

Impossible Dreams

By

Mark Bowen

Based on the life of Tony Conigliaro, his team's 1967
championship season... and another Boston icon, whose
campaign the following year would use the same theme song...

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Cast of Characters

<u>Mike Malone:</u>	A homeless veteran. 40s
<u>Tony Conigliaro:</u>	Boston Red Sox Legend. Mike's boyhood hero. 20s-30s
<u>Billy Conigliaro:</u>	Tony's Brother. 30s
<u>Ginger Pulaski:</u>	Mike's High School Girlfriend. 20s
<u>Judy Marshall:</u>	Tony's High School Girlfriend. 20s
<u>Dick Williams:</u>	Tony's Manager. 40s
<u>Jack Hamilton:</u>	California Angels Pitcher, whose one pitch would end Tony's career. 20s
<u>Sharon Henshaw:</u>	Tony's Friend. 30s
<u>Jennifer Warren:</u>	Tony's Daughter. 18.
<u>Homeless Ensemble:</u>	Age / Gender Open
:	Note: The homeless ensemble will double as one or more other characters... they will have those characters' costumes on underneath their "homeless attire" so they can transform just by taking this outer layer off.

Scene

Boston: A Homeless Encampment

Time

February, 1990

ACT I

(The Homeless Encampment: February, 1990. At center stage is a trash can fire, over which several members of the cast are standing, trying to keep warm. Other cast members lie scattered around various parts of the stage. At the back of the stage is a backdrop that will allow for future transitions to scene locations in Mike's and Tony's imaginations that can be projected onto it. MIKE is sleeping downstage, in his old Army uniform. As the lights come up, he begins to stir, talking in his sleep.)

MIKE

Now batting for Boston, the Right Fielder, number 25-

(A gunshot is heard. Mike reacts as if hit. Continuous machine-gun fire continues to be heard as he continues to go through his flashback, and TONY, as he looked during his prime, walks onstage.)

MIKE

Uh... I'm hit! Son of a bitch! Get me a medic. No, get down! Call for backup, goddammit! Manny, get me the- Aw, fuck! They got- No don't touch me, goddammit! Somebody go and... ah, they got Lopez. Call in the- oh shit... You fucking gook bastards! Get me some morphine. Please, man. Somebody help Manny... Manny, can you hear me? No, no it's coming from up in the... NO! You fucking gook bastards!

(Tony has crossed over to Mike, whom he now cradles in his arms.)

TONY

Easy, buddy. Take it easy.

MIKE

No, no...

TONY

It's alright.

MIKE

Get me some morphine! Don't let them-

TONY

(offering him a water bottle)

Here.

(Mike takes a drink, and reacts
strangely. The gunfire sounds stop.)

MIKE

Who the hell are you?

TONY

A friend. Here, have some more water.

(Tony crosses to the trash can at center
stage)

MIKE

That's what this shit is? No wonder. I need something a
lot stronger than that.

TONY

No, you don't. Not now.

MIKE

Oh my god. I'm... I suppose you're an angel?

TONY

Just for a season.

MIKE

For a season?

TONY

Something like that.

MIKE

I knew it. Why else would you wake me instead of him?
(indicating one of the other homeless
men standing with TONY at the trash can)
I usually wake up to him right about the time that Manny
bites the dust.

(indicating the water bottle as he takes
another drink)

Only no morphine. Wake-up call's usually more like "Shut
the fuck up, you crazy bastard!"

TONY
 (trying to get the man's attention)
 I don't think he can hear us.

MIKE
 So this is the end of the road...

TONY
 He reminds me, in an odd sort of way, of Freddie.

MIKE
 Who's Freddie?

TONY
 It's amazing when you think about it... after these past eight years. How liberating it feels just to see people like you and him...

MIKE
 And I suppose you're enjoying seeing us in our-

TONY
 No. I'm not. It feels just the way you'd expect it to feel... but at least it feels.

(pause)
 If only we appreciated that fact while we still had the chance... recognized that there is majesty even in the filth. We wouldn't turn our backs on the celebrations of all the beauty... sit crying in front of our lockers in the midst of our greatest triumphs.

MIKE
 What the fuck are you talking about, man?

TONY
 You'll see.

(Pause)

MIKE
 Are you here to take me away or something?

TONY
 No. I'm not here for you. I'm here for Freddie.

MIKE
 Who the hell is Freddie?

TONY
 Frederick Anderson. I lost my best friend in Vietnam, too.
 (pause)

(MORE)

TONY (cont'd)

I know sometimes it's hard for us to live by the ground rules that have been set down for us. You and I may not have made them. But we've got to play by them.

MIKE

How the hell is somebody an angel for a season?

TONY

You know, most of my friends and family were shocked by the trade. After the comeback... I'd even recovered to have my best season ever... but then yeah, the eyesight was worsening, just like they'd expected... but I think it's mostly that me and Anaheim were just never really a good fit.

MIKE

(beginning to understand)

Anaheim?

TONY

Maybe you're not the only crazy bastard out here. My manager out there said I ought to have my head examined after my outburst in Oakland.

MIKE

In Oakland?

TONY

(shaking his head, ashamed)

The rules were pretty clear over whether I got to run to first on a dropped third strike when that base was already occupied...

MIKE

(staring in amazement into the eyes of the man whom he now recognizes as his boyhood hero)

Oh my god...

TONY

... not that you and I didn't both know the rules we were playing by. But with all we'd been through, it just made it that much more tempting to wanna just stand there arguing with the call, and get ourselves thrown out of the game. For me, it certainly didn't help to see Dick Williams, of all people, sitting in the opposing dugout... smirking...

MIKE

Oh my god. It's you.

(The backdrop is illuminated by images and/or videos of Tony in his glory days, and we hear the sounds of a cheering crowd. Mike goes back over to where he'd been sleeping and searches for something.)

MIKE

Tony, can you- can I call you Tony?

TONY

Of course.

MIKE

Tony, can you do me a favor?

TONY

What's that?

(Mike finds the bat he was looking for, and comes back to Tony)

MIKE

Can you sign my bat?

TONY

That's not why I'm here. I told you...

(The backdrop is now illuminated with images of Arlington National Cemetary. Twin eulogies:)

TONY

What I remember most about Frederick Anderson, was his ability to see the good in people... all people. Even the kinds of guys like myself, that a lot of the other guys at St. Mary's thought was a real jerk...

MIKE

Manuel Lopez was the person who first helped me to really understand the significance of our national motto "E. Pluribus Unum", that whatever our national origins, we are all Americans...

TONY

... the fact that they all usually came to the conclusion that I was a great guy once they got to know me, was the fact there was a guy like Freddie Anderson there to speak up for me, to let them know that I deserved that chance...

MIKE

... and he was just the type to foolishly give his life, coming to the aid of his fallen comrade, who should have known better than to call out...

TONY

... he was the type who gave his life for his country, by not dodging the draft, while the college boys sought deferments, and the big league ballplayers did their service to their country in the reserves...

MIKE AND TONY

(together)

I have lost a good friend, but my country has lost a great man!

(We hear the sound of the 21 gun salute and the playing of taps, and then the images of Arlington disappear from the backdrop.)

MIKE

Dodging the draft?

TONY

What else would you call it?

MIKE

There were lots of others in your position who found their ways...

TONY

And there were lots more in yours who couldn't avoid...

MIKE

You think I blame you for my life?

TONY

Maybe.

MIKE

Do you still blame Jack Hamilton?

(Lights up on JACK, upstage in an Angels uniform, watching over the scene like a ghost.)

JACK

You still think it was a spitter?

(Lights up on DICK, upstage in a Red Sox uniform)

DICK

Oh, come on! Just look at that! What the hell kinda unit do you think you're running here? Check the ball, check the ball!

(pause for umpire's response)

Well, you need to instruct him to wipe off his fingers after every pitch!

(Lights out on Dick as Tony finally takes the bat from Mike)

JACK

I just felt so bad about the whole thing. I wanted to sit down and meet with you and let you know I didn't mean it.

TONY

Let's just leave the issue the way it is.

MIKE

With your wrists, nobody could throw one past you. You were a natural fastball hitter.

(As he describes it, Tony assumes his batting stance.)

TONY

But I had trouble with the breaking pitches. Especially over the outside corner

JACK

So that's how we all pitched you.

TONY

So to compensate, I crowded the plate, so I could reach that outside corner.

JACK

And our solution to that was the obvious one. Pitch inside, to back you off. That plate belongs to us too, and its our job to take it back from the batter.

TONY

And then one got away.

JACK

One got away.

(Jack mimes pitching the imaginary ball as the lights go out on him. Tony reacts to being beamed in the face and collapses. Mike races to his side, and cradles his head in his arms.)

MIKE

The doctors told you that if the pitch had been two inches higher, you'd have been dead. But your cheekbone was shattered, and bone fragments went into your eye socket, almost causing blindness.

TONY

When I regained consciousness, and took my first look at my face in the mirror, I could make out the imprint of the stitches from the ball.

MIKE

They waited all night for that tragic phone call from Dr. Tierney. But once it became apparent you were going to live, everyone expected you'd return to the lineup in a couple weeks.

TONY

But I didn't

MIKE

You didn't. Your next visit to the doctors indicated that your eye had gotten worse, a cyst had developed on the retina.

TONY

So I followed the rest of the pennant race on television. Until that moment, I'd never been a spectator at a baseball game in my entire life...

MIK

Of course not... why would you?

TONY

... not even at the ballpark, and certainly not on television.

MIKE

But the Sox did everything they could to let you know you were still a part of the team. They even got a waiver from the commissioner to let you sit on the bench in uniform as the 26th man on the roster, even throughout the World Series. And yet as the team clinched the pennant on the final day of the season, you just... that's what you meant when you referred to crying during the celebration of your triumphs, wasn't it?

TONY

Yes.

MIKE

While the whole team celebrated in the clubhouse, you just sat in front of your locker and cried.... why was that?

TONY

(expressionless)

Baseball is a game to be played, not watched.

MIKE

Goddamn right!

TONY

I couldn't stand leaving it at that.

