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Grand Slam

by

J.C. Svec

A Collection of Four Short Plays
With Baseball as a Common Theme
For a Full Evening of Entertainment

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Grand Slam

by J.C. Svec

Cast of Characters

ALL-AMERICAN GIRLS

ANN POST; *perfect and elegant career woman*

MARY JAMISON; *tomboyish, but lady-like ballplayer from the Midwest*

RUTH SHEPHERD; *a simple, maternal figure in charge of the care and guidance of her ballplayers*

SHIRLEY GALLOWAY; *feminine, soft-spoken ballplayer from America's heartland*

FALL GUYS

JACK (KENNEDY); *the perfectly coiffed, physical embodiment of President John F. Kennedy*

FIDEL (CASTRO); *the physical embodiment of Cuban military dictator Fidel Castro*

SUSIE; *the somewhat ditzzy, scatterbrained secretary to President Kennedy*

ESPERANZA; *the hot tempered, irritated Cuban secretary to Fidel Castro*

NIXON (VOICE OVER ONLY)

POST-GAME INTERVIEW

DICK PLACE; *a bitter, angry, and chauvinistic television sports reporter*

NEVADA DES BARRES; *a young, go-getter who manipulates her way to an on-air reporter's job*

DUKE COLEMAN; *a disgruntled, stunned ballplayer who has just blown a World Series game*

THE CONCRETE WALL

CHARLIE; *a young man who has died a soldier, helping his sister get over his death [The character is portrayed as a 12 year-old boy and as a young man of 19]*

ANNIE; *a young woman who is having trouble letting go of her deceased, younger brother*

PRODUCTION NOTES

Grand Slam is a collection of four one-act plays with baseball as its central theme. They are to be portrayed as historical (*All-American Girls*), farcical (*Fall Guys*), comedic (*Post-Game Interview*), and dramatic (*The Concrete Wall*.) Individual specific settings are suggested for each play, but as a whole, *Grand Slam* easily works on a unit set with a minimum of furniture changes to represent environment and locations for each play. The original production was set against the backdrop of a stadium scoreboard. Please remember that these plays are character driven and, also, mostly period pieces. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on costuming over setting.

Grand Slam

by S.C. Svec

ALL-AMERICAN GIRLS

SCENE: Summer, 1943. As if being interviewed, four representatives of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAPGL) convey their thoughts and experiences after the league's first year of play.

AT RISE: Standing side-by-side from stage right to stage left are ANN POST, perfect and elegant in a suit ensemble, MARY JAMISON, in her South Bend Blue Sox uniform, RUTH SHEPHERD, in a simple blouse, skirt and "Penny" loafers, and SHIRLEY GALLOWAY, in her Kenosha Comets uniform. LIGHTS UP first on RUTH and then on each girl upon introduction.

NOTE: The girls, lit individually and by dialogues, address the audience by breaking the fourth wall. They only acknowledge each other when specified.

RUTH

(Ceremonial) May I present Miss Mary Jamison.

MARY

How do you do. May I introduce Miss Shirley Galloway.

SHIRLEY

Pleased to meet you.

RUTH

Miss Galloway, well bred young ladies do not say 'pleased to meet you.'

SHIRLEY

(Embarrassed) I am very glad to meet you.

RUTH

(Smiles) Much better. May I make you acquainted with league representative Miss Ann Post.

(ANN strikes an elegant pose.)

ANN

How do you do.

(RUTH holds out her arms and presents the ladies.)

RUTH

(Explains) Charm cannot exist without good manners.

MARY AND SHIRLEY

Charm cannot exist without good manners.

ANN

You know a lady as such as soon as she opens her mouth.

MARY

The first requirement for charm is a pleasing voice.

RUTH

And...

SHIRLEY

Avoid behavior that makes you conspicuous in public.

ANN

We have agreed that sportsmanship on the field is definitely aligned with etiquette off the field.

RUTH

You do not have to have manners that follow particular rules—

MARY

But it doesn't hurt.

ANN

The continued practice of kind and friendly acts—

SHIRLEY

Should be natural and spontaneous.

MARY

A kind, proper and courteous approach to life cannot help but add to your personality.

SHIRLEY

And give you a big advantage in dealing with your every day life.

(RUTH looks at MARY and SHIRLEY.)

RUTH

(Proud) My girls.

(Lights fade to black on everyone except SHIRLEY.)

SHIRLEY

(Relaxed) We had officially been at war for a little more than a year. There were so many professional baseball players going off. They were being enlisted and drafted into the armed forces and it was no secret that baseball might soon be in real trouble. Every day we read about the possible folding of a team or even the collapse of a league. American cities that were home to either a major or minor league club were threatened with the aspect of closing stadiums. All these worries began talk, which eventually led to looking for a solution to the problem. That's where Mr. Wrigley came into the picture.

(Lights up on MARY.)

MARY

My daddy told me about this baseball tryout being held. I didn't think much of it because there were always new teams sprouting up around the state. Then he mentioned the tryouts were for girls. Girls! To play professional baseball. Well, it took me no time at all to pack my bag and mitt. My daddy let me borrow the family car and I was on my way. Now that I think about it, that was my first trip alone out of the state.

SHIRLEY

You might know Mr. Wrigley... he's the chewing gum person. He inherited the Chicago Cubs baseball franchise from his father and so he had good reason to worry.

MARY

I was eighteen years old and in my last year of high school in Lakeview, Ohio. Lakeview is a real pretty, rural area and very sports minded. Men's sports that is. With the way I was brought up, I knew had a chance at those tryouts.

SHIRLEY

Mr. Wrigley formed a committee to investigate everyone's concerns. The committee's recommendation was to establish a girl's professional softball league. The teams would play in the major league parks. The attendance from these games would be used to make up for the attendance drop being anticipated from major league baseball teams. Because of all the teams losing their talented players.

MARY

I used to be a bat girl for my town's baseball team. They played all over the state. Dad was a coach and my older brother Waite was a pitcher. I traveled all over the state with them. Even practiced with them. Imagine, me, playing baseball with one of the best ball clubs, men's ball club, in the state.

(Lights up on ANN.)

ANN

I had been a local softball star in Chicago.

SHIRLEY

Mr. Wrigley envisioned the owners of the parks profiting from having the women play on dates the men's teams were on the road. The idea was not well received... mainly because there already was organized softball for women.

MARY

My dad insisted we stay a family and do everything together.

ANN

I knew the sport. I knew the game. I knew women. I knew men. I knew design. I knew what would succeed.

SHIRLEY

The compromise was to create a new game combining both softball and baseball.

ANN

Ultimately, I was the first woman signed to a contract in the new league. But not as a player.

MARY

It was Dad's promise to Mother after she passed on. Up until I left for the tryouts.

SHIRLEY

Scouts set up tryouts in dozens of big cities for women who were eager to play in the new league. Girls came from all over the United States and Canada. I never knew softball was so popular up there. I thought they just ice skated.

MARY

In Lakeview, boys were boys and girls were girls. I got the chance to learn the game because of my dad and brother. Believe me, it wasn't like that in other families.

ANN

(Reminisces) Ah, to go home to Chicago.

SHIRLEY

The final tryouts were held for Mr. Wrigley and his board of trustees. Two hundred and eighty girls were invited to Chicago. Only sixty of us were chosen to become the first women ever to play professional baseball.

(Lights up on RUTH.)

RUTH

My name is Ruth Shepherd. I am in this league with a defined assignment.

SHIRLEY

The one thing I remember about the tryouts? I guess being watched every second we were on the field. The league officials watching us field every position, throwing, catching, running, sliding and hitting.

MARY

At the end of the day we went back to our hotel rooms and no one wanted to answer the phone.

SHIRLEY

We were afraid of being told we were no good and to pack our bags and go home.

RUTH

I have a job to do, with specific duties and responsibilities. Just as my girls have.

MARY

I was one of the sixty.

SHIRLEY

Four major league cities were selected. All close to each other and to the league headquarters in Chicago.

ANN

The uniforms are similar. Each city has a different colored outfit and its own symbolic patch to adorn the front of the uniform.

MARY

When we become players in the All-American Girls Baseball League we reached the highest position a girl could attain in our sport.

ANN

Speaking to the uniform's simplicity. Less is more. Less attention drawn to the design and more attention directed to the product.

SHIRLEY

Racine and Kenosha, Wisconsin. Rockford, Illinois and South Bend, Indiana. The Belles, Comets, Peaches, and Blue Sox.

