman trying to escape a mad dog. The ball lands behind him.

BILLY

Well, he never did, and still doesn't.

Behind a portable backstop, a guy with a radar gun gets ready to clock a trio of relievers. One - Mike Magnante - a 37-year-old veteran - has his pant legs pulled up to adjust knee-braces. Steve Schott looks at Billy.

BILLY

He's 37 years old, what do you want.

Magnante gets up and begins throwing, increasing his velocity each time.

BILLY

None of those broke 85. I can tell from here.

They watch the second pitcher - Jim Mecir - throw a few. He's seems to be limping a little.

SCHOTT

Is Mecir hurt too?

BILLY

That's just his clubfoot.
(Steve stares at Billy)
He was born with it. It doesn't affect anything.

The third pitcher steps up - the gentle-faced kid from the locker room - Chad Bradford.

BILLY

Chad I have high hopes for.

Chad overthrows his first submarine hand-scraping-the-ground pitch, the ball sailing wide of the catcher toward a coach who has to duck to keep from being decapitated.

BILLY

It just got away from him.

They turn their attention to the infield where Ron Washington hits grounders to the two possible-starting first basemen - Carlos Pena and Scott Hatteberg.

Carlos handles them pretty well; Scott only slightly better than those hit to him by his wife back in Tacoma. One - and it's not hit all that hard - caroms off the heel of his big mitt into right field.

BILLY

He'll be fine.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - ARIZONA - LATER

As the players shower and change into street clothes, Art, Billy and Washington discuss Scott Hatteberg, who knows they're discussing him.

BILLY

It's the first day of week one.
There's nothing to judge yet.

ART

I can judge it and so can you.
First base is the moon to him and
it's not gonna get any more
familiar.

BILLY

Wash?

WASHINGTON

The nicest way I can put it is, he
lacks confidence.

BILLY

Give him some then. Give him some
now. Look at him. He needs it.

As Washington crosses the locker room to lie to Scott about how much progress he's making, he passes Magnante taking off his leg braces, then Chad Bradford sitting at his locker with a Bible in his lap.

ART

I mentioned my contract situation
to Steve. He said he never had a
conversation with you about it.

BILLY

(pause)
He must've forgotten.

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Art doesn't believe it took place any more this time than he did before.

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ART

He also said if he were to have such a conversation he would defer to you.

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BILLY

(pause)

I'll take care of it, Art.

*
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*

As Billy steps away to leave, Chad Bradford sets his Bible on the bench and approaches him.

*
*

CHAD

Mr. Beane.

(Billy turns back)

I want to thank you for giving me a chance.

BILLY

That's fine.

Chad's Mississippi accent is thick. If he said "shortstop," it would come out "shoatstop."

CHAD

I'm not going to disappoint you.

BILLY

I'm sure you won't.

Chad's earnestness and gratitude - like anybody's - makes Billy uncomfortable.

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*

CHAD

I'm going to pray for you.

*
*

BILLY

I'm probably too far gone for that, Chad, but go ahead if you want.

*
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*
*

CHAD

God bless you and your family.

BILLY

No problem.

Chad smiles shyly and returns to his locker. Sits with his Bible in his lap and bows his head in prayer. Billy watches a moment. As he leaves, we -

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*

CUT TO BLACK

*

INT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT - DAY - 1982

A blur of travelers emerges from the black again -
but this time - like a soldier shipping out, Young Billy
kisses his new wife goodbye, gathers his carry-on bag
and heads for his gate.

EXT. SMITH-WILLS STADIUM, JACKSON - DAY - 1982

Billy stands in left field in a Jackson Mets jersey.
Lenny Dykstra's in center. Darryl Strawberry's in right.
A Tulsa Oiler swats a liner over the 2nd baseman's head
and the kid from Crenshaw makes a big-league diving
catch.

EXT. SMITH-WILLS STADIUM, JACKSON - DAY

Billy settles into the box, and - unlike in the small
pond of high school - it feels like an actual box to him.
Or a cage. Claustrophobic.

He tries to stay loose, but can't as what appears to be
a down-the-middle fastball suddenly drops. He swings and
misses and the umpire barks a third strike grunt.

As Billy walks back to the dugout, his teammates -
knowing what's coming - move away on the bench. Billy
shoves his helmet into its pigeon-hole and beats his bat
against the rack until it breaks.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT - 1982

Lenny Dykstra crosses a parking lot with two bottles of
beer and opens the door of a -

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- where he finds Billy reading a book on one of the twin
beds. He sets a beer on Billy's night stand, switches on
the TV - tuned to MTV - and sits in front of it with the
other beer watching Patty Smythe sing 'Goodbye to You.'

DYKSTRA

You shouldn't do that.

Billy assumes he means his strike-out behavior.

BILLY

I know.

DYKSTRA

I mean read. It'll ruin your eyes. I don't read nothing.

Billy watches Dykstra sip from his beer bottle as he watches MTV, not a care in the world.

*
*

BILLY

You keep a book on pitchers.

DYKSTRA

A what?

BILLY

You study pitchers.

DYKSTRA

No, I don't.

BILLY

How you know what they're gonna throw?

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*
*

DYKSTRA

I don't.

*
*

BILLY

You have no idea.

DYKSTRA

I don't even know what the count is most the time.

As Dykstra bobs his head and hums along to the music, Billy studies him. Maybe this is what a true big-league ball player looks like.

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EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - PRESENT DAY

A towering portrait of David Justice has been painted where Jason Giambi's used to be. A spattering of diehard fans files under it and through the turnstiles.

Legend: April 4, 2002

*

You know what these fans look like, dripping A's merchandise, radios and Sharpies, arriving so early the batting practice cage is still being dragged into place. Down there, a KICU-TV reporter speaks to a camera -

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REPORTER

With the departure of head scout Grady Fuson, and a roster that reads more like an obituary page than a baseball team, you have to wonder, What is Billy Beane thinking. He's not saying, and he can get away with that as long as this House of Tarot Cards stands. But if it falls, he's not only going to have to answer; he's going to have to answer for it.

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INT. A'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME TIME - DAY

Jeremy Giambi's boombox is on again as he and his 24 teammates suit up. David Justice wanders past him to a soda machine. Presses a button, but nothing comes out. He tries again.

TEJADA

Is a dollar, mang.

JUSTICE

What?

TEJADA

Always been like that here.

JUSTICE

You're fuckin' kidding me, right?

TEJADA

Welcome to Oakland.

Scott Hatteberg sits by his locker oiling his 1st baseman's mitt while the A's catcher - Ramon Hernandez - whose job Scott wishes he had - gathers his gear.

As coach Ron Washington watches Hatteberg, knowing what he's thinking, Art Howe fills out his line-up card and a second identical one for the home plate umpire.

*

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - DAY

The crowds have filled in. In prime seats behind home plate, a dozen or so women, most of them blonde, sit and chat. They're the players' wives and they all look like Billy's ex, only younger. Elizabeth Hatteberg doesn't know any of them. Turns to a pretty one sitting next to her.

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ELIZABETH
Which is your husband?

YOUNG WOMAN
None of them. I'm dating the
general manager.

As the A's trot out to their positions, cheers erupt
from the crowd, and Roy Steele - the A's Voice of God PA
announcer - introducers them:

VOICE OF GOD
And now, Your 2002 Oakland
Athletics. Leading off, number 7,
Jer-e-my Giam-bi, left field.

Amidst polite applause, someone yells out -

FAN
Your brother's a sellout!

VOICE OF GOD
Hitting second, number 11, Frank
Mene-chinooo, second base.

Amidst more polite applause, the fan keeps on Jeremy -

FAN
Hey, Jeremy, I got a doobie for
you here!

Jeremy heard both remarks, but remains upbeat.

VOICE OF GOD
Batting third, number 10,
designated hitter, Scott Hatt-e-
berg.

Someone in the crowd - actually several people - turn to
their companions and say, "Who?" Even some of the wives
say it as Elizabeth Hatteberg claps - virtually alone.

VOICE OF GOD
Batting clean-up, number 23, in
right field, Da-viddd Jus-tice.

Thunderous applause. Justice is used to it, but never
tires of it, and tips his cap.

Billy, not allowed in the dugout, lurks in the tunnel,
watching Carlos Pena toss grounders to the infield, then
retreats, as he always does, to the weight room as the
game begins.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER - DAY

The Texas Rangers' Frank Catalanotto settles in at the plate. Out in left, shifting back and forth like a man awaiting an unpleasant phone call, Jeremy Giambi mumbles a mantra: 'don't hit it to me, don't hit it to me.'

Catalanotto mercifully drives it up the middle - rounds first - trots back to the bag and glances at Pena.

CATALANOTTO

What's up with the fuckin soda machines?

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Bathed in sweat and in better shape than most of his players, Billy bench-presses weights as he did when we first met him. The TV sound is off as commentators, conduct their post-mortem of the game that has ended. Art Howe comes in.

ART

You wanted to see me?

BILLY

Why wasn't Hatteberg at first?

ART

Because he can't play first.

BILLY

How do you know if you don't play him.

ART

I know because it's obvious.

Billy just nods his head as he looks at Art.

ART

Anything else?

BILLY

Yeah. I would've rather seen Bradford in there than Magnante.

ART

Bradford's a -

BILLY

I don't care about right-hand-left-hand, you know that. He's better and that's reason enough.

Art doesn't agree, but also doesn't argue. Eventually -

BILLY

This about your contract?

ART

Is what about my contract?

BILLY

These disagreements we seem to be having.

ART

No. You've made it clear what you think of that. This is about you doing your job and me doing mine. Mine is being left alone to manage my team.

BILLY

Your team.

ART

Uh-huh.

They regard each other another moment. Then, as Art leaves -

THE SEAMS OF A BASEBALL

spin as a pitch comes at us. As David Justice connects -

THE REPLACEMENTS' song, "Alex Chilton," bangs in and continues over -

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

A plane lifts off a runway, beginning an A's Roadtrip:

INT. AIRPLANE - IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

The A's may be cheap, but they do have a plane.

Some of the players nap. Others fiddle with clunky, second generation iPods. A few read. Paul scrolls down stats on his laptop.

TEJADA

The fuck is that, mang.

Tejada isn't looking at the computer, he's looking at what Paul is drinking. It's green.

PAUL

Wheat grass.

The look on Tejada's face says he'll never ask Paul another question as long as he lives. A couple seats back, Jeremy Giambi discreetly mixes a highball from a cache of hotel minibar liquor bottles as he watches his favorite movie on a portable DVD player, The Natural. *

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - SEATTLE - NIGHT

Inspired, perhaps, by the movie, Jeremy lines a single to right, but is so slow he's almost thrown out at first. Art Howe glances at his bench coach, Ken Macha.

ART

I'm the only manager in baseball who has to pinch run his leadoff hitter.

Down in the Visitors' pen, Chad sits with Mike Magnante. *

MAGNANTE

Why do you do that?

CHAD

I don't know. I can't not do it.

MAGNANTE

How do you do it? Every ball park's different.

CHAD

I take that into account and adjust the distance of my steps.

MAGNANTE

Seventy-four from the pen to the mound. Why not seventy-five?