MIKE

And what's wrong with that? You'd earned the right to feel that way. Come on, tell me more! How'd you say it made you feel watching that shit on TV?

TONY

That was a long time ago.

MIKE

Come on! What did you tell those reporters?

TONY

I said that whenever I watched on TV, I just wanted to charge right through the screen and pick up a bat. But I knew I couldn't. And I didn't know if I ever could again.

MIKE

But you did.

TONY

Yes... I did.

MIKE

You had guts, Tony... you were the...

(pause)

... and yet it was still never the same.

TONY

No, it wasn't.

MIKE

Ultimately, it did still end your career, didn't it?

TONY

Yes, it did...

(standing)

(MORE)

TONY (cont'd)

But I'm past all that now... you're not.

(Tony pulls a Vietcong flag out of his pocket.)

MIKE

What the hell is that?

TONY

One of the soldiers I visited during my USO tour the following winter gave me this captured Vietcong flag. Something to remember him by. But that's not the only thing I took home with me from that trip. When I got home, I had perspective. I was done feeling sorry for myself. I had an eye injury from a baseball game, and even if I never played again, what did that add up to compared to these kids losing their lives and coming home with broken bodies?

MIKE

That's what you wrote in your autobiography...

TONY

Something like that.

MIKE

How was the eye holding up during that tour?

TONY

(laughs)

Just like all the rest. Of all the suffering I saw, that's all they wanted to know. Everywhere I went it was always "Hey Tony, how's the eye?"

(pause)

I think now its your turn. Why don't you tell me about the pitch that you got hit with?

MIKE

Life is the pitch that hit me!

TONY

That's not what you said a minute ago. Right before I woke you, you didn't blame it on a world that was against you. You blamed it on... what was it? "That fucking gook bastard"?

(The backdrop is lit with images to place us in Vietnam. Lights back up on Jack, wearing the hat of a Vietnamese peasant and holding an AK-47.)

MIKE

Let's just leave the issue the way it is.

JACK

Are you sure?

MIKE

Yeah, I'm sure. I did get past it. I was crowding the plate, and you did what you had to do.

(Jack points the rifle at him and fires as the lights go out on him.)

MIKE

(to Tony)

I don't blame him. I blame that lyin' son of a bitch Johnson who ordered us to crowd a plate that wasn't ours to crowd.

(Lights back up on Dick, who points a finger menacingly at Mike)

DICK

It's people like you that caused us to lose that war!

(Lights up on the whole stage as the homeless ensemble assembles into a "Greek Chorus")

CHORUS

A nation must not be allowed to go Marxist just because its people are irresponsible.

We must destroy this village in order to save it.

If you've got 'em by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow.

If the President does it, that means it's not illegal!

(Lights out on all except Mike and Tony. Tony picks up the bat and examines what's already written on it.)

TONY

So what, have you been carrying this around since '67 to remember the "Impossible Dream" season?

(Mike shakes his head)

TONY

No?

MIKE

I missed the rest of the season too.

TONY

Missed it?

MIKE

Yes. A different pitch hit me, remember?

(Sound of the gunshot)

TONY

Oh.

(They share a moment of uncomfortable
silence)

MIKE

So... they all asked you that, huh?

TONY

What?

MIKE

On the tour... they all asked you that same question, "how's
the eye"?

TONY

Yeah.

MIKE

Guess that's why you wouldn't remember me.

TONY

Oh, I remember... like it was yesterday.

MIKE

You do?

TONY

Of course I remember you... I remember them all.

MIKE

That's why you're here, isn't it? So you remember what I
said to you?

TONY

(distracted, looking at the bat)

You got Yastrzemski, and some of the other members of the '67 team to sign already.

MIKE

Yeah, I was collecting those signatures before I got my draft notice. After you and I got beaned, I guess I kind of lost interest.

TONY

Lost interest?

MIKE

Kinda made me reconsider why we spend so much of our miserable existence chasing after that...

TONY

Chasing after what?

MIKE

You know.

TONY

No, I don't. Why don't you tell me?

MIKE

(after a pause, shaking his head)

Just how in the hell did they ever get the idea to go with that?

TONY

To go with what?

MIKE

That hokey theme song for the season... that goddamn tune she tortured me with the whole summer... whenever she wasn't running around the country with a bunch of-

TONY

Who are we talking about, Mike?

MIKE

Never mind, forget it...

TONY

She tortured you with it?

MIKE

That's what I said, isn't it?

TONY

That's not what you thought back when-

MIKE

Yeah, well if I knew then what I know now...

(pause)

So much of our lives we spend... chasing after that... that which is illusory, that which we're promised with those story book, "two outs, bottom of the ninth" endings.

TONY

Sometimes those endings are real, you know.

MIKE

Of course. Which is all the more reason why we've got to keep our eye on the ball, not swing at the shit in the dirt. We've got to...

(pause)

But no, people prefer to chase the illusion, while they let what is real slip through their fingers.

TONY

And you're a fine one to talk...

MIKE

Hey, we didn't set the ground rules, remember? They did... and I chose not to play in the ballpark they designed.

TONY

And you're satisfied with that decision?

MIKE

Maybe... hey, what I'm not happy with is the options the umpires left me with. But there was a time... a time that we had other options. The chance to pursue dreams that were real, that were staring at us, right there in front of us...

TONY

And somebody made you the authority on just what is and is not real?

MIKE

Let's just say that cluelessness is not one of the afflictions I came home from the war with.

(pause)

"The Impossible Dream", hmmph....

(Lights up on Dick)

DICK

My only promise when I took the job was to win more than we lost...

MIKE

... if that's what that season really was, I've always wondered how they pulled it out...

DICK

... something they hadn't done since '58...

MIKE

... Let's try to pay a little closer attention to the vocabulary we've all supposedly agreed on, huh?

DICK

... and then came Yastrzemski.

(Images of Yastrzemski come up on the backdrop as the Greek Chorus reassembles.)

DICK

Single greatest performance to carry a club to a championship... ever.

CHORUS

.522 batting average in the final two week homestretch. 5 home runs and 16 RBIs.

5 RBIs in the final two game series with Minnesota, which came into the series leading by a game.

Game 1: Three run homer to win the game and pull even in the standings.

Game 2 clincher: RBI base hit to start the come-from-behind rally in the 6th. Threw Allison out at 2nd to end a Twins rally and possible comeback in the 8th.

Last player in either league to win the Triple Crown...

MIKE

(violently grabbing the bat from Tony)
Aw, shut the fuck up!

(The images disappear from the backdrop. Mike and Tony stand there for a moment of uncomfortable silence, and then lights come up on GINGER.)

GINGER

Michael, honey, come away with me.

MIKE

I'm not going to Canada. I have to...

GINGER

Alright, but you have a week before you leave for boot camp. Let's make the most of it... lets go stay with my uncle in New York. We can go and see a Broadway show... Uncle Frank can probably even get us tickets to Man of La Mancha. You remember... don't you Michael?

MIKE

Remember what?

GINGER

Our very first date... at the local community theater?

MIKE

That wasn't Man of La Mancha. It was...
(long dramatic pause)
Camelot...

(Images of JFK appear up on the
backdrop.)

MIKE

I started collecting these signatures when I bought this at the gift shop back on the home opener of '64. John F. Kennedy day at Fenway.

TONY

(remembering)

JFK day...

(The Zapruder film plays, projected on
the backdrop.)

MIKE

Naturally it had hit us here in the Commonwealth harder than anywhere else in the nation. Jack Kennedy was, after all, the home town boy. Political reporter Mary McGlory, Bostonian through and through, had said "we'll never laugh again."

(pause)

And then we heard about somebody else, who was also one of our own. The kid who'd been the New York- Penn League Rookie of the Year and MVP the year before. Almost signed with the Orioles, but decided to go with Boston because that was his hometown team. Who's ever heard of any top prospect that does that anymore? When the game whose proceeds were going to the Kennedy Library Fund got underway, the crowd included movie stars and sports legends... and the Attorney

(MORE)

MIKE (cont'd)

General, looking for a new local boy to fill his brother's shoes and win the hearts and minds of the people of Boston.

(He begins taking practice swings with the bat.)

TONY

Don't forget the press.

MIKE

The press?

TONY

Yes. They needed me too. And for entirely different reasons. When Williams retired in 1960 he took all the glamor with him. They were desperate to create a new legend.

MIKE

And you were not the kind to disappoint them.

TONY

No, I wasn't... not even in the winter before the season began. Yastrzemski had won the batting title the year before, but he was not the kind of guy to bask in the limelight. Me, I lived for it!

MIKE

No! That wasn't it at all. Batting championships don't mean shit to sport writers, never have. How many home runs did Yastrzemski hit during that batting championship season of '63? Come on, how many?

TONY

Fourteen.

MIKE

Fourteen! The press understands the importance of glamor in America's pastime and that glamor has never been with the singles hitter, its been with the guy that hits 'em out of the park. And that stance of his...

(Imitates Yastrzemski's signature stance)

Bat held a foot over his head, 90 degrees vertical, and that hitch.

(imitates the swing)

That goddamn big hitch in his swing. How the hell do you pull the ball when it takes you that long to get around on it? But Tony C.? Right handed, dead pull hitter, playing in Fenway? It was Yastrzemski who said it himself about you... remember?

TONY

"If he'd stayed healthy, without a doubt he would have hit 500 home runs playing in Fenway Park...."

MIKE

..."He could hit home runs in that ballpark in his sleep". That's what you wanted, wasn't it Tony? It wasn't about making the big leagues, or about pennants and world championships, was it Tony?

TONY

No... it wasn't.

MIKE

But we knew what it was you really wanted out of life. What did you tell the reporters when they asked if you thought you had the potential to turn out to be as good as Williams?

TONY

I said "no... better than Williams"

MIKE

Damn straight! You wanted nothing less than to be the best there ever was. And what's wrong with that?

TONY

And Hitler wanted to be a great artist.

MIKE

No, don't do that! Don't you fuckin' do that! Yeah, every kid has his dreams...