MARY

I don't know what they think in other parts of the country, but where I'm from, if you play sports you're just not feminine.

ANN

The game? Of course I meant the game. (*Aside to audience*) And, perhaps, the beautiful women that play the game.

SHIRLEY

Those of us who survived the cut were signed to professional league contracts.

ANN

The uniform is really a stroke of genius. A one-piece, short skirted, flared tunic.

MARY

The contracts included an agreement not to have any other employment during the baseball season.

RUTH

The girls in the league are already becoming heroines to both our youngsters and grown-ups all over the country.

ANN

They're fashioned after the current looks of our field hockey, tennis, and figure skating outfits.

MARY

I can understand. The league has established a very high standard that help us feel proud to be a player in this league. Now, and for years to come.

SHIRLEY

Our league needs to be distinctive from the existing softball leagues.

RUTH

As an All-American Girl, you have certain responsibilities and duties to uphold the standards of the sport.

MARY

We also have a responsibility to each other.

ANN

Satin shorts, knee high socks and baseball hats complete the uniform.

SHIRLEY

I won't say this past year hasn't been hard. Our sport is a blend of softball and baseball. Each team consists of fifteen players, a manager, and a woman chaperone.

RUTH

I am very glad to meet you.

SHIRLEY

The managers are somewhat notable sports figures. For curiosity, and interest, I guess?

MARY

Some still refer to our game as 'glorified softball.' And that's just not true.

RUTH

Yes, standards of the profession. Because All- American Girls are in the limelight, their actions and appearance both on and off the field reflect the whole profession.

ANN

Yes, you can say the girls play in abbreviated costumes. What's wrong with heightening customer appeal?

MARY

I have learned so much, so fast. And I am blessed to have become really good friends with so many of my teammates.

ANN

Have I mentioned that I was the original model for my uniforms? In case you were interested.

SHIRLEY

We have the best times together and we're there to support each other... through anything.

ANN

Personally, I believe once the game has started fans forget the uniforms. They're in attendance to see a team that goes onto the field to play and to win. They forget about the daintiness of the uniforms and the cuteness of the girls.

(MARY and SHIRLEY slowly turn to ANN.)

ANN

Well, they do. *(Looks to MARY then SHIRLEY)* They do!

RUTH

Most of everyone's attention is on the war these days. It's difficult not to talk about it, to constantly think about it.

MARY

It's affecting all of us. Some, more directly than others.

SHIRLEY

Before every game we do a "V" formation on the field and pledge allegiance to the flag.

MARY

How can you not feel... be patriotic?

RUTH

There are so many soldiers and sailors in the stands.

ANN

Yes, there are.

SHIRLEY

Most of the country is involved in the war effort in one way or another. Women who were housewives have left their homes for jobs in the factories.

MARY

I guess that includes us.

ANN

Besides, all beauty comes from within.

RUTH

It is our - my responsibility, to take care of the girls. Both on the inside and out.

ANN

It's not as if a woman's legs have never been seen in public before. And the skirts are a maximum six inches above the kneecap.

SHIRLEY

I think with women in these new roles, you know, not the ordinary woman jobs, well, that's made it easier for us.

ANN

Anyone could argue faults in any design. It doesn't mean there are faults.

SHIRLEY

I wonder how many men would tear into a base feet first, knowing the certain result would be a few welts or cuts on a bare knee or thigh.

MARY

Easier to be accepted as professional ballplayers.

RUTH

It hasn't been easy for them. A lot is expected from them. Emotionally and, more so, physically.

SHIRLEY

Once the season began we were exposed to the sun, the wind, the dust, day in and day out.

RUTH

For example, it became most essential that every precaution be taken for the care of their skin.

ANN

We all know a lot is expected from them. Especially when it comes to their appearance.

MARY

It's all worth while. I truly believe we've had some effect in the communities we've played.

ANN

Wear your cap and keep it securely in place. Keep your uniform as clean and neat as possible.

SHIRLEY

We give people a place to go to have a good time, let people be with other people and forget their hard times for a spell.

ANN

Always secure your stockings so that they are smooth and remain in place. Keep your shoes clean and shining.

SHIRLEY

Because of the war, people don't have a lot of the luxury items. Gasoline, tires, even food.

RUTH

Times are hard. Rationing, finding ways to do the chores the men in your family used to do ... just making ends meet.

ANN

At no time may a player appear in the stands in her uniform.

MARY

People are staying close to home and spending whatever leisure time they have with each other.

SHIRLEY ANN

At the ballpark.

ANN

Absolutely no slacks or shorts in public.

SHIRLEY

You're welcome, Mr. Wrigley.

RUTH

We're all part of the fight for freedom.

MARY

No question we are being used to capitalize on the patriotic mood of the company.

SHIRLEY

So what.

MARY

So what.

RUTH

America's young men are off fighting for their country. They're dreaming of the girls they left behind. Girls just like these girls, who are not just being promoted as All-American Girls...because - They are all American girls!

SHIRLEY

I don't feel my looks are so unique.

MARY

Our talents aren't so unique. Those of us in the league just have a unique opportunity.

SHIRLEY

They call us 'the girl next door in spikes.'

ANN

(Angry) They call them chorus girls. Hired not for the kick line but to play the line.

RUTH

The directors of the league were smart enough to approve every aspect of the game, including the uniforms.

ANN

(Defensive) Uniforms that are comfortable, and allow for freedom of movement—

SHIRLEY

That encourages an exuberant response from the fans as we both take and exit the field.

MARY

'They lost,' they'd say, 'but they're cute.'

ANN

I am constantly defending the look. The uniforms were designed for style and appeal, in addition to their functionality. I admit to their feminine appeal, but the accent is on neatness. The uniform is part of their equipment and—

(MARY and SHIRLEY finish her statement.)

MARY AND SHIRLEY

—there is a tremendous advantage to the girl and to the team which makes the best use of its equipment.

ANN

It's all true.

RUTH

The smart looking teams invariably play smart baseball and the girls can add to their own popularity and crowd appeal by looking the part of a ballplayer and a lady. And the more popular you are...

SHIRLEY

The salaries are considered pretty high.

MARY

Some of the girls are as young as fifteen.

RUTH

In some cases the girls are making more than their parents who have skilled occupations.

SHIRLEY

I understand our salaries range from forty- five to eighty-five dollars a week.

RUTH

Eighty-five dollars a week. I chose to have the wrong skills.

MARY

It's more money than I ever dreamed of, that's for sure.

SHIRLEY

And that's not all. They're also teaching us how to be proper young women.

MARY

Before the season began, we were required to attend Helena Rubenstein's Evening Charm School.

SHIRLEY

Every day after practice.

RUTH

The proper etiquette for all situations was taught along with every aspect of personal hygiene.

ANN

I wasn't just responsible for the uniforms. It was my responsibility to present the players with a dress code.

MARY

(Shy) Foremost, deodorant keeps a girl fresh and allows for assurance and confidence in social contacts.

ANN

From a public appeal standpoint, it is surprising how the crowd will respond to the team that appears on the field with a certain neatness.

RUTH

The All-American Girl is naturally susceptible to hygiene problems because of her vigorous activities.

ANN

In their personal, daily lives, the girls should still maintain a particular 'snap' to their appearance.

SHIRLEY

It certainly pays to be on the safe side when meeting my fans.

ANN

Follow the guidelines established for you and see if you don't feel better, all the time.

SHIRLEY

Back on the farm, there were chores and schedules, but nothing like I have to deal with now. In your room two hours after the game, always carry your identification...

ANN

Players are to always appear in feminine attire when not actively engaged in practice or playing ball. This regulation continues throughout the playoffs for every player even if your team is not participating.

RUTH

There was a manual provided to every girl, to help with their personal appearance.

MARY

Most of the rules are for behavior.

RUTH

It is for their own good as well as the league.

SHIRLEY

The future success of girl's baseball depends on us.

MARY

Rule. No relatives, friends or visitors on the bench at any time.

ANN

Generally speaking, clothes, of course, have always been one of women's great problems. And, again, have proven to be so for the All-American Girl.

SHIRLEY

Rule. No fraternizing with members of different clubs at any time during the season.

ANN

However, with the necessary use of good taste, the All-American Girl has solved her wardrobe problems in a tasteful manner and without great expense.

RUTH

We instructed our girls to study their own beauty possibilities. We will then work with the individual to best emphasize their features without overdoing the treatment at the risk of gaudiness.

