

BULLPEN

a late-inning comedy by

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The entire play takes place in the Boston Red Sox bullpen at Fenway Park, Boston, on a Saturday afternoon one summer—some time between the pennant they didn't win in '78 and the one they gave back in '86.

ACT ONE—The Earlier Innings

ACT TWO—The Later Innings

There will be one seventh-inning stretch.

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THE RELIEF CORPS

BOOMER
RIPPER
MOOSE
TANK
FRITO
DUKE

and

THE KID

ACT ONE

(In the blackout, we hear a radio announcer.)

ANNOUNCER. ...on a beautiful afternoon here at Fenway Park, where Rupert McGee for the Boston Red Sox and Dave Righetti for the New York Yankees continue their neck-and-neck race—for fifth place. The Yanks have announced that Dave Winfield is now off the disabled list, while the Red Sox, with three of their own on the D.L., are apparently bringing up their premiere minor league lefty—a 19-year-old phenom known all over Pawtucket as “The Kid”....

(The lights come up on the Boston Red Sox bullpen at Fenway Park in Boston. At center stage, we see a dugout-type structure—a protected enclave housing a long bench. On the upstage wall, there is the customary telephone, next to a small blackboard and some chalk. Downstage, we see a low fence, ostensibly looking out over the diamond, behind which are four deck chairs, two on either side of the pen; and upstage right is a closet which houses the john. Next to the bullpen and above it, we see a suggestion of the center field bleachers.)

The set is painted the most terrifying shade of green ever visited upon the human race.

As the lights come up, Boomer, age 35 and a second-string catcher, is walking through the tunnel into the bullpen. His mask is in one hand, his glove in the other, and he is wearing his shin guards and chest protector. He crosses the pen, trying not to stare at the telephone as he is doing so, and drops his gear, along with a copy of the Boston Globe, onto the bench. He surveys the pen, then bends down to do some stretching exercises—)

BOOMER. *(Groaning.)* Aw, fuck....

(—and winds up keeling over instead when his joints won't connect properly. He rises with a pained grimace, digs into his pants and removes his cup, then walks upstage center and tosses it onto the bench. After a moment, he glances behind his shoulder at the telephone and checks to make sure no one is watching him; then, appearing unconcerned, he finds an excuse to cross the bullpen, and happens to come to a stop in front of the instrument attached to the wall. He stands before it impatiently.)

BOOMER. Ring.

(There is a deadly silence. The telephone refuses to comply.)

BOOMER. Five... Four... Three...

(He picks up the receiver and speaks into the mouthpiece.)

BOOMER. Reach out and touch this—

(—and places the receiver to his crotch. Ripper suddenly enters the bullpen through the tunnel, glove dangling from his hand. He stops dead as he sees Boomer with the telephone. There is a long pause.)

RIPPER. Don't tell me—you finally taught it how to talk.

BOOMER. Yeah. Long distance.

(He hangs up the telephone as Ripper sits on the upstage bench and picks up Boomer's paper.)

RIPPER. Any word yet?

BOOMER. Nothin'.

RIPPER. Can I read your *Globe*?

BOOMER. No.

(Ripper opens it.)

RIPPER. Thanks.

(Boomer sits, stands, and returns to the telephone.)

BOOMER. Why won't it ring?

RIPPER. It will.

(The telephone rings. Boomer turns to Ripper and frowns.)

BOOMER. Big deal.

(He picks up the telephone.)

BOOMER. Dial-a-Stud. Can I have your credit card number and expiration date? *(Pause; feigning joy.)* Doug! What a pleasant surprise! Gee, I'll bet the other guys'd get a kick out of this if they were here. *(Pause; looking around the pen.)* No, they won't be in today. They're in the Bahamas. *(Pause; patiently.)* Doug? Doug? Lower your voice, Doug. Look, I'll make a deal with you—you keep The Kid in Pawtucket, and we'll think about working, okay? *(Pause.)* Incidentally, have they gotten around to deciding if and when yet? It's been—

(His face falls.)

BOOMER. That's a piss-poor excuse for a joke, Doug. *(Pause.)* Yeah? Well, I'm not laughing either.

(He hangs up and turns to Ripper.)

BOOMER. Guess what?

RIPPER. He found an agent for your talking dick.

BOOMER. *(Sitting.)* The little snot left Providence on the one o'clock shuttle. Somebody'd better start packing.

RIPPER. He isn't here yet.

BOOMER. God, if it's me, I hope they don't trade me to Detroit.

RIPPER. You like Detroit.

BOOMER. I don't like Detroit. Frito likes Detroit.

RIPPER. Frito likes Milwaukee.

BOOMER. Don't start.

(A beat.)

RIPPER. Boomer, how long have you felt this way?

BOOMER. About what?

RIPPER. About Detroit. You used to like Detroit.

BOOMER. WHAT IS IT WITH YOU AND DETROIT? I hate Detroit!

RIPPER. Anchovies.

BOOMER. What?

RIPPER. Anchovies. You hate anchovies.

BOOMER. I don't get it.

RIPPER. You can't have it both ways, Boomer.

(Boomer is bewildered beyond the point of comprehension. All he knows for sure is that he has just been shafted.)

BOOMER. I'll tell you something. If you weren't lefthanded, you wouldn't be able to get away with that.

RIPPER. If you weren't righthanded, you wouldn't fall for it.

BOOMER. Tell me about it, ass-face. You know how many famous people are lefthanded? About five. And nobody ever heard of three of them.

RIPPER. Yeah? How many years have I been pitching for the Red Sox?

BOOMER. Seven.

RIPPER. Uh-huh. And how many years have you been catching me?

BOOMER. Six.

RIPPER. In all that time, how many arguments have you won?

BOOMER. Three.

RIPPER. Two. You know why?

BOOMER. Don't tell me. Read my paper.

RIPPER. Because the left side of the brain controls the right side of the body and the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body. Know what that means?

BOOMER. (*Miming jacking off.*) Yeah. You're doing it to me again.

RIPPER. It means that lefthanded people are the only people in their right minds. It's called dominance.

BOOMER. I don't understand.

RIPPER. I'm not surprised.

BOOMER. Know what, Ripper? Talking to you is an obstacle course.

(*Ripper looks up from the newspaper.*)

RIPPER. Hey, listen to this. (*Quoting.*) "When asked if he was apprehensive about his impending major league promotion, The Kid replied, 'I'm not the one who should feel apprehensive.'"

BOOMER. "The Kid." Where the hell's he come off getting a name like that?

RIPPER. It's no worse than "Boomer".

BOOMER. Yeah? I got news for you. After I die, they'll call me "The Boston Bomber."

RIPPER. After you die, they'll call you dead. (*Pointing to the page.*) Would you look at those stats?

BOOMER. Brother...

(*Ripper puts down the paper.*)

RIPPER. Say, Boom, will you do me a favor?

BOOMER. What's that?

RIPPER. I think we ought to lay off Frito for awhile about his slump. (*Indicating the newspaper.*) I mean, this isn't exactly the day to be 2 and 9, okay?

BOOMER. Aw, man, what kind of an asshole do you think I am?

RIPPER. No special kind. Just the garden variety.

(*From offstage, we hear Tank and Moose, who are entering through the tunnel. They are engaged in an energetic conversation.*)

TANK. So we're in this elevator in Chicago, me and Frito, right? You follow?

MOOSE. I follow. I follow.

TANK. Right. So we're going downstairs for dinner, only he's complaining that he's so horny, he could hit fungoes to left field with it—whatever that means. Understand?

MOOSE. I said I understood. You want an affidavit?

TANK. Right. Anyway, the door opens up and this blonde steps in. Boobies out to here, you follow?

MOOSE. If you ask me that one more time, I'm going to break your neck. (*Pause.*) What happened?

(*There is a beat.*)

TANK. (*Downcast.*) Okay, you don't want to know.

MOOSE. Tank, I want to know. Do you hear me? GODDAMNIT, I WANT TO KNOW!

TANK. Do you *really* want to know?

(*Boomer looks up at Tank.*)

BOOMER. He threw you out on the fourth floor and corked her in the elevator.

MOOSE. (*To Boomer; awed.*) No, he didn't.

BOOMER. Yeah, he did.

MOOSE. Frito did that? On an *elevator*?!

BOOMER. Yeah. Right between the mezzanine and the lobby.

(*Moose sits down next to Boomer; Tank sits quietly next to Ripper.*)

MOOSE. No wonder he's in a slump. You know, one of these days that guy's going to— *(Pause.)* In the *Hilton*?

BOOMER. Well, you know how they're always mouthing off about their service.

MOOSE. How did he get away with it?

BOOMER. He didn't. It was one of those *scenic* elevators—you know, with the glass? They had traffic backed up for three miles down Lake Shore Drive.