TONY

And so did you.

MIKE

Yes! But, like I said, yours and mine were real. Its those that aren't that ruin them all for the rest of us. 500 home runs? Shit. If it weren't for Jack Hamilton, it would have been your record, not Hank Aaron's. And every fan my age knew you were going to do it! To us you were "one of our own" more than anybody else knew. You were the baby boomer, the kid who hated authority, who used his signing bonus to buy a corvette, who dated a playboy model...

TONY

... Mamie Van Doren

MIKE

... Yeah, Mamie Van Doren ... who cried when they shot Jack Kennedy, who cut a rock and roll record... what was it called?

TONY

Playing the Field.

MIKE

Yeah, Playing the Field... The kid who got in trouble with his managers for bringing his record player on the plane... playing Elvis, the Beatles, and all the rest of that new kind of music that Williams' generation told us we were going to hell for listening to. Even Yaz was born during the war, so he didn't count. He wasn't really one of us!

(We hear the noise of a live crowd.)

MIKE

When me and the boys ditched school to sneak into Fenway that afternoon, we were ready to welcome Boston's new hero. And in the first pitch thrown to you at Fenway, we had him.

(He hands the bat back to Tony, then walks out of the light back over to his sleeping position, leaving Tony alone.)

TONY

(mournfully)

You had him.

(assumes his batting stance)

First pitch at Fenway thrown to the rookie who crowds the plate to reach the outside breaking pitches he has trouble with is... a belt high fastball. Right down the middle of the plate.

(He swings. We hear the crack of the bat and the sounds of the crowd going wild... he takes it all in for a moment.)

TONY

Yes, Mike. I did cry when they shot Jack Kennedy.

(Lights up on JUDY. She holds a letter that she reads aloud.)

JUDY

"Kennedy is dead. What can I say? I cried the same as you cried. He's gone, and God has a great man by his side. It just goes to show you... anyone can die at any time. So while we're alive, we should be grateful and enjoy life."

(She puts the letter aside and speaks

TONY

Because all the players that scored were married... I remember that.

(They both chuckle)

JUDY

You know, if its about the hope chest...

TONY

No, I told you it's not.

JUDY

My mother says things like that publicly... about how important silly old traditions are, but privately she knows what's really important. She told me the other day that it really isn't necessary.

TONY

That's just the thing, Judy. It is. When we're ready to do this, its going to be because I'm ready to do it right. I'm gonna get you that... and everything else a girl like you deserves. But look, the team bus is about to leave... we'll talk more about this when I get home.

JUDY

When's that going to be? When am I going to see you again, Tony?

TONY

Soon. The season's going to be over in a couple weeks. And I'll be making the big club for sure next year. I'll be back in Boston, and we'll see each other all the time.

JUDY

Alright. Goodbye, Tony. I love you.

TONY

Goodbye.

JUDY

Tony, can't you say it?

(He looks around, embarrassed, to all the imaginary teammates in the locker room.)

TONY

(quietly, with mouth covered)
I love you, sweetheart.

(Lights out on Judy, as BILLY walks downstage into the new scene inside a nightclub. Billy and Tony sit. He sets the bat down next to the table.)

BILLY

Dad said he was driving down Western Avenue in Lynn this afternoon and passed by Young's Furniture Store.

TONY

Yeah?

BILLY

He saw your car parked outside.

TONY

So?

BILLY

You were with Freddie Anderson.

TONY

Yeah.

BILLY

Tony, what were the two of you doing in there?

(No answer)

BILLY

Dad watched from the outside, and went in after you left. Talked to the manager. Said you purchased a brand new cedar hope chest.

(Judy enters the bar)

BILLY

Tony, you know how dad feels about-

JUDY

Tony!

TONY

Judy!

(He gets up. They embrace and kiss.)

JUDY

Oh, darling its so good to have you home. I miss you so badly when you're away.

TONY

I missed you too, baby. Here, have a seat. I've got a little surprise for you. Wait here.

(She takes Tony's seat as he disappears upstage.)

JUDY

Hello, Billy.

BILLY

Judy. Good to see you.

JUDY

How's your Mother?

BILLY

She's fine. Look, Judy-

(He is interrupted as the song finishes and we hear the sound of applause from the other patrons at the nightclub. Tony is heard from upstage.)

TONY

Ok, that was great... how's everybody doing tonight?

(A spotlight appears on Tony upstage, holding a microphone.)

TONY

Hi, I'm Tony Conigliaro. You'll be seeing me out at Fenway this April, playing right field for the Sox!

(Loud, boisterous applause.)

TONY

But for now, I'd like to dedicate this next song to somebody very special... Judy, honey, this one's for you.

(Music starts, and he sings Elvis's "Can't Help Falling in Love" When the song finishes he walks back to the table and gives Judy a kiss.)

TONY

That was just for you, sweetheart... the girl I'm gonna marry.

JUDY

Of course. Can't tie the knot with someone until you've embarrassed her in public.

TONY

Judy...

JUDY

(laughing)

It's ok, honey.

(standing)

Listen, I'm going to go to the ladies' room. Your brother says he needs to talk to you alone for a minute.

TONY

Hurry back!

(He gives her another kiss, and sits down with his brother)

BILLY

Tony, are you sure you know what you're doing?

TONY

I don't know what you mean.

BILLY

I think you know exactly what I mean.

TONY

Is this why you invited me and Judy here tonight?

BILLY

Listen, if there's one thing that all the years of practice with Dad and Uncle Vinnie have taught you, its that you're a lousy ballplayer if you don't play hard every second, put every bit of your effort and concentration into it.

TONY

I don't believe this. I haven't seen Judy in almost a month, and my first night back-

BILLY

Tony, you're nineteen, you can't be getting tied down right now.

TONY

(standing)

I don't want to talk about this. Not now.

(He walks upstage into the darkness.)

BILLY

(calling after him)

You've got a gift, Tony. You've got the potential for greatness. The greatest there ever was. The greatest there ever will be. Don't throw it away.

(Lights go out on Billy, and come up on Tony and Judy, kissing.)

TONY

Judy, we... We have to break up.

JUDY

What?

TONY

Judy, I love you more than anything. I'll always love you. But I have to do this.

JUDY

What did I do?

TONY

I have to concentrate on my career. I have to...

(He kisses her again, and the lights crossfade back to Billy, holding the bat)

TONY

I always said that I did it because I knew I was too young, that I couldn't stand the thought of being married at nineteen.

BILLY

(handing Tony the bat)

But you knew better.

TONY

Yeah.

BILLY

Mom knew that Dad was the one who broke you up. He said that it was either Judy or baseball.

TONY

I saw her again a couple years later...

(As Billy goes off, lights come back up on Judy. We are back in 1990. She is holding a handful of letters.)

JUDY

I never got rid of the hope chest. I've kept all the letters you ever sent me inside for the past twenty years.

TONY

Spring, 1966. I was in the on deck circle, casually looked up at the crowd, and... there you were.

JUDY

Yes... I was sitting with my mother right behind the home dugout.

TONY

Toward the end of the game I wrote something on a little slip of paper and tossed it to you when I thought no one would notice.

JUDY

Everyone did, of course. The whole crowd wanted to know what the star of the team was giving to this girl nobody knew.

(She shuffles through the letters and comes to the note they're referring to.)

TONY

You still have it?

JUDY

Of course I still have it... Mother kept pestering me to open it and tell her what it said. Everyone was staring at me, I told her I couldn't.

TONY

But when you got home-

JUDY

No... I couldn't. It's been twenty years, and in all that time... I just haven't had the strength.

TONY

You think maybe now, after all these years...?

(Slowly and cautiously she opens the note.)

JUDY

(struggling to contain her tears)

I love you too, Tony!

(Lights out on Judy)

TONY

Yes Mike. Like so many Americans our age, that was the winter during which I buried a good deal of my innocence with the President. But for some of us, that innocence is a commodity that all the acres at Arlington don't have a plot large enough for.

(Lights up on Dick)

TONY

And, yes. You could say I was the type of kid that hated authority. Some kinds a lot more than others. With Dick Williams, the generation gap was just too acute. A guy like him and a guy like me were bound to clash sooner or later.

DICK

Conigliaro! Turn that hat around!

TONY

He grew up in poverty during the depression. Struggled for years in the minors before getting his shot, and then an injury assured that his playing career would never really take off.

DICK

(to the other imaginary players)

Tuck those damn shirt tails in! Hey, what did I tell you about that! That's a fifty dollar fine!

TONY

My die-hard fans used to say that he got on me because he was jealous of me. I knew better. But there are certain things that can't simply be attributed to belonging to the prejudices of his generation.

(Lights up on Jack)

JACK

I tried to visit you in the hospital, but I was turned away.

TONY

I know... They wouldn't let anybody but immediate family into the room. Not even my roommate...

JACK

Yes...

TONY

Hey, at least you made the effort.

DICK

We were all very upset about the beaming and tried almost immediately to visit Conigliaro in the hospital. But the team owner, Tom Yawkey, said no. And not just in the beginning. Every time I tried to visit him, Yawkey said no. He allowed only himself that privilege.

JACK

I wasn't aware that your club kept its manager under lock and key, tapped his phone, and opened his mail...

TONY

... Most of my teammates seemed to find a way.

JACK

You tried to come back the next season...

TONY

... I got a few hits in spring training... But they were just lucky guesses. I couldn't see the ball.

(Lights out on Jack)

DICK

Hey, I was the one who had to put up with things like his comeback from eye trouble... Yes, it was a brave and impressive effort he made, but Conigliaro soured everyone by expecting all of us to treat him like royalty. I don't think there's anything wrong with his vision other than what he says to the press.

(Lights out on Dick)

TONY

I thought Dick was a baseball manager, not an eye doctor.

(Tony spends a moment pacing back and forth, deep in thought. Finally, he picks up a "phone")

TONY

(trying to sound sick)

Buddy, I need to talk to Dick... I need to be excused from today's game with Minnesota. I have a sore throat.

(Lights back up on Dick)

DICK

I don't want to talk to him. If he spent less time in those barrooms and more at the ballpark he could be a pretty good ballplayer.