MARY

Rule. No room parties, auto trips or eating in out of the way places.

RUTH

Practice the little measures that will reflect well on appearance and personality as a real All-American Girl.

ANN

I have offered suggestions over the course of the past year for the type of wardrobe that best exemplifies the proper image of the All- American girl. And I will continue to do so.

RUTH

Everything needs to be remembered. The skin, the hair, the teeth and the eyes.

SHIRLEY

It is in our own best interest to follow all of their suggestions.

RUTH

We can't ignore that there's also a public relations standpoint.

MARY

We understand that we need to be presentable and attractive at all times.

ANN

For example, to retain cleanliness, a dark suit, rather than light. And material that is not easily crushed as to retain neatness.

MARY

Rule. Be at the station thirty minutes before departure time.

SHIRLEY

Anyone missing her arranged transportation pays her own fare.

ANN

Blouses are easily laundered and will add sparkle and versatility to your suit.

SHIRLEY

There are high moral standards we just have to comply with.

MARY

And the rules of conduct imposed by the league.

ANN

In addition to blouses, skirts and sweaters will simplify your wardrobe and your baggage problems for road trips.

SHIRLEY

They can make as many rules as they want.

ANN

Sports jackets and sports coats are very popular with skirts.

MARY

Because of this league, I'm thinking, maybe now, I can go to college.

ANN

Yes, a skirt, blouse and sports coat is perfect for leisure time at home and in public on the road.

SHIRLEY

When we signed our contract we understood the need to be more, a lot more, than just a skilled player.

RUTH

The mind and body are interrelated and you cannot neglect one without causing the other to suffer.

ANN

I recommended every girl's wardrobe also include a dress, or two, for civic luncheons and other moral functions in which you might participate.

MARY

Ohio Northern, I'm thinking.

SHIRLEY

College? Me? Nah. *(Pause)* Well, maybe. Sure, why not.

RUTH

A healthy mind and a healthy body are all true attributes of the All-American Girl.

ANN

Casual shoes for various functions. A pair, each, of dress shoes, flat walking shoes and saddle shoes.

MARY

Unwritten rule. Femininity is the highest priority.

ANN

Our biggest concern this past year? (*Thinks*) Without a doubt, slacks. Slacks are not permitted for street wear. Include shorts or sportswear for recreation. Golf togs. A swimsuit, of course. Slacks—

MARY AND SHIRLEY

—are not permitted for street wear.

RUTH

Each girl is responsible to be the best judge of her own beauty requirements.

SHIRLEY

We each received a beauty kit and instruction on how to use it.

RUTH

The beauty kit each girl received was the league's effort to make every player as physically attractive as possible.

ANN

Hats? Please, no. Hats should be seldom worn.

MARY

It is our responsibility to keep our kit re-, re-...

RUTH

Replenished.

MARY

Replenished with the things we need for our own toilette...

ANN

A lightweight raincoat. Compact for road trips.

SHIRLEY

... beauty, culture and care.

RUTH

The kit contains cleansing cream, lipstick, rouge- medium, cream deodorant and a mild astringent.

ANN

Bobby socks are acceptable but you will want two or three pairs of regular stockings. If available.

SHIRLEY

Face powder for brunettes.

MARY

Hand lotion.

RUTH

And... this is a rather delicate mention... hair remover.

(RUTH inconspicuously strokes the area above her upper lip.)

ANN

Don't even get me started on hair styling.

MARY

Rule. Always carry your beauty kit with you on road trips.

SHIRLEY

Did I mention our chaperones?

RUTH

(Proud) That would be me. I have a direct responsibility to my girls, their families, to the club that employs them and to the league they represent.

ANN

Boyish bobs are not permissible.

MARY

Any and all social engagements must be approved...

SHIRLEY

... by our chaperone.

RUTH

As a chaperone I hope to be considered, well, a friend. Amongst other things that is.

ANN

Short hair is to be deemed... prohibited.

SHIRLEY

Legitimate requests for dates can only be considered...

MARY
... by our chaperone.

ANN
It's not a rule, just common sense.

RUTH
I am here with a specific, defined assignment.

ANN
One's hair should be well groomed at all times.

MARY
All living quarters and eating places must be approved...

SHIRLEY
... by our chaperone.

RUTH
I wouldn't say my job is an easy one. It's not really difficult either. Let's agree it's challenging... necessary.

ANN
Long hair. No further discussion on the topic.

SHIRLEY
At all times our whereabouts must be known...

MARY
... by our chaperone.

RUTH
My girls are free to come to me with any and all personal problems.

SHIRLEY
Actually, most of us find our chaperones helpful—

MARY
Friendly—

SHIRLEY
And cooperative.

MARY
The mother I never had.

SHIRLEY

I'm only aware of a few of the girls taking advantage of their good nature and friendship.

RUTH

My desire is that everyone will derive a mutual, beneficial enjoyment from our... association.

MARY

Relationship.

(RUTH turns to MARY.)

RUTH

Thank you.

ANN

Don't forget the lipstick. Always wear lipstick. Never wear slacks, always wear lipstick.

RUTH

It's been an exhilarating first year.

SHIRLEY

This first year? Some good times, some bad times. Mostly good, though.

MARY

I don't know... joy and sadness, success and disappointment.

SHIRLEY

Disappointments? Sure? My team, the Kenosha Comets, lost the world championship in five games to the Racine Belles. I'd say that was disappointing.

ANN

This year has been a whirlwind. The players have all done their best. These girls, pardon, these women, are heroes now. And as heroes, they need to dress the part of heroes.

MARY

We're told people need local heroes now.

SHIRLEY

We're told we fulfill that need. Maybe that explains the crowds.

RUTH

The league was very encouraged by the attendance.

SHIRLEY

Major league baseball officials, the press and baseball fans from all across the country were amazed at how well we played.

RUTH

At times the amount of support and enthusiasm was remarkable.

MARY

I don't know why people are so amazed about what we do.

ANN

I sometimes don't know how they do it.

SHIRLEY

Maybe because no one really thought women could play baseball and we proved they could.

RUTH

Attendance in sponsoring cities was said to be over 175,000 people.

MARY

Here we are playing baseball when the only other real careers for women were teachers and nurses and not much else.

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE FOR "FALL GUYS"

FALL GUYS

SCENE: October, 1962. Two individual desks sit side-by-side. They each have a table lamp and a small telephone console with two handsets attached to each console.

AT RISE: Next to the stage right desk stands JACK, perfectly coiffed, dressed in a gray, pinstripe suit. Next to the stage left desk stands FIDEL, in his usual green military fatigues, beret, and combat boots. He wears heavy black-rimmed glasses while a cigar dangles from his mouth. SUSIE, in a conservative two-piece outfit and heels, and ESPERANZA, in a worn house dress and sandals enter and take their seats stage right and stage left respectively.

NOTE: JACK and FIDEL are never heard and their dialogue is implied through them 'speaking' into their handsets and over-exaggerating body language. SUSIE and ESPERANZA'S dialogue is the translation of what is being spoken by either JACK or FIDEL. Any phone effects, such as the rotary phone dial, busy signals, and ring tones are to be recorded.

JACK nods and SUSIE picks up her handset. She dials a long series of numbers. After several moments, ESPERANZA'S phone rings. ESPERANZA and FIDEL react to the ring and stare at their console. The phone continues to ring for some time. Finally, FIDEL and JACK emphatically point to their consoles. SUSIE hangs up as ESPERANZA picks up. JACK and FIDEL display their disappointment.

*FIDEL instructs ESPERANZA to check the phone. She picks up the handset, waits for a dial tone, nods, and holds the handset out for FIDEL to hear. He arrogantly turns his head away from the desk. ESPERANZA slowly lays the handset back onto the console.
Silence.*

*SUSIE and ESPERANZA share long looks at JACK and FIDEL. JACK contemplates his next move. The two men begin bouncing on the balls of their feet then stop at the exact same time.
Silence.*

JACK and FIDEL point to the consoles. SUSIE and ESPERANZA frantically dial their numbers and wait for the connection. The two women hold up their handsets echoing busy signals. The two men respond with frustration as the women hang up their headsets.

Silence.