MOOSE. Did he wear a condom, at least?

BOOMER. You kidding? He gets paid in Trojans.

MOOSE. I forgot....

(They pantomime conversation as Ripper turns to Tank.)

RIPPER. Screwed up your punchline, huh?

(A beat.)

TANK. Big deal. He told it better anyway.

RIPPER. Five bucks says you're lying.

TANK. No, really. You know how long it takes me to get a story right? I probably would have loused it up myself if he hadn't done it for me.

(Back to Boomer and Moose.)

MOOSE. Christ, the scoreboard lights up every time he unzips his fly. You know, he's what gives us a bad name.

BOOMER. Oh, yeah? You were that way once.

MOOSE. What do you mean, once? I'm only 38.

BOOMER. How old were you when you were born, Moose? Minus six?

(They continue with pantomime as Ripper turns to Tank.)

RIPPER. Tank, you know what your problem is? You think too much.

(Tank looks up uncertainly.)

TANK. I do?

RIPPER. Uh-huh. And when was the last time somebody thought his way out of a jam?

TANK. June 18, 1978. Don Sutton was pitching to Gary Carter, when he—

RIPPER. My point is, brains and baseball don't mix.

TANK. No, huh?

RIPPER. Nope. You use your head too much, you know what you're going to get?

TANK. Bad wood?

RIPPER. You got it. *(Pause.)* You want to warm me up?

TANK. Yeah, okay.

(They pick up their gear and walk to opposite sides of the stage. As they begin throwing to one another, we go back to Boomer and Moose. Moose is indicating Tank.)

MOOSE. All right, maybe I should have eased off. But I'll tell you—sometimes I think if I hear another “you know,” I'm going to bust his chops. You know?

BOOMER. So he's a little, uh—

MOOSE. Dim.

BOOMER. How much would you give for his hard slider?

MOOSE. My second mortgage.

BOOMER. Uh-huh. Check it out, Moose.

(Ripper and Tank are warming up downstage.)

TANK. Ripper, did I ever tell you what I was going to be if I wasn't a pitcher?

RIPPER. No.

(Back to Boomer and Moose.)

MOOSE. Hey, Boom. I ever tell you what I was going to be if they hadn't brought me up?

BOOMER. Probably fifty fucking times.

(Ripper and Tank.)

TANK. Well, don't tell anybody—but I was going to be an obstetrician.

RIPPER. What?

TANK. You know—one of those guys that keeps track of all the stats. I'll bet you didn't know that Pop Foster batted .268 for the Giants in 1898, did you?

RIPPER. I could have guessed.

TANK. No, you couldn't. Or that some of the guys used to call Scotty MacKay "Spitter" on account of that's what he threw?

RIPPER. I knew *that*.

TANK. Ripper—

RIPPER. —sort of.

TANK. Well, there's this whole career for guys who know things like that, you know? And you don't even need a diploma or have to look like Clark Grable or somebody.

(Boomer and Moose.)

MOOSE. You know, my roommate at Washington always used to say that "Easy Street" was spelled "M.D." And I should have listened to him, too—because nobody ever worries that your arm's too old—

(Boomer chimes in.)

BOOMER AND MOOSE. —when you're asking them to piss in a bottle.

MOOSE. Big joke.

BOOMER. You know what *I* wanted to be?

MOOSE. What?

BOOMER. I wanted to be a homosexual.

MOOSE. Carolyn must have been tickled.

BOOMER. Aah, it was just a thought. See, I could never figure out why they always got to go to the best movies and meet a lot of famous people—and how come you never saw them dressed like shit. But then I changed my mind.

MOOSE. Why?

BOOMER. I look lousy in a Yankee uniform.

(Moose stares at him, offers him a low five, then crosses to the blackboard, where he makes a hash mark under Boomer's column.)

RIPPER. I was either going to be a math teacher or Perry Mason. Isn't that the craziest thing?

TANK. Math?

RIPPER. Math.

(There is a pause.)

TANK. Long division, right?

RIPPER. Well, it was a little bit more complicated than that.

TANK. What made you quit, Ripper? You're real good at making people understand things. You know?

RIPPER. Logarithms made me puke.

TANK. What's a logarithm?

RIPPER. You don't want to know.

(Tank sighs.)

TANK. I'll level with you, Rip. I've never been too good at stuff like that.

RIPPER. No?

TANK. No.

RIPPER. Pop Foster divided by Scotty MacKay. Lifetime.

TANK. 1.09.

RIPPER. You pass.

(They finish warming up and cross upstage to the bench. We go back to Moose and Boomer.)

BOOMER. —anyway, Ripper thinks we shouldn't say anything to Frito about his slump—

(Ripper and Tank.)

TANK. Don't worry, Ripper. I won't say anything.

(Boomer and Moose.)

BOOMER. —even though you'd have to practically be blind to miss the plate by this much, and—

MOOSE. *(Cutting in.)* Boomer—have you been listening to the grapevine?

BOOMER. It isn't true.

MOOSE. What isn't?

BOOMER. Whatever you heard. I didn't do it, Frito did. *(Pause.)*

What did you hear?

MOOSE. What did you do?

BOOMER. I asked you first.

MOOSE. They say The Kid's going to be here some time this afternoon. *(Pause.)* I mean *here*.

BOOMER. I don't want to talk about it.

MOOSE. That's what my wife says. *(Mimicking.)* "I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to talk about it." Nice way to face reality, you guys.

BOOMER. What are you worried about? The Kid comes up here, he pitches us to a pennant, and we don't have to do a thing. *(Pause.)* I love rookies. They're so fuckin' dumb.

MOOSE. Boomer, if they bring him up, *somebody's* going to get the knife.

BOOMER. I don't want to talk about it.

MOOSE. Fine. You and my wife, you can start a club. Besides, why should *you* bitch? *I'm* the sacrificial lamb. *(Pause.)* I'll level with you, Boom. I'm really 41.

BOOMER. I'll level with you, Moose. You're really 42.

MOOSE. See? Who else is it going to be? *(Pointing downstage to Ripper.)* The brain with the split-fingered fastball?

BOOMER. Why not?

MOOSE. Because they're talking Cy Young, that's why not.

BOOMER. *You* won a couple of those.

MOOSE. Yeah. And you were eleven the last time I did it.

(Boomer looks around furtively.)

BOOMER. Moose, you know what your problem is? *(Pause.)* Dominance.

MOOSE. Huh?

BOOMER. Dominance. That's when you're not in your right mind.

MOOSE. You should know.

(Boomer lowers his voice and glances over his shoulder to make sure Ripper can't hear him.)

BOOMER. See, your left hand controls the right side of your head, and your right hand controls the left side of your head. Now, that there's what you call your dominance.

(Moose stares at him.)

MOOSE. No, it isn't. It's hemisphere lateralization.

(Boomer stares accusingly at Ripper, who looks up from his newspaper.)

RIPPER. That, too.

BOOMER. Aw, man, you guys can all go to hell.

(Ripper indicates the newspaper.)

RIPPER. Hey, Boomer, did you see this?

BOOMER. Gee, no. Some asshole swiped my paper.

RIPPER. There was this 79-year-old woman who spent \$100,000 on a cruise around the world.

BOOMER. Not interested.

RIPPER. Saved up for it for seven years.

BOOMER. Don't wrinkle the pages. You always wrinkle the pages.

RIPPER. Two days out of port, she dies.

BOOMER. She what?

RIPPER. I thought you weren't interested.

MOOSE. She *dies*?

TANK. She *dies*?

RIPPER. Right in the middle of dinner. They hadn't even gotten to Bermuda yet.

MOOSE. How did it happen?

TANK. How did it happen?

(Moose shoots Tank a glare.)

RIPPER. Beats me. She picked up a glass of champagne and then she croaked.

TANK. I hope they gave her a refund.

(Moose turns to him.)

MOOSE. Do you *practice* saying things like that?

BOOMER. Does it really say that?

RIPPER. Yeah. Wanna see?

(He rips the page in half and hands it to Boomer, who is furious.)

BOOMER. Aw, man—

(From offstage, we hear Frito.)

FRITO'S VOICE. It happened! It happened! It finally happened!

(Ripper sits up hastily.)

RIPPER. It's Frito. Now remember—not a word about his arm.

(The others nod. Suddenly Frito rips into the pen through the tunnel, cap on backwards and holding onto a glove and a bag of corn chips, to which he is wedded for life.)

FRITO. You're not going to believe this, man—

(The others look up simultaneously.)

ALL OF THEM. Nice slump.

(Frito stops dead.)

FRITO. Kiss my ass. *(Frenetic again.)* Somebody ask me what happened! You! Ripper! Ask me what happened!