TONY

(still on the phone, dropping the act)

Buddy, put that guy on the phone!

DICK

When he starts acting like the rest of the boys he'll be treated like the rest of the boys.

TONY

That son of a... I'm gonna kill him! Get him on the phone, now!

DICK

I don't want to talk to him.

TONY

Buddy, put that bastard on the phone! I'm coming down and I'm going to beat the shit out of him!

(Lights out on Dick. Tony slumps to the ground, clutching to the bat. After a moment of crying, we hear the sounds of Red Sox trainer Buddy Leroux approaching, and he looks up.)

TONY

Buddy, its not the throat. Don't you understand? I can't see. Its all over.

(Buddy leaves)

TONY

My comeback would have to wait until the next season. I would miss the entire 1968 season.

(Lights back up on Dick)

DICK

We did it without his butt last year, and we'll do it without his butt this year!

(Lights out on Dick)

TONY

They didn't. The Sox would finish 4th, seventeen games behind Detroit. But I'm sure you knew all that, didn't you Mike?

(waits for a response he doesn't get)

Mike?

(Lights up on Mike's sleeping area. During the action of the last couple minutes, in which this part of the stage was darkened, another member of the homeless ensemble has traded places with Mike so that, without seeing this actor's face, we can imagine that it is Mike's body while the Mike that is about to enter is his "out of body self".... Tony walks over to "Mike's body" and tries to wake him)

TONY

Mike! Come on, now. Don't leave me, buddy.

MIKE

(re-entering)

You know, there was a time when I knew all that. Could have told you the exact number of games out of first the Sox were at any moment of the season. Probably could have told you the the current batting averages for everyone in the starting lineup too. But I told you. I don't care about that anymore... I stopped caring a long time ago.

(Tony examines the signatures on the bat again.)

TONY

Right. You gave up the fight.

MIKE

No! I fought! It's the others that abandoned me. But I- When I was discharged- just a little while after you'd passed by my hospital bed on your USO tour- I came home with only one concern and that was to see to it that nobody else was gonna have to go through what I did... have to lose their life or come home crippled for no reason!

TONY

Crippled? You seem to be able to walk just fine.

MIKE

Barbara Bush can walk! You don't see her on the cover of fucking Sports Illustrated!

TONY

Is Barbara Bush a cripple?

MIKE

Could she steal bases, the one thing you couldn't do on the ball field? We're crippled the moment we're robbed of our G-...

(stopping himself from saying "God")

... of the ability to do anything and everything we're destined for!

TONY

What kind of ability?

MIKE

What are you talking about?

TONY

You were about to say-

MIKE

Fuck you!

(pause)

I'm sorry, Tony. I'm sorry.

(pause)

Henderson would be chasing my record, not Lou Brock's! Could I do that after-

TONY

That kept you from holding down a job in your father's insurance business?

MIKE

Fuck the insurance business!

TONY

That caused you to tell your girl you never wanted to see her again?

MIKE

YES!!!

(A long silence)

TONY

You know, sooner or later we all get to the point where it's time to quit crying in front of our lockers, and join our teammates in their celebration.

MIKE

I had no teammates!

TONY

We both had them, Mike. The ones that picked us up when we were down...

MIKE

No, I'm not talking about that fight. It's the larger one where they- where she left me to die on the battlefield.

TONY

Ginger was-

MIKE

NO!! You shut up about her!

(Pause.)

TONY

My father asked me to choose baseball over Judy. Lord knows what you chose over Ginger.

(long pause)

MIKE

I chose the girl I knew over the one she'd become. The girl I fell in love with was the one who...

(pause)

That girl... her dreams were as real as yours and mine, Tony.

TONY

Yes, the real ones... and just what was it that you said about the other ones?

MIKE

... so long as she was willing to fight for them. Then one day she just quit...

TONY

You spoke of other dreams, the ones that are illusory... you said that they are what end up ruining them all for the rest of us...

MIKE

Yes... and then there are the ones that aren't real, because they never existed... because some don't have the vision to ever see them... not any at all.

TONY

And that's what you think she became?

MIKE

If that's how you want to put it... but the girl I knew would never...

TONY

How was she different, Mike?

MIKE

From the girl I knew? The girl that nursed me back to health? You know, it was she who, for a time, started to get me to change back from what I'd become.

TONY

What you'd become?

MIKE

During my year over in... you know.

(pause)

You know, during that all too brief period during the summer of '68... almost even got me to reconsider my feeling toward...

TONY

Toward what?

MIKE

You know what.

(pause)

You know, if it weren't for the doctor's orders about needing to stay off my feet for a few more months I would have come out to California and joined her...

TONY

It gave you something to believe in again, didn't it?

MIKE

Yes.

TONY

And, at the time, you didn't consider it such a silly slogan, did you?

MIKE

Not at the time, no...

(pause)

(MORE)

MIKE (cont'd)

She called me from the hotel that night.

(Images of RFK dying on the kitchen floor at the Ambassador Hotel up on the backdrop.)

MIKE

She was so excited when she called me to tell me the news. Told me to turn on the television. I rang for the nurse about a thousand times before she came to turn it on for me. And then...

(We here gunshots, and the images of RFK disappear. There is a long silence)

TONY

You know, when McGovern first quoted from that song during the campaign, Bobby asked him, after the speech, what he meant... asked if he really believed that the campaign was all just tilting at windmills. He said "no, I don't think it's impossible. I just wanted them to know it was worth making the effort, whether you win or lose"

MIKE

He was right. It was.
(pause)

In the end, it's not the losing that kills you... its not being allowed to play.

(pause)

It was worth it... and then all of a sudden, it wasn't.

TONY

And so you've spent the last twenty years since then slowly working at killing yourself...

MIKE

(indicating the body)

And it looks like I've finally succeeded.

TONY

You're not dead. You've got a pulse.

MIKE

You might want to check it again.

(hands him the newspaper)

I think you should have a look at this.

TONY

(reading from the paper)

"Red Sox legend Tony Conigliaro: Dead at 45"

MIKE

Soon as I recognized you, I knew I was dead.

TONY

(flipping through the newspaper)

That's funny. I don't see your name anywhere in here.

(He hands the paper back to him.)

MIKE

Living people don't generally carry on conversations with the dead.

(waves the paper at him)

And how the hell does this not faze you any? You act like you knew!

TONY

I did know.

MIKE

How did you know? And how'd you know all that shit about me? What I did when I got home, my father's business, Ginger.... I never told you her name.... shit, I never told you MY name. How do you know all this? You don't know me!

TONY

We've been through this... I do know you.

MIKE

I'm not even the reason you're here!

TONY

Yes... you are.

MIKE

You told me you were here for Freddie.

TONY

Him too.

MIKE

Yeah, right.

TONY

Hey, I knew I couldn't help you unless I got you to open up and tell me some of these things on your own.

MIKE

Well you haven't helped me. Just do whatever it is that you came here for and get it over with.

TONY

I'm doing it right now.

MIKE

Are you here to take me home, or wherever it is I'm supposed to go?

TONY

No.

MIKE

Of course. There is nowhere, is there? This is it.

TONY

I didn't say that.

MIKE

So is somebody else on their way to take me?

TONY

(indicating the body)

That's for you to determine, Mike.

MIKE

What the fuck's that supposed to mean?

TONY

Once you figure that out, my job here will be done.

MIKE

(indicating the bat that Tony still holds)

If you're not gonna sign that, can you just give it back to me?

(Tony looks at the bat for a moment, considering.)

TONY

No, I don't think so.

MIKE

What?

TONY

So long as you're clinging to this talisman... window shopping for Camelot, there's nothing anybody can do for you.

MIKE

Window shopping for Camelot?

TONY

Did you know that one of the only reasons I didn't sign with Baltimore is that their offer was the same amount that Boston was offering?

MIKE

And...?

TONY

That if they'd offered more money, which they didn't, I would have signed with them? At the time, I'd never even seen the inside of Fenway. Remember what we talked about, Mike. We were competitors. We knew that baseball was a game to be played, not to be watched as spectators.

MIKE

I did play! You know what stopped me!

TONY

So did many others, Mike. But you didn't want them on your team unless you saw them emerging from the mists of one of Merlin's spells...

(starting to leave)

Those you and I wept for were not the Once and Future King, I am not Lancelot, and this-

(holding up the bat)

- is not Excalibur!

(He exits. The backdrop is illuminated by the footage of Ted Kennedy delivering the final part of his eulogy to Bobby...)

TED KENNEDY

... my brother need not be idealized, or enlarged in death beyond that which he was in life, but to be remembered simply as a good and decent man, who saw wrong and tried to right it, who saw suffering and tried to heal it, who saw war and tried to stop it. Those of us who loved him and take him to his rest today, pray that what he was to us and what he wished for others will someday come to pass for all the world. As he said, many times, in many parts of this nation, to those he touched... and sought to touch him:

(The projection goes off, lights go up on the whole stage, and the Chorus finishes the eulogy with the famous line RFK borrowed from G.B. Shaw...)

CHORUS

Some see things as they are, and say "Why?"

I dream things that never were, and say "Why not?"

(The Chorus dissolves, and the homeless ensemble returns to their places, leaving Mike all alone)

MIKE

No! Don't leave me here! I don't deserve this! What do you think you're trying to teach me with this? Just what the hell do you know about me?

BILLY

(walking into the scene)

Far more than you'll ever realize.

(MIKE turns, startled, to face him.)

MIKE

What the-

BILLY

(extending his hand)

Hi, I'm-

MIKE

I know who you are. Where's your brother? Where's my bat?

BILLY

You know, everybody remembers what happened at Fenway back in '67, but almost nobody knows about the second pitch that hit him 15 years later. The one that he, unlike you, couldn't pick himself up from.

(Lights up on Jack)

BILLY

And then there are those who do know about what happened on that drive to the airport...

JACK

I wonder if I, somehow, am responsible for him dying.

(Lights out on Jack)

BILLY

... and they wonder if it had anything to do with the beaning. Of course, it did not.