JACK points to the console and raises his finger signaling 'one more time.' Just before SUSIE finishes dialing her number, FIDEL instructs ESPERANZA to leave. As she stands to exit, her phone rings. ESPERANZA and FIDEL stare down at the phone. FIDEL frantically gestures for ESPERANZA to sit and answer. She picks up both handsets, handing one to FIDEL. They exchange a nervous look. He encourages her to speak but all she can manage is heavy, nervous breathing. In disgust, SUSIE looks at her handset and slams it back down onto the console. ESPERANZA reacts to the deafening noise in her ear and slams her handset down. JACK and FIDEL stare at the women in disbelief. They proceed to reprimand the women who plead their case non-verbally. JACK calmly instructs SUSIE to make another call. SUSIE picks up her

handset and dials the long series of numbers. The ringing phone freezes FIDEL in the middle of his rage at ESPERANZA. He then points to the console. ESPERANZA sits and picks up the handset.

ESPERANZA, speaking with a Cuban accents answers.

ESPERANZA

(Tentative) Hello?

SUSIE

(Tentative) Hello?

ESPERANZA

Hello.

(FIDEL asks for and is handed his handset. A silence follows.)

SUSIE

(Unsure) Hello?

ESPERANZA

(Unsure) Hello.

(SUSIE and ESPERANZA look at JACK and FIDEL. The four individuals shrug their shoulders. JACK encourages SUSIE to continue.)

SUSIE

(Upbeat) Hel-lo.

(ESPERANZA looks at her handset incredulously.)

ESPERANZA

(Imitates SUSIE) Hel-lo!

(SUSIE covers the mouthpiece and gives JACK a thumbs up as ESPERANZA gestures 'crazy' to FIDEL. JACK motions he'll take over.)

[NOTE: From this point on, JACK and FIDEL act out their lines that are being translated by either SUSIE or ESPERANZA. There should be beats between exchanges to allow for the men's dialogue.]

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

So, what's new?

SUSIE

Not much – what's new with you?

(JACK nods his head.)

SUSIE, *Continues*

(Intrigued) How are your Senators doing?

ESPERANZA

(Explains) Well, they're not necessarily my senators. They're the people's representatives, and like the people, they're pretty much on the edge of their seats right now. But they'll support the decisions of their President.

SUSIE

(Arrogant) I understand they are not the winning-est group of men, but when did your capitalist democratic government take control of them?

(JACK displays confusion.)

ESPERANZA

(Explains) The senators are a national, league team for the American public. If anyone controls them it is the voting populace.

SUSIE

(Confused) National League?

ESPERANZA

(Corrects) No. National. League of men.

SUSIE

(Annoyed) Yes, that's what I said. But, the National... League?

ESPERANZA

You're asking me a question?

SUSIE

Yes. The National League, not the American?

(JACK looks at his handset.)

ESPERANZA

(Emphatic) Of course, *American*.

SUSIE

(Confused) Then why did you say *National League*?

ESPERANZA

I didn't. You did.

SUSIE

So did you.

ESPERANZA

No, I didn't. I said National... league.

SUSIE

Are the Senators American or not?

ESPERANZA

By law they have to be!

(JACK instructs SUSIE to put them on hold.)

SUSIE

(As herself into handset) Please hold.

(In frustration, JACK lowers the handset to his side and FIDEL erupts in silent rage at ESPERANZA.)

ESPERANZA

(As herself to FIDEL) Si, el presidenté. Si. Si, el presidenté. Si. Si. Si, el presidenté.

(FIDEL calms himself and waits. JACK raises the handset to his ear and instructs SUSIE to return to the conversation.)

SUSIE

(As herself) Hello.

ESPERANZA

(As herself) Hello.

(FIDEL points to the console.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

(As herself) Please hold.

(FIDEL enjoys his sudden control.)

SUSIE

(To JACK) We're on hold Mr. President.

(JACK, hands on his hips, shakes his head in disbelief. FIDEL speaks into his handset. SUSIE listens in shock.)

SUSIE, *Continues*

(As herself to JACK) Mr. President?

(JACK looks at SUSIE.)

SUSIE, *Continues*

(Gasps) Mr. President... *(As herself)* He said something very... improper.

(JACK screams at his handset.)

ESPERANZA

(Yells) Cono su madre.

(JACK gives SUSIE the thumbs up as FIDEL flips ESPERANZA 'the bird.' Silence. JACK and FIDEL speak into their handsets.)

SUSIE AND ESPERANZA

What is it going to take to resolve our situation? *(Pause)* My situation? Your situation.

(The two men cross their arms and turn away from SUSIE and ESPERANZA.)

SUSIE AND ESPERANZA, *Continue*

(Cautious) Please hold.

(Silence. JACK speaks into his handset. ESPERANZA signals FIDEL to listen.)

ESPERANZA

We know that you have Soviet missiles pointed at the United States.

(FIDEL responds.)

SUSIE

Who says?

ESPERANZA

We have pictures.

SUSIE

So.

ESPERANZA

So?

SUSIE

Maybe we do and maybe we don't.

ESPERANZA

Fine. Let's just say you... might have them. If you do, and I'm not saying that's the case, what might you want to get rid of... them.

(Silence.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

What do you want?

SUSIE

What do you want?

ESPERANZA

I asked you first.

SUSIE

I'm the one with the missiles.

ESPERANZA

Aha!

(FIDEL slaps his forehead realizing what he's said. JACK jumps up and down with excitement. FIDEL speaks into his handset.)

SUSIE

(Soft) Jack?

(SUSIE points to JACK'S handset. He arrogantly puts it back to his ear.)

ESPERANZA

What can I do for you, Fiddie, ol' boy?

(Silence.)

SUSIE

(Serious) You can believe that I will finish construction, point one of my little babies at Florida and...KABOOM!

(The noise startles JACK into a new approach.)

ESPERANZA

(Happy) So, where were we? What was it you wanted? A few new automobiles? Money? How about some new clothes? We'll send you a Sears catalogue.

(Silence. SUSIE shrugs her shoulders.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

(Kids) You want Desi Arnez back? (Silence) How about we clean up that mess we made on Bahia de Cochinas. Maybe plant a few new trees. Build a Howard Johnson's.

(FIDEL finally responds.)

SUSIE

(Angry) So you can throw another beach blanket bingo party?

(The tension escalates.)

ESPERANZA

It was a joke.

SUSIE

It was not funny.

ESPERANZA

Oh, relax a little.

SUSIE

You relax.

ESPERANZA

Don't tell me what to do!

SUSIE

I can do whatever I want.

ESPERANZA

Says who?

SUSIE

Says me!

ESPERANZA

Baby.

SUSIE

Big baby.

ESPERANZA

Riffraff.

SUSIE

Blue blood.

Marxist. ESPERANZA

Capitalist. SUSIE

Criminal. ESPERANZA

Democrat. SUSIE

You were a lousy ballplayer. ESPERANZA

And you were a lousy sailor. SUSIE

(JACK gasps and holds his handset at arms length. Silence.)

SUSIE AND ESPERANZA
(As themselves) Please hold.

(Both men begin to walk away but their handsets pull them back into place. FIDEL talks into his handset.)

SUSIE
(Resigned) Mr. President.

ESPERANZA
Yes.

SUSIE
You asked what I wanted.

ESPERANZA
(Encouraged) Yes.

SUSIE
I want the Senators.

(JACK appears confused.)

ESPERANZA
Which senator?

SUSIE

All of them.

(JACK bounces his head back and forth.)

ESPERANZA

There are a few republican representatives I wouldn't mind sacrificing... but, that's just not possible. It's immoral, unethical, and, though a tempting offer, out of the question.

SUSIE

Mr. President, I don't think you understand.

ESPERANZA

(Preaches) Oh, I understand. You want me to hand over our government as a ransom for your renegade act of terrorism. The American public won't stand for it, the memory of our fore fathers won't stand for it, God won't stand for it and, lastly, I certainly won't stand for it.

(Silence.)

SUSIE

I want the Washington Senators.

ESPERANZA

The baseball team?

SUSIE

If you're still referring to them as such. Yes, the baseball team.

ESPERANZA

Mr. President, may I call you back?

(FIDEL nods his head.)

SUSIE

Of course.

(All parties hang up their handsets. JACK hands a little black book to SUSIE. He points at a section of the page it has been opened to and points to the console. SUSIE dials a series of numbers. The phone rings only once.)

NIXON (V.O.)

Hello, this is Milhouse, not the White House.

(SUSIE stares at her headset as JACK looks on.)

NIXON (V.O.), *Continues*

Kennedy, is that you again? Stop calling me you son-of-a—

(SUSIE slams down the handset. JACK motions to a different spot on the page. She locates the correct phone number and dials.)