(Frito begins digging frantically through his pants, as Ripper turns to Moose.)

RIPPER. Moose, what do you suppose happened?

MOOSE. He caught the clap and his dick fell off.

(Frito removes something from his pocket and approaches the others with a steady stream of conversation, to which no one is paying any attention.)

FRITO. You're not going to believe what I got—

(Boomer waves the remnants of the Globe in front of Ripper, livid.)

BOOMER. You're paying for that, you hear me?

RIPPER. Put it on my tab.

FRITO. Six years of waiting and praying, "O Rock of Ages" and all the rest of that shit—

BOOMER. Yeah? Have a bourbon, Ripper.

(He sits. Ripper reacts, perturbed.)

RIPPER. I owe you for that one.

FRITO. —and telling myself, "Man, there's no way"—

(Tank turns to Moose.)

TANK. Maybe the champagne gave her ptomaine of the liver. I read this book once—

MOOSE. You're putting me on.

FRITO. —but I did it! I did it!

(There is a dead silence as they all turn to him.)

FRITO. Doesn't anybody want to know what I did?

(Ripper turns and looks at Moose. Then he looks at Tank, who is lost in thought. Then he looks at Boomer. Then he turns back to Frito.)

RIPPER. No.

(Frito pivots, agitated.)

FRITO. Fine! Terrific! I'm going home. *(Pause.)* Did you hear me? I'm leaving.

(He exits.)

TANK. Moose, would your dick *really* fall off?

MOOSE. Yours would.

RIPPER. *(Calling out.)* Okay, Frito. What happened?

(Frito re-enters and crosses to a down right chair.)

FRITO. Fuck you, shithead. You don't want to know.

(The players look at one another. Slowly they rise, one by one, and approach the chair. In moments, Frito is surrounded. They stare down at him.)

BOOMER. Five...

THE OTHERS. Four... Three...

FRITO. I GOT THE SPRINGSTEEN TICKETS!

(Moose groans.)

MOOSE. For that I had to get up?

TANK. For that we had to get up?

MOOSE. *(To Tank, irritated.)* What are you, a tape delay?

(Moose and Tank return to the down left chairs; Ripper and Boomer remain crowded around Frito.)

RIPPER. Uh—how many did you get, Frito?

FRITO. Now you want to talk, huh? Well, all they let me have was two.

RIPPER. *(A groan; to Boomer.)* Jesus, I hate kissing ass this early in the day. Don't you?

BOOMER. Uh—who gets the other one, Frito?

(Ripper glares at him.)

RIPPER. Stay out of this. I was here first.

(Moose calls out.)

MOOSE. Hey, Frito. You want Court in session?

FRITO. Who needs Court? *(To Ripper and Boomer.)* Excuse me, gentlemen. Your calls will be answered in turn.

(He walks to the telephone and dials. Ripper and Boomer stare after him.)

FRITO. Flight arrivals, please. *(Pause.)* Yes, I'm calling about your 1:00 p.m. shuttle from Providence. *(Pause.)* Has it crashed? *(Disappointed.)* Are you sure? *(Pause.)* Yeah, well, thanks.

(He hangs up.)

FRITO. Aah, it's always when they *land* that they crack up. We got plenty of time. *(Reaching into his pocket.)* Ooh, Tank, I got something for you. X-rated flash cards. They go from "Asshole" to "Zebra-dick". Here. Learn something.

TANK. Frito, I'm not opening this.

MOOSE. Give me that.

(He takes the box away from Tank and begins looking at the cards, as Frito faces the immobile Ripper and Boomer, who have still not said a word.)

FRITO. So. *(Pause.)* Tell me I'm a better pitcher than Bruce Sutter.

RIPPER AND BOOMER. *(Mumbling.)* You're a better pitcher than Bruce Sutter.

FRITO. Come on, guys—I need more than that. *(Sitting between them.)* Tell me you wish you had my arm.

RIPPER. I wish I had your arm.

BOOMER. I wish I had your arm.

RIPPER. *(To Boomer.)* Are our noses turning brown yet?

BOOMER. No, but our tongues are.

FRITO. Tell me you wish you were me.

BOOMER. *(Gritted teeth.)* I wish I was you.

(Frito turns to Ripper, quizzically. There is a pause.)

RIPPER. I'm out.

(Ripper rises and crosses to the opposite bench, where he sits.)

FRITO. *(To Boomer.)* Tell me I made you what you are.

(Boomer begins to sizzle. After a long moment, his eyes narrow.)

BOOMER. You made me what I am. *(Deadly pause.)* Dick-lips.

FRITO. Pig-shit.

BOOMER. Anus-mouth.

FRITO. Pit-licker.

(Moose looks up from the flash cards.)

MOOSE. How about "corn-holer"? *(To Ripper.)* I didn't know that was hyphenated.

RIPPER. Where did you go to school?

BOOMER. *(To Frito.)* You know, you got no couth.

FRITO. Who? Who? Who doesn't got couth? I got couth. Ripper, what's couth?

RIPPER. Remember the girl in the elevator?

FRITO. So?

RIPPER. That wasn't couth.

FRITO. Then fuck couth. *(To Boomer.)* I'll tell you couth —

BOOMER. No—I'll tell you couth. Who was it who put a rabbit in my locker? Huh?

(On the bench, Moose groans.)

MOOSE. For Christ's sake—that was 1979!

FRITO. It wasn't me!

(Tank begins reading the flash cards. His jaw drops.)

BOOMER. The hell it wasn't. I was picking pellets out of my cleats for three weeks.

RIPPER. *(To Moose.)* Two—but who's counting?

BOOMER. Some couth.

FRITO. Oh, yeah? I'm couther than you are. Last July—I'm two strikeouts away from passing Rollie Fingers, and what did you, my pal, say? "Buzz off." So don't talk to me about couth.

BOOMER. That's because it's two out in the bottom of the eighth, we haven't even won the game yet, and you're flapping around my neck shouting, "Fingers! Fingers!" like you just escaped from a nuthouse! How would *you* like it if I chased you down the baseline screaming, "Toes! Toes!"

FRITO. Who are you kidding? You can't run that fast, scrotum-face.

(The others react with glee, as Frito races to the blackboard.)

MOOSE. *(Flipping through the flash cards.)* "Scrotum-face"? That one's not even *in* here.

FRITO. It's in the Silver Screen Edition.

(Frito raises the chalk to make a mark.)

BOOMER. Wait! *(Slowly, with deliberation.)* The day you were conceived, your old man should have shot his load down the sink.

(Ripper takes the chalk from Frito and places Boomer's hash mark on the board.)

RIPPER. I could be wrong, but that may just be the worst thing I ever heard in my life.

BOOMER. *(To Frito; gloating.)* And the Say-Hey Kid strikes again.

FRITO. *(Pointing to Boomer.)* I never liked him. *(Whirling on Boomer.)* I hope you're the one who gets the axe.

BOOMER. Aah, go load the bases.

(Ripper stands and raises his hand.)

RIPPER. All right—Court's in session. Frito's guilty. All in favor?

THE OTHERS. Aye.

RIPPER. *(To Frito.)* You lose.

FRITO. Wait a minute! Wait a minute! What kind of a trial was that?

BOOMER. Sit down and shut up. That's what kind of a trial it was.

FRITO. Don't shout at me. It bothers me when you shout at me. You're making me tighten up. *(Rolling up his sleeve.)* See? *(To Tank.)* Move over, Your Dumbness.

(He bumps Tank off the bench onto the floor and picks up the paper. Boomer crosses downstage to Moose.)

BOOMER. You know what he did to me in Texas? Do you know what he did? He wrote, "Boomer sleeps with boys" on the clubhouse wall. Now, what the hell does that make *me*?

TANK. *(Looking up.)* Bi-lingual?

RIPPER. *(To Tank.)* Something like that.

BOOMER. *(To Moose; indicating Frito.)* So don't you agree with me? Shouldn't I kill him?

MOOSE. Personally, I think you ought to play Mah Jongg with him. *(Pause.)* "Scrotum-face."

BOOMER. What was that supposed to mean?

MOOSE. It means you sound like a couple of old ladies.

BOOMER. Thank you, Methuselah.

(He sits. Tank turns to Moose.)

TANK. Hey, Moose—who's Methuselah?

MOOSE. He was this thousand-year-old fart who brought the Ten Commandments down from a mountain and parted the Red Sea.

(Tank frowns.)

MOOSE. What's the matter? Don't you believe me?

TANK. I thought that was Moses.

MOOSE. Were you there?

TANK. No, but—

MOOSE. Then shut up.

(The telephone rings. Ripper crosses and picks it up.)

RIPPER. Word Processing. *(Pause.)* You do? Well, I think you're sexy, too.

(The others lean in eagerly.)

RIPPER. I'm not wearing *anything*. What are *you* wearing?

Yeah? Well, why don't you take it off?

FRITO. *(A whisper.)* Is she doing it?

BOOMER. *(Eagerly.)* Who is it?

(Ripper turns to Boomer.)

RIPPER. It's your wife.

(The others groan. Boomer rises, panicked.)

BOOMER. Do I need an alibi for anything?

(Ripper goes back to the receiver.)

RIPPER. Carolyn, does he need an alibi for anything? *(Pause; to Boomer.)* Take your pick.

(Boomer grabs the receiver and whispers to Ripper.)

BOOMER. What did you do that for?

RIPPER. I owed you one.

(Ripper returns to the bench as Boomer speaks into the telephone with some difficulty; everyone else pretends not to listen.)

BOOMER. Yeah. *(Pause; quietly.)* Uh—yeah, so am I. *(A beat.)* No—I didn't either.

(Ripper cuts in loudly to the others.)

RIPPER. Has anybody taken time to measure the basepaths lately?

(Moose snaps his fingers.)

MOOSE. Damn! I knew there was something I forgot.

BOOMER. *(Into telephone.)* Then why can't you tell me?

RIPPER. None of them are exactly parallel, and two of them are an inch longer than the rest. You know what that means?

TANK. We have to forfeit the season?

(Moose turns to Tank, exasperated.)

MOOSE. Aw, turn the lights on, willya?

BOOMER. *(Into telephone.)* What difference does it make now? *(Noticing the guys.)* Uh, look—we don't have to talk about this here, do we?

RIPPER. It means that we're not playing on a diamond—we're playing on a trapezoid.

FRITO. I thought those were the things you get up your ass. Like George Brett.

BOOMER. (Into telephone.) Then why don't we just forget it, okay? *(Pause.)* Yeah. Later.

He hangs up and faces the pen. There is a dead silence, as Tank tries to lighten the mood.

TANK. Anybody see the news last night?

RIPPER. Yeah. He bats left, throws left, pitched two no-hitters, and he uses Crest.

TANK. Not that. The Yankees say now that Winfield's back, they're going to sweep us in three straight.

(There is a pause. Boomer looks up.)

BOOMER. Aah, the Yankees suck snot.

(He glances over at Moose.)

MOOSE. The Yankees suck horse turds.

FRITO. The Yankees suck used balloons.

(Boomer turns to Tank.)

BOOMER. It's your turn.

TANK. The Yankees suck— *(Pause.)* The Yankees suck—

FRITO. (Whispering to him.) Psst! Tank! Say "shit-sticks".

TANK. Frito, I am not going to say that.

FRITO. Fine. Have it your way.

TANK. The Yankees suck dead meat.

(A negative murmur from the pen.)

FRITO. See?

(The guys turn their heads to Ripper, who looks up calmly.)

RIPPER. The Yankees suck toe cheese.

(Boomer automatically picks up the piece of chalk and begins to make a hash mark on the board.)

BOOMER. Okay, that's one for the Ripper. Anybody got any objections?

(Duke enters through the tunnel.)

DUKE. The Yankees suck dead dog dicks.

BOOMER. (Conceding.) There's the ball game.

(Frito turns to the others.)

FRITO. Hey, watch it. Duke's here. We can't say "nigger" anymore.

(Boomer makes a hash mark in Duke's column, as Ripper turns to Frito.)

RIPPER. You mind if I make an observation?

FRITO. What's that?

RIPPER. One of these days you're going to be wearing your balls around your neck.

FRITO. Baby, I was born to run.

TANK. Who sang that?

FRITO. Brucie. G-minor seventh, down to a—

DUKE. Do we care? *(Into receiver; British accent.)* Carol B. please. *(Pause.)* This is Arthur Fiedler of the Boston Pops. I saw your advertisement and wondered if you might be interested in coming over and blowing my woodwind. *(Pause.)* South Station. *(Pause.)* Above the urinal. It said "For good head—" *(Pause.)* Now look, bitch— Hello?

(He hangs up in disgust.)

BOOMER. You romantic devil, you.

DUKE. You got the horoscope, Ripper?

RIPPER. Yeah, I saved it for you.

(Frito turns to Boomer.)

FRITO. A five spot says he reads it and starts singing.

BOOMER. You're on.

(Ripper begins to read, sniffs the air, then recoils.)

RIPPER. Aw, Christ, haven't you changed that shirt yet?

DUKE. No, and I haven't lost in it yet, either, so don't mess with me. *(Pointing.)* Read.

RIPPER. "Libra—" *(Groaning at the smell.)* God, that's ripe. *(Reading again.)* "Libra —" *(Another break.)* Turn the other way, will you? *(Reading.)* "Libra— This is not a good day for business ventures. Take no unnecessary risks, or you chance a downslide in financial gain."

(Moose to Tank.)

MOOSE. He's turning snow white.

TANK. *(Looking.)* No, he's not.

(Frito to Boomer.)

FRITO. Want to make it ten?

BOOMER. Want to cancel?

(Duke is, by now, quite annoyed.)

DUKE. Is going in at the top of the sixth a business venture?

BOOMER. You get paid for it, don't you?

RIPPER. For now. Until the plane lands.

DUKE. Thanks for the support, Ripper. Who told you that, Jack Daniels?

RIPPER. Knock it off.

DUKE. Well, that's it. I can't pitch. Tell Doug I pulled a hamstring.

TANK. In your arm?

DUKE. What else am I going to do?

RIPPER. How about your laundry?

FRITO. *(To Boomer.)* Sing. He's going to sing.

BOOMER. You lose.

(Duke begins singing resonantly, in a perfect imitation of Paul Robeson.)

DUKE. "Summertiiiiime—"

(Frito turns to Boomer.)

FRITO. Pay up.

BOOMER. I hate a poor winner.

FRITO. I can't stand a cheap loser.

DUKE. "Summertiiiiime—"

BOOMER. *(To Frito.)* Eat shit.

FRITO. Kiss my ass.

DUKE. "Summertiiiiime—"

MOOSE. WOULD YOU SHUT THE HELL UP?

DUKE. Look, Grandma—

MOOSE. Don't call me that.

DUKE. You handle the Yankees your way, I'll take care of them mine.

TANK. Can I say something?

(Boomer turns to Frito.)

BOOMER. Can he say something?

FRITO. How did I get to be keeper of the flame?

ALL OF THEM. Say something.

TANK. I had a thought—

MOOSE. Don't worry—it's probably just another false alarm.

TANK. —about the Yankees—

(Frito rises and begins walking toward the bullpen telephone.)

FRITO. All right, Tank. You wanna know how to handle the Yankees? It's simple. *(Dialing.)* You gotta out-psyche them. You gotta out-think them. You gotta make 'em look for shit that ain't even there. *(Into receiver.)* Dave Winfield, please. *(Pause.)* This be his brother. Steve Winfield. *(To the guys.)* You'd be surprised how little it takes to get on the board. *(Into receiver.)* Mr. Winfield? This is the Cambridge Police Department. We have a little problem here involving a 16-year-old girl. *(Pause.)* Mr. Winfield, in Massachusetts that's considered statutory rape. *(Pause.)* Look, buddy, I don't give a fuck who you are or who you play for. We got a morals charge here, and unless you come downtown and clean it up, you're gonna find your big ass in some very serious trouble. Understand?

(He slams down the receiver. They all exchange high fives as another hash mark is added to the board.)

FRITO. 'Course, sometimes it's a little easier than other times.

(Moments later, there is a voiceover coming from the speakers. It is the stadium's announcer.)

STADIUM ANNOUNCER. Ladies and gentlemen, we ask that you now rise for our National Anthem.

(The players groan and begin standing one-by-one, putting their caps over their hearts as the music begins; Frito is holding his bag of chips as well. Dialogue is almost sotto voce, as they attempt to appear moved by the music.)

DUKE. Know what I'll never understand? Out of all the songs they could've picked, how they wound up with this one.

MOOSE. That's what we get for waiting two thousand years to be discovered. All the good ones were gone.

RIPPER. But look what we could have had. "My Country 'Tis of Thee"...

TANK. ..."America The Beautiful"...

FRITO. ..."Born in the U.S.A."...

(Boomer notices Frito's chips.)

BOOMER. Nice respect, fart-breath. You want to put those away?

FRITO. You want to get off my case?

BOOMER. Don't crinkle the cellophane. It annoys me when you crinkle the cellophane.

(Frito, naturally, begins crinkling the cellophane. In Boomer's ear. Boomer turns beet-red.)

DUKE. Hey, Sugar Loaf. Want some advice?

FRITO. What's that?

DUKE. When they get to the land of the free and the home of the brave, you'd better be on your way out of town.

(Frito looks up suddenly.)

FRITO. Tit Patrol. Lower boxes, yellow V-neck sweater.

(The players all lean in and stare out at audience left. Moose whistles.)

MOOSE. What a set.

TANK. Wait a minute. By the foul pole?

BOOMER. Yeah. To the left.

TANK. That's a man.

MOOSE. The *other* left, Einstein.

RIPPER. Hey, Tank. Trivia.

(Tank thinks fast.)

TANK. Uh—October 3, 1951. Bobby Thomson hits a home run for the Giants. Question: who was on deck?

MOOSE. Eddie Stanky.

BOOMER. Alvin Dark.

DUKE. Monte Irvin.

(Tank turns to his right.)

TANK. Ripper?

RIPPER. Uh, I'll go with Stanky.

TANK. How about you, Frito?

FRITO. 1951?

TANK. Uh-huh.

FRITO. Wasn't it Moose?

(Moose belts him with his cap. The anthem ends.)

ALL OF THEM. *(Singing.)* "And the home of the—SOX!!"

(High fives, loud cheers, etc.)

FRITO. *(Calling out.)* ALL RIGHT! LET'S KICK SOME ASS! SIX-FOUR-THREE! LET'S FLATTEN 'EM, McGEE!

BOOMER. Do you have to do that?

FRITO. Does it bother you?

BOOMER. Yes.

FRITO. Then I do. *(Calling out.)* KNOCK 'EM OUTTA THERE, RUPE!

(Duke approaches Moose in the down left chair.)

DUKE. Excuse me, sir. You look like a kindly older gentleman. *(Pointing.)* Would you move over there?

MOOSE. I don't hear you.

DUKE. Come on, Massah Moose—

MOOSE. *(Vehement.)* Duke, I hate it when you do that!

DUKE. Then give me back the seat, Jack. I got my last three saves sitting here.

MOOSE. *(Pointing.)* See that? It's a whole bench. Voodoo works just as good over there.

(Duke leans over and sags, as though he had several bales of tobacco on his back.)

DUKE. Lawzy, it does. Mebbe ah'll just shuffle on over dere and—

MOOSE. *(Rising.)* All right! Take the fucking seat!

(He moves stage right. Duke sits down next to Tank, who turns to him.)

TANK. Duke, how come stuff like that only works for you?

(Duke points to Moose.)

DUKE. He's bearing the guilt of an entire generation.

TANK. Oh.

(Boomer looks around the pen.)

BOOMER. Okay—bets.

MOOSE. 7-1, us.

TANK. 4-3, us.

DUKE. 16-nothing, them.

MOOSE. You're a barrel of laughs.

RIPPER. I call 5-2, Yankees.

FRITO. *(To Ripper; complaining.)* I was going to say that.

RIPPER. No, you weren't.

FRITO. Yeah, I was. If you win, I get half.

RIPPER. If I win, you get stuffed. Make your own bet.

FRITO. I want yours.

BOOMER. What difference does it make? You always change it in the fifth anyway.

FRITO. Who asked you, Boomer?

BOOMER. Nobody asked me.

FRITO. Then why don't we leave it that way?

BOOMER. Then why don't we plant it up your hole?

(Frito calls out to Duke.)

FRITO. Oh, Duuuuke—I have two tickets to the Bruce Springsteen concert, and Boomer's definitely not going. You want to come with me?

DUKE. Keep me out of this. I'm no pawn.

RIPPER. What about me?

FRITO. You're on probation.

(Boomer frowns, disgusted.)

BOOMER. Aah, who wants to sit next to you anyway?

FRITO. Fine.

BOOMER. *(Mimicking.)* "Fine." "Fine."

(He pivots and walks away, as Frito turns back to Duke and Ripper. In seconds, Boomer spins and jumps Frito.)

BOOMER. I want that ticket! I want that ticket!

(Frito is struggling on the floor.)

FRITO. *(A chop to the ribs.)* Yeah? Who's got couth now, scumbag?

BOOMER. Say yes! Say yes!

FRITO. Screw you! Whistle for it!

(Ripper grabs Frito and restrains him; Moose grabs Boomer.)

RIPPER. Okay, kiddies. That's enough.

(Boomer tries to break away.)

BOOMER. Pellets! Pellets! Three weeks! Count 'em!

FRITO. Who changes in the fifth? I never change it in the fifth.

(On the bench, Duke turns to Tank.)

DUKE. This used to be such a quiet neighborhood until white people moved in.

(Ripper plants Frito in one of the deck chairs on the apron; Moose drags Boomer to the upstage bench.)

RIPPER. *(To Frito.)* Now, just calm down and behave yourself. And if you're very good, we'll buy you a hot dog.

FRITO. You ever eat one here? They sit up. *(Staring front.)* How do we look?

RIPPER. Terrific.

BOOMER. Who's up?

MOOSE. Randolph. Three and two.

BOOMER. Strike three.

MOOSE. Ball four.

(There is a crack from the field. Crowd noise. Heads crane in concert as the ball clears the fence. Moose and Boomer stare at each other; Frito turns to Ripper.)

FRITO. Check out the pair of papayas on that babe in the lower boxes. Man, would I like to drill that.

RIPPER. There's an elevator leaving in ten minutes.

DUKE. *(Sighing.)* And another great afternoon kicks off.

(Lights dim. We hear the radio announcer.)

ANNOUNCER. Looks like McGee's pretty shaken up over that last one. Yep, they're calling time to see if he's all right. *(Pause.)* You know, somebody once said that baseball was fifteen minutes of excitement crammed into three hours. *(Pause.)* And as we sit here at the top of the third, you've got to wonder about some of these boys. With all that free time, what do they find to talk about?

(Lights up. Duke and Tank are downstage right, Frito and Ripper are down left, Moose is upstage center, and Boomer is in the john. Presently, we notice that Duke is tying and untying his shoelaces.)

DUKE. *(Looking up.)* Look at all those people. This place must hold 35,000 of 'em.

TANK. 33,583.

DUKE. What do you suppose they find to talk about?

TANK. Us, I guess.

DUKE. Why?

TANK. I don't know. Maybe they believe in us.

(Duke looks at Tank, then up at God.)

DUKE. There's one born every minute, isn't there?

TANK. *(Uncertain grin.)* Yeah.

(He notices Duke tying his shoes—again.)

TANK. What are you doing?

DUKE. Three times apiece.

TANK. Oh. *(Pause.)* Duke, why do you go through all that? It never works.

(Duke points to the plate.)

DUKE. Check out the batter, Baby Bunion. Who do you see?

TANK. Don Mattingly.

DUKE. Right. That's spelled "MVP." I learned it from him. Don't you think—

(There is another crack from the field. Crowd noise. The closet door pops open and Boomer steps out, as bullpen heads look up.)

FRITO. Son of a bitch!

BOOMER. *(Moving up center to Moose.)* What the hell is the matter with McGee?

MOOSE. His pants are too tight.

(Tank and Duke.)

TANK. *(Conceding.)* Okay—once.

DUKE. Not once, Doubting Thomas. Always.

TANK. Duke, don't take this the wrong way, but I thought your people were supposed to believe in Jesus. Isn't that a lot safer?

DUKE. You think so?

TANK. Well, it works for me. *I* believe in Him.

DUKE. You do? Why?

TANK. I don't know. Sometimes when I'm out there on the mound, I don't feel so all alone when I know He's there.

DUKE. Tank, *you've* got the slider—*He* doesn't.

TANK. Yeah, but once in awhile I can hear Him talking to me and telling me what to do with it. *(Pause.)* Course, sometimes it's Boomer, 'cause he does weird stuff like that—

DUKE. You want to hear a story about Jesus, Tank? 'Cause I got a dandy.

TANK. I know the one about Judas—

DUKE. Yeah, only that ain't it.

TANK. King Herod?

DUKE. Billy Murdock.

TANK. Huh?

DUKE. Pinch-hitter for Maryland. He was the home run champ, the RBI champ, and a real humanitarian. Said I went around during the off-season raping white women. *(Pause.)* 'Course, that

was on a good day —when he wasn't leaving razor blades in my Keds. Get it? One of *your* people. Anyway, it's May of my senior year at Georgetown—last game of the season—and everybody on our squad had already been drafted by one team or another, except me. That meant there was about three weeks standing in between me and a manure truck, on account of the only thing I learned at Georgetown—the only thing college taught me—was how to throw a fastball. You getting the picture yet?

TANK. Uh—

DUKE. So there I am pitching this no-hitter against Maryland, and we're down to the ninth inning with two away. Now, who do you think they bring in to pinch hit?

TANK. Murdock?

DUKE. Well, it wasn't Mother Theresa. But see, it didn't bother me none, 'cause I knew I had it made. On the one hand, there was evil —Murdock—and on the other hand, there was good—me—and you didn't need a degree in theology to figure out what side Christ was going to take. You follow? Anyways, it was right about then that I look up for a little assist, figuring I could use one. I mean, all I needed was one more out. *(Pause.)* That was the only time Jesus ever spoke to me, Tank. And you know what He said?

TANK. What?

DUKE. "Goodbye, Duke." That's what He said. That son-of-a-bitch sent that heater over the wall, and by the time it came down, Jesus was already in the parking lot. *(Pause.)* I hope He got mugged.

TANK. So what? You got drafted, didn't you?

DUKE. No thanks to Him. That night I'm reading the paper and it says "Libra—Do not rely on others." Tell you what, Sour Dough. You subscribe to the church—I'll subscribe to the Boston *Globe*.

(Tank glances at him uncomfortably, then surreptitiously begins tying and untying his shoes. On the upstage bench, Moose turns to Boomer, who is staring at the field.)

MOOSE. I mean, why does he do it to *me*? Do I look like a bigot?

BOOMER. You don't *look* like a bigot.

MOOSE. For Christ's sake—I never even had a maid. *(Pause.)* I'll bet he's *on* something. A lot of them are, you know.

BOOMER. *(Shouting to the field.)* Move your ass, Boggsy!

MOOSE. Remember that game he pitched at Kansas City? Somebody said he was high. Doesn't that worry you?

BOOMER. I don't know. Seems to me he two-hit the Royals, didn't he?

MOOSE. *(Hastily.)* Hey—do I look like a bigot?

BOOMER. I know where you can rent a sheet...

(Frito turns to Ripper, indicating the field.)

FRITO. Man, I wish they'd bring me in. Today I know I could burn 'em out of there.

RIPPER. Right.

FRITO. Know what I was thinking, Ripper? How do you think Bruce knew about The Kid and Pawtucket before we did?

RIPPER. Huh?

FRITO. *You* know, man. It's in "Tenth Avenue Freezeout". *(Singing.)* "When the change was made uptown, and the Big Man joined the band..."

(Ripper joins in.)

RIPPER AND FRITO. "From the coastline to the city, All the little pretties raise their hands."

(Moose rises and walks over to them.)

MOOSE. Knock it off!

FRITO. *(Face-to-face with Moose.)* Time for a little Vic Damone?

(Moose returns upstage. Frito turns to Ripper.)

FRITO. Man, I'm glad I'm not Moose today, aren't you?

RIPPER. I don't think that's any of our business. *(Pause; to the field.)* Base hit, Marty.

FRITO. It's *always* our business, Rip. I mean, if it wasn't for us, you wouldn't have headed for The Meadows last year, right? Then where would you be now?

RIPPER. That was different.

FRITO. Yeah? Different how, Ripper? Just because it's Moose? Let me ask you something, pal. How long you think he can last listening to Steve and Eydie?

RIPPER. Where's your faith?

(There is another crack from the field.)

RIPPER. Double play! Damn—I *knew* it!

FRITO. *(Staring at him.)* Where's yours?

(Duke and Tank.)

DUKE. You know what faith is, baby? It's the biggest sting around. Ask your boy Ripper —*he* knows. He'll tell you last year never happened. He'll tell you they dried him out real good up at The Meadows. But you know what? If you say "shot glass" to him, his eyes still bug out. Just like a scared rabbit.

(Boomer hears "rabbit" and instantly bolts upright on the bench, sorer than hell, and calls out to Duke.)

BOOMER. Fuck that rabbit, man. It was white and it had big ears and a pink nose— *(Pointing to Frito.)* — and it shit all over my cup—

MOOSE. All right—

FRITO. *(Turning to Boomer.)* —*but I didn't put it there!*

RIPPER. He knows you didn't.

FRITO. Then why—

RIPPER. Because he also knows he can flip you off whenever he wants to, and you'll take it.

FRITO. Like hell I will.

RIPPER. You're right, Frito. Why don't you wait until his wife's kicked him out and then tell him that to his face.

FRITO. I—

(Frito glances upstage toward Boomer, uncertainly. Then he turns back to Ripper.)

FRITO. Man, I just wish they'd bring me in. Today, I know I could burn 'em out of there.

RIPPER. Think about it...

(Moose and Boomer. Moose is indicating Frito.)

MOOSE. Boomer, just go a little easy on him. He doesn't know where the strike zone is anymore, and the Pawtucket Pecker's on his way. *(Pause.)* Don't you see, Boom? That Bruce Bernstein concert—it's here. It's not in Seattle and it's not in Cincinnati. It's here.

(Duke turns to Tank.)

DUKE. Strange.

TANK. What's that?

DUKE. Tomorrow five of us'll be here and one of us won't.

TANK. Well, *I'm* safe.

DUKE. You think so?

TANK. *(Looking up.)* Uh-huh. Because I believe—even if you don't.

(Duke picks up the newspaper.)

DUKE. Oh, I believe. You're a Scorpio, aren't you?

TANK. So?

(Duke reads from the newspaper.)

DUKE. “Scorpio—Do not count on *anything*.”

(Tank is rocked. After a moment, he looks up.)

TANK. Maybe it’s wrong.

DUKE. How come you always look on the bright side even when there isn’t one?

TANK. I’m an optometrist.

(There is a sudden roar from the crowd. Stage lights come up full as everyone stares out at the field.)

MOOSE. Jesus Christ—you *don’t walk* Henderson.

DUKE. It’s not McGee’s fault. Gedman’s messing up the signs. What the hell does 3 1/2 fingers mean?

RIPPER. It means one of his nuts fell out. Leave him alone.

BOOMER. Oh, no. Winfield.

MOOSE. Come on, Rupe.

FRITO. You think he could get the last out already. What’s he waiting for—a wakeup call?

TANK. It looks like he’s in a comma—

(There is a sharp crack. Once again, the ball clears the fence.)

FRITO. Is it out? Is it out?

MOOSE. What are you, blind? If he’d hit it any harder, it’d have to go through customs.

FRITO. What does that make it?

RIPPER. Six to nothing.

DUKE. That’s all, brother.

(They rise and move about the pen.)

RIPPER. Well, gents—I believe that’s what’s called a red alert.

MOOSE. Alarmist.

(Ripper faces the others and raises his hand.)

RIPPER. All right—Court’s in session.

FRITO. Wait a minute—who said *you* could run the show?

RIPPER. I minored in law. What are *your* credentials?

FRITO. I got arrested once.

MOOSE. For what? Indecent exposure?

FRITO. *(To Boomer; annoyed.)* Did you tell *everybody*?

RIPPER. *(To the pen.)* Okay—McGee’s guilty. All in favor?

THE OTHERS. Aye.

RIPPER. Now, that’s thirty bucks for the three homers, minus five because Winfield’s under 36—

MOOSE. Yeah, but he’s hitting .283, so we knock off another ten, right?

BOOMER. Yeah? Then we have to give him credit for striking him out in the first.

TANK. That’s only fair, Ripper.

FRITO. Wait a minute, wait a minute. If we take all of that away, what does McGee owe us?

DUKE. Nothin’. We owe *him*.

FRITO. That’s what I thought.

RIPPER. Frito’s right. Case dismissed.

TANK. Why?

DUKE. We can’t afford it.

(The others split up and move to various spots on the bench. Moose takes Boomer aside and points to Frito, then shoves him in Frito’s general direction. Frito, in the meantime, has crossed down right and picked up Boomer’s paper. When he turns, Boomer is directly behind him.)

FRITO. Uh—

BOOMER. Uh—

(Frito looks around.)

FRITO. Do I need an audience here?

(He turns back to Boomer.)

BOOMER. All right. You're forgiven, okay?

FRITO. *You're* forgiven.

(There is an acid silence.)

BOOMER. I wasn't apologizing.

FRITO. Neither was I.

(Boomer looks down.)

BOOMER. Would you give me back my paper? *(Pause.)* Please?

FRITO. *(Sharp.)* Who needs it? I have total recall.

BOOMER. So does a VCR. Only they don't cost 900 grand a year.

(Frito begins a slow boil.)

FRITO. I—

RIPPER. *(Warning.)* Frito—

(Frito hands Boomer the paper.)

FRITO. Here.

BOOMER. Thank you.

(Frito looks down and sees the Springsteen tickets that have materialized in his hands. So does Boomer.)

FRITO. Third row.

BOOMER. You—

(Moose cuts in.)

MOOSE. Boomer—

(Boomer takes a deep breath.)

BOOMER. That's nice.

(They walk toward opposite sides of the bench and sit.)

FRITO. *(After a beat.)* —mezzanine.

(A pause.)

BOOMER. I'm glad.

(After a tense moment of silence, Boomer turns to Frito politely.)

BOOMER. Mind if I ask you something? Are your slow reflexes an acquired trait or are they hereditary?

FRITO. Beats me. Is it true that your jockstrap is a boy's medium?

(Boomer bites his tongue.)

BOOMER. No.

(Moose and Ripper look at one another and nod, pleased. The tension is suddenly broken as the telephone rings. Frito rises.)

FRITO. I'll get it.

(He passes Boomer, who trips him, then jumps up and gets him in a hammerlock.)

BOOMER. You're gonna get it. Take it back! Take it back!

FRITO. (Struggling.) Fuck you, pencil-dick.

(Moose sighs, rises, and walks over to the ringing telephone. Ripper and Tank maneuver Frito and Boomer over to the closet, shove them into it, and slam the door. Throughout, we hear them fighting.)

MOOSE. (Into receiver.) Union Oyster House. *(Pause.)* I can't hear you. The floor show just started.

(Duke looks up.)

DUKE. If they're looking for somebody to pitch, tell them I went home.

RIPPER. It isn't you they want—it's me.

TANK. No—I think it's me.

(The closet door opens. Frito calls out from within.)

FRITO'S VOICE. I'm—the—one—they—want.

(Ripper slams the door shut.)

MOOSE. (Into telephone.) I'm sorry—what number were you dialing? *(Wincing.)* Yeah, yeah. Okay. Get a sense of humor, wouldya?

(He hangs up and points to Duke.)

MOOSE. You.

(The closet door opens.)

FRITO'S VOICE. We—didn't—shake—on—it.

(Ripper slams it shut.)

DUKE. (To Moose.) Wait a minute, wait a minute. How did it get to be me?

MOOSE. Do I sign the checks? *(Pointing.)* They got righthanded hitters or something. You're righthanded. It's deductive reasoning.

(Duke shakes his head.)

DUKE. Uh-huh. Sometimes I think I should have stuck with manure. The only difference between horseshit and bullshit is the truck.

(He sits down and begins tying his shoes again. Ripper stares up at the sky, perturbed.)

RIPPER. Now, what the hell is that?

(Tank looks up.)

TANK. It's a bird.

RIPPER. No, it's a plane.

TANK. It's—

RIPPER. (Warning.) Don't even *think* it.

MOOSE. (Looking up.) Maybe they're lowering the little shit by helicopter.

(Duke approaches Moose.)

DUKE. Hey, Moose—let me use your glove.

TANK. (Looking up.) Wait a second. It's spelling something.

MOOSE. (To Duke.) You've got a prayer. Use your own glove.

DUKE. Mine doesn't have any wins in it.

RIPPER. (To Tank.) I think you're right. That's an s.

MOOSE. (To Duke.) Who told you that—a palm reader?

DUKE. I never get wins on a Saturday with that glove. Only saves. *(Putting an arm around Moose.)* Now, Moosie, I need a win. I need one reeeel bad. Give me your glove.

RIPPER. *(To Tank.)* That's a *u*.

TANK. It's an *n*.

RIPPER. Stand over here.

DUKE. *(To Moose.)* I'm warning you, man.

MOOSE. You don't intimidate me.

(Duke drops to his knees.)

DUKE. *(Singing.)* "Old Man Ribber, That Old Man Ribber, He don't want somethin', He don't want nuffin'—"

MOOSE. All right! Take it! Just *shut up!*

DUKE. Much obliged.

(He looks up and calls out front.)

DUKE. Hang in there, Captain! I'll save you, Nell!

(Ripper turns to Tank, pointing to the sky.)

RIPPER. Does it really say that?

TANK. We must be reading it wrong.

(Duke walks over to the closet and knocks on the door.)

DUKE. Hey, Pork Chop—when you got a minute—

BOOMER'S VOICE. Right. *(To Frito; menacing.)* Don't move.

(The door pops open. Frito and Boomer tumble out, Frito on his way to the downstage right chair.)

FRITO. *(Exhausted.)* Fresno Fats behind on points to Kanute the Brute —Boomer, I'm getting too old for this.

(Boomer passes Ripper, who grabs his arm and points to the sky.)

RIPPER. Boomer, what does that say?

(Boomer looks up and shrugs.)

BOOMER. "Yankees suck."

(He starts to walk away, stops dead, and registers a double take. The guys all look skyward, then very slowly turn down right and stare at Frito. There is a long pause.)

FRITO. Who said it was me?

MOOSE. They put your initials on the end, moron.

(They all congratulate Frito, as Duke gives him a hash mark.)

DUKE. Man, if I was white, I'd have done that.

(Boomer and Duke go down to the apron and begin warming up. As Tank crosses to the bench, Ripper intercepts him, looking around to make sure nobody can hear him.)

RIPPER. Tank? Uh—

TANK. What, Ripper?

RIPPER. It—uh—was Eddie Stanky on deck behind Thomson, wasn't it?

TANK. It was Willie Mays.

RIPPER. I knew that. *(Mumbling.)* I knew that.

(They move to opposite benches as Boomer calls out from his crouch.)

BOOMER. Hey, Tank—third inning. It's your turn to pick.

(Tank picks up the remnants of the sports section.)

TANK. Which game?

MOOSE. Try the Tigers at Oakland.

(Tank reads.)

TANK. Winning pitcher—Jack Morris. *(Pause.)* We can't do anything with that.

RIPPER. Keep going.

TANK. Braves at Houston, Bob Knepper. Orioles at Texas, Mike Flanagan. Cubs at San Francisco—*(Stopping.)*— Wait a minute. How about Steve Trout?

(Ripper looks around.)

RIPPER. Okay? The All-Fish Team.

(General assent.)

MOOSE. Frito, you start.

(Frito thinks for a moment.)

FRITO. Trout... Trout... *(Pause.)* Uh, Catfish Hunter. Yankees.

(Ripper chimes in.)

RIPPER. I'm next. Chico Salmon. Orioles.

(Moose leans back, smug.)

MOOSE. Anybody remember Randy Bass? '77 Twins.

(Boomer looks up from his crouch.)

BOOMER. My turn. Art Herring. '29 Tigers.

(They all stare at Duke, who is silent.)

RIPPER. You out, Duke?

DUKE. *(After a pause.)* Thornton Kipper. '53 Phillies.

FRITO. Good call.

RIPPER. Tank?

TANK. Can we do what gets put *on* 'em? Like Chet Lemon?

MOOSE. Stick to the rules.

FRITO. He's out.

RIPPER. *(To Tank.)* Five seconds.

THE OTHERS. Four. Three. Two—

TANK. *(Suddenly.)* Bobby Sturgeon! 1940 Cubs!

FRITO. *(To himself.)* Shit.

(Boomer looks up from his crouch.)

BOOMER. Moose, that one gets points.

(Moose reaches behind the bench for the chalk and adds a hash mark to the wall.)

MOOSE. Okay, that's one for the Airhead.

(Ripper turns to Frito.)

RIPPER. How about it, Frito?

FRITO. I'm thinking. Give me a minute. *(Pause.)* Uh—

MOOSE. Five seconds...

FRITO. Jake Mackerel.

RIPPER. I got one. How about Jesse [Pike]—

(Moose cuts in.)

MOOSE. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. *(To Frito.)* Who the hell is Jake Mackerel?

FRITO. Orioles. Baltimore. 1962.

MOOSE. You're full of shit. What position?

FRITO. Shortstop.

(Moose turns to Tank.)

MOOSE. Tank, who played short for the '62 Birds?

TANK. Jerry Adair. Born December 17, 1936.

MOOSE. *(To Frito; disgusted.)* Jake Mackerel, my ass. *(To Ripper.)* Okay, he's out.

FRITO. I'm not! *(Indicating Tank.)* What does *he* know?

MOOSE. Rules are rules.

RIPPER. You do this every time.

MOOSE. —think you can get away with—

TANK. Yeah—what if *we*—

FRITO. Just because—

RIPPER. COURT'S IN SESSION! COURT'S IN SESSION!

MOOSE, FRITO AND TANK. *(To Ripper.)* AW, SHUT UP!

(The lights dim on them and remain up on Duke and Boomer, who are still throwing.)

DUKE. We've got to associate with a better class of people.

BOOMER. *(Preoccupied.)* Yeah.

(There is a pause. Boomer looks up.)

BOOMER. Duke—how long have you and Denise been married?

DUKE. According to her, too long. By my clock, oh, twelve years. Why?

BOOMER. What do you do when you suddenly realize you're a shit?

DUKE. Nothin'. By that time it's too late. You've already turned back into a pumpkin.

(A pause.)

BOOMER. You play around much?

DUKE. Nope.

BOOMER. Pretty faithful, huh?

DUKE. Pretty scared. Denise said if she ever caught me going after that stuff, she'd cut my balls off. I know what side *my* bread's buttered on.

BOOMER. Well, you know if you did, it wouldn't *mean* anything.

DUKE. Who are you trying to convince, Pistol Pete?

(Boomer shrugs.)

BOOMER. Nobody. I'm not trying to convince nobody.

DUKE. Boomer...

BOOMER. Duke, it wasn't like she was blind, you know? She knew what she was getting into.

DUKE. Who did? The party you're not trying to convince?

BOOMER. You know what she said to me? Do you know what she said? She said I should have married a chest protector. On our *honeymoon* she said that. Does that suck or what?

DUKE. Where did you go?

BOOMER. The Hall of Fame. *(A grin.)* Aw, man. Have you ever seen a Ping Bodie baseball card? *(Pause.)* Right there under glass, like some kind of monument or something. *(Pause.)* Or Cy Young's license plate? You know his real name was "Denton." Denton Young. *(Reflective pause.)* No wonder he changed it to Cy.

DUKE. What did Carolyn have to say?

BOOMER. Who? *(Pause.)* Oh. I don't remember. I think she went home. *(Reflective pause.)* God, I really blew it, didn't I? *(Looking up.)* That's why I figured if I got my own place for awhile, she might—

DUKE. She might what? Click her heels together three times and tell you there's no place like home?

BOOMER. Yeah, yeah—I know. Anyway, that's when all the playing around started. *(A beat.)* And you want to hear something funny? *(Long pause.)* I don't blame her.

DUKE. Boomer—

BOOMER. No, really. I think she thought she was doing to me what I was doing to her. Even when I wasn't. You know what that means?

DUKE. What?

(There is a pause.)

BOOMER. I don't know. I'm asking.

DUKE. Boomer, there's one thing you've got to learn. Sometimes you just sit back and let everybody else tell you what to do, and you don't appear to remember that blocking the plate's only part of your job. You've got to give the signs, hold the runners, and keep that knuckler out of the dirt. It's all in your pocket—because you call the shots. And when the bases are loaded and that sumbuck is breaking away from third and you got all you can do to keep your head on straight, let alone make a decision, there's only one thing you can count on.

BOOMER. Myself?

DUKE. Drugs.

(They rise and move back toward the bench. The lights come up center stage, where the others are still involved in conversation.)

TANK. Twitchy Dick Porter. '29 Indians.

FRITO. Donkey Dick Siebert. '42 Phillies.

MOOSE. How about John Glasscock? Pirates.

RIPPER. Old Goldenrod Gowdy. Braves.

(Frito frowns.)

FRITO. Ripper, that's gross.

MOOSE. Look who's talking. Toilet Mouth.

(He turns to Boomer and Duke.)

RIPPER. You guys in?

BOOMER. Yeah. Walt Smallwood. 1919 Yankees.

RIPPER. Duke?

DUKE. Hardrock Johnson. 1918 A's.

(Murmurs of assent.)

FRITO. Now, that's class.

(They look over at Tank, who is lost in thought.)

TANK. Can we go in another direction?

RIPPER. That depends.

TANK. How about Doug Bird?

FRITO. Yeah—let's go in another direction. Joe Cannon.

MOOSE. Leslie Bush.

RIPPER. Pud Galvin.

BOOMER. Hank Peter.

DUKE. High Rise Richard.

(Duke begins to make a hash mark for himself when Tank rises.)

TANK. BONER MERKLE!

(The others are awed.)

MOOSE. No. *(Pause.)* You're kidding.

TANK. Nope. First base. 1908 Giants.

BOOMER. Okay, Moose. Give him the points.

MOOSE. *(Rising.)* That's another one for the Peabrain. *(To Tank.)* I'll tell you something—for a moron, you're doing pretty good.

(He crosses to the chalkboard and makes a hash mark for Tank; the others go back to their individual pursuits.)

MOOSE. (To Ripper.) Say, Rip—on the off-chance one of us gets called in, what say we—

TANK. (To Moose; evenly.) Moose, why don't you shove it up your butt?

(The others are stunned. This is the first time Tank has raised his voice.)

FRITO. (Awed; to Ripper.) What did he say?

MOOSE. Were you talking to me?

TANK. Yeah. I said why don't you shove it up your butt?

MOOSE. Look, saphead—I don't know what your problem is, but you'd best—

RIPPER. (Quickly.) Shut up, Moose.

MOOSE. The hell I will. No halfwit talks to me like that. And if you think—

(Tank looks up sharply.)

TANK. Moose, if you ever call me that again, I'm going to drop you with a hardball to the side of the head. Do you understand me?

(By now Moose has caught on and is extremely uncertain.)

MOOSE. Hey, only joking. Okay?

TANK. No. It's not okay. (Pacing.) You know something? I'll tell you something. We've been playing together for six years, eight months, and 22 days. And in all that time, whenever you've come into the clubhouse, you've never said "hello" to me. Do you know that? Do you know what you say to me? You say, "Get out of my way"—that's what you say to me. And sometimes if you're in a good mood, you say, "Get out of my way, stupid." (Pause.) 162 times a year, not counting spring training. I've hated that for so long, Moose, that sometimes I wish—

BOOMER. That's enough, Tank.

TANK. I haven't even started yet! (Pacing.) How many times do you have to remind me that I can't think? How many innings do I have to pitch before somebody says, "Hey, he's pretty good, even if he did flunk out of Boys' Latin"? (Whirling on Moose.) Know something, Mister? Maybe I can't tell a story too good, and maybe my jokes don't come out too funny—but if brains are so darned important, how come I've got eleven saves and you can't even find the plate anymore?

(There is a pained silence as Duke looks up.)

DUKE. Somebody make him stop.

(Tank turns, out of control, on the pen. Panic city, man.)

TANK. Don't you see? Don't you get it? What if it's me? What if that phone rings and I'm the one who's out of here?

RIPPER. Tank, you've got a lot of company, so cool it.

TANK. I do? You think so? I've got news for you. I can't do anything else. This is all I've got—and what if nobody takes me? Ripper, I'm not 20. I'm not allowed to be dumb anymore, y'know? Fan Appreciation Day, I said "nice boobies" to a fan. I didn't know what they meant by "fan appreciation." I even lost a shampoo commercial because I couldn't remember my line. How long do you think I can get away with that? (To Duke.) And you think I don't know that everybody's laughing? I read my own interviews. I watch myself on the news. They ask me all these questions and I never have the answers, because all I know is how to pitch! (To Moose, in agony.) SO GET OFF MY BACK TODAY, OLD MAN—WILL YOU?

(Duke rises.)

DUKE. Okay, Tank. Cool out, buddy—

(Moose shoves Duke out of the way.)

MOOSE. Why don't you sit down?

(He grabs Tank and spins him around, seething.)

MOOSE . "Old man," huh? Well, I want you to take a good look at me, Mister. *(Pointing to his arm.)* You know what this is? This is old, too. You get it? Old. Do you know what that means? It means that after I use it, it sits in a bucket of ice for six hours like a shrimp cocktail so that maybe—*maybe*—I can get it to work the next time I have to. Only usually I can't. It's the biggest game of five-card stud I've ever played in my life, and that guy at the plate always has the winning hand. The only thing I can do is keep him from finding out. Because if I can't, *my* number is up.

(He shoves Tank against the wall.)

MOOSE. And you want sympathy? Get the fuck out of here.

(There is a moment of dead silence before Tank breaks the hold and goes right for the jugular.)

TANK. I'll kill you, Moose—

(Ripper and Boomer intercede, pulling them apart. In the background, we hear the crack of the bat and the roar of the crowd. Simultaneously, the telephone begins ringing angrily.)

FRITO. Jesus Christ, he means it—

DUKE. Tank, everybody's got the same—

BOOMER. Ripper, get him out of here—

RIPPER. Somebody answer the phone—

(The noises blend to a deafening pitch, when suddenly our attention is drawn to the tunnel. The Kid emerges—young, arrogant, and sure of himself. All action freezes onstage; it is suddenly deathly quiet, save for the ringing of the telephone, and,

finally, that too stops. The Kid surveys the premises with a cynical eye, his glove casually dangling from his right hand. After a long moment, he saunters upstage center, plops the glove onto the bench, and sits. There is a large Bazooka bubble emerging from his mouth. As he disposes of it, he shrugs.)

THE KID. So this is it, huh? *(Pause.)* Big deal.

(The other players stare at him, thoroughly taken aback, and then glance at one other with foreboding.)

ACT ONE CURTAIN