(Tony and a STATION MANAGER walk into the scene)

BILLY

At the beginning of the 1982 season, Tony was given the opportunity to replace Ken Harrelson as the color commentator for the Sox. Ken Harrelson... the man who'd replaced him. Replaced him: First as the guy that played right field for Boston and then as the guy that dated Judy Marshall.

(He walks over to the table to join the meeting already in progress.)

STATION MANAGER

Well, Mr. Conigliaro, with the work in broadcasting you've done in California, I'd say your resume is very strong. And Mr. Martin was very impressed with your audition. But you see, here's the problem. We like having somebody on the air that the locals can relate to, and your past with the team is great there, but... you've been out of the game for so long now that... nobody around here really knows who you are anymore.

BILLY

What did you say?

STATION MANAGER

No one knows him.

BILLY

Will you excuse me a minute?

(Billy gets up and walks over to another patron at the restaurant)

BILLY

Excuse me, can I ask you a question? In baseball, who is known as Tony C.?

PATRON # 1

Tony Conigliaro! Best ballplayer ever to come out of Boston!

(Billy walks to another patron)

BILLY

Excuse me, sorry to bother you, but can you tell me the Boston player that led the American League in homers back in '65?

PATRON # 2

Tony Conigliaro. Homered his first time up at Fenway!

BILLY

(coming back to the table)

You were saying...?

STATION MANAGER

Welcome aboard!

(He shakes Tony's hand as the lights go out on the restaurant and Billy walks back to the separately lit area where he'd been talking with Mike.)

BILLY

It was just after that meeting that Tony had another appointment to keep... scouting potential clients in Florida for the new sports management firm one of his old teammates was setting up. It was my job to give him that fateful ride to the airport.

(Lights come up on Tony at a separately lit stage area, sitting in a chair to represent the "passenger seat", and we hear the sounds of the car driving off.)

BILLY

From the moment I got him into the car, all he could talk about was how excited he was about the fortunate turn of events...

TONY

You know, Billy, it's going to be great being back in Boston with the family again.

BILLY

And yet you're leaving us already.

TONY

I won't be gone long.

BILLY

You know the house right next door to Mom and Dad is for sale...

TONY

You think you'd have to tell me that?

BILLY

We just went on about how bright the future was looking... it was when I started teasing him about a girl, and he didn't answer, just made a wheezing sound... I asked again, and looked over at him. His hands were in fists, held tightly against his chest

(Tony does this as Billy describes it)

BILLY

Tony? Tony...?

(Tony slumps over in the seat)

Tony!!!

(We hear the sound of the car speeding off as the lights go out on Tony)

BILLY

We were almost to the airport, but I turned the car around... probably the worst mistake I ever made.

(The lights go out as we hear the engine roaring, horn honking, etc... Finally, we hear the sound of him skidding to a stop in front of the hospital, and hear voices in the darkness)

NURSE

Sir, you can't park here.

BILLY

Give me a hand with him, damnit! Get him inside!

(We hear the sounds of Tony being helped into the wheelchair, other ad libs from doctors, nurses, etc...)

NURSE

I'm not getting a pulse.

BILLY

Help him, please.

(Lights come up on Billy, sitting)

BILLY

Please, God. Don't let him die.

MIKE

(walking into the scene)

He can't hear you. He never does.

NURSE

(walking into the scene)

Mr. Conigliaro?

BILLY

Yes?

NURSE

Your brother's condition has stabilized. The doctors had a very difficult time at it, but they have been able to get his heart going again.

BILLY

Oh, thank God.

NURSE

Unfortunately, there have been a few complications. Will you come with me, please?

(They walk out of the light, leaving Mike there alone)

MIKE

Billy? Billy! Where'd you go? Don't you leave me here too! Somebody... somebody say something!

(The lights come up on the whole stage. Tony is offstage, and the rest of the cast have returned to their homeless attire. Other than the one cast member who has now taken Mike's place to play his body, the scene looks exactly as it did when the curtain rose. Mike walks over to the trash can and tries to get the attention of the other homeless people standing there)

MIKE

Hey. Can you hear me?

(No response. He goes around the stage to different members of the ensemble, speaking in ad-libs, waving hands in front of their faces, etc., to see if they can see or hear him. They can't.)

CHORUS

You pitied him, for all that he
Endured when it did show
Then turned your backs, and could not see
The true depths of his woe.
If you had seen, you would not tell
Of what you can't abide
While watching as he went through hell
For eight years, 'til he died.

MIKE

(pleading)

No, no. This can't be happening. Where am I? I said I wanted... But this, this is not what I wanted. Its not. Don't leave me here. Don't do this to me!!!!!!

(He falls to his knees, hysterical.)

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

ACT II

(At rise, Mike is still on his knees while the rest of the homeless ensemble goes about their normal business. There has been no passage of time.)

MIKE

This is not what I wanted. Its not...

(Lights fade on all but the downstage area.)

MIKE

(towards the sky)

So this is it? That figures.

(to himself)

Bench warmer for all eternity... 26th man on the roster to watch this pennant race from afar. And I thought it couldn't get any worse than that game with St. Mary's. Oh yeah, Coach Muller said he was saving me for the big game.... Just like now, always a justification.

(Lights up on the homeless ensemble)

CHORUS

Seek not to justify the pain

You can't alleviate.

Look to it's roots, and soon you'll gain

Keys to a better state.

If ignorance your nature makes

Turn 'gainst its better part,

Avoid that voice that from you takes

That fire out of your heart.

(Lights out on the homeless ensemble behind Mike)

MIKE

Yeah, Tony. You couldn't stand watching your team on television... wanted to charge through the screen and pick up a bat? What if it was these assholes you'd had to

(MORE)

MIKE (cont'd)

watch? You'd wanna pick up a bat so you could knock the shit out of 'em!

(back towards the sky)

What the hell do you think you're trying to teach me with any of this? Show me something different for Christ's sake, something that'll help!

GINGER

(stepping into the scene)

Michael?

(The backdrop is illuminated with images that place us in a locker room. Sounds of a victory celebration are heard in the background.)

MIKE

(back to the sky, pleading)

Oh no, not this. Please, not this.

GINGER

Michael!!

MIKE

Ginger!

(They kiss.)

MIKE

Ginger, you know you're not allowed in here. The guys could walk in-

GINGER

Well, then we don't have a lot of time.

MIKE

(excited)

Why, Ginger!

GINGER

(pulling away)

No, Michael. We need to talk.

MIKE

About what?

GINGER

That recruiter from Harvard... Right now, before anyone forgets this season, would be a good time to talk with him about that scholarship.

MIKE

I don't know about that, Ginger.

GINGER

Michael, we've talked about this.

MIKE

I know, but that scout from Detroit. He was in the stands watching the game today. That's why I needed to get dressed quickly and get out there before he gets away.

GINGER

That's why you're not celebrating with your friends?

MIKE

Yeah. Well, that and...

GINGER

What, Michael?

MIKE

Nothing.

GINGER

Still sore about that game with Saint Mary's?

MIKE

No, no... that's not it at all.

GINGER

Well what is bothering you, then?

MIKE

Never mind.

GINGER

No, what is it?

MIKE

Nothing. Its just... Look, its Walter's big day right now. He deserves a chance to-

GINGER

Have you congratulated Walter?

MIKE

What? Of course... I-

GINGER

Then why aren't you out there with him and the rest of the team?

MIKE

I told you.

GINGER

It really bothers you that much...?

MIKE

What are you talking about?

GINGER

... That his shutout means he's gonna be named MVP instead of you?

MIKE

That's got nothing to do with-

(He sighs and gives up)

GINGER

You think all those runs you scored throughout the season had nothing to do with why you're here?

MIKE

Yeah, you're right...

GINGER

Alright then...

MIKE

... but next season.

GINGER

What?

MIKE

Still got my senior year ahead of me. Next year, when we win the state championship one more time, I'm gonna be the one that takes home that damn trophy-

GINGER

Michael!

MIKE

Sorry. -that darn trophy. And that scout? He can wait. By the time I graduate, I'm gonna have offers from every team in the big leagues!

GINGER

Yes, but we need to talk about-

MIKE

(ignoring her)

And I don't care if its for less money, I'm gonna sign with the hometown team, just like Tony C. did!

GINGER

Honey, what about-?

MIKE

The Sox are going to be contenders again, mark my word! Couple years, when they got Mike "Mad Dog" Malone in the lead-off spot, I'll be the one that scores their runs for them... the guy that gets on base, steals to get into scoring position for Tony C to drive in when the Sox start their rallies. And when I...

(His words start to trail off as the light slowly rise on Dick, dressed as a drill sergeant, and marching in place.)

DICK

LEFT...! LEFT...! LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT!

LEFT...! LEFT...! LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT!

(The backdrop illumination changes to place us in a barracks. Dick continues marching in place while chanting his military cadence, echoed by the Chorus)

DICK

I don't know but its been said!

CHORUS

I don't know but its been said!

DICK

Your impossible dream's as good as dead!

CHORUS

Your impossible dream's as good as dead!

DICK

I don't know but its been told!

CHORUS

I don't know but its been told!

DICK

The flame is growing mighty cold!

CHORUS

The flame is growing mighty cold!

DICK

Ten- hut! Malone!!

MIKE

(stands at attention)

Sir!!

DICK

Open your foot locker, soldier!

(Mike walks to the trash can that used to provide the "fire" and pulls the foot locker from behind it. Dick rumages through it, inspecting the contents. He finds a baseball card and pulls it out.)

DICK

Malone!!

MIKE

Sir!!

DICK

Just what in the hell is this that you're keeping in your foot locker?

(pause)

I asked you a question, Private Malone!!

MIKE

Sir, a baseball card, sir!!

DICK

And why are you keeping it in your foot locker, Malone?

MIKE

Sir, because I'm a ballplayer, sir!

DICK

A ballplayer. Now let me ask you something, Malone. Why are you here today?

MIKE

Sir, because I was drafted, sir!

DICK

And why do you suppose your Uncle Sam sent you that draft notice? What are you in this army for, Malone?