SUSIE

(Into phone) Charlotte, this is Susie. *(Pause)* I'm fine how are you? *(Pause)* I'm sorry to hear that. *(To JACK)* Her Mom's in the hospital. *(JACK displays his annoyance.)* Um, Charlotte, this is kind of an emergency, is Mr. Short in for the President? Thanks.

(SUSIE hands JACK his handset. JACK'S reactions body language ranges from desperate to explosive while pleading his case. JACK eventually hands SUSIE his handset.)

SUSIE, *Continues*

(To JACK) No deal?

(JACK shakes his head and reluctantly instructs SUSIE to call FIDEL. ESPERANZA answers her ringing console.)

ESPERANZA

(As herself into handset) Hello.

SUSIE

(As herself into handset) Hello. Please hold for the President.

(SUSIE hands JACK his handset.)

ESPERANZA

I'm sorry, but to sell an American interest to a foreign power is out of the question.

(JACK shrugs his shoulders in response to SUSIE'S glare. JACK continues.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

Therefore your request is out of the question.

(FIDEL takes his handset.)

SUSIE

I will pay top price.

ESPERANZA

And...

SUSIE

And?

ESPERANZA

Yes. And...

(FIDEL realizes what is missing from his offer.)

SUSIE

All right. I'll dismantle the damn missiles.

(JACK throws his arms up in frustration.)

ESPERANZA

If it was up to me, Fidel... can I call you Fidel?

SUSIE

If I can call you John?

ESPERANZA

Please, Jack.

SUSIE

Okay... Jack.

ESPERANZA

As I was saying, if it was up to me I'd be thrilled to unload the team. So would their owner. We both agree they're a national embarrassment. But... well, maybe in another time under different circumstances.

SUSIE

Force him.

ESPERANZA

Fidel, it doesn't work that way in the United States, remember?

SUSIE

I forgot. *(Silence)* Why?

ESPERANZA

Why? Why won't he sell?

SUSIE

Yes.

ESPERANZA

He won't sell to a communist.

SUSIE

My money's as good as the next comrade's.

ESPERANZA

He knows that. I know that.

SUSIE

I'll turn the you-know-whats around. I'll face them anywhere you want. South America? *(Pause)*
How about Mexico. Mexico, who cares.

ESPERANZA

Fidel, I appreciate the offer. But we had that whole Red scare thing a couple of years ago and, well, people are still a bit... apprehensive about dealing with your kind.

SUSIE

How about Texas. Right up that son-of-a-bitch L.B.J. and Lady Bird's—

ESPERANZA

That's very generous, Fidel... and tempting. He's soused most of the time and, to be honest, would never know what hit him.

(The two men have a good laugh.)

SUSIE

You know Jack, you seem like a pretty decent fellow.

ESPERANZA

I'm getting the same feeling about you, Fidel.

SUSIE

What do you say the two of us just start pressing buttons and piss everybody off?

ESPERANZA

All we'd have to do is sit back and wait for the... fallout.

(Silence. The men then burst into hysterical laughter as the women remain very still and serious.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

So, Fidel, you weren't serious about buying the Senators, were you?

SUSIE

No, not really.

ESPERANZA

They'd probably have better attendance in Havana, that's for sure.

SUSIE

I'd call them the Havana Barbados.

ESPERANZA

The bearded ones. Very good. You're up on your Cuban.

ESPERANZA

If things had gone differently, we considered a vacation to your lovely country.

SUSIE

You and Mrs. Kennedy.

(JACK displays his embarrassment.)

ESPERANZA

Uhhh....

SUSIE

Oh ho, you dog, you.

ESPERANZA

Anyway, why offer to buy the team? If it was to break the ice between us, it sure succeeded.

SUSIE

I'd like to take credit but, no, not just that. *(Pause)* It's silly. I don't want to bother you.

ESPERANZA

Fidel, buddy, come on, we're sharing a foxhole under fire here.

SUSIE

(Hesitates) I guess I'm just feeling a little nostalgic. A little... melancholy. *(Pause)* Well, it's my anniversary.

ESPERANZA

Anniversary?

SUSIE

Twenty years ago the New York Giants offered me a contract to play baseball. It included a five thousand dollar signing bonus. I was a pretty good pitcher you know.

ESPERANZA

(Apologetic) I'm sorry about the ballplayer remark before. I've heard you had a pretty good curveball in your day.

SUSIE

Yes. Yes. I could always hit that outside corner. And a breaking ball, too. Low and in on the knees.

ESPERANZA

Your fastball?

SUSIE

Passable, only passable, I have to admit. *(Silence)* Imagine the world if I had decided to play baseball instead of becoming a lawyer.

ESPERANZA

It definitely would have put a different spin on world politics. *(Pause)* Is law school the only reason you didn't sign?

SUSIE

Stronger aspirations. For my country and my people. Besides, Batista had to be stopped. Be careful Jack, we have a lot of the same enemies. A lot in common.

ESPERANZA

Including our love for baseball.

SUSIE

The national game of Cuba.

ESPERANZA

And the national pastime of the American people.

SUSIE

What if my people had not invented the game?

(Silence.)

ESPERANZA

Fidel, we invented the game of baseball.

SUSIE

No, Jack, we did. From the Cuban game batos.

(The tension increases.)

ESPERANZA

You can't change history.

SUSIE

No, but I can make it. Our deal is off.

ESPERANZA

Deal, what deal? We had a deal?

SUSIE

Don't push me. You start pushing; I'll start pushing, if you know what I mean.

(FIDEL frantically pantomimes pushing buttons.)

ESPERANZA

You start pushing buttons and I'll start pushing buttons. And I've got a lot more of them than you and that bald headed pinko in the Kremlin.

SUSIE

You wouldn't dare.

ESPERANZA

Oh, wouldn't I.

(Silence.)

SUSIE

(Careful) You wouldn't, would you?

ESPERANZA

No, would you?

SUSIE

No.

ESPERANZA

Then why...

SUSIE

Just acting out I guess.

ESPERANZA

What about Moscow?

SUSIE

Don't worry about them. They have lots of little red buttons but nothing on the other end of the wire.

(Silence.)

ESPERANZA

So, now what do we do?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE FOR “POST-GAME INTERVIEW”

POST-GAME INTERVIEW

SCENE: A baseball stadium tunnel, within hearing distance of the field, during the World Series.

AT RISE: A television sports reporter, DICK PLACE, stands alone, microphone in hand and earpiece in place. He continuously shifts his weight trying to keep warm in the cold night air. The sounds of the game and fans can be heard in the background. DICK finally settles. He presses on his earpiece and speaks into the microphone.

DICK

(Abrupt) What? (Listens) No, I won't take off my overcoat. (Listens) Because it's thirty-seven degrees, that's why. (Listens) How about the scarf? Like it? (Listens) Oh, you want me to take it off. (Pause) Fuck you! Do you need me to repeat myself? (Listens) Good. (To himself) Fall classic my ass. (Into microphone) I said, Fall Classic my ass! Yes, I knew what to expect for October in New York. That's why I dressed for winter! Whatever happened to day games, for crissakes? (To himself) How did I end up doing this again? (Defensive, into microphone) Who said that? I want to know who just made that accusation. (Listens) I know there's no shame in failing, Phil. (Listens; humble) Thank you, Phil. (Pause) It wasn't my fault, Phil. (Pause) You know what those morning shows are like. One minute I'm an anchor and the next I'm interviewing monkeys and frying platanos for Cuban Heritage Day. You just don't slice sweet plantains on national television and come off manly, Phil. (Pause) You're a good man, Phil. (Listens) The coat and scarf? You're a good man, Phil. (Pause) Phil. Fuck you, Phil. (Yells) It's thirty-seven freakin' degrees, Phil. I'll take them off when I'm good and ready to take them off. And I'm not good and ready. Until then... kiss my frozen ass. (Listens) No, I have no idea where she is. Maybe she was abducted by aliens. Maybe she's warming up in the bullpen. (Yells) Maybe she got smart and went home. (Listens) Well, I can hope can't I? And besides, isn't she supposed to be keeping track of me, and not the other way around. (Pause) You made her a field producer. (Under his breath) Nobody helped me my first day on the job. You either can do the job or you can't.

(DICK reacts violently to a comment through his earpiece.)

DICK, *Continues*

Who said that? Who said that? I want his name, Phil. I mean it.

(DICK makes an obvious attempt to simmer down.)