CHAD

I dunno.

MAGNANTE

You should get that looked at, man. That's not superstition. That's mental.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - LATER

As Chad trots from the bullpen to the mound, counting his steps, Art Howe notices his unnatural gait and turns to the A's pitching coach, Rick Peterson.

ART

I got a clubfooted screwball pitcher and a senior citizen with leg braces. What's this?

PETERSON

A Baptist with OCD.

INT. OAKLAND AIRPORT - DAY

Billy, who never travels with the team, waits in the baggage claim area for someone, glancing through a box score in the paper. The A's, if we notice, are first in their division, but not by much.

A planeload of arriving passengers streams in. Casey Beane, traveling alone, spots her father waiting for her and smothers him with a hug. He throws away the paper on their way out.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - EVENING

As David Justice lounges with a handful of good-looking girls, Hatteberg talks to his wife on the phone.

SCOTT

I think Art's gonna keep me off first all season.

ELIZABETH

You should talk to him.

SCOTT

No, I'm glad he's doing it. I'd make a spectacle of myself out there.

ELIZABETH

That's not true.

SCOTT

It is true.

EXT. ARLINGTON - NIGHT

Carlos Pena hits into a double-play, ending the game. The Rangers bench trots out to slap hands in a receiving line with the players as Art watches glumly from the Visitors' dugout.

THE STANDINGS ON PAUL'S COMPUTER:

The A's have fallen a game below .500 and are no longer in first place. Paul closes the window on his laptop and looks out at -

EXT. LAKE OLMSTEAD STADIUM - AUGUSTA, GEORGIA - NIGHT

- where he has made a detour to take in a GreenJackets game, specifically to have a look at his man-crush Greek God of Walks - Kevin Youkilis - in the flesh. We're used to it by now but still can't quite get over how Youkilis shakes his ample butt at the plate.

EXT. TELEGRAPH AVENUE - BERKELEY - NIGHT

Billy and Casey stand in a line leading to the doors of Amoeba Records.

CASEY

How come you don't travel with the team?

BILLY

It's my chance to spend time with you.

CASEY

Otherwise you would?

BILLY

No. No, I don't want to get to know my players personally; on the road you can't avoid it. It just clouds your judgment.

CASEY

Would you tour with a band?

BILLY

Whose band? Your band? You want to hire me in a couple years as a road manager? I'd do that.

CASEY
I'm saying it's the same.

BILLY
It's not. Not when you're a
player. In a band, you make a
mistake, no one notices but you.
In baseball, everything you do -
every single note you play - is
written down, added up and
averaged, and that's you. I've
been on that tour.

INT. AMOEBA RECORDS - LATER - NIGHT

Father and daughter have the same taste in music, and
tonight, it's what we've been listening to on the sound
track: Paul Westerberg.

As Casey Beane watches Westerberg's post-Replacements
band enthralled, Billy watches her. This is as happy as
he's ever going to be.

EXT. EDISON FIELD - ANAHEIM - DAY

David Justice signs autographs. Scott Hatteberg watches
the frenzy from the dugout. Justice motions to him, but
Scott shakes his head no.

JUSTICE
Come on.

SCOTT
Nobody knows who I am.

JUSTICE
Not true. Come on.

Scott drags himself up and out of the dugout and stands
near Justice. No one seems to even notice him there and
he finally slinks back into the dugout.

EXT. EDISON FIELD - DAY

Chad Bradford looks uncomfortable, standing with a
television reporter who likes to hear himself talk -

REPORTER
There have been so few
submariners, Chad, you can count
them on one hand - I should say,
on one hand down here -

He puts his hand to the ground and laughs at his own joke. Chad, who is too shy to make eye contact with the reporter or the television audience, keeps his cap down low to make sure of it.

REPORTER

Kent Tekulve, Dan Quisenberry -
Carl Mays, of course, who killed
poor Ray Chapman with a pitch -

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Chad on the phone.

MOTHER V/O

You pulled your cap so low I
couldn't see your eyes. You have
beautiful eyes.

CHAD

Mom -

MOTHER V/O

You're handsome and charming, but
you have to smile or people won't
know.

CHAD

I don't want people looking at me.

MOTHER V/O

Just a little smile every so
often.

EXT. EDISON FIELD - DAY

The scoreboard shows the A's down by 1 in the 6th.

As Art trudges toward the mound to pull his starter, he holds out his left arm. Magnante emerges from the pen - and Paul, up in a VIP box, flips open his phone.

INT. OAKLAND AIRPORT - SAME TIME - DAY

At the security checkpoint, Casey and her father are saying goodbye.

BILLY

Thanks for the mix-tape.

CASEY

Thanks for mine.

BILLY
I'm gonna miss you. I love you.

CASEY
I love you, too.

BILLY
Say hi to your mom.

CASEY
Or don't.

BILLY
Or don't.

She smiles and goes through security without setting off any alarms. Billy watches after her as she walks toward the boarding gates. His cell phone chimes. He's got a text message: 3-2 / MAGNANTE.

BILLY
Fuckin Art.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. BELVEDERE - DAY

Billy and Paul sit with Steve Schott in his house overlooking the Bay. The faucets here you can be sure didn't cost a hundred dollars. They're watching the news -

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SPORTSCASTER
Up in Toronto, a town not used to winning, Blue Jays fans bid a tearful farewell to the A's after last night's 11-0 pistol-whipping. Having dropped 13 of 16 - along with their shoulders and chins and several double-play balls - the A's return home to Oakland and, hopefully, a stern lecture. Or maybe it's the front office that deserves one.

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Steve mutes the set, but the silence is almost worse. Eventually -

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BILLY
It's still early.

SCHOTT
It's not that early. What's happening here with this - I'll be kind and call it a system.

*
*
*

He looks at Paul, who just looks down. *

BILLY

We got some guys who are nervous
and some guys who are old. We got
the team we can afford. And we
got Art.

SCHOTT

I like Art.

BILLY

Everybody likes Art. That, he's
good at. And following everything
it says in How To Manage Baseball.
Reading his players is another
matter.

They listen to fog horns and feel they're somewhere out
to sea as well. *

SCHOTT *

You got to do something, Billy. *

This can't go on. *

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - EVENING

The Blue Jays have come to town and hang out in and
around the Visitors' dugout as the A's take batting
practice.

Art - as he prefers, and as he has every time we've seen
him in the A's dugout - watches from the bench instead of
the railing - which is where Billy finds him.

BILLY

We need to shake things up. We
are not going to lose three to the
Blue Jays. The Blue Jays. I want
Dye in right, Justice DH'ing, Pena
on the bench and Hatteberg at
first.

Hatteberg, who happens to be walking past at this
moment on his way to the cage, is horrified by what he
just heard. So is Art, but Art - being Art - takes it,
on the surface at least, in stride.

ART

You want me to put Hatte at first.

BILLY

I think that's what I just said.

ART
With a lefty throwing.

BILLY
That's right.

Art - Mr. Passive Aggressive to Billy's just plain Aggressive - takes out his lineup card and pretends to study it.

ART
I'll certainly consider it.

Billy takes that as the flat-out 'no' it is, but manages to hold his temper. As he turns to leave, Art knows he shouldn't, but can't resist adding -

ART
Nothing else?

Billy can think of several things - breaking some bats, kicking some helmets, taking a swing at Art - but instead only says -

BILLY
Yeah. When you sit on the bench an entire game, you look like a prisoner at Auschwitz. Stand up at the railing like a manager.

If it wasn't already, now it's on. Art pulls himself up off the bench and stands at the railing.

ART
Like this?
(then puts his chin on his hand)
Or like this.

Billy will work out his fury in the weight room, but not before issuing Art a final warning -

BILLY
Hatteberg at first.

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EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER - NIGHT

It's Hatteberg who looks like a prisoner at Auschwitz, sitting on the bench in the dugout with his 1st basemen's mitt, hoping he misheard what Billy said. Eventually, he works up the courage to cross to where Art's final lineup card hangs and, looking at it, breathes a sigh of relief.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - SAME TIME - NIGHT

The game plays silently on the TV as Billy lifts weights. Not wanting to watch, but not being able not to watch, he glances at the screen to see Pena trotting out to first base ...

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER - NIGHT

The Blue Jays' bench clears to high-five the players coming off the field. The game is over, and, obviously, they've won. The A's exit their dugout to the tunnels.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

It's just like any other night as far as Jeremy Giambi is concerned. He's got his DVD of The Natural playing on a TV and he's humming along to its poignant score as he gets dressed.

As Art crosses to his office, he sees Billy waiting inside it. He hesitates, then goes in and we follow him. Billy says nothing, but his silence - at least tonight - is more threatening than his wrath. Art has to break it -

ART

It's just one game.

BILLY

Is that the point, you think?

ART

The point is always tomorrow's game.

BILLY

That's what my manager used to say. In Little League.

Art sniffs. Moves things around on his desk.

BILLY

I don't like sharing the cellar with Texas, do you?

ART

You should've thought of that when you got me these players.

BILLY

You not using the players I got.

ART

I'm not using them because they
can't play.

BILLY

I'm through talking. Things are
going to change. Since you won't
do it, I will.

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*

Billy lets himself out - regards the players in the
locker room - his glance moving from one to another and
settling on Jeremy Giambi -

*

JEREMY

Yeah, Hobbs!

*

He's not even aware of Billy. He's reacting to the
fireworks as Robert Redford's home run ball smashes into
the floodlights in The Natural as he watches it for the
hundredth time with the sound turned up loud.

BILLY

Jeremy.

Jeremy looks over with his usual good-natured-loyal-dog
smile on his face.

BILLY

Is losing fun?

JEREMY

What?

BILLY

Is getting swept by the Blue Jays -
the Blue Jays - fun?

JEREMY

No.

BILLY

Then what the fuck are you having
fun for?

Jeremy concedes the point, lowers Randy Newman's
towering score a little, and looks over again to find
Billy still staring at him. He turns it down some more.
Then, finally switches it off - the slow-motion image of
Redford rounding second amidst sparks suddenly going
dark. Silence. No one moves. Eventually -

BILLY

This is what losing sounds like.

He makes them listen to it a little longer. Looks at
Pena. Then leaves. *

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - LATER - NIGHT *

Billy shoves a wad of Copenhagen under his lip, picks up
the phone, and, from a list, dials a number next to the
Phillies' GM's name. It connects.

BILLY

Ed. Billy. My apologies if I
woke you, but I need some help on
defense and I'm willing to trade
Jeremy Giambi for it. Who you
got?

Billy listens a moment, then cups the phone.

BILLY

Who's John Mabry?

PAUL

Outfielder. He's knocked around. *
Seattle minor leagues. Four years
with the Cards. One with Philly -
(flips open his laptop)
Decent numbers, but let me pull
them up.

BILLY

Don't bother.
(into the phone)
He'll be fine, Ed.
(pause)
I'm not picking your pocket,
you're picking mine. Giambi's
name alone is worth more than -

PAUL

Mabry.

BILLY

(into phone) *
Mabry, whose career is stagnant,
to put it nicely. Can we say it's *
done in theory and start drawing
up paperwork?

Paul looks unnerved by what's going on here, but Billy
isn't done. He hangs up.