MIKE

(aside)

To defend Wall Street's investments, I imagine.

DICK

What was that?

MIKE

Sir, I don't know, sir!

DICK

You don't know. Well let me help you out, soldier. You are defending honor, Malone. The honor of your country. Defending it against all of its enemies. And that means readying yourself, in mind, body and spirit, to kill VC gooks, and all other sons of bitches that stand in the way of that honor. Do I make myself clear?

MIKE

Sir, yes sir!!

DICK

Now. Where in that equation does a bunch of faggots hitting a ball with a stick and running around in little sissy circles around a series of pillows serve that objective?

MIKE

Sir, it doesn't, sir!!

DICK

You're goddamn right it doesn't!

(He tears the card up, and throws the pieces to the ground. Mike falls to the ground, fighting back tears as he tries to gather the pieces up.)

DICK

Whatsa matter? You gonna cry? Or no. You wanna take a swing at me, boy? Oh, I think you do. Well come on, please... Come on you little pussy!!

(He slaps Mike, knocking him down, and then he does start to cry.)

DICK

Well, there are those tears. Go ahead, and cry for your momma.

(addressing the whole imaginary platoon)

MEN!

(pause)

(MORE)

DICK (cont'd)

Now you may all think I'm a real mean son of a bitch. But when you get out there... when you're facing the enemy, when it's kill or be killed, when you first see the mangled bodies of the friends who didn't want to fire first because they were concerned with what a rough life some poor commie gook must have had... you'll realize that I'm not doing any of you boys a favor by making you soft. And someday you'll thank me for this.

(He walks out of the light, leaving Mike alone to cry for a moment. Then, Billy's voice is heard from upstage in the darkness)

BILLY

You know, Tony told you it was the USO tour that really changed him, made him see things clearly for the first time. It wasn't.

(Billy pushes Tony downstage in the wheelchair. He is in a vegetative state, but clutches the bat across the chair. Billy holds a copy of his brother's 1970 autobiography, "Seeing it Through")

MIKE

Billy! Tony! My bat!

BILLY

(reading from the book)

"After that, I was done feeling sorry for myself and being bitter over a something as insignificant as an eye injury"?

(closing the book)

What a bunch of crap.

(Mike tries to take the bat out of Tony's hands but he can't)

BILLY

Oh, I'm not saying my brother was a liar, but let's keep in mind that he wrote that in 1970. 1970, the year his eyesight had temporarily improved long enough to return to the lineup, win the "comeback player of the year" award, and post career best home run totals.

MIKE

But that's not...

(The backdrop is lit up with the famous V-J Day photograph of the sailor kissing the nurse.)

BILLY

(indicating the picture)

You know, at this point in time, I don't imagine either of these two were still very bitter about Pearl Harbor.

(The photograph disappears)

TONY

(quietly)

Comeback player of the year award...

BILLY

Tony? Did you say something? Can you hear me?

(Tony makes a futile attempt to respond, but then breaks into a violent coughing fit)

BILLY

(offering oxygen)

Tony, come on now. Take it easy. Breathe.

(Tony finally stops coughing.)

BILLY

Comeback player of the year award. After missing all of the '68 season nobody gave him a chance of ever playing again. But it was opening day of the '69 season, his first day back, with his brother as his new teammate, that I'll remember most of all. Went into extra innings, and in the 10th, Tony knocked a Pete Richert fastball over the left field fence to win the game.

TONY

Actually my homer didn't win the game. Baltimore tied it up in the bottom of the 10th, and we subsequently won it in twelve.

(This time, Billy doesn't acknowledge that Tony has spoken, and just goes on...)

BILLY

I like to think that that award was given on the basis of that one swing of the bat.

TONY

Of course, we would have lost in ten without my homer, and it was I that scored the winning run on Jones' sacrifice fly in the 12th... but Billy's version of the story was naturally the one the press preferred.

BILLY

When he got back to the dugout we were all surrounding him, pounding him on the back and hugging him to death. And then guess who came over to put the finishing touch on the celebration?

(Lights up on Dick, back in his Red Sox uniform)

DICK

We did it without his butt last year, and we'll do it without his butt this year!

BILLY

He leaned over to my brother and kissed him on the cheek. I'll never forget what Tony said to me about it after the game...

TONY

At that moment, I could have bit him on the neck!

BILLY

(laughing)

He could have bit him on the neck!

(Lights out on Dick)

BILLY

No, Tony didn't have a lot to be bitter about that year. But it's these past eight... Listening to the wheezing, the coughing, dropping suggestions to doctors and nurses, and when they don't take the hints asking them flat out if there's any way I can help my brother to die without going to prison... I think then is when he's learned just how much, in the scheme of things, it really matters to be "better than Williams"... or to take home an MVP trophy.

MIKE

Oh, don't you start too!

(The Chorus begins assembling)

BILLY

These last eight years have taught him what it means to lose the things that really matter...

MIKE

History isn't made by men who focus on the "things that really matter"!

BILLY

My brother loved to eat.

CHORUS

Now, he's fed through a tube!

BILLY

He loved to sing.

CHORUS

Now, he can barely talk!

BILLY

He loved to dance.

CHORUS

Now, he can't walk!

BILLY

He loved his family and friends.

CHORUS

Now, he can barely recognize them!

MIKE

If Henry Ford was more interested in family your brother would have spent his bonus money on a new bicycle.... if Columbus concerned himself with any of that shit, the world would still be flat!

(pause)

Oh, what the hell do you know?

(He storms off. Billy hands his brother a little bell.)

BILLY

I'm going to go into the other room now, Tony. If you need anything, ring for me.

(He takes the bat, and walks out of the scene, leaving Tony alone)

TONY

Yeah, Mike. After the trade, I was still bitter over my career. You better believe it. But who knows? If I hadn't been sent out to California against my will, I might not have landed my first broadcasting gig out there. I might never have gotten to meet Sam and Sharon.

SHARON

(stepping into the scene)

Tony?

(The backdrop is lit with the images that place us in a hospital waiting room)

TONY

Sharon, is it... I mean, did you-

SHARON

Yes, we decided to do what the doctors recommended.

TONY

Sharon, you didn't have to-

SHARON

It's what Sam would want... I know it. He always told me...

TONY

I'm so sorry.

(pause)

You want me to go back in there with you?

SHARON

No, Tony. It's alright.

TONY

You're not going to...?

SHARON

No.

TONY

Sharon, you can't...

SHARON

Yes, I can. This is also something about which Sam made his intentions very clear. I was there with him and his mother... those last three hours he sat there holding her

(MORE)

SHARON (cont'd)

hand, watching and waiting. It was- it was not his warmest memory of her to be his last. He always told me that if he hadn't stayed in there in that room, his last memory of her could have been what she said to him before she closed her eyes for the last time... She had sat up in the bed, and she said... "I've had a good life!". That would have been pretty good for a last memory, but Sam always said that those last three hours ruined it. I've always felt the same way.

TONY

Is there anything I can do?

SHARON

You're doing it right now, Tony. Just keep being around for us. Stop by the house, and see the girls. You've been like a second father to them. They're going to need you in their lives now more than ever.

TONY

Of course. Look, Sharon. I know this is a lousy time for me to be asking anything of you, but given the nature of the request, I think now is a better time than any to ask you.

SHARON

What, Tony?

TONY

Seeing Sam these past few months, its hard to imagine what he's been going through. And, given the fact that for some people it lasts for years and years... I can only attribute it to how truly blessed he's been by God's infinite mercy that its only been for a couple months. But I know I haven't done anything to deserve that mercy.

SHARON

None of us ever will.

TONY

No, we won't. And I'm not the type to wait around for something I know isn't coming. Sharon, promise me... promise me, that if I'm ever like that, that you'll pull the plug on me. My family will never do it. But that's no way to live.

SHARON

I promise, Tony. I promise.

NURSE

(entering)

Ms. Henshaw?

(Sharon falls into Tony's arms.)

SHARON

Oh, Tony!

(Lights out on them as Mike enters in a different stage area. He is in the cap and gown from his high school graduation.)

MIKE

(mocking)

You forgot to tell her the reason that that mutual friend of yours saw fit to torture you for the past eight years... because He loves you.

(Lights back up on Tony, in his wheelchair)

TONY

(pensive)

Yes, Mike. Tortured. You know, there's a lot of people who would say that...

MIKE

What?

TONY

Forget it. You wouldn't understand.

(Ginger walks into Mike's area)

GINGER

Congratulations, Michael.

MIKE

For what?

GINGER

You know what.

MIKE

For the brilliant season?

GINGER

That was your choice, Michael. Nothing in that draft notice told you you couldn't play.

MIKE

For the bright future ahead of me?

GINGER

It's still there. When you come back-

MIKE

And if I don't?

GINGER

Don't talk like that! I'll be right here waiting for you. We can talk about college-

MIKE

You don't have to wait for me, or for anything. If you wanna see other people-

GINGER

Michael!

(pause)

Now we've already talked about this... we don't even have to wait. Come with me, Michael. We can go to Canada, we can-

MIKE

I'm not going to fuckin' Canada.

GINGER

Michael, watch your mouth!

MIKE

A man doesn't get to choose his country, any more than he gets to choose his teammates.

GINGER

(clasping both of his hands)

You'll be in my prayers every day you're away, sweetheart. And don't you ever forget to always put your faith in God. Whatever happens to you, He'll always be with you. If you'll just keep your heart open for him, he'll always find a way in.

(She kisses him and goes off. He stands there for a moment, and then opens his hand to see what she has placed in it. It's a rosary)

MIKE

Hmmph. Yeah, Ginger. Keep up with your prayers. And in the meantime I'll just pray to the little green aliens that I believe created the universe.

TONY

And you wonder why nobody-

MIKE

Hey, what makes her God any more real than my aliens? Oh, what the hell. Maybe I should have carried this around in one pocket... and a little Buddha in the other. Not like their idols are any stronger than hers... but at least I can see the Buddha.