DICK, *Continues*

Yes, I'm calm, Phil. I've won local Emmy Awards, Phil. I deserve a little more respect. *(Pause)* Damn it. *(Listens)* I know the game's almost over. *(Listens)* I know the booth will throw it directly to me when the game ends. *(Listens)* After the interview, which I still don't have by the way, I recap the game and cue the studio. I've have done this once or twice you know. What's the sudden concern, Phil?

(DICK listens to a long response. He interjects an occasional 'uh-huh' and 'got it.')

DICK, *Continues*

Phil, the coat and scarf are staying on you absurd walking example of humanity. (*Listens*) Fuck me? Fuck you! Hey, here's an idea... (*Yells*) find your producer and get me an interview! (*Listens*) I know it's her job, but does she know it's her job? She's probably curled up in a ball in some bathroom somewhere sobbing uncontrollably. 'I don't know what to do. Somebody... anybody... please help me.' *To himself*) I'll probably end up interviewing a beer vendor from the upper deck.

(*DICK enacts the interview playing both roles.*)

DICK, *Continues*

So, are the lite beers really lighter?

DICK, *As the Vendor*

No question about it, Dick.

DICK

You must realize that you're only a few sales away from most all-time beers sold at major league baseball games.

DICK, *As the Vendor*

I really try not to pay attention to the stats, Dick.

DICK

This is your thirty-first year selling beer.

DICK, *As the Vendor*

(*Interrupts*) Actually it's only my thirtieth year. My first years in the 'show' I sold cotton candy.

DICK

It's still a remarkable run of successful years. How do you explain your longevity?

DICK, *As the Vendor*

First... I've had some of the best concession managers in the league. My paper cap off to those guys, Dick. And let's not forget the great army of vendors selling behind me. Well, actually below me. In the lower decks.

(*DICK ends the interview.*)

DICK, *Continues*

Hey, Phil, did you roll tape on that. It's looking like the only interview I might be doing all night.

(*A young woman, NEVADA DES BARRES, scampers up to DICK. She is dressed in white from head to toe. Pants, boots, parka, wool hat and mittens.*)

DICK, *Continues*

(Into microphone) Hey Phil, the Pillsbury Dough Girl just showed up. *(DICK pokes her parka.)*
Where's the giggle, oven fresh?

NEVADA

Very funny.

DICK

Well?

NEVADA

(Hedges) Well...

DICK

(Dumbfounded) You didn't get the interview. You didn't get him. Did you?

NEVADA

(Implores) Hear me out.

(DICK accents his dialogue with emphatic hand gestures.)

DICK

I... sent you... to arrange... for me... Duke Coleman... the star... of the game.

NEVADA

Right... about that part of it.

DICK

I know you went, but did you get Duke, or anyone else? *(Pause)* How about that part of it?

NEVADA

The star of the game part?

(DICK stares angrily at NEVADA for several long seconds. The silence is finally broken by a roar from the crowd. The two quickly turn their attention to the field as DICK adjusts his earpiece.)

DICK

(Into microphone) What just happened? *(At Nevada)* He lost the perfect game. And the no-hitter.
(To Nevada) Happy?

NEVADA

How is it my fault?

DICK
Where are you standing?

NEVADA
(Confused) Excuse me?

DICK
Are you standing in front of me?

NEVADA
What of it? *(Pause)* Yeah.

DICK
(Loses it) Then it's your fault.

NEVADA
You're insane.

DICK
(Screams) Have you, or have you not arranged my post-game interview with Duke Coleman?

NEVADA
That's what I've—

DICK
(Silences her) Uh-uh. Uh-uh-uh. Uh-uh-uh-uh.

NEVADA
Just let me—

DICK
NO! You don't say anything. Nothing. Nada. Go smear some more lipstick on... or adjust something... whatever your kind does.

NEVADA
(Seethes) My kind.

DICK
Go. Go away and don't come back... at least until Duke Coleman is signed, sealed, and delivered.

(A second crowd roar startles DICK and NEVADA.)

DICK, *Continues*
(Into microphone) What just happened? *(Nervous)* So, it's still a two-hitter. *(Yells at Nevada)* And a World Series shutout. *(Into microphone)* Yeah, yeah.

(DICK throws a look towards the field then at NEVADA.)

NEVADA

Will you listen to me now?

DICK

If I thought you had anything remotely worth listening to... he's pitched the game of a lifetime. Any pitcher's lifetime except for maybe Larson. That's Don Larson, who pitched for the New York Yankees, if you're wondering.

NEVADA

I know who Don Larson is. In 1954 he was traded by the Orioles to New York along with Billy Hunter and Bob Turley for Gene Woodling, Harry Byrd, Jim McDonald, Hal Smith, Gus Triandos and Willy Miranda. In 1959 Larson would be part of the deal that brought Roger Maris to the Yankees from the Kansas City Athletics.

DICK

(Bristles) Get out of my sight.

(In the background, an applauding crowd can be heard.)

DICK, *Continues*

(Into microphone) Now what? *(Listens)* So the count is 3 and 0. So what. SO. WHAT. It doesn't take anything away from—

(The crowd roars.)

DICK, *Continues*

(Dejected; into microphone) Phil! *(Pause)* He walked the bases.

(DICK slowly turns to NEVADA.)

NEVADA

I had a feeling.

(DICK is physically affected by the comment.)

DICK

(Into microphone) Did you hear that, Phil? *(DICK shoves the microphone into NEVADA'S face.)* Tell Phil what you just said Miss Marshmallow producer. Tell him!

NEVADA

(Into microphone) I... had...

DICK

(Mocking) You... had...

NEVADA

(Confident) I had a feeling it wouldn't last.

(DICK pulls the microphone back.)

DICK

(Into microphone) Hear that, Phil. She had a feeling. Now, aren't we all just bowing down in exaltation. *(Listens)* I will not ask. *(Listens)* Because, it would only dignify that whole, ridiculous, woman's intuition, bull-crap business. You want to get in touch with your feminine side, take her out for tea and finger sandwiches after I GET MY INTERVIEW WITH DUKE COLEMAN.

(DICK leans into NEVADA.)

DICK, *Continues*

Duke. Coleman.

NEVADA

Fine!

(NEVADA storms off. While balancing the microphone, DICK blows his nose and begins to remove his scarf, overcoat and gloves.)

DICK

(Into microphone) Yes, I'm taking them off. *(To himself)* Thirty-seven degrees. Probably end up with pneumonia.

(An explosive roar from the crowd freezes DICK mid change. The noise is long and loud. DICK finishes slowly and methodically. He stands spellbound and reluctantly raises the microphone to his mouth.)

DICK, *Continues*

(His voice cracks) Phil? *(Nods while listening)* The fat lady has sung. *(Calm)* Very funny, Phil, very funny. Now, can we skip the metaphors? *(Listens)* Grand slam. You don't say. Yeah, I'd say that sounded like a grand slam.

(DICK stands motionless and silent until NEVADA ushers in a stunned DUKE COLEMAN. The two men stand shoulder-to-shoulder like deer in the headlights of a fast approaching vehicle. NEVADA tilts COLEMAN'S hat back on his head and straightens DICK'S necktie. DICK is roused by the voice in his earpiece. He slowly turns his head and stares at the still comatose COLEMAN. NEVADA responds to her earpiece.)

NEVADA

Dick! Dick! You're on the air.

DICK

(To DUKE) You blew it.

(COLEMAN manages an uncomfortable smirk.)

DICK, *Continues*

You blew it.

DUKE

Excuse me.

DICK

You heard me. You bleeewww it. The perfect game. The no-hitter. All of it.

(DICK gestures a choke on his own throat.)

DUKE

(Angry) Do you have a question for me?

DICK

This could have been the defining moment in my career.

DUKE

(Enunciating each word) Do you have a question for me?

DICK

Yes. Yes, I do. *(Screams)* What the Hell just happened?

DUKE

You self-centered ass. I never could stand you. Your producer was the only reason I agreed to do this interview in the first place. *(To NEVADA)* I'll owe you one. *(To DICK)* By the way, you've got something hanging out of your nose.

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE FOR "THE CONCRETE WALL"

THE CONCRETE WALL

SCENE: New Jersey. Summer, 1971. An implied concrete and cinder block wall on which is chalked a perfectly outlined strike zone. Opposite the wall sits a silver metal garbage can and lid.

AT RISE: A young man, CHARLIE. His clothes and mannerisms are those of a pre-teen boy. A baseball glove and a pink rubber ball sit at his feet. He meticulously runs white chalk over the heavily lined rectangle on the wall. CHARLIE'S head is bowed as he observes his work from under the pulled-down brim of his baseball cap. ANNIE, his sister, sits on the garbage can. She observes CHARLIE'S artistry before speaking directly to the audience.

NOTE: CHARLIE should only speak or refer to ANNIE when specified. Unlike CHARLIE, ANNIE is always aware of CHARLIE'S presence since it is her memory. The stage lighting should provide isolated areas in addition to areas to signify CHARLIE and ANNIE coming together and, ultimately, ANNIE accepting CHARLIE'S death.

ANNIE

That's my little brother Charlie. His ball and glove. The wall belongs to Barney and Leo Miller. It's one of four walls that make up the building. But you probably could have figured that out for yourself. The roof completes the package we know as Miller's Auto Parts and Supply. That, you wouldn't have figured out. *(Looks at wall)* Don't worry about the chalk, it wears off. A heavy rain and it's gone in minutes. And besides, Barney and Leo don't mind. *(To CHARLIE)* Tilt your hat back, Charlie.

(CHARLIE'S attention stays on the wall.)

CHARLIE

I'm okay.

ANNIE

You're straining your eyes.

CHARLIE

(Insistent) No, I'm not.

ANNIE

Charlie.

CHARLIE

Alright, alright already.

ANNIE

(To audience) Ever since he was a little boy he's wanted to play baseball. For his ninth birthday our aunt and uncle gave him this replica Yankee's uniform. He insisted Mom sew a number "7" on the shirt.

CHARLIE

Only Mickey Mantle, the greatest Yankee, no, the greatest ballplayer who's ever lived.

ANNIE

(Smiles) It took Mom hours to find a piece of black material for that number and then sew it on. I don't know how she talked him out of wanting to draw pinstripes on it.

(CHARLIE turns his head to ANNIE but doesn't make eye contact.)

CHARLIE

(Resolute) "The Mick," Annie, "The Mick."

ANNIE

(To audience) He wore that heavy flannel uniform all summer. No matter how hot it got, and trust me, it was a hot summer; he wore that thing every single day. When it was in the laundry he'd cut out the "NY" and a number "7" from paper, color them in with a black crayon and pin them on a tee shirt. Eventually, he found a laundry marker and just drew them on.

CHARLIE

(Disappointed) Yeah, until Mom wouldn't let me do it anymore.

ANNIE

(To CHARLIE) You were running out of tee shirts. *(To audience)* Where were we? Right... the wall.

CHARLIE

(To audience) It's not perfect, but it's pretty close. Better than most I've seen, or pitched against, anyway. I'm really lucky... it being on the same block that I live on and everything. Just across the street.

(CHARLIE returns to his chalking.)

ANNIE

(Looks up) Across the street is up there. We live on the third floor. Me, Mom and Charlie. Dad died a few years ago. It's kind of... let's just say it's what we can afford. Mom tries to—

(CHARLIE interrupts, referring to the wall.)

CHARLIE

You see how this stuff... this...

ANNIE

Charlie, I was talking.

CHARLIE

Sorry. We don't talk about our father very much anymore. Mom hasn't adjusted very well.

CHARLIE

(Still) It wasn't fair, you know.

ANNIE

(Encouraging) What's that Charlie?

CHARLIE

You know.

ANNIE

Dad? *(Silence)* We talk sometimes. If nothing else, we do have each other. The night he died, Charlie spent hours out here. It was really quiet for a summer night. One of those rare evenings when no one was around. No kids; nobody hanging out on the corner. Seemed as every porch was empty. After the sun went down, all you could hear was that hollow ball hitting that wall.

CHARLIE

(Interjects) No sound like it in the world.

ANNIE

It was such a perfect cadence, too.

(CHARLIE bounces the ball against the wall.)

ANNIE, *Continues*

Such a rhythm. Like a machine.

CHARLIE

(Changing mood) Can I explain to them about the wall?

ANNIE

Sure.

CHARLIE

(Teases) What I started to point out before was... this stuff here...

ANNIE

The mortar.

CHARLIE

That's it. Pretty even with the brick. It's deep, but not too deep.

ANNIE

And that's important?

CHARLIE

(Astonished) Yeah, that's real important.

(CHARLIE rubs the palm of his hand over the wall.)

CHARLIE, *Continues*

(Delighted) Almost smooth. Amazing. *(To audience)* It may not seem like a big deal to you, but for a kid like me... *(He holds up the ball)* These things cost money. A new “Pennsy Pinkie” or a Spalding... that’s a big deal, a really big deal.

(CHARLIE’s attention is back to the wall. ANNIE realizes he has left the audience without any further explanations.)

ANNIE

(To CHARLIE) Charlie, you might want to explain yourself a little more.

CHARLIE

(Embarrassed; to audience) Sorry.

(CHARLIE uses the ball and wall for show-and-tell.)

CHARLIE, *Continues*

(Serious) If the ball doesn’t hit the wall flat and hits one of these groves or high spots... whoosh! Out to the left where you’ve got two sewers. One on each side of the block. Once the ball settles into a roll in the gutters, you can kiss this baby good-bye.

ANNIE

(To audience) Run after it.

CHARLIE

(To audience) See, that’s where you’d make a humongous mistake. With cars always parked on both sides of the street, you can’t always see it. You might run right past it.

ANNIE

(To CHARLIE) So, what’s the secret Charlie?

CHARLIE

(Knowingly) As soon as that sucker shoots out, hit the pavement. See where the ball is and head right for it. The trick is to run past it and then, just scoop it up like a routine ground ball. Disaster avoided... if you’re lucky.

(CHARLIE takes a ballpoint pen from his pocket, sits ‘Indian-style’, and re-inks his name on the rubber ball.)

ANNIE

(To audience) You always knew when a sewer claimed its latest victim. Charlie would race into the kitchen screaming for a wire hanger. Once he got one, it was a matter of seconds before he had the top untwisted. By the time he was back out the door and across the porch he had the hanger pretty much straightened out. Three flights back downstairs and through the back yard

ANNIE, *Continued*

and he's molded a perfect scooping utensil, handle included. Imagine a giant dipper for coloring Easter eggs.

CHARLIE

(To himself) I'd save a lot of time if Mom'd just let me keep one on the back porch. I'd clean it and everything.

(ANNIE pinches her nose in CHARLIE's direction.)

ANNIE

It's been down in the sewer, Charlie.

CHARLIE

(Without looking) Girl.

ANNIE

(Regroups) So, what if the ball bounces to your right?

CHARLIE

(Aghast) That's real trouble. The Boulevard.

ANNIE

(To audience) The main thoroughfare in our quaint little town. Four lanes of two-way traffic, all day, all night - every day, every night. It bounces out there and...

CHARLIE

(Afraid) It almost never gets clear across the street. It usually hits off the front of a car, or truck and then it could travel for a full block or two. It bounces off the front of a bus and you probably never find it. Ever.

ANNIE

Why's that?

CHARLIE

(Depleted) The size of the front of the bus, along with the height of the bumper, then add in the amount of space under the bus... any number of reasons the ball gets trapped and carried away.

ANNIE

(To CHARLIE) But if you do?

CHARLIE

(Tentative) Do? Do what?

ANNIE

(To CHARLIE) Find the ball.

CHARLIE

If you do, you are super lucky. Especially if the ball doesn't split in half, which it might do if it's an old, worn one.

ANNIE

(Plays along) Why would you be playing with an old, worn out ball?

CHARLIE

(Matter-of-fact) Only one left.

ANNIE

So if you're not 'super lucky' then...

(CHARLIE and ANNIE simultaneously look up, beyond Charlie's wall.)

CHARLIE

(Flabbergasted) Miller's roof.

ANNIE

(To audience) The older boys play stickball further up the block. A couple of houses down from Avenue A. They even have a home plate painted on the street.

CHARLIE

Dead center. Directly across from the fire hydrant in front of Danny Ryder's house.

ANNIE

(To audience) The first manhole cover down, the one with a yellow "X" on it, is designated as second base, even though no one actually ever runs the bases. A ball hit beyond it that bounces is an automatic single. Same rule for the next manhole, but that's a double. Somebody hits the Boulevard on a fly... automatic home run.

CHARLIE

(To audience) I've never seen it happen, myself. But they say Joey Nicholson hit three one summer.

ANNIE

(Swoons) Ahh, Joey Nicholson. What a cutie.

CHARLIE

He was like, only the number one stickball player this city has ever seen. And he came from this block. Our block.

ANNIE

(To CHARLIE) He was something else, that's for sure.

CHARLIE
(To audience) Girl.

ANNIE
 Butt face.

CHARLIE
 Turd.

ANNIE
 Piss-ant.

CHARLIE
 Sister.

ANNIE
 Brother.

(Silence.)

BOTH
(Sincere) Love you. Me too.

ANNIE
*(To CHARLIE)*What were we talking about?

CHARLIE
 Rounding the bases.

ANNIE
(Sly) Right, Joey Nicholson.

CHARLIE
(Disgusted) Ughhh. Home runs.

ANNIE
(Playfully) Right. Anyway, the guys have an endless supply of—
(CHARLIE cuts her off just in case she isn't "misunderstood.")

CHARLIE
 Spaldeens. Or Pennsys. Nothing too good for their stickball game.

ANNIE
 The ball gets hit onto Miller's roof and it's an automatic out. And since they don't need them...

CHARLIE

(Grateful) They leave them.

ANNIE

(Gestures) Enter Charlie the Circus Boy. Especially after one of those grey behemoths, barreling down the boulevard keeping on schedule, gobbles up one of those shots out to the right.

CHARLIE

(Over his shoulder) Can I, please?

ANNIE

(Corrects him) May I.

CHARLIE

(Disappointed) It's my story.

ANNIE

No, I was trying... go ahead.

CHARLIE

(To audience) I found a way onto the roof. You have to be real careful, though. There are bars on the back window so actually getting up the side of the building is the easy part.

ANNIE

(To audience; proudly) Tough guy, huh?

CHARLIE

Sneaking into the yard to get to the building, that's the hard part. *(CHARLIE pauses)* It's scary, really scary. If Mr. or Mrs. Cassidy ever caught me... they'd tell Mom and...

(CHARLIE pantomimes death by dragging his thumb across his throat. He then puts a finger to his lips and shushes the audience.)

CHARLIE, *Continues*

(Whispers to audience) Our secret, okay?

ANNIE

(To audience) To be honest, the Cassidys knew. They told Mom they'd keep an eye on him until he was down off the roof and on his way. So Mom knew. I knew. Barney and Leo Miller knew. Joey Nicholson knew. He told me he'd hit one up there on purpose every now and then. Just for Charlie.

CHARLIE

(Solemn) He was a really cool guy.

ANNIE

(To herself) Yes, he was.

(Silence.)

CHARLIE

(Quietly) I miss him.

ANNIE

(To audience) Joey was the first on our block to go to Vietnam. He didn't come home in body bag but he might as well have. The VA says he speaks a word every now and then. *(Increasingly angry)* Just a random word. He says nothing about nothing. The doctors try to encourage his parents. "At least his brain is functioning." "Be patient, first words then sentences." "At least he isn't violent." That's my favorite. "At least he isn't violent." Well, Doctor Doolittle, it's pretty hard to be violent when you don't have any arms and legs and the most consistent thing that comes out of your mouth is drool.

(CHARLIE removes his baseball cap and looks over to his sister for the first time. His speech and mannerisms from this point of the play are those of a young man.)

CHARLIE

(To ANNIE) The Cassidys spied on me?

ANNIE

(To CHARLIE) Yes, they watched out for you.

CHARLIE

Mom, too. Really?

ANNIE

I didn't have the heart to tell you.

CHARLIE

(Amazed) And almost everyone on the block knew.

ANNIE

Honestly?

CHARLIE

Yes.

ANNIE

I think everyone on the block knew.

(CHARLIE looks up above the wall.)

CHARLIE

(Surprised) I thought when I climbed up there it was the best kept secret in the world.

ANNIE

Like you don't anymore.

CHARLIE

You know I don't.

ANNIE

Don't be a wise guy. I saw you up there just the other day.

CHARLIE

(Disconcerted) Just the other day, huh?

ANNIE

When your little girlfriend from school called the house.

(CHARLIE gives ANNIE a quizzical look.)

ANNIE, *Continues*

(Annoyed) Donna. To invite you to her birthday party.

CHARLIE

(Nods) That's right. I remember, now.

ANNIE

(Mocks) I remember now. I look down from the porch to call you upstairs and instead I'm almost eye- to-eye with you up on the roof.

CHARLIE

Caught in the act.

ANNIE

I'd say so.

(CHARLIE picks up his ball and glove. He tosses the pink sphere into the air several times.)

CHARLIE

(Smug) Know how many I found that day?

ANNIE

Five.

CHARLIE

(Surprised) I told you?

ANNIE

More than once.

CHARLIE

It was a good day.

ANNIE

Except you never spoke to your girlfriend.

CHARLIE

(Corrects) She wasn't my girlfriend.

ANNIE

Could've been.

CHARLIE

(Looks at ball) This was more important. *(Silence)* Hey, Sis.

ANNIE

Yeah.

CHARLIE

That was four years ago.

ANNIE

(Pause) I know.

(Silence.)

ANNIE, *Continues*

(Melancholy) Seems like it was just the other day. It's all been a blur since you've been gone. I sit here, and stare at that wall and it's as if the two of us are out here like nothing ever happened. Like you're still... why'd you go Charlie?

(CHARLIE simply shrugs his shoulders.)

ANNIE, *Continues*

(Annoyed) That's not an answer.

CHARLIE

(Defensive) What do you want me say? What is it you still want after all this time?

(Silence.)

ANNIE

A reason.

CHARLIE

As if anything I say, any rationale, any explanation is going to satisfy you. Or make you feel better or even bring me home.

ANNIE

(Hurt) That's not fair.

CHARLIE

Neither was my dying. But that's what we're dealing with.

ANNIE

(Calm) You didn't have to go, though. You had an out. Several if I'm not mistaken.

CHARLIE

You don't know that, not for sure.

ANNIE

You could have tried.

CHARLIE

Do you really think they would have deferred me for being the last living male in our family? A bit of a stretch, don't you think?

ANNIE

Maybe. *(Pause)* There was college. You had a full scholarship. A thousand days and nights of throwing a ball against that wall would have paid off.

CHARLIE

Let it go, please. I believed what I believed.

ANNIE

You never believed in the war. We talked and you told me so.

CHARLIE

I got called to serve my country. Dad did.

ANNIE

(Dumbfounded) Charlie, that was World War II. It was a different war, a different time. Very, very different.

CHARLIE

Joey Nicholson went. You used tell me he was the smartest guy on the block. You said, 'Try to be like Joey, Charlie.' 'Listen to Joey, Charlie, he'll steer you right.'

ANNIE

(Defensive) I said a lot of things when you were growing up. Dad was gone and you were growing up faster than Mom and I could keep track of. You needed someone to, I don't know, look up to. Be able to talk to about stuff... whatever. And he loved you like a little brother.

CHARLIE

I know that. I didn't go because he did, or told me to. He also taught me to think for myself. Give me a little credit will you. It was my decision.

ANNIE

A decision that affected a lot of people.

(Silence.)

CHARLIE

I'm sorry you ended up losing both of us.

ANNIE

(Pause) I just really miss you.

CHARLIE

I miss you too, Sis. I never meant for you to be alone. Honest to God I didn't.

(CHARLIE picks up the chalk from the base of the wall.)

CHARLIE, *Continues*

Time to move on big sister.

ANNIE

(Dismisses) Yeah, yeah.

CHARLIE

I'm serious. No more of this. It's not healthy.

(ANNIE initially ignores CHARLIE until he gets her attention.)

CHARLIE, *Continues*

Hey, did you hear me?

ANNIE

I heard you.

CHARLIE

But are you listening?

ANNIE

No fair, that's what I used to say to you.

(CHARLIE responds to ANNIE'S use of tense. She nods. CHARLIE kisses ANNIE on the forehead. She fights back tears as he hands her his ball and glove.)

CHARLIE

Take care of these for me, okay.

ANNIE

What do you want me to do with them?

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

PROPERTIES

ALL-AMERICAN GIRLS

NONE

FALL GUYS

2 Telephone Consoles or at least 4 handsets

Cigar

POST-GAME INTERVIEW

Microphone

Ear-piece (2)

THE CONCRETE WALL

Pink rubber ball

Baseball glove

Ballpoint pen

Chalk

N.Y. Yankee baseball hat