BILLY

And Pena's going down to Triple A.
Art can't put him at first if he's
playing for the River Cats.

PAUL

Maybe you want to go home and
think about this. You're upset
and this is - is -

BILLY

What. Unscientific? Is it
unscientific, Paul? Something has
to happen here -

*

PAUL

Pena's on pace for Rookie of the
Year -

*

*

*

BILLY

I don't care, he's in my way.
He's a casualty of war. So go
tell him he's going to Sacramento.
And Giambi to Philadelphia.

*

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*

PAUL

Me -

BILLY

Be a man. Go shoot Old Yeller.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - NEXT DAY

Paul had hoped he'd find Old Yeller at one of the strip
clubs he's been known to visit. Instead, his inquiries
have brought him here, where Giambi signs baseballs for
terminally ill children. He finishes, wishes them luck
and, heading out, sees Paul and smiles.

JEREMY

Hey, Paul.

PAUL

Hey, Jeremy. Can I talk to you a
second?

JEREMY

Sure.

They walk off together down the corridor. We hang back
and watch from too great a distance to hear what Paul is
telling him, but of course we know. Paul finishes and
comes back past us, leaving Jeremy standing alone at the
end of the sterile hallway ...

*

BILL JAMES V/O *

Like our good friend Henry Chadwick's other statistics, the error was conceived in a bygone era that has little to do with today.

BILL JAMES'S *

low opinion of us hasn't improved but his circumstances have. He's in a real office now - with a view - with a company he part-owns: STATS, Inc.

A new Chapter Title appears under him: The Error *

BILL JAMES

Back then, when outfields went unmowed and infields ungroomed, a ball hit more than a few feet from a fielder on leave from the Civil War was unplayable. A simple pop fly was an adventure.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - DAY *

The dreaded Yankees have come to town.

As Jeter steps into the box, Old Yeller's big brother Jason Giambi emerges from the dugout. As he steps to the on-deck circle, 30,000 fans boo him. He glances at them, sees handmade signs that read, "Traitor" and "Sellout," and smiles imperiously as he takes practice swings. *

BILL JAMES V/O *

But a century and a half later, Mr. Chadwick's error is still used to value players when anyone with a brain can tell it is a trivial detail. *

We stand where the infield dirt meets the right field grass, behind the player with the name Hatteberg on the jersey. *

BILL JAMES V/O *

A talent for avoiding calamity is no great trait in a modern day big league player when the easiest way to avoid one is to be too slow to reach the ball in the first place.

We come around in front of Hatteberg and see he's
muttering the same mantra Jeremy Giambi used to mutter:
'don't hit it to me, don't hit it to me.'

*

BILL JAMES V/O

*

So what is an error? An error
is the only statistic in baseball
that notes what hasn't occurred
rather than what has.

Barry Zito checks Soriano at first, winds up and throws.
Jeter takes. Hatteberg breathes again.

*

BILL JAMES V/O

*

It's the subjective opinion of
an observer whose name none of us
knows or cares to know, of what he
thinks should have been
accomplished. It isn't a
statistic. It's a moral judgment.

Jeter whacks a sharp grounder to the right-side hole -
third base coach Washington covers his eyes - Hatteberg
makes a heroic dive for the ball and gets his mitt on it
but his throw to second for the double play sails over
shortstop Tejada's head to John Mabry in left.

In the dugout, Art shakes his head unhappily. In the
players' wives section, Elizabeth Hatteberg listens to
some boos, as -

GREEN DAY'S "Welcome to Paradise" begins and plays over:

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - NIGHT

*

The parking lot is a vast, empty black sea with just two
pin-points of moving light. Headlights.

*

*

PNC PARK, PITTSBURGH - SAME TIME - NIGHT

*

More boos as the A's set down the Pirates, but these are
the kind of boos they like -

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - CONTINUED - NIGHT

*

A lower angle on the empty parking lot as the single
pair of headlights turns toward and blinds us -

*

*

INT. BILLY'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

He drives around the lot like a downhill skier with nothing in his way, the CD playing. His phone vibrates and he checks a text message that tells him -

CINERGY FIELD, CINCINNATI

The A's have just put up a run against the Reds.

In the bullpen, Magnante turns a small white rock in his hands, looks at Chad, smiles uncomfortably.

MAGNANTE

How long you been doing this one?

CHAD

Always. Since I was twelve.

MAGNANTE

Same rock or different rocks?

CHAD

Same rock.

MAGNANTE

No one ever said, what the fuck you doing?

CHAD

I don't advertise it. I'm discreet.

Magnante hands the little rock back. He's not a psychiatrist. Chad puts it in his pocket.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - CONTINUED - NIGHT

The headlights rake across a security guard who's used to Billy's nocturnal ritual and gives him a little wave.

SAFECO FIELD, SEATTLE

Now the crowds are cheering. The A's are getting shut out. Venafro's done and Chad's coming in from the pen, arriving at the mound mumbling under his breath -

CHAD

Seventy-three ... seventy-four.

ART

What?

CHAD

Nothing.

Art hands him the game ball and heads to the dugout. Chad roughs it up with his hands as he moves to the back of the mound. He reaches for the rosin bag - but doesn't touch it - he never touches it - and drops his lucky little white rock on the dirt.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - MOVING - CONTINUED - NIGHT

Billy checks a new incoming text message as he drives. This one pleases him less than the last one and he guns the engine as -

SAFECO FIELD, NIGHT

The A's are getting beat. You only have to look at their expressions in the dugout. And dropping division-leading Mariners games is the worst thing they could do right now.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - NIGHT

The Green Day music ends as we rise from a crowded parking lot to look down on the bright green sea of the field and a game in play.

COMMENTATOR V/O

Six games back is not where you want to be at the All-Star Break, but really, how unexpected is it?

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - NIGHT

The TV's on, but muted. A 3 to 5 losing score on the banner, and two announcers silently pontificating. Paul knocks, pokes him head in.

PAUL

You're not listening to this?

BILLY

I never listen to these assholes and neither should you.

Paul, horrified as he is by it, can't not listen, and switches on the TV sound:

COMMENTATOR 1

When a science experiment fails in the lab, things blow up. When it fails at the Oakland Coliseum, guess what, same result.

COMMENTATOR 2

That's right, Bob. You cannot assemble a crew of castoffs as Billy Beane has, prop it up with voodoo numbers, and say you're surprised when it blows up in your face, as has again for the A's tonight -

BILLY

Oh, shut the fuck up.

He takes the remote from Paul and hits the mute button.

INT. BILLY'S CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT

A young woman we've never seen before sleeps in Billy's bed, but he's not there. He's in the den in the glow of a laptop, the coffee table awash in Bill James books and legal pads full of notes. Having worked something out, apparently, he makes a call -

BILLY

Art. Billy.

ART

What? What the fuck time is it?

BILLY

It's time to stop losing.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - NEXT DAY

Art Howe goes through a set of signs from the dugout. Third base coach, Washington, relays them to the runner on first - Terrence Long - whose stunned shrug back asks, How can that be? Washington relays Long's shrug to Art, who shrugs back to say, That's how it is. Washington's shrug back to Long says, Search me.

LONG V/O

Art says you said no more steals.

BILLY V/O

That's right.

INT. A'S LOCKER ROOM - LATER - DAY

Billy sitting with a group of players after the game, his workout towel around his neck which he uses to wipe sweat from his eyes.

LONG

That's what I do. That's what you pay me to do.

BILLY

I pay you to get on first, T, not get thrown out at second. *

LONG

I don't get thrown out much.

BILLY

I don't hit on 16 at the black-jack table, but if I did, the odds would be about the same.

Silence. Then - *

CHAVEZ

Art says you said no more bunts.

BILLY

A bunt is an out. You're paid to avoid outs, not make them. *

CHAVEZ

A bunt isn't an out-out. It's a sacrifice-out. *

BILLY

A bunt is for pitchers and weak hitters. You're not a pitcher, so what are you saying, Chavy, you're a weak hitter? *

Silence. Then - *

ELLIS

Art says you said we have to walk more. How much more? *

BILLY

At least once every ten at bats. *

ELLIS

Or - *

BILLY

Or else.

Silence as the players try to grasp these new edicts - and the fact they're coming from the front office and not the manager.

TEJADA

We have a saying in the Dominican, Billy. You don't walk off the island.

BILLY

I have a saying. Triple-A Sacramento is just a strike out away.

The players stare at him. To all of them -

BILLY

I'm not interested in what you think you know about baseball, or what you think I don't know about it. I'm not interested in guts or heart or determination or anything else the fans or your mothers love about you. I'm interested in you getting on base. If you do that, we win. If you don't, we lose. And I hate to lose. I hate to lose more than I need to win. There's a difference.

Meeting over. The players disassemble in disbelief. Except one. David Justice. Eventually -

JUSTICE

I've never seen a GM talk to players.

BILLY

You've never seen a GM who was a player.

JUSTICE

By player, you mean a guy who couldn't cut it as a player.

The look Billy gives Justice says, You sure you want to go there? Justice does.

JUSTICE

I don't think a guy who couldn't cut it has much to offer guys who can. But go ahead and tell them how to play baseball. Not me.

*
*
*

BILLY

Why. Are you special?

JUSTICE

You're paying me 7 million bucks. I guess I am.

BILLY

I'm not paying you 7 million bucks. The Yankees are paying half your salary. That's what they think of you. They're paying you to play against them.

This is news to Justice, but he tries not to show it.

BILLY

So let's be honest with each other. I want to milk the last ounce of baseball you have left in you, and you want to milk the last dollar. After that, we never have to see each other again.

*

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

It appears we're back in The Natural. But Billy isn't anywhere in sight. Scouts are, though, and a few are the same scouts - like Bogard - 20-some-odd-years older. They're focused on a group of young pitching prospects. As one throws, we see his name on his jersey:

*

BOGARD V/O

Lark. Lefty. Good body. Big arm.

*

HEATH V/O

What's his profile say?

INT. SCOUTING ROOM - DAY

The white-boards show over three hundred names on magnetic strips - amateur players - under the headings Pitchers, Catchers, Outfielders, Infielders.

A Chapter Title appears: The Amateur Draft

*

The same A's scouts as before are all here again - all except Grady - chewing tobacco as they consult clipboards overstuffed with paperwork, much of it handwritten. Paul sits off to the side with his laptop.

BOGARD

Competitive Drive - one out of ten. Leadership - one out of ten. Conscientiousness - one out of -

BILLY

Shit, does he have a two in anything?

BOGARD

Velocity. Ten out of ten.

BILLY

Take him off the board. Next.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Another young prospect hits from a cage.

HOPKINS V/O

Simmons. Outfielder. Chico State. Good looking, but -

*

BILLY V/O

But what. Drugs?

BACK TO THE SCOUTING ROOM -

HOPKINS

No drugs. Just no grades.

BILLY

You mean bad grades?

HOPKINS

No, I mean no grades. He really has no desire to be in college.

BILLY

We don't need another Rockhead. Next.

PITTARO

We love this guy, Billy.

BILLY

Can he hit?

PITTARO

He's a tools guy.

BILLY

So he can't hit.

PITTARO

He can hit.

BILLY

He can hit - or he can hit?

PITTARO

He can hit.

BILLY

So you're saying he can't hit.

PITTARO

He can hit.

BILLY

That's not what I asked. I asked
can he hit.

PITTARO

He's a good hitter.

BILLY

If he's a good hitter, why doesn't
he hit good?

PITTARO

He needs a little work. He'll be
able to hit.

WHITE

How's he look?

HOPKINS

Great body. Best body in the
draft.

BILLY

We're not selling jeans here.
Next.

Hoppy's and Pitter's disappointment shows.

KEOUGH

What about your guy, Billy?
Swisher. You seen him yet?

BILLY

I can't see him. The minute I show up, everyone knows I'm interested and his stock goes up.

HEATH

I got a call from the White Sox yesterday saying they know you're in love with him because you haven't been to see him.

Everyone laughs. Billy goes up to the board and puts Swisher's name high up.

BILLY

Let's talk about Jeremy Brown.

Several of the scouts start leafing through their paperwork. Billy looks at Paul. This must be one of his finds. The scouts - those who find the name on their lists - find it on the last page.

PITTARO

Jeremy Brown, the Alabama U catcher?

PAUL

Three hundred hits and two hundred walks. Best in SEC history.

BOGARD

I've seen Jeremy Brown. It's not a pretty sight. Kid wears a large pair of underwear.

EXT. SEWELL-THOMAS STADIUM, TUSCALOOSA - DAY

Jeremy Brown is big - like Prince Fielder - and with his catcher's gear on, even bigger. What he doesn't look like is a ball player.

BOGARD V/O

It's not just that he's big. He's doughy. It's a big, soft, fleshy kind of body.

BACK TO THE SCOUTING ROOM -

BILLY

Oh, you mean like Babe Ruth?

BOGARD

When he walks, Billy, his thighs
stick together.

BILLY

We are selling jeans.

BOGARD

If we were, he'd start a fire.

To the horror of the scouts, Billy puts Jeremy Brown's
name up next to Swisher's.

BOGARD

Billy, he really doesn't belong
up there. Honestly. He's barely
mobile.

BILLY

Paul -

PAUL

Three hundred and ninety at bats
last season. Ninety-eight walks.
Thirty-eight K's. Oh, and twenty-
one jacks.

BOGARD

His body is not natural.

BILLY

I don't give a fuck, he can get on
base. Find me a catcher who gets
on more and I'll move his name
down.

BOGARD

If you saw him, I'm telling you,
he wouldn't be up there -

BILLY

You don't like to look at him,
Bogie, I get it. He doesn't fit
your idea of what a ball player
should look like. You're looking
at a ball player who looked like a
ball player to you - and now I'm
moving strips around on a board.
I'm looking at ball players who
looked like ball players and
you're watching me. It doesn't
matter what Jeremy Brown looks
like because looks deceive. Your
eyes deceived you, Bogie.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

They didn't see into the future.
I'm proof of it.

Billy didn't mean to say so much and tries to disguise that by saying nothing more. Neither does anyone else.
Until -

BOGARD

If we're not here to tell you about the promise we see in a player - if it's all in there -
(in Paul's computer)
- then I'm not sure why we are here.

BILLY

That's pretty much what Grady said when he left.

Which is another way of telling them, leave if you want to. All feel like it, but they don't. As Billy arranges four names at the top of his draft Wish List -

BILLY

A year ago, you thought I was nuts to want Zito. You wanted Ben Sheets. I forced Zito down your throats and a month later, he's kicking everybody's ass.

BOGARD

Jeremy Brown is no Barry Zito.

BILLY

These are our top four.

Swisher, Blanton, Fritz and Brown. Meeting adjourned. But the scouts stay put and chew and spit as Billy heads out.

INT. SCOUTING ROOM - DAY

A telephone - on speaker - sits in front of head scout, Eric Kubota. Steve Schott has joined Billy, Paul and the rest of the scouts. Art Howe stands in the back.

The wall has been cleared of every amateur player they don't want. What's left are the names of the ones they do: 8 pitchers and 12 position players.

Three of those - Billy's top three - Swisher, Blanton and Fritz - they've already got. Scout-loathing Jeremy Brown is next.

SPEAKERPHONE

Pittsburg. Redraft Number 0090.
 Bullington, Bryan. Right-handed
 pitcher, Ball State University.
 Fisher, Indiana.

No great loss, apparently, to Billy.

SPEAKERPHONE

White Sox. Redraft Number 0103.
 Ring, Roger. Left-handed pitcher,
 San Diego State University. La
 Mesa, California.

Billy nods to Kubota and, as he leans a little closer to the speakerphone, one of the scouts leans a little closer to him, and whispers -

PITTARO

Hit the button quick, Eric, so we
 won't have to listen to the
 laughter.

SPEAKERPHONE

Oakland?

KUBOTA

Oakland drafts Number 1172.
 Brown, Jeremy. Catcher,
 University of Alabama. Hueytown,
 Alabama.

As the draft continues, Billy gets up to refill his coffee. Bogard is there refilling his.

BOGARD

My eyes didn't deceive me.

Bogard stirs his coffee while looking at Billy who has some difficulty looking at him.

BOGARD

That's not what it was.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM - DAY - 1985

Young Billy, despite his problems, has made it to the majors as a back-up outfielder. In one of his rare plate appearances, he makes the least of it, striking out, and returns to the dugout. His teammates move away on the bench, but surprisingly Billy doesn't break anything.

INT. SHEA STADIUM - DAY - 1985

He's cleaning out his locker. Dykstra and Strawberry aren't. They're staying in New York. Billy isn't.

INT. METRODOME - MINNEAPOLIS - DAY - 1987

Billy is cleaning out his locker again. The Twins are trading him.

INT. TIGER STADIUM - DETROIT - DAY - 1988

And now he's leaving the Tigers.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - DAY - 1989

Billy strikes out. His new teammates move down the bench. As he walks to the dugout, some fans boo him.

FAN

Hey, Billy! This is for you!

The fan flings a yellow ("golden") sombrero onto the field. Billy drops his bat, leaps up into the stands and attacks the fan.

DR. DORFMAN

How you feeling?

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy's never been to a psychiatrist before and isn't happy being with one now.

BILLY

I just went 79 innings without a walk. How you think I'm feeling?

DR. DORFMAN

You think that's why you're here?
(nothing from Billy)
When a guy kicks stuff, or throws stuff, Karl sends him to me. You did more than that.

BILLY

I'm hitting .219. If I was hitting .319 and killed a fan I wouldn't be here.

(MORE)

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BILLY (CONT'D)

So unless you can tell me how to
hit, we don't have anything to
 talk about.

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EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - DAY

Billy sits on the dugout bench. On the field, by the
 batting cage, Dr. Dorfman confers with A's Manager Tony
 La Russa.

DORFMAN

He sees himself only in his
 statistics. He calculates them
 every time he comes up. He can't
 get them out of his head. The
 lower his numbers, the lower his
 self-worth. The lower his self-
 worth, the lower his numbers. So
 both keep falling in a kind of
 endless cycle.

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INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Billy and his wife drive home in silence, their infant
 daughter asleep in a car seat in back. Sharon fixates on
 Billy's hands, which have a vice-grip on the wheel.

BILLY

Don't look at me.

He says it without looking at her. He must have felt
 her looking. She stares out at the road as they drive
 in silence again.

BILLY

You want to talk? I'll talk.
 I'll tell you what I think every
 time I come up: It's all going to
 go away.

SHARON

I'm not.

He glances at her, somehow knowing that's not true, then
 looks back out at the road.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Billy signs a document. It isn't a baseball contract.

He passes it to a lawyer who passes it to another lawyer
 who passes it to Billy's wife, who signs her name under
 Billy's on the divorce papers.

INT. OAKLAND LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Most of the players have changed into their street clothes. Billy's still in his uniform, sitting next to his locker, alone with his thoughts. Eventually, he gets up and walks out -

INT. A'S FRONT OFFICE - LATER

General Manager Sandy Alderson considers the player in his office who is still in his A's uniform and cleats.

SANDY

This is weird, Billy. It's like a politician quitting a campaign and saying he wants to be a staffer.

(Billy nods; he knows)

Do you even know what a scout does?

BILLY

I've been scouted since I was fifteen years old. I know exactly what they do. They hear about you and come out and watch you. They tell you how much promise you have and how much they believe in you and offer you money to prove it. You're still in high school and on your parents' kitchen table is a check for a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars and an acceptance letter from college and they tell you, "pick."

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Billy glances to a paperweight on Alderson's desk, but it may as well be the check on the kitchen table. Then -

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BILLY

I know what they do. And what I'd do if I had it to do over again. And what I wouldn't do if I was one of them. I wouldn't sign any kid out of high school no matter how much I wanted to live through him. Ever. So if signing 17-year-olds who don't know the first fucking thing about life is important to you, then I'll just have to forget about baseball altogether.

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Alderson pulls the paperweight to him and turns it slowly on his desk as he studies this not-so-good ball-player who wants to be a better scout. *

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - PRESENT DAY - EVENING *

Paul's erstwhile team, the Indians, have come to town. They hang out in and around the Visitors' dugout as the A's take batting practice and a reporter with a KICU-TV microphone talks at a camera - *

REPORTER *

Billy Beane's May trades have proven to be what we predicted, Bob: Ineffectual. Like scraping dirt off your shoes before stepping in mud. You're not going to get any traction doing that. *

We notice on the back of one the Indian's jerseys a name we vaguely recognize - Rincon - the relief pitcher, if we recall, Billy tried to negotiate with Shapiro for in Cleveland. And getting loose for the A's, relief pitchers Magnante, Venafro and Bradford. *

REPORTER *

And the A's haven't. They're right where they were two months ago - five games behind the division-leading Mariners - and coming into August, the separation point in the season - they're about to feel the full impact of Beane's fascination for Fantasy Baseball over Real Baseball. *

Billy walks past on his way to the dugout, where he finds Art filling out his lineup card. *

BILLY

I'm tired of Magnante blowing games. The first guy I want to see out of the pen, regardless of the situation, is Bradford.

ART

Anything you say.

Billy isn't sure if that's a yes or a no. You can never tell with Art. Billy disappears into the tunnel. *

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

The game telecast plays silently on the TV. Billy "ignores" it as he lifts weights, but can't ignore the live collective groan of 30,000 fans echoing through the corridors, and looks up at the broadcast to see that the Indians just got a second baserunner on.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER - NIGHT

The A's are up by three, but obviously that lead is tenuous now. Art, at the dugout railing but not liking it, lumbers out to pull his starter, Tim Hudson. Halfway to the mound, he touches his left arm.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - SAME TIME

Billy sees Magnante leave the pen on the TV -

INT. VIDEO ROOM - SAME TIME

Paul hears something crash in the weight room and glimpses Billy heading to the tunnel that leads to the dugout -

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - CONTINUOUS

On the mound, Art hands the ball to Magnante and heads back toward the dugout. He sees Billy and slows. The plate umpire notices and follows Art's sight line, sees Billy in the dugout and walks over there ahead of Art.

UMPIRE

You can't be in there, Billy.

Billy doesn't move. Just stares at Art on the field. *

UMPIRE *

Players and coaches only, you know that. *

Billy does know that, of course, but only stares at Art. *

UMPIRE

Billy, you're holding up the game, come on.

Everyone on the field, and the few in the dugout, stare at Billy as he keeps staring at Art. *

UMPIRE

Do I have to get security over here?

Now the fans are beginning to wonder what's holding things up and you can hear it as Billy keeps staring at Art. The umpire waves to security guys along the left field line. They trot over and confer with him. Then, looking embarrassed, they go into dugout.

SECURITY GUY

Mr. Beane?
(nothing from Billy)
Mr. Beane?

He finally shifts his look from Art to them.

BILLY

I was just leaving, guys. Thanks.

And he calmly leaves.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER - NIGHT

Magnante mops his brow, squints for the sign, winds up and makes his pitch. It misses low and Jim Thome trots to first, loading the bases.

Back on the bench of the dugout - not at the railing - Art watches Milton Bradley come up and quickly bloop a single, scoring two.

Magnante is dying as Lee Stevens comes up with two still on. To the horror of all, Stevens sends a Magnante pitch over the wall. Art sighs. There will now be even more hell to pay.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

It's just one game as far as most of the players are concerned, but for Magnante, it's not. No game is just one game when you're 37 years old, have braces on you legs, and get shelled like he did tonight. He sits glumly at his locker.

Billy appears and strides into Art's office, closing the door. Some of the players look at the closed door. They can't hear many of the words, but a few cut through - like 'fuck,' and 'fucking,' and 'motherfucking.'

The office door opens again, but just long enough for Billy to step out and slam it. Magnante tries to hide but finds starter, Tim Hudson, already there.

MAGNANTE

I'm not here.

HUDSON

Neither am I.

Magnate peeks around the corner and sees to his great relief that Billy is gone.

INT. BILLY'S CONDOMINIUM - LATER - NIGHT

He can't sleep. Stares out his living room window. Thinking or plotting or despairing or all three. Scrolls down to "Paul" on his cell phone, hits the green button.

PAUL

(asleep)
Hello?

BILLY

You asleep?
(Paul grunts 'yeah')
How can you sleep when we're losing like this?
(Paul grunts 'what?')
If I can't sleep, you're not going to sleep. Get up.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - DAY

The early-bird fan fanatics are arriving. So are the players at the players' entrance -

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - DAY

As Magnante suits up in the A's locker room, and Rincon suits up in the Visitors' -

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME - DAY

Billy sticks some tobacco under his lip. The Indians' GM, Mark Shapiro, is on the speakerphone. Paul's nearby with his laptop.

A legend appears: July 31 - Trade Deadline

BILLY

Let's be honest, Mark. A premiere setup man is not going to get you any closer to the playoffs. It's a luxury you can't afford.

SHAPIRO

And you can? There's half a million on Rincon's contract and at least one other suitor.

BILLY

By at least one, you mean one? Who is it?

SHAPIRO

I'd rather not say.

PAUL

(whispers)
San Francisco.

BILLY

I'll call you back.

He hangs up, starts dialing a number from the printed list of GM's direct lines.

PAUL

What do you think we can get for Magnante?

BILLY

Nothing. What's left on Venafro's contract?

PAUL

Two-seventy-five.

BILLY

San Francisco might be interested in Venafro. If they are, Shapiro's only got one buyer for Rincon. Me.

Billy's call to the Giants' GM connects.

BILLY

Sabes. Billy. You like Venafro. I can let you have him for almost nothing.

SABEAN

(smelling a rat)
Why would you do that, Billy?

BILLY

Because I'm magnanimous.

SABEAN

Uh-huh.

BILLY

Think about it and call me back.

He calls Shapiro back.

BILLY

Mark -

SHAPIRO

You can't afford him, Billy.

BILLY

You sure about that? I get the impression the market for Rincon is softening. You might want to make sure whoever's interested is still interested. Call me back.

He hangs up. As he dials another number -

BILLY

What about the Mets for Venafro?

PAUL

You just offered him to the Giants.

BILLY

Between Bonds, Nen, Kent, and Snow, they can't afford car fare. I just need them to cool on Rincon.

His call connects, again on speaker.

PHILLIPS

Steve Phillips.

BILLY

Steve. Billy. I hear you're looking for a left-handed reliever. What do you think of Venafro? I can make it quick and easy for you.

PHILLIPS

What's the angle?

BILLY

No angle.

PHILLIPS

Who am I getting fleeced for?

BILLY

Hang on a second.

He puts him on hold. Paul is already scrolling through the Mets' farm system, his eyes darting around the stats.

PAUL

Gonzalez maybe?

BILLY

How old?

PAUL

Twenty-nine.

BILLY

Twenty-nine and in Double-A?
Forget it.

PAUL

Redman? No. Salazar? No.
Furbush?

BILLY

Furbush? I'd take him for his
name alone.

PAUL

Bates. Bates.

Billy punches the phone off hold.

BILLY

Bates.

PHILLIPS

Bates? I like Bates.

BILLY

You don't even know who Bates is.

Paul answers a second blinking line while Billy continues with Phillips -

PHILLIPS

Is Venafro hurt?

BILLY

No, he's not hurt. He's fine.
This is just a situation for us.

PHILLIPS

Last couple of times out, he got
hammered.

BILLY

That was Art. Art misused him.
(to Paul)
What.

PAUL

It's Steve.

BILLY

I'm on with Steve.

PAUL

Steve Schott.

BILLY

Tell him to hold.
(to Steve Phillips)
Look. Steve. Here's the deal.
I'm being straight with you. I'm
getting Rincon. It's a done deal.
It's done.

PHILLIPS

I heard the Giants -

BILLY

No, the Giants want Venafro. And
I told them they can have him for
Luke Robertson -

PAUL

Anderson -

BILLY

Luke Anderson. But I'd rather
deal with you. Because you can
give me Bates and two hundred and
twenty-five thousand cash and the
Giants can't.

Billy's look to Paul says, Doesn't hurt to ask. As they
listen to silence on Phillips' side of the call -

PAUL

Schott is still holding.

PHILLIPS

I'll think about it.

BILLY

Of course. Think. But whoever
calls me back first gets Venafro.

He hangs up. Looks for the blinking light that belongs
to his owner.

PAUL

He hung up.

Suddenly the phone rings again. Paul answers.

PAUL

Sorry, Mr. Schott.

(listens)

Oh. Hang on a second.

It's not Steve Schott. It's someone else. Paul puts the call on hold.

PAUL

It's Omar with the Expos.

BILLY

Omar? Why would Omar be calling?

PAUL

Cliff Floyd?

BILLY

Is that possible? Let me think.

He thinks for three seconds and hits the speaker button.

BILLY

Omar! What's up?

Omar Minaya's voice is unlike the other GMs' voices we've heard. It's soft and too trusting.

OMAR

Hi, Billy. Listen, I was just calling to say Floyd is unavailable.

BILLY

Did I say I wanted Floyd?

OMAR

Last year.

BILLY

Last year?

OMAR

I'm looking at his contract and it says he can veto a trade to Oakland.

BILLY

Oakland and who else?

OMAR

Only Oakland. Anywhere else is
okay with him.

BILLY

That's why you're calling?
Thanks, Omar, that makes me feel
great.

OMAR

I just thought, if you were still
interested, you should (know) -

BILLY

Wait.

OMAR

What?

Billy's most devious synapses are firing.

BILLY

Where's he going?

OMAR

I'm talking to the Red Sox.

BILLY

What are they giving you?

OMAR

Two million, Rolando Arrojo and
Seung-jun Song.

Billy lets some silence draw out for effect.

OMAR

Are you there?

BILLY

You really want to do that, Omar?
You really like those guys?
Arrojo and Sing Song?

OMAR

Seung-jun Song. Yes.

BILLY

And two million sounds good to
you?

OMAR

Yes.

BILLY

Then you should do it.

OMAR

(pause)

Why shouldn't I?

BILLY

Because I could get you more.

OMAR

What do you mean?

BILLY

You don't have the stomach to extract every last hunk of flesh out of the Red Sox, Omar, but I do. Let me. Give me Cliff Floyd for five minutes and I'll get you two and a half million, Arrojo, Sing Song, and another player.

Silence. Then -

OMAR

What would you get out of it?

BILLY

The third player you didn't have to begin with.

OMAR

Who?

BILLY

His name is Youkilis.

Paul suddenly comes alive. Billy puts a finger to his lips - shhhh.

OMAR

Who?

BILLY

He's nobody. A fat Double-A third baseman. Kevin Youkilis.

Another silence on Omar's end of the call. Somebody with him is probably hurriedly looking up Youkilis. Finally -

OMAR

I'll see what I can do.

BILLY

Here's how you do it. I'll walk you through it. You call them and

OMAR

I know, ask for Youkilis.

BILLY

No! You don't ask for Youkilis, Omar. You tell them Youkilis is in the deal or there's no deal. And hang up. I guarantee you they'll call you right back and give you everything. They're not going to blow a deal for Cliff Floyd over Kevin Youkilis. They don't know who Youkilis is any more than you do. Here, let me read you the Boston Globe's headline tomorrow: "Sox Lose Floyd to Keep Fat Minor Leaguer."

Omar is sweet, but no fool.

OMAR

Who is Youkilis, Billy?

BILLY

I told you.

OMAR

You did but you didn't. You want him for some reason.

BILLY

I'm doing a friend of mine a sentimental favor. That's all, I swear.

OMAR

I'll call them and see.

BILLY

Call me back.

He hangs up. Paul can't believe what Billy just did for him.

PAUL

Thank you.

BILLY

Don't thank me yet, he's probably gonna blow it.

Billy unhappily regards the phone that's not ringing. *

BILLY
Why isn't anybody calling? *

He hates the silence. Dials another number from memory. *

BILLY
Calling Schott back. Pick it up.
I'm on the other line. *

Paul picks up the receiver and listens to it ring. Billy is not on another line.

SCHOTT
Hello?

PAUL
Mr. Schott, it's Paul DePodesta.
Sorry I left you on hold. Billy
asked me to call you back. He's
on another line.

BILLY
Tell him I need two hundred and
twenty-five grand for Rincon.

PAUL
Billy says he needs two hundred
and twenty-five thousand dollars
for Ricardo Rincon.
(pause, to Billy)
No.

BILLY
Tell him I'll pay it, but when I
sell him next year for twice that,
I keep it the money.

PAUL
Billy says he'll pay for Rincon
himself, sell him, and keep the
profit.

Paul listens to whatever Steve Schott is saying, thanks him, and hangs up.

PAUL
He says he'll pay for Rincon.

Billy dials Shapiro's number.

BILLY
Mark. Billy. Sorry it took so
long. Here's the deal.
(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)
I don't want Rincon pitching
against me tonight. Tell him to
change his clothes. I got you the
money. Yeah. Thanks.

He hangs up.

BILLY
Go down and release Magnante.

PAUL
I don't want to do that again.

BILLY
Don't be such a girl.

PAUL
Billy, he's got braces on his
legs.

BILLY
I don't give a fuck. Somebody's
got to tell him.

As Billy dials an extension, Paul stays put. *

BILLY
Voos. You got twenty minutes to
make Ricardo Rincon a jersey. Put
any number on it. *

The second he hangs up the phone, it rings. *

BILLY
Billy Beane. *
(pause) *
Oh, hi, Ricardo. *
(pause) *
His interpreter, sorry. *
(pause) *
Yeah, it is sudden. But tell him *
he's going to love it here. Great *
bunch of guys. *
(pause) *
Now. Yes, right now. Tell him *
for me, Bienvenido. *

He hangs up. *

PAUL
What about Art? *

BILLY
What about Art. *

PAUL

Can Art tell Mags?

*
*

Great idea. Billy dials another extension.

*

BILLY

Art. Billy. The good news is Ricardo Rincon's heading over to the clubhouse. The bad new is you got to tell Magnante he threw his last pitch in the major leagues last night.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

ART

(pause)

No.

*
*
*

INT. A'S LOCKER ROOM - 20 MINUTES LATER

*

A sewing machine needle bangs the last of the stitching on an "N." Hands pull the jersey out and give it, along with pants and socks, to Ricardo Rincon.

Standing with his interpreter with the new uniform in his arms like a prison inmate, Rincon looks around at the "great bunch of guys" he doesn't know, all stealing looks to Art's office as they get ready for the game.

*
*
*
*

In the office, Magnante, still in uniform, stares at the floor. Billy has already told him the bad news and now waits for him to get on with it and leave. Art is nowhere to be seen. Eventually -

*
*
*
*

MAGNANTE

My wife brought my kids to the game. I can't leave now without telling them why.

*
*
*
*

BILLY

You can hang out here till the game's over if you want.

*
*
*

MAGNANTE

(meaning the opposite)

That's nice of you.

*
*
*

BILLY

Then don't. Makes no difference to me.

*
*
*

Magnante's life is over and it reads on his face, and Billy checking his watch isn't making it any easier.

*
*

MAGNANTE

Somehow I doubt this is how it happened to you.

*
*
*

BILLY

You're right. I had the good sense to quit because I saw it coming. And so did you. You chose not to.

*
*
*
*
*

Magnante gets up and leaves the office without saying goodbye to Billy. Comes past his teammates who all know what must have gone on in there. Unbuttons his jersey as he crosses to his locker. Finds Rincon there, putting on his new jersey, the interpreter next to him. To Rincon -

*
*
*
*
*

MAGNANTE

You speak English?

*

RINCON

Un poco.

MAGNANTE

This is all you need to know:
Fuck - Billy - Beane.

*

The synthesized organ intro of The Who's 'Won't Get Fooled Again' begins and carries over -

A GRAPHIC

of the AL West standings - from the start of the season until now - the teams shifting positions as the games-out and winning percentage numbers change like on an adding machine, too fast for us to really follow - but then:

The calculations abruptly lock and we're given enough time to understand where we - and Oakland - are after 120 games:

<u>AL West</u>	<u>GB</u>	<u>WP</u>
Seattle	---	.610
Anaheim	2.0	.593
Oakland	4.5	.571
Texas	21.5	.427

As the graphic cuts to a bright wide shot of Oakland's Coliseum - with only a quarter of the seats filled - Pete Townsend's SG hits like an explosion over -

Barry Zito - on his way to the American League Cy Young Award - hurls his strikeout pitch - his curveball - past the Blue Jays' Brian Leshar -

The wheels of the team jet lift off -

REPORTER

The A's begin this road trip
having won the last five at home,
picking up two games on the Angels
and Mariners -

Jacob's Field. Terrence Long leading off first -

ANNOUNCER

2-1 on Hernandez, a stealer's
count, so expect Long to be
running -

Long isn't going anywhere. Stays put on the pitch.

ANNOUNCER

I guess not.

Jacob's Field. Night game. Justice is up, and as he's
been doing more and more lately, takes, and is rewarded
with a walk -

The standings-graphic shows they have just moved up into
a three-way tie for first place.

The plane takes off from Cleveland Hopkins Airport -

REPORTER

Who would have thought in April
I'd be saying this: The A's head
to Detroit having won their ninth
game in a row -

Tiger Stadium, Detroit. Ricardo Rincon - comfortable
now with Billy's "great bunch of guys - walks off the
mound as strike three is called. The bench clears to
congratulate him -

The plane takes off from Wayne County Airport -

Kaufmann Stadium, Kansas City, as Miguel Tejada - Mr.
Swing at Everything - swings at something and drives it
in the gap -

KC REPORTER V/O

Oakland's offense has exploded,
scoring 40 runs in the last four
games -

Later in the game, Bradford scares Carlos Beltran with
an inside pitch from hell. Beltran stares at him, then
grounds out to second.

KC REPORTER

As has its pitching. I'm here with Chad Bradford, and I have to ask, where on earth did you learn to throw like that?

Chad manages to overcome his shyness just enough to allow a slight smile at the camera.

CHAD

Um ... my dad.

KC REPORTER

Your dad had some unusual notions about how to throw a baseball.

CHAD

Actually he had a stroke.

Kauffman Stadium, next day. The A's bench pours from the dugout to congratulate those on the field with more than usual excitement - because the standings-graphic shows:

<u>AL West</u>	<u>GB</u>	<u>WP</u>
Oakland	---	.619
Anaheim	4.0	.591
Seattle	4.5	.586
Texas	22.5	.450

The plane touches down at Oakland International -

The fans are coming back. The Coliseum is half full for this home day game against the Twins. As Hernandez - all 230-pounds of him - barely makes it to second on what should have been a triple -

Billy and Paul watch the game in the weight room -

BILL KING (TV)

You got to hand it to Art Howe. He's managing this unorthodox team in an unorthodox way. They are not bunting. They are not stealing. They are just winning. And Art Howe is the reason.

Billy gives Paul a world-weary look before glancing back to the TV.

PAUL

You know what I think the reason is?

BILLY

Thank you, Paul, I appreciate it.

*
*

PAUL

That's not what I was going to say. I was going to say there's not one Billy Beane on this team.

*
*
*
*

Billy glances over at him again. Eventually -

*

BILLY

Well, that's lucky, I guess.

*
*

PAUL

Was it? Or was it conscious?

*
*

BILLY

Was what?

*
*

PAUL

They can't throw. They can't run. They can't field. They don't even look like ballplayers, most of them. All they can do is the one thing you couldn't. Hit.

*
*
*
*
*
*

BILLY

Your next patient's in the waiting room, doctor. This one's had enough. Thanks for trying.

*
*
*
*

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - NIGHT GAME

*

Long lines at the souvenir stands. Money changing hands. The Coliseum's three-quarters full now as John Mabry hits a solo shot against Twins starter Joe Mays -

GREG PAPA

This is getting eerie now and far be it from me to jinx it by saying how many consecutive games the A's have won -

BILL KING

Seventeen - and ten of those were on the road.

GREG PAPA

You said it, not me. It's on the record. If they lose tonight, you can answer to Billy Beane.

Roger Daltrey's anthemic scream is overtaken by an even-louder mechanized roar as -

EXT. OAKLAND - LATE AFTERNOON

From a news chopper overhead, the Coliseum looks like its counterpart in Rome -

Legend: September 4, 2002

And all roads leading to it are jammed with traffic.

REPORTER

None of the Oakland fans in their cars down there have forgotten the A's inglorious history-making choke in Game 5 of the AL division series last October -

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATE AFTERNOON

Tickets are torn and purses searched as a record breaking number of fans stream into the stadium.

REPORTER

Tonight, one game shy of 20 consecutive wins, they have a shot at redemption. How rare is it to win 20 games in a row? This rare: No American League team has ever done it.

INT. A'S LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

It's like a tomb. The players getting ready without music or chat. Each fretting he'll be the one who'll make the error, or not get the hit tonight, that will cost them the game.

Tejada, Chavez, Mabry, Durham, Dye, Ellis, Hernandez, Long, Rincon, Hudson - all sitting, standing, buttoning or pacing alone.

Bradford pulls his cap low, trying to look invisible. Hatteberg stares at the floor, then at David Justice as he slips a dollar bill into the soda machine.

SCOTT

Dave?

Justice, the only player who doesn't look nervous, glances over.

SCOTT
What's your greatest fear?

JUSTICE
Palimony.

SCOTT
I'm serious.

JUSTICE
So am I.

Justice pulls his soda from the machine, opens it and sips as Hatteberg stares at the floor again.

JUSTICE
What's your greatest fear?

SCOTT
Bill Buckner.

INT. CAR - MOVING - EVENING

Billy heads east on 580 with Bob Mould on the CD player. His cell phone rings. He answers it with -

BILLY
Don't tell me the score, Paul.

SHARON
It's me, Billy.

It's his ex-wife.

SHARON
How you feeling? Nervous?

BILLY
Not at all.

His hands are gripping the wheel like they used to with her in the car.

SHARON
I just wanted to call and say that, you know, everything's going to go great tonight ... but if it doesn't ... it doesn't mean anything.

BILLY
The players know that.

SHARON

I mean about you.

Nothing from Billy.

SHARON

Casey wants to say hi.

CASEY

Hi, dad.

BILLY

Hi, honey.

CASEY

Good luck tonight.

BILLY

Thanks.

CASEY

I can hear the music.

BILLY

It's your music.

CASEY

Are you on your way to the stadium?

BILLY

I'm on my way to Visalia, to see a Single-A catcher who eats too much and everyone hates.

CASEY

Dad - turn around. You have to see the game.

BILLY

No, I don't.

CASEY

Turn around.

BILLY

I'll talk to you later, sweetheart. I love you.

He hangs up and stares at the long winding highway ahead, uncharacteristically reflective, contemplating either the loss he may experience tonight, or the one earlier in his life.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - DUGOUT - EVENING

Art posts the lineup and crosses to the plate umpire to give him a copy. Hatteberg stares at the little card on the dugout wall from afar. Works up the courage to walk over there and have a look. Sees "Mabry (1B)" and breathes a huge sigh of relief.

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Billy's hands clutch the steering wheel like its Art's throat. The not-knowing what's going on in the game is killing him. Finally, even as he knows he'll hate himself for it, he switches the Social D music on the CD over to radio -

ANNOUNCER

Tim Hudson is carving through this Royals' lineup, and, at the end of three, it's A's 11, Royals nothing.

Billy can't believe it. His hands relax on the wheel. The broadcast cuts to a perky commercial and he steers the car onto a ramp. He's turning around. Switches the radio back to Mike Ness.

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER - NIGHT

Billy strides through an underground corridor which is echoing with the cheers of 55,000 fans. Comes into the locker room and finds Paul watching the game on the TV - with the sound off - in Art's office.

BILLY

Paul. Come on, let's enjoy it.

Paul reaches for the remote to turn the sound on.

BILLY

No. Let's enjoy it.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER

Billy and Paul emerge from a tunnel to a sight Billy has denied himself for 138 games: The lit-up ballpark with a game in play.

Unfortunately, the idyllic moment, like all Billy's idyllic moments in baseball, is short-lived as Tejada drops a routine double-play throw from Ellis and the Royals get on the board.

Billy looks sick. It's still a rout at 11 to 1, but that's missing the point.

BILLY

I shouldn't be here. It's bad luck.

PAUL

It's 11 to 1. Relax.

But Billy is sure his presence pushed that one run across. He disappears back in the tunnel to resume his vigil - or penance - underground.

INT. ART'S OFFICE - LATER

The TV is silent, but the little banner on the screen reads: A's 11, Royals 5. As Billy and Paul stare at it, Art emerges from the dugout to pull Hudson.

BILLY

It better be Bradford.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - SAME TIME

It is. Chad Bradford comes off the bullpen mound to relieve Hudson, and begins counting his steps -

CHAD

One, two, three, four -

INT. ART'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Billy and Paul watch Chad take the game ball from Art.

PAUL

No A's team has lost an 11-run lead since the Philadelphia A's in 1936.

Billy looks at him.

BILLY

Is that supposed to make me feel better, or worse?

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - SAME TIME

Chad drops his little white rock next to the rosin bag. Climbs back atop the mound. Covers his mouth with his glove, closes his eyes and whispers -

CHAD

I know what it is to be in need
and to have plenty. I am content.
I can do all things through Christ
who gives me strength -

INT. ART'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Watching Bradford on the TV -

PAUL

Is he praying?

BILLY

If I could get him to believe less
in the Lord and more in the power
of the ground ball, he'd knock a
full point off his ERA.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER

Chad walks the first batter he faces, Brent Mayne. The crowd grows anxious.

His first submariner pitch to the next batter, Dee Brown, goes awry, almost hitting the Royals' Neifi Perez in the on-deck circle.

He gets behind in the count and loses him. As Dee trots to first, a disgruntled A's bleacher fan hurls a roll of toilet paper into center field as others boo Bradford.

Chad manages to get Perez to hit a slow grounder to Mabry's right, but is late covering and everyone's safe. The bases are loaded and the fans want Chad's head.

In the stands, a woman who must be Chad's mother, puts her hands together to her lips to pray -

The next Royal, Luis Ordaz hits a grounder to Tejada who tries for the force at home and misses. 11-6, bases still loaded, and nobody out.

As Art emerges from the dugout to pull Bradford, he notices the red light on the nearest TV camera.

Knowing Billy will be watching wherever he is, he looks directly into in with an expression that says, Happy?

INT. ART'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Billy looks at Art looking at him on the TV.

BILLY

Oh, fuck you.

As Ricardo Rincon is summoned from the pen and trots toward the mound -

BILLY

What are the odds of winning twenty games in a row? I know you've looked.

PAUL

1 in 75,000.

BILLY

And the odds of blowing an 11-run lead?

PAUL

1 in 75,000.

BILL JAMES

regards us unhappily from his nice STATS Inc. office. The sounds of the Coliseum are silenced.

BILL JAMES

There exists in the world - and in baseball - forces of negative momentum which act to reduce the differences between strong teams and weak teams, teams which are ahead are behind, good players and bad players -

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER

Rincon, a good player, is gone already. Jeff Tam is on the mound now. The Royals' Mike Sweeney up. Time seems to have altered. Slowed down.

BILL JAMES V/O

The balance of strategies always favors the team which is behind.

(MORE)

BILL JAMES V/O (CONT'D)

Psychology always pulls the winners down and push the losers up.

INT. ART'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Billy watches Tam squint for the sign on TV.

BILLY

Don't throw the sinker. He's waiting for it.

BILL JAMES V/O

And people who want very badly to win - so much that it becomes a need - discover that need is a weakness. And in some people it's even more than that. It's a curse.

Tam throws his "super-sinker" and Sweeney golfs it over the left field wall.

BILLY

Fucking Tam.

Billy can't take it anymore. Throws a paperweight for the strike that Tam couldn't into Art's framed Optimist's Creed hanging on the wall, and leaves.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER

The scoreboard: 11-10. The A's closer, Billy Koch, is on the mound now, facing Luis Alicea. Koch winds up and fires and Alicea drives it to left. Byrnes traps it and throws to the plate but it's too late to keep Kit Pellow from scoring from second.

INT. ART'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Paul listens to things crashing into lockers.

INT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER

Bottom of the ninth. 11 to 11. In the dugout -

ART

Hatte. Grab a bat.

Scott Hatteberg actually points to himself and mouths, Me? Then pulls a bat from the rack and makes the long walk to the plate as Roy Steele's booming voice echoes:

VOICE OF GOD

Pinch hitting, for Eric Byrnes -
Scott Hat-te-berg.

His wife Elizabeth watches him settle into the box. He stares at the Royals' closer, Jason Grimsley, and, when the first pitch comes, manages to lay off it.

UMPIRE

Ball!

Scott steps out of the box. Tries to catch his breath. Looks at 55,528 fans looking at him. Steps back in and stares at the point in space he believes the next pitch will leave Grimsley's hand. When it comes, he sees it. Swings. And -

We are back in The Natural - if only for a few moments - as the barrel of Scott's bat finds the ball -

Every head in both dugouts tilts up - every head in the Coliseum tilts up - Elizabeth Hatteberg's head tilts up -

Billy - not watching in the locker room - listens to a sudden hush of 55,000 people, a broken bat in his hand -

As Scott hurries to first, praying it's a single, the ball sails over the 362 sign in right center -

The A's pour out of the dugout and bullpen and engulf him as he crosses home plate. He disappears under a sea of green and yellow uniforms -

INT. ART'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Billy looks in to see the televised version of the celebration on the field that's accompanied by the live echoing sounds of the ecstatic fans. Then at Paul, who is amazingly calm considering what's just happened.

PAUL

Most consecutive wins in AL
history. Congratulations, Billy.

INT. A'S LOCKER ROOM - LATER

The place is packed with players, players' wives, coaches and news crews. There's no champagne-spraying, but they feel like they just won the World Series. In fact, they've accomplished something much more rare.

Billy feels like they just dodged a bullet. There's something melancholy about how he watches his players - many of whom he plucked from obscurity - as reporters swirl around them. Surely, it would feel better if he were one of them. Paul comes up to him and his yet-another-new girlfriend.

PAUL

Hi, I'm Paul.

NEW GIRLFRIEND

I'm Katie. Hi.

They shake hands. Katie excuses herself.

BILLY

Where you going?

NEW GIRLFRIEND

To get a Coke.

He motions her back, takes out his wallet, hands her a dollar. As she goes off with it to the vending machines -

PAUL

What happened to what's-her-name, the last one?

BILLY

Traded her.

SCHOTT

Billy!

He sees Steve Schott gesturing at him to join in an interview he's doing. Billy waves it off, no. Schott cuts it short and, as he comes over to him, Paul leaves.

SCHOTT

Why not.

BILLY

That's the same guy who said on opening day someone ought to throw me from the Bay Bridge.

SCHOTT

He's not saying that now. He's singing your praises.

BILLY

If you'll let me, I'll crush his larynx and we'll see how good he sings.

SCHOTT

Look at this.

He shows Billy a printout listing the American League West teams and their respective payrolls.

SCHOTT

The standings are in inverse order to the payrolls. 41 million and were in first. Anaheim, Seattle. Texas: A hundred and six million. Last.

BILLY

We made a good faucet.

SCHOTT

You built me a beautiful house. I'm proud of you.

*

Billy nods. But that's about all. As Schott wanders off to do another interview, Art Howe does one -

*

*

ART

Down in Anaheim, all they talk about is the manager. Most people don't even know who the General Manager is down there. They just know Scioscia.

REPORTER

People appreciate you here, Art.

ART

Which people? My people? With all the years I've been here, and all we've accomplished - 102 games last year and on a pace to beat that this year - don't you think I might've been offered a long-term contract by now? I haven't.

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As the celebration continues around Billy - but none of it focused on him -

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ELIZABETH

Mr. Beane?

*

Billy turns, sees her in the tunnel/locker doorway.

ELIZABETH

Thank you.

*

BILLY

Your husband did it, not me.

ELIZABETH

He wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you. You're the only one who believed in him.

He watches with a kind of horror as she starts to cry, and, no doubt wishing there were someone else who could perform the function, it sort of falls to him to comfort her with an awkward embrace.

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BILLY

It's all right.

*
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ELIZABETH

You don't know what it's like to have everyone think you're a failure.

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He doesn't admit it, but of course he does know.

*

BILLY

You never thought that.

*
*

ELIZABETH

Yes, I did.

*
*

And that admission really makes her cry, which makes Billy all the more uncomfortable with his comforting job.

*
*

ELIZABETH

And he knows I did.

*
*

BILLY

It's all right. It's okay. Everything's okay now.

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*

But she just keep holding onto him.

*

INT. APPLEBEE'S RESTAURANT - LATER - NIGHT

Unlike Steve Schott, Billy doesn't look proud, or all that interested in the pretty waitress glancing his way as she waits at the bar for some drinks. Perhaps it was Elizabeth Hatteberg's confession to her priest - him - that's put him in this uncharacteristic quiet mood.

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PAUL

I can't think of one thing to be morose about on a night like this. Not even for you.

BILLY

How about this: We win the division and get shut out in the series.

PAUL

Even that can't take this away.

BILLY

No? If we lose the playoffs again, I can guarantee you no one is going to say, Look what they did in the regular season - they made a team out of nothing - they won twenty in a row - they won as many games as the Yankees with a fraction of the money. They're going to say - just like last year - fire Billy Beane.

PAUL

You don't care what they say.

BILLY

I don't.

But, of course, he does.

BILLY

They're also going to say, fire Paul Depodesta.

PAUL

I don't care.

Billy's look to him says, Sure. The waitress appears with their drinks. Sets Paul's down on a coaster -

WAITRESS

7-Up for you.

PAUL

Thanks, Kimmi.

WAITRESS

Mojito for you.

(sets Billy's down on a coaster)

Sure I can't get you something else. Some Buffalo Wings, or a Quesadilla Tower?

PAUL

No, thanks.

As she goes off, Billy doesn't look after her. He's noticed the phone number scribbled on his coaster, and turns it so it faces up.

Paul sees it, too, and wonders perhaps if Billy is realizing as he looks at it where a decade of swapping girlfriends like ballplayers has gotten him.

But Paul, of all people should know - and so should we - old habits die even harder than baseball myths. Billy puts the coaster in his pocket.

BILL JAMES

looks at us just a little less sourly than we're used to. He's in a different office. Wearing a Red Sox windbreaker.

A Chapter Title appears under him: Baseball

*

BILL JAMES

Most people in Baseball are idiots. That goes without saying. And you're an idiot, too, if you think I care about statistics. I don't care about statistics. Statistics aren't the point. The point is understanding. The point is making sense out of chaos. The point - is to reveal the true worth of the individual.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - NIGHT

The same shot as at the beginning: the Coliseum from high above, only this time the final game of the division series is being played at home. But still it's silent.

Legend: 5th Game 2002 ALDS - A's vs Twins

BILL JAMES V/O

I've spent my life trying to do that, but Baseball doesn't want to change because Baseball is afraid of change, and I've about had it with Baseball. Listen to this. Listen to Baseball -

As we drift over the game - the A's batting in the ninth - we begin to hear the crowd and an announcer -

JOE MORGAN V/O

The flaw in the A's thinking - and this comes from the top of their organization - is their failure to comprehend you have to manufacture runs in the post-season.

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We descend to field level and move through the A's dugout. Past the faces of the players we've come to know. Thousand yard stares. They must be losing.

JOE MORGAN V/O

You have to steal. You have to bunt. You have to sacrifice. You have to trust in Small Ball - not Billy Ball. The A's wait for the home run. They are still waiting.

*
*

We duck into the dugout tunnel. As we move along it, the sounds change from live to electronic -

JOE MORGAN V/O

They think they've devised a science to win games. They think it resides in a computer.

The sound suddenly cuts out. We continue to move down the dimly-lit cinder-block corridor. In a few moments the sound comes back on:

JOE MORGAN V/O

They thumb their nose at fundamentals. At tradition. At Baseball.

We reach an underground room where a solitary figure bench-presses weights. The TV displays the game, but the man working out isn't watching it.

JOE MORGAN V/O

They're bean-counters in Oakland. That's bean with an "e" at the end. They're card-counters at the blackjack table who have forgotten the house always wins. Which is why they're here again - teetering on the brink of elimination.

PAUL

Oh, shut the fuck up.

It's Paul lifting weights, not Billy. He hits the mute button on the remote. Continues his workout.

Then sits up and looks at the TV to see the last play of the game and the Twins streaming onto the field to build a joyous human mountain.

Paul seems to take the series loss in stride. Walks from the weight room to the locker room where the couple of clubhouse workers who wrapped it in plastic now sit there in silence.

Paul regards them a moment. Then grabs a bat and beats it against lockers until it breaks.

He stands there breathing hard. Spent. Lets the bat handle fall from his hand. As it clatters to the floor, he turns to look at the stadium guys again, but sees -

Billy. Who is the picture of calm as he looks at Paul covered in sweat. Paul regards him. Did Billy watch the game? Does he know the A's lost the series? Does he care? Billy comes closer and whispers -

BILLY

I've had an inspiration: Trade Art.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

The list of GM's next to the phone. One of them is circled: Steve Phillips, New York Mets.

BILLY

Steve. Billy.

He punches the speaker button so Paul can hear.

BILLY

What's happening with Bobby Valentine?

PHILLIPS

Between us?

BILLY

He's gone?

PHILLIPS

Tomorrow.

BILLY

I called at the right time then.

PHILLIPS

(pause)
Art?

BILLY
I love Art. I love the man.
But I can't afford him anymore.
Interested?

PHILLIPS
Have him call me.

BILLY
I'll have him call you if you'll
throw in that Double-A-what's-his-
name-backup-catcher at Binghamton -

PAUL
Virgil Chevalier.

BILLY
Chevalier.

PHILLIPS
You want to trade Art for a
player?

BILLY
A nobody player. You'll never
miss him. And you get the best
manager in baseball.

Silence on the other end of the line.

BILLY
I'm calling Cleveland, Steve.

PHILLIPS
Okay, okay. Done.

Billy hangs up.

BILLY
I feel much better.

PAUL
Trades always make you feel
better.

BILLY
None more than that one.

PAUL
Well done.

Billy seems at peace. Looks at Paul, mentor to acolyte.

PAUL
What.

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BILLY

You know who's undervalued? You.
You make less than the worst
player in baseball.

PAUL

Guess you can't trade me for much
then.

BILLY

I guess not.

As Billy looks at Paul, his expression - very slowly -
changes as something occurs to him ...

BILLY

I wonder if I could trade me?

EXT. BOSTON - DAY

The Red Sox new owner, billionaire John Henry, stands
with Billy at home plate of Fenway Park, admiring the
history-worn beauty of the venerable stadium.

HENRY

No offense to Oakland, Billy, but
this is a ball park.

BILLY

It is. I admit it.

HENRY

Ever play here?

FLASHCUT TO -

Young Billy striking out at Fenway -

BACK TO FENWAY NOW -

BILLY

No.

HENRY

That's a shame.

He calls out to a man in the otherwise-empty Sox dugout:

HENRY

Bill!

The man looks up from the sausage and onion sandwich
he's eating and we see it's our old friend, Bill James.
Henry points to Billy -

HENRY

Billy Beane!

Bill James, who seems no more interested in Billy Beane than he is in us, gives a lazy wave.

HENRY

Bill's my new Senior Consultant. Why it took someone so long to hire this guy is beyond me.

BILLY

Because Baseball hates him.

HENRY

Money buys a lot of things. One of them is the luxury to disregard what Baseball thinks. Let's walk.

They begin walking around the bases like it's a path through a park, which in a way it is.

HENRY

My goal with the Red Sox is the same as every owner since 1920 - to break the Curse of The Bambino. My plan to accomplish this is to rebuild the team - only with a lot more money - in the image of the A's. To do that I need you, and I'm willing to pay for it. I think you're worth it. I think you've proven that. Do you think you're worth it?

BILLY

How much are we talking about?

HENRY

More than any GM has made in the history of baseball.

BILLY

How much?

HENRY

Twelve and a half million for five years.

It's more than Billy expected. It's more than any GM could expect. As they round third and stroll toward home on their little walk -

HENRY

You belong in Boston, Billy. You belong with Johnny Damon and Nomar Garciaparra and Manny Ramirez and Pedro Martinez. You belong on that team.

They stop at home and Billy regards the stadium again - like he did when he was 25 and couldn't hit a change-up over the plate. He's hit one now, though, as a GM - over the Green Monster.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - OAKLAND - DAY

The A's new GM sits behind Billy's desk: Paul.

The A's outgoing GM sits where Paul used to always sit: Billy.

PAUL

That's great, Billy. It's amazing. But I don't think it's enough. I think you're worth more than that.

BILLY

He's not going to pay any more.

PAUL

No?

Paul glances down at the GM/Owners phone list and dials one of the numbers on it. It connects.

PAUL

Mr. Henry, please. Paul DePodesta.

Paul switches it to speaker as the call is transferred.

HENRY

Hello, Paul.

PAUL

John. I don't know what Billy told you, but you know he's still under contract to the A's.

HENRY

He said he could get out of it no problem.

PAUL

Steve Schott says no. I just got off the phone with him. He's not happy with idea of the Red Sox poaching his general manager. Not without some kind of compensation.

HENRY

He wants money?

PAUL

No. A player. And given who it is, you should consider it a bargain.

HENRY

Who?

PAUL

He's nobody. A fat third baseman at Sarasota. Youkilis.

HENRY

Youkilis?

PAUL

Exactly. Youkilis? Who the fuck is that? He's not a pretty sight in the showers is who he is.

HENRY

Is Billy with you?

PAUL

Yes.

HENRY

Billy?

BILLY

Yes, John.

HENRY

Is Youkilis somebody?

Billy looks at Paul. Looks at the speakerphone. Looks back to Paul. And, finally -

BILLY

No.

HENRY

All right, Paul. Deal.

The call disconnects. Paul can barely contain his excitement. He's just won his own personal lottery.

PAUL

Thank you.

BILLY

That's the last lie I tell for you.

INT/EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - LATER - DUSK

Billy walks along the underground cinder block tunnel. Comes into the locker room and gives it a look. Crosses to the equipment area and considers several bats before picking up the one whose weight he likes.

But doesn't break anything with it. He carries it down the tunnel that leads to the A's dugout, climbs the dugout steps and walks to the batter's box.

From the center field bleachers, we watch the small, lone figure settle in at the plate, swing the bat a few times, then stand there leaning on it like a cane ...

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - LATER

The phone rings. Paul picks it up.

PAUL

Paul DePodesta.

BILLY V/O

Meet me in the dugout.

EXT. OAKLAND COLISEUM - EVENING

Paul finds Billy sitting on the bench with the bat.

BILLY

Sit down.

Paul sits. Silence. Then -

BILLY

Do I love the Red Sox?

PAUL

I don't know. I've never heard you say you did.

BILLY

I don't. I've never liked the Red Sox. So why am I doing this?

PAUL

You're not doing it for the money.

BILLY

No?

PAUL

You're doing it for what the money says. It says what it says to any player who gets big money: that they're worth it.

BILLY

The offer says that. The money itself is redundant.

(pause)

I took the money once, and you know where it took me? Nowhere. I just called Henry and told him that.

(pause)

I'm sorry, Paul. Your Greek God of Walks isn't coming to Oakland because I'm not leaving.

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*

Paul is devastated. Tries to say he isn't with a philosophical nod, but he is. Billy gets up and leans comfortably on the dugout railing, like Art never could, and looks out at his unremarkable ball park.

PAUL

Billy?

Billy says nothing in order to say, What.

PAUL

There's a Double-A backup outfielder in Mobile. The Mets didn't know what they had, and neither do the Padres.

Billy nods, but it's not clear he's interested. Paul gets up off the bench and joins him at the railing. They look out at the darkening sky. Eventually -

BILLY

What was his on-base?

PAUL

Four-0-four.

BILLY

Slugging?

PAUL

Five-sixty-eight.

As they continue to talk about this - the first trade they'll attempt for the 2003 season - we begin to pull back.

BILLY

That's -

PAUL

Nine-seventy-two OPS.

BILLY

And San Diego doesn't know what they got?

PAUL

No.

BILLY

What's his name?

PAUL

Jason Bay.

They are small silhouettes from way out here, alone in the vast Coliseum. No crowd noise. No announcers. No reporters. No experts telling the world they're destroying baseball. Just them. Talking about next year.

BILLY

I'll see what I can do.

As darkness envelopes the Coliseum, Oasis's "Live Forever" begins, and we see -

David Justice at the plate. As he takes ball four and trots down to first, the image freezes -

Legend: David Justice retired after the 2002 season, leaving baseball with a team-leading on-base percentage with most walks.

Scott Hatteberg, looking comfortable on the infield dirt finally, dives for a line drive - freeze.

Legend: Scott Hatteberg played three more seasons with the A's, then signed with Cincinnati in 2006 - as a first baseman. He's currently a free agent.

Chad Bradford goes into his windup from Mars. As his hand scrapes the dirt - freeze.

Legend: Chad Bradford went to the Red Sox in 2005. In 2008, he was traded to Tampa Bay who went on to the World Series with a payroll even lower than the A's.

Kevin Youkilis, in a Red Sox uniform, shimmies at the plate. As he lays off ball four and the umpire points to first - freeze.

Legend: Boston never traded to Billy - or anyone else - their Greek God of Walks, Kevin Youkilis. He was part of the historic World Series Championship Red Sox of 2004, and is still with the club.

Paul, in a Harvard Crimson uniform, scoops a grounder to short. As he throws out a Yale Bulldog - freeze.

Legend: Paul DePodesta left Oakland in 2004 to become the General Manager of the Dodgers. He's now with the San Diego Padres.

Billy - 18 years old - in his Mount Carmel High uniform, takes his stance at the plate with the supreme confidence of youth. The pitch comes. He swings. And as his bat makes contact - freeze.

Legend: Billy Beane is still the General Manager of the Oakland A's.

As "Live Forever" continues, the final image of Young Billy at the plate fades -

TO BLACK