(He goes off, and the lights come up on the homeless ensemble behind Tony)

TONY

Well, Mike. Sometimes I wonder how many of these people ended up here... evicted from their homes, because they chose not to pay bills... not to any collection agency who's officers they couldn't see in person...

(Lights out on the homeless ensemble)

TONY

... if they'd never actually seen these people... well, then they probably didn't exist.

(Tony returns to his vegetative state as Billy and Sharon walk downstage into the scene)

SHARON

You didn't know that the airport where you were headed-

BILLY

Yes! I know that now.

SHARON

I'm sorry.

BILLY

Don't be. We all know now that the airport had a completely operational set of medical facilities...

(Lights up on Jack)

JACK

You never wanted to consider the possibility that the heart attack might have been brought on by a blood clot he'd had in his head for years...

BILLY

By turning the car around to get him to the hospital where I was dating a nurse, I added a good five to ten minutes his brain went without oxygen.

SHARON

Billy...

JACK

... mighta been there ever since... I don't know.

BILLY

Only takes three or four before the brain damage occurs.

JACK

Probably harder for you to accept that possibility... you being the only one who thought that I...

SHARON

Billy, don't do this to yourself.

BILLY

I'm not. I'm not. Everyone else does that for me.

JACK

A scoreless pitcher's duel! You really think I'd deliberately put someone on base to start the rally that beat me?

(Lights out on Jack)

BILLY

They've all got their opinions on what I should have done.

SHARON

You don't have to listen to them.

BILLY

I don't. Believe me, if I had it all to do over again, knowing what I know now, I'd have just pulled the car off to the side of the road so I could say goodbye to the brother I loved.

SHARON

Oh, Billy, don't say that. Is there any way he can...

BILLY

No. The brain damage is irreversible. The doctors say-

SHARON

But couldn't the doctors be wrong? I mean, Tony is such a fighter, and the doctors have been wrong before. They said he'd never play again.

BILLY

This is different.

SHARON

Billy do you think that he can... does he know we're here? Does he recognize us?

BILLY

I don't know. But I prefer to think that he doesn't.

(He gets up and leaves him there with her)

SHARON

Tony, I'm so sorry. I'm sorry this had to happen. But I'm sorrier still that I can't be the friend to you that you were to Sam, and that I swore I would be to you. I made a promise to you several years ago. But now I look, and there isn't any plug for me to pull.

(She goes off, as the backdrop is illuminated by images that place us in a meadow. It is 1969. Mike and Ginger sit at opposite ends of a blanket. Ginger is finishing getting dressed at one end, while Mike faces away from her, smoking a joint. Tony observes from his separate stage area)

GINGER

You know, I wasn't expecting a speech, but it wouldn't kill you to say something to me.

MIKE

Ummmm... thank you?

GINGER

That's all you have to say?

MIKE

Don't you have something to say to me?
(indicating the joint)

About this?

GINGER

What's the point? It's your life.

MIKE

Hmmph. Kinda hard to imagine the girl I left behind saying that.

GINGER

Maybe that's the difference between you and me, Michael.... I don't need to take out my brush and paint over all your imperfections before the likeness of Prince Charming is close enough for me to accept.

(pause)

Alright, fine. What do you want me to say? Yeah, it is a little demoralizing. Shows me what I'm stuck with... a bitter, broken down, foul mouthed pain in the neck that's very difficult to be around. And that I'm the one whose burden it is to love him in spite of all that.

MIKE

Your burden?

GINGER

Its not just our country, but a lot of things we don't get to choose, Mike.

MIKE

We both got to choose this.

GINGER

So is that it? You didn't like the location? Would have preferred that hotel room you'd rented for us on prom night... or the room at my parents' house right next to where my father was sleeping?

MIKE

No! That's not it at all.

GINGER

Well, then what is it, Michael?

MIKE

What you said to me those times... the way you never let me touch you... took me six months before I got to put my arm around you in the movie theaters...

(pause)

I liked that.

GINGER

Alright, fine. Look at it as a part of your rehabilitation then... be happy that you just proved you could do one thing the doctors weren't sure you'd ever be able to do.

MIKE

Now you know why I didn't want to talk.

GINGER

We're going to have to talk about it sooner or later, Michael... The fact that you don't want to acknowledge that you're an able bodied man-

MIKE

Able bodied?

GINGER

There is more to life than what goes on on a baseball diamond.

MIKE

Funny... you sound like someone else I used to know.

GINGER

You know, not everything is black and white, Michael.

MIKE

Probably why it was so easy for you to put on that fucking Humphrey button.

GINGER

Yes, it was... it just might be possible to split the difference between those who refuse to show compassion to a wounded man, and those who feel that we all owe Tony Conigliaro an apology for having two good eyes.

MIKE

Once again, we see that I'm not the only one that's changed.

GINGER

I'm the same girl, Mike. You're just seeing her for the first time.

MIKE

I saw you, Ginger!

GINGER

No! You didn't. You saw what you wanted to see. When your father first told you-

MIKE

I won't work for that man!

GINGER

Please! Don't interrupt me. Now your father- ok, when my father first explained to me that all the stuff under our tree didn't come from a jolly fat man from the North Pole that had slid down our chimney the night before... I was disappointed. But you know something? I got over it!

MIKE

You don't know shit about my father.

GINGER

Look, whatever he's done to earn your resentment-

MIKE

My resentment? What would your Professor Sheinbaum have to say about working for a man like that?

GINGER

How should I know?

MIKE

That's right, you wouldn't. Because you don't know my father.

(pause)

You wanna know who it was who first taught me that word you got me to stop using... first convinced me of the moral imperative to "kill commie gooks"? I'll give you a hint... it wasn't Sergeant Rogers.

GINGER

You think the fact that my father used to use those terms means-

MIKE

You know why I never made that trip out to LA to give Manny's dog tags back to his family like I promised him? I wasn't still recuperating. I felt fine. But Dad wouldn't give me the money. Said he couldn't see any reason why I needed to waste any more of my time on "that spic kid".

(pause)

What would Sheinbaum have to say about that? What about his campus civil rights clubs, and your friends from the Kennedy campaign?

GINGER

The senator would have pitied your father, Michael.

MIKE

Pitied him? Give me a fuckin' break...

GINGER

You know, I was with Bobby during the Indiana primary when he toured that Ford plant... right there in one of those precincts that had gone heavily for Wallace in '64. After all of his remarkable successes in turning those blue collar workers around for him... the only one he kept remembering was the one that had refused his outstretched hand... told him to "get his fucking nigger loving presence out of there"

MIKE

Of course that's the one you're gonna remember!

GINGER

No, Mike. For a different reason. He looked at him, and then he looked around at all of his co-workers in the plant... at how many of them were black. He said...

(MORE)

GINGER (cont'd)
 "imagine what he must be like inside. Imagine having to
 work next to those people when you feel that way"

MIKE
 What the hell is any of this supposed to mean?

GINGER
 Think about it, Michael. You tell me.

(There is a long silence. Then,
 finally:)

MIKE
 The girl I left behind never would have repeated what that
 man said.

(Unable to take it anymore, she stands,
 grabs the joint away from him and takes
 a drag on it)

MIKE
 Now we see where it went...

GINGER
 (flicking the joint at his head)
 Go fuck yourself!

(She goes off, leaving Mike sitting
 there alone while Tony watches)

TONY
 Go after her...

(Tony gets up from the wheelchair and
 walks over to Mike's stage area. The
 images of the meadow disappear from the
 backdrop.)

TONY
 Go after her you dumb bastard.

MIKE
 Oh, what the fuck is it to you?

TONY
 Don't give up the fight, Mike. Don't give up the fight.

MIKE

I didn't. She did.

TONY

She did?

MIKE

The moment she put on that goddamn Humphrey button. I told you, it's not the losing I couldn't take... it was having teammates who didn't wanna play!

TONY

She didn't want to play? What do you think she's been doing these past twenty years?

(The backdrop is illuminated with images that place us inside the House of Representatives, while we hear a Congressman on voice over.)

CONGRESSMAN'S VOICE

Mr. Speaker, I yield two minutes to the gentlewoman from Massachusetts.

(Lights come up on a podium that Ginger approaches.)

GINGER

Mr. Speaker, this past year we have seen the Berlin Wall come down. As this great nation celebrates its victory in the Cold War, we face new challenges as the world's only remaining superpower. "To those whom much is given, much is expected". This distinguished body is faced with a historic choice when we are asked how we are going to invest the political capitol won in this great victory. There has been talk of a so called "peace dividend" to be invested in our crumbling infrastructure and in the domestic needs of the future. For the cost it takes to maintain just one of our aircraft carriers for one year, this body could appropriate sufficient funding to build 17,000 homes for 67,000 people, enroll an additional 384,000 children in Head Start, provide drug and alcohol treatment to 333,00 people, or give half a million malnourished children three hot meals a day for a year.

(Sounds of heckling begin)

GINGER

Instead, we are asked by the President to approve funding for a perpetually overgrown military machine to usher in a

(MORE)

GINGER (cont'd)

"new world order" in which our job in the world is to continually find...

(reading from a National Security Council Document)

... a "much weaker enemy" for whom our challenge will be "not simply to defeat them, but to defeat them decisively and rapidly". This past year, our President found the first of these "much weaker enemies" in Noriega, and now he asks us to be on guard against another dictator whom this body has consistently provided with the funds he needs to kill Iranians, lest he carry out his threat to move against the Kuwaiti monarchy that has been the consistent ally of the oil companies. He talks of the need to kick what he calls the "Vietnam Syndrome". Mr. Speaker...

(she starts to choke up)

... as somebody who has seen firsthand the lives devastated by that horrific war, and who has subsequently observed the resulting "syndrome" of an America whose citizens ask questions of their government when they are asked to blindly follow the leader, the "national sickness" of a citizenry that does not believe the lies fed to them by their government... if such a syndrome is an illness that has been afflicting this nation for the past twenty years, then I say "God bless it!"

(screaming over the heckling which has now grown extremely loud)

NO BLOOD FOR OIL, MR. PRESIDENT! NO BLOOD FOR OIL!!!

(Lights out on Ginger as the Congressional images disappear)

TONY

Did that sound like someone who's given up fighting?

MIKE

Sounded like someone who wanted to hear herself talk... just like all the rest. You think that speech is gonna change anything?

TONY

Maybe some people do. You used to.

MIKE

I also used to think I was gonna live to see the Sox break the Curse of the Bambino.

TONY

So then which one is it, Mike?

MIKE

Which one is it?

TONY

I think you're confused my friend... need to make up your mind.

MIKE

What the fuck are you talking about?

TONY

Just what was it about her that you couldn't hack? The fact that she usually came to the conclusion that you've got to choose your battles... didn't always wanna take on Goliath when nothing good could possibly come of it...?

MIKE

You don't know shit about her any more than about me...

TONY

... or is it for the times that she does conclude that it's time to stand and fight, that it doesn't matter whether or not you win....

(pause)

... and then she doesn't?

(Mike just stares at him, knowing that he's been had)

TONY

At the end of the day, it is just the losing that you can't take, isn't it? And she was an easier target for your resentment than Sirhan... wasn't she?

(Pause.)

MIKE

Let me repeat the question... what's it to you?

TONY

I happen to know what it's like to have to look back with regret... on all the things you've done to cripple yourself.

(Lights up on the homeless ensemble)

CHORUS

If substances your senses dim

The will to seek what's right

(MORE)

CHORUS (cont'd)

Dispose of them, and then begin
 Again with all your might.
 If present days cannot abate
 Past pains you hold inside,
 Work now to build that better state
 To heal your wounded pride.

(Lights out on the homeless ensemble)

MIKE

All the things you've done to cripple yourself? You did it to yourself? Did you throw that fastball at your own face?

TONY

No. But that's not the pitch I'm talking about.

MIKE

You gave yourself that heart attack?

TONY

That's not the pitch I'm talking about either.

MIKE

What are we talking about, Tony?

TONY

(after a long pause)

Did you know that Ted Williams missed some of his best years too? Flying combat missions, first over Germany, and then Korea... right during the prime of his career?

MIKE

He fought in a just war! And he came back in one piece, didn't he?

TONY

That's not the point, Mike. He volunteered. And think of how many homers he would have had if he'd stayed home.

(pause)

There's a reason my manager didn't take too kindly to the cocky kid who said he was going to be better than him.

MIKE

I can't believe you're defending that asshole.

TONY

People of his generation weren't born assholes. They got that way after watching people from ours do our service to the country in the reserves, then come up to the big leagues saying we're going to be better than those who knew the meaning of sacrifice.

MIKE

You cried for Jack Kennedy!

(Lights up on the homeless ensemble)

TONY

I also used to get really pissed off when the newspapers printed stories about my carousing off the field.

CHORUS

Baby boomers.

TONY

I wanted to party..

CHORUS

... and then expected the press to portray you as the choirboy.

TONY

Aw, the baby boomers...

CHORUS

... "Build up our military, but don't expect ME to put on a uniform!!"

TONY

... the "ME Generation"...

CHORUS

... "Fully fund my entitlements, but don't expect ME to pay taxes!"

TONY

You know, there were good reasons our generation loved Jack Kennedy so much... trouble is, we put our own little twist on what it was he had to say to us...

CHORUS

"Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask how much your country can do for you... and how little you can do in return!"

(Lights out on the homeless ensemble.)

TONY

They can come in the form of baseballs, bloodclots.... or from out of the barrel of an AK-47. But in the end, you'll find that the most crippling beanballs are the ones we throw at our own heads.

MIKE

You don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

TONY

You wouldn't mind showing me your arm before you say that?

(He tries to pull up his sleeve to look for the needle marks, but Mike pulls away.)

TONY

Suit yourself. In the end, it catches up to you...

(Lights up on the whole stage as he continues. Tony's casket has been placed at center stage where the trash can fire had been, and the backdrop is illuminated with images that place us in a funeral parlor. Other cast members approach the casket to place flowers on it while Tony and Mike continue their talk.)

TONY

... just like the consequences of my behavior off the field will always continue to hurt a lot more than anything I can blame on Jack Hamilton... even indirectly.

MIKE

(indicating the casket)

Its your own fault that you're in there?

TONY

No. When you get to where I am, your regrets are not going to be with all the years you might have had, but what you chose to do with all the years God did decide to bless you with...

(Judy approaches the casket)

TONY

... or more accurately, what you didn't do.

MIKE

(indicating Judy)

Hey, you've got your father to blame for that!

TONY

I never blamed my parents for anything!

(pause)

We all make our own choices. And besides, I wasn't talking about her.

(Judy places a flower on the casket and steps aside. An 18 year old girl, JENNIFER, approaches the casket next. Tony walks over and stands beside her)

MIKE

Who is she?

(Tony just stares at her as Billy approaches and hugs her)

BILLY

You know, some people didn't want me to let you in, but all it took was one look at you and your big brown eyes to know you were telling the truth. Hell, I knew it before you even opened your mouth.

JENNIFER

I wish I could have stopped by and met you and your family earlier. But with my mother... well, this was something she always tried so hard to keep from me.

BILLY

Knowing my brother the way I did... talking to people like Sharon Henshaw, and so many others... if he'd only known, no matter how it had to happen, he would have been so thrilled just to...

JENNIFER

I know. I know.

BILLY

I know its not worth nearly as much now, but please stay in touch... come meet my mother... your-

JENNIFER

I will.

BILLY

Good. We need you around. You're the only thing we all have left of him.

(Billy steps aside and Jennifer goes back to the casket.)

JENNIFER

Goodbye d-.... Tony. You know for a long time, I've just been so excited to tell the world all about this, but in my house it was always expressly forbidden. My mother wouldn't allow it. She said she always kept it from me to protect me. She's a private woman who didn't want money, didn't want attention, and didn't want to see me get hurt. She always feared I'd be rejected by the Conigliaros. I guess that just goes to show how little she really knows this family. Then one day I'm riding with her in the car and we hear the news bulletin on the radio about the heart attack. We get home, and all the talk around the neighborhood regarding the news is all about how I... Finally, I couldn't take it anymore and just came into the house and said, "Mom, is that guy on the TV my father?"

(long pause)

I guess she never knew any more about baseball than she did about the family she always wanted to deny. When she first saw you signing autographs at that New England Sportsman's Convention, she had no idea who you were. "All I knew was that he was cute" she told me, and when I asked her if she was in love with you during the 3 months that followed she just said... "it wasn't love, it was the 70s".

(placing her palm on the casket)

I'm not running from the past anymore. When they have that benefit at Fenway next year, honoring the '67 "Impossible Dream" season, the whole team is going to be represented... even those who didn't make the final cut for the World Series roster. When it's Tony C's turn in the lineup, he'll have a teammate there to pinch hit for him. Goodbye, Dad.

(She leans forward and kisses the casket while Tony leans over to hug her from behind, and follows her down and places his head on the casket next to hers. He backs away as she stands and steps aside. The casket is carried off as the lights fade on all but Mike's stage area which Tony walks into)

TONY

I picked myself up from the first pitch that knocked me down. The one life threw at me fifteen years later was an agonizing process that took eight long years, but I got up from that one as well. But the ones we throw at our own heads... we don't get those ones back, Mike. Never. When certain people are willing to pinch hit for you, you don't cry in front of your locker about not making the starting lineup. You consider yourself blessed that they've asked you to be the 26th man on their roster...

(He goes off with Mike calling after him as the lights begin to dim and the sounds of the battle in Vietnam we heard at the beginning start again)

MIKE

Hey!! NOW where do you think you're going?

BLACKOUT

(In the darkness, the battle sounds grow louder and louder...)

MIKE

What is this shit? Don't you get it? I don't have any place on that roster! Not on anybody's. Nobody ever gave a shit about me! Only one, and Uncle Sam fucked her up real good... fucked her up and turned her against me! He turned her against me, don't you understand? Now who's gonna pinch hit for me? Who? Nobody wants me on their roster! Nobody! Why do you give a contract to a guy that hasn't been thrown anything over the plate his whole life? Nothing, not one fucking thing, don't you see? Ah, what am I saying, of course you don't. You don't understand, Tony. You don't!

(Lights slowly begin to come up on the whole stage. The original setting of the homeless encampment has been reset, with all actors in their original locations, including Mike, who has "stepped back into his body" as he finishes his rant from his sleeping position)

MIKE

... you don't know shit about me, Tony! You don't!

HOMELESS MAN

Hey, shut the fuck up you crazy bastard!!

MIKE

(waking up)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Had a nightmare.

HOMELESS MAN

What else is new?

MIKE

Obviously, not much. I think- Wait a minute, you... you can hear me?

HOMELESS MAN

Yeah, I always do... unfortunately. And why don't you keep your shit away from mine for a change?

(He kicks some of "Mike's shit" over toward him, and Mike starts searching through it.)

MIKE

Sorry.

(He continues searching through the stuff and, sure enough the bat is there. He looks at it and reads what is now written on it to himself while we hear Tony read it in voiceover)

TONY'S VOICE

Dear Mike,

You may not know where they are, or even that they exist, but there are people who would be honored to have you on their rosters. Remember, it takes all 25, or in my case 26, to have a real championship season.

Best wishes,

Tony C.

(As Mike stares at the bat in amazement, a young girl, to be played by the same actress playing Jennifer, staggers onto the stage)

JENNIFER

Oh, God. Oh, God. Somebody please...

(She approaches the homeless man at the trashcan.)

JENNIFER

Hey, mister... mister?

(He obviously cannot see or hear her, but Mike does. She looks up so that we can now see her face and what figure from Tony's life Mike perceives her as, but what parallel figure she represents should be left up to the imagination)

JENNIFER

Sir?

(She gives up on getting the attention of the other homeless man and falls to her knees, just as hers and Mike's eyes meet. They stare at each other, both looking very puzzled, for a long moment of uncomfortable silence. Then she finally starts to crawl over towards him while he holds out the bat to show her the signature. Slowly and cautiously she reaches out and takes hold of the bat as...)

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK