

THE OLDEST ROOKIE

Written by

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TITLE: JONES FARM, WESTFALL, IOWA, SUMMER 1966

EXT. JONES FARM - DAY

Three young boys are running through the yard. 12-yr old MARK Jones leads his 10-yr old brother, Mitchell (MITCH) and 7-yr old brother, Michael (MIKE). Mark hollers over his shoulder to Mitch.

MARK
Hey, Mitch, bet ya can't catch me.

MITCH
OK. You're on!

The boys race into a large barn, Mark leading the way.

INT. JONES BARN - CONTINUOUS

The boys run up a flight of steps and run across a large open hay loft, with Mark and Mitch hurdling a few lonely hay bales. Mike slows and has to climb over the hay bale.

Mark approaches the edge of the loft, grabs a rope and shimmies up the rope, using his hands and feet, to get to another smaller loft running perpendicular to the large hay loft. Mitch is close behind, climbing up the rope using only his hands (no feet). Mike stops at the rope.

MIKE
(shouting at his brothers)
Hey, Mark... No fair!

MARK
Oh, Mike, don't be such a baby.

Mark then grabs another rope and swings (Tarzan style) across the open middle section of the barn, swinging over a tractor and wagon, and landing on another loft on the opposite side of the barn.

Mitch waits until Mark has landed and swings the rope across the great abyss to him, then he, too, swings across the gap to the far side.

Mark, in the meantime, is sliding down another rope to the main loft. Mitch follows, and Mike joins Mark and Mitch as the two race back down the stairs and back out into the yard.

EXT. JONES FARM - MOMENTS LATER

Mitch inches past Mark as they enter the front yard, and STOMPS on a WOODEN BASEBALL HOME PLATE.

MITCH
(to Mark)
Gotcha again.

MARK
(sly grin on his face)
Yeah, but you're just lucky I'm
letting you win.

Both boys pick up their ball gloves laying on the ground, and begin tossing a baseball back and forth. Mike arrives shortly thereafter.

MIKE
(gasping for breath)
It's not fair. You guys cheated.

Mike turns and walks towards the house. Mitch and Mark merely look at each other with big grins on their faces.

MITCH
Nice throw!

Mitch tosses the ball back to Mark.

MOM (V.O.)
Boys . . . time for dinner.

MARK
(responding with a holler)
Alright. Just a couple more.

William Jones (DAD) (45), the boy's father, passes by heading for the house. He's a tall, thin, gentle man with a farmer's deep-tanned face and warm friendly eyes.

DAD
Time for dinner now. You boys have
played enough ball for today. Don't
you guys do anything else but play
baseball all day?

The boys jog over to their dad and they all walk together towards the house.

MARK
Gee, Dad. You know we do other
things.

MITCH
Yeah, Dad.

MARK
We do our chores and other stuff.

DAD
(chuckling)
I know, I know. But you do play a lot of baseball every day.

MITCH
So...?

MARK
And we're not hurting anything. And we're not getting into any trouble. And what else is there to do?

DAD
(rubbing the heads of both boys as they walk)
I know, I know.

INT. JONES KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dad and the boys enter the kitchen.

DAD
Go wash up.

Both boys run to the bathroom.

MITCH
I win! I win!

MARK
I wasn't racing you.

After washing their hands they return to the kitchen just as Dad is also returning from washing up in a different bathroom.

As they take their seats around the LARGE FARM TABLE, we see plenty of food in bowls on the table. Dad takes his place at the head of the table.

Patricia Jones (MOM) (42) is seated at the other end of the table, holding an infant boy (MAVERICK), feeding him a bottle. MASON (2) sits in a high chair near Mom. Mitch and Michael (7) sit on one side of the table, with Michael closest to Dad. Mark and MELVIN (Mel) (5) sit on the other side of the table with Mel sitting beside Dad.

DAD
Who's turn to say grace?

Mark points to Mitch.

MARK
Mitch's turn.

MITCH
(pointing to Michael)
Na huh! It's Mike's.

DAD
Mitch, I think it's your turn.

MITCH
Oh, alright.

Everyone folds their hands and bows their heads.

MITCH (CONT'D)
God is great. God is good. Let us
thank Him for our food. Amen

ALL
Amen!

DAD
(to Mitch)
Thank you.

MOM
(to Dad)
Can you dish up Melvin's and
Michael's plates? I'll be done with
Maverick in just a minute, then
I'll get Mason.

Dad begins filling the boys' plates while Mark and Mitch are putting food on their own plates. Camera zooms in on Mitch and his smiling eyes as he takes a bite of food.

DISSOLVE TO:

OPENING CREDITS

TITLE: FRANKFORD, KENTUCKY, SPRING 2026

EXT. CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL STADIUM - DAY

We see a new large BASEBALL STADIUM (as large as many university stadiums) filled with SPECTATORS in the stands.

As the camera pans the stadium, we see SIGNS ON THE WALL behind the stands:

Central High School Baseball	
Conference Champions	2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025
State Champions	2005, 2008, 2010, 2014, 2017, 2021, 2023, 2025

A PORTABLE PODIUM is situated on the field between the pitcher's mound and home plate, facing the stands behind home plate. There is a large rectangular item covered by a tarpaulin immediately behind it and a fat yellow ribbon extending from the tarpaulin to a large weight on the ground nearby.

70-year old MITCH JONES and his wife CONNIE (66), their son MITCH JR (38) and his WIFE (38), and four GRANDCHILDREN (ages 4-12) are standing between home plate and the first base dugout (where the Central HS team is located). Although Mitch and Connie are showing signs of graying, they still look 20 years younger. With them is the school District Superintendent ADAMS (60) and Principle RIVERA (45).

ADAMS

(to Mitch)

Thanks for coming today to the season opener.

MITCH

(glancing at Connie)

No problem. We wouldn't have missed this day for the world.

ADAMS

It's a beautiful day for a dedication ceremony. You knew, of course, that the field is being named the "Mitch Jones Field".

MITCH

Yeah, so I heard.

ADAMS

Let's see, you've been with the district for what... 25 years?

MITCH

Yeah, something like that.

ADAMS

Wow. How the time flies by. Well, I'll introduce you and you can make some remarks, then just cut that yellow ribbon there...

(pointing)

And the new sign will be revealed.

MITCH

OK.

ADAMS

Oh, and Mitch, please stick around after the game. There's some people who want to speak with you.

MITCH

OK, I guess.

ADAMS

Well, let me get this thing started.

Superintendent Adams walks up to the podium and, of course, taps on the microphone.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

(looking around)

It is a beautiful day and this sure is a beautiful ballfield... one that any school would be envious of having... and it's all due to Coach Mitch Jones and his championship teams.

Applause breaks out from the spectators.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

(waiting for the applause to diminish)

Today, we're dedicating this field to honor Coach Jones as he is retiring from the district. Coach, come on over here and say a few words, won't you?

Mitch walks over to the podium and addresses the CROWD.

MALE SPECTATOR (BACKGROUND V.O.)

Way to go, Coach!

FEMALE SPECTATOR (BACKGROUND V.O.)
We love you, Coach!

Mitch smiles and nods to the spectators.

MITCH
I want to thank each and every one of you for being here today. It brings such great joy to my heart to see such a large crowd coming out to support our boys and this team and this great game of baseball. Simply put, it is because of our love for baseball that you made all this possible. Thank you.

Superintendent Adams hands Mitch a gigantic pair of scissors he was holding. Mitch turns and with both hands, cuts the ribbon. The tarpaulin drape falls to the ground, unveiling the NEW SIGN for the ballpark - "Mitchell Jones Field". A ROAR goes up from the CROWD.

MITCH (CONT'D)
(to Adams)
Mitchell?

ADAMS
(chuckling)
Well, it is your name, isn't it?

As Mitch and his family are leaving the field and a crew of WORKERS are removing the podium and sign, a CHANT begins in the CROWD - first in one corner, then spreading throughout the entire stadium.

CROWD
First Pitch . . . First Pitch . . .
First Pitch

The Central HS BASEBALL PLAYERS are also joining in on the chant.

Superintendent Adams looks at Mitch.

ADAMS
Looks like you're being called out.
You up for it?

MITCH
I guess. But I haven't thrown a ball in quite some time.

Mitch looks at Connie. She smiles and gives a nod of approval.

As Mitch turns and walks out to the pitcher's mound, the crowd erupts with CHEERING.

Mitch motions for the Central HS CATCHER to come on out to home plate.

The catcher jogs out toward the pitcher's mound, tosses Mitch a ball, who catches it barehanded, then jogs over to home plate.

Mitch stands just off of the pitcher's mound and stretches his shoulder and arm. He then assumes his position on the mound.

The catcher is just standing at home plate. Mitch motions for him to crouch. He complies.

Mitch cleans the rubber with his foot and peers towards the catcher to get a SIGNAL. The catcher puts one finger down.

Mitch grins broadly, winds up and delivers a strike. The RADAR GUN SIGN on the scoreboard reads 91 mph. The crowd erupts with CHEERING.

The catcher shakes out his gloved hand, hops up, jogs towards the mound, hands Mitch the ball, and shakes his hand.

CATCHER

That one sort of stung.

MITCH

(grinning and winking)
Sorry about that.

Mitch pats him on the shoulder, then turns and walks off the field to the ROAR of the fans in the stadium, waving to them as he strides. He walks over to a BEAMING Connie, now in the stands, and gives her a big hug.

CONNIE

I hope you didn't hurt yourself.

MITCH

(shrugging his shoulders)
Eh.

Mitch then turns to his grandchildren - in the seats immediately behind his, and proceeds to HIGH FIVE each of them before he and Connie take their seats. Superintendent Adams is sitting on the other side of Connie.

More than a dozen REPORTERS flock around Mitch and Connie as the Central HS BASEBALL TEAM takes the field.

Cameras are flashing, news cameras are rolling, and reporters are all competing with each other by simultaneously shouting out questions to Mitch as he and Connie sit in the stands.

REPORTER 1

Mitch, How's it feel to be done with baseball?

REPORTER 2

What are you going to do now?

REPORTER 3

Connie, how do you feel about Mitch's retirement?

REPORTER 4

Are you going to stay in the area or move away?

Mitch stands, smiles, and waves his hands at the reporters.

MITCH

Gentlemen... Gentlemen...
Gentleman...

(nodding to a female
reporter)

And ladies... We're all here to watch this game and cheer for our home team. It's their time now. Grab a seat and watch the game and I promise you that we will address all your questions after the game.

With some murmuring, the group of reporters dissipates.

Superintendent Adams' face is smiling as he nods at Mitch with his approval. Mitch's face is beaming, and as he sits, he begins to focus on the game in front of him.

UMPIRE

Batter up!

The Central HS catcher makes a throw to second base... The SECOND BASEMAN tosses it to the FIRST BASEMAN, who tosses it to the SHORT STOP, who tosses it to the THIRD BASEMAN. And the third baseman tosses the baseball back to the PITCHER. Meanwhile, the BATTER takes his position in the batter's box.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Play ball!

FADE TO:

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - LATER

Mitch and his family are standing near the end of the bleachers with reporters circled around them. Other spectators are leaving the bleachers and ball park.

REPORTER 2

So, Mitch, what are you going to do now?

MITCH

Oh, I don't know... Maybe go home and take a nap.

Everyone chuckles.

REPORTER 3

How did this all begin? Tell us a little about your early life.

MITCH

Well, it all began way back when I was a kid, growing up on our family farm near Westfall, Iowa.

I was the second of six boys.

Now anyone who ever grew up on a farm knows that there isn't a whole heck of a lot to do... socially speaking... So we played a lot of baseball - especially my older brother, Mark, and me.

REPORTER 1

But, a lot of kids, including city kids, play a lot of baseball when they're young, but they never make it to the pros. What set you apart? What was different for you?

MITCH

I can't give you a precise answer to that question. Maybe it was an actual gift from Almighty God. Maybe it was all the other stuff we did on the farm.

REPORTER 2

Like what?

The camera slowly zooms in on Mitch's smiling eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- Mitch (10), climbing a tree.

MITCH (V.O.)
Like maybe climbing trees... and
ladders.

-- Mitch (10) swinging on a rope in the barn.

MITCH (V.O.)
Or hanging around with ropes.

-- Mitch (10) racing Mark (12) on their bikes on the country
road in front of their house.

MITCH (V.O.)
And then we ran and rode our bikes
all over the place. Shoot, it was
three miles just to ride to our
school - and we rode nearly every
day.

-- Mitch (10) hitting stones with a wooden lath.

MITCH (V.O.)
When I was by myself, I would
frequently take a stick... a wooden
lath... and hit stones from our
gravel driveway with it. I would
try to hit them over or onto our
barn roof.

-- Mitch (now 14) hitting stones with a wooden lath.

MITCH (V.O.)
I did that a lot and I guess I got
pretty good with it.

-- Mitch (14) and Mark (16) stacking bales of hay on a wagon
as they come off the baler conveyor as their dad drives the
tractor.

MITCH (V.O.)
Or maybe it was hefting bales of
hay...

-- Mitch (14) shoveling grain in a wagon during harvest.

MITCH (V.O.)
Or all the shoveling we did...
harvesting grain, and snow... and
don't forget, we got a lot of snow
there in Iowa.

Chuckles are heard

-- Mitch (14) throwing snowballs at his brothers during a family snowball fight.

MITCH (V.O.)
And of course with all that snow,
there were many, many snow-ball
fights.

-- Mitch (14) playing catch with Mark (16), Mike (11), and Mel (9), and Mason (6).

MITCH (V.O.)
But mostly, I think it was just all
the time I played catch and baseball
with my brothers and other guys. I
guess I started pretty young.

END MONTAGE

FADE TO:

TITLE: SUMMER 1966

EXT. WESTFALL COMMUNITY BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

There is a decent CROWD attending a little league BASEBALL GAME in the rural town of WESTFALL, IOWA.

Mitch, in his little league uniform, is standing out in shallow center field, swatting at some evening butterflies and chewing on one of the leather laces to his ball glove.

A ball is hit in the air in his direction. Mitch begins to run in towards second base, then stops, holds up his glove, and watches the ball sail over his head and roll towards the fence.

Seeing the error, the opposing team's FIRST BASE COACH (33) waves the BATTER on to second base. The batter is sprinting towards the bag.

Mitch turns around, races to the ball, grabs it with his non-gloved right hand, turns and rifles a strike right to the second base bag. The shortstop (JIMMY) (10) catches the ball and easily tags the batter out.

The FIRST BASE COACH shakes his head in amazement.

FIRST BASE COACH
Impossible!

Since that was the third out, the fielders trot off the field towards their dugout (3rd base side). Jimmy waits up for Mitch and slaps Mitch on the back with his glove.

JIMMY

Nice throw.

MITCH

Yeah, but I should've caught the ball.

JIMMY

Well, you got him anyway.

MITCH

Yeah, but I still should've caught it.

JIMMY

Next time.

As Mitch and Jimmy approach the dugout, COACH WILLIAMS (34) pats Mitch on the back as he walks out to the third base coach's box.

COACH WILLIAMS

Jimmy, your up first. Nice throw, Mitch. Hustle up. You're on deck.

Mitch dons his helmet, grabs his bat, and takes his position in the on-deck circle. Jimmy is at bat and hits the first pitch to the SECOND BASEMAN, who scoops it up and tosses it to the FIRST BASEMAN.

The UMPIRE, who had jogged a few steps towards first base to watch the play gives the "out" hand signal.

UMPIRE

Batter's out!

Mitch steps towards the batter's box, stops and looks over to Coach Williams for a hitting sign. Getting no sign, Mitch takes his place in the batter's box and the umpire takes his position behind the CATCHER. The umpire signals the PITCHER to pitch. The first pitch is in the dirt in front of home plate.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Ball one!

The pitcher winds up and throws his second pitch. The ball nearly hits Mitch, but Mitch is able to duck just in the nick of time.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Ball two!

As the pitcher winds up for his third pitch, Mitch's eyes SQUINT, focusing on the pitched ball. Mitch swings his bat - CRACK - and sends the ball deep into right-center field, between the RIGHT FIELDER and CENTER FIELDER. The ball bounces off of the chain-link fence.

Mitch sprints towards first, then races towards second base, but he doesn't stop there. He rounds second base and hustles towards third base and easily beats the cutoff throw from the second baseman.

Coach Williams taps Mitch on top of his helmet.

COACH WILLIAMS

Nice hit! By the way, be prepared to pitch this next inning. OK?

MITCH

(nods his head)

OK.

The next two batters strike out and the side is retired. Mitch grabs his glove and trots out to the pitcher's mound. The coach walks to the dugout.

Mitch gets ready to warm up. Once the CATCHER (10) is in place, Mitch does his best Juan Marichal high-kick delivery and sends a fastball over the heads of the catcher and umpire - about 15 feet up into the backstop. The catcher chases down the ball and tosses it back to Mitch.

The coach calls out to Mitch from the dugout.

COACH WILLIAMS

Let's try to bring it down just a little.

Mitch nods his head.

Mitch does another perfect Juan Marichal high-kick imitation, and once again sends another fastball high into the backstop. The catcher once again chases down the ball and tosses it back to Mitch.

Coach Williams calls "Time" and walks out to the pitcher's mound and tries to add a little levity to his "talk" with Mitch.

COACH WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

(patting Mitch on the shoulder)

(MORE)

COACH WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Well, I think we'll wait and try another time. With your power and inaccuracy, I don't want to risk killing a batter. Why don't you head back out to center field.

Mitch hands the Coach the ball and trots back out to center field, replacing the BOY that the coach now wants to have pitch. Mitch's eyes have tears forming in them as he angrily kicks at a white dandelion.

EXT. WESTFALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Mitch (10) is putting his bicycle in the bike rack at the school, along with Jimmy and a couple other CLASSMATES.

JIMMY

How long did it take you today to ride to school?

MITCH

Uh, I think it was about 10 minutes.

JIMMY

For all three miles?

MITCH

Yeah.

JIMMY

Wow. Cool.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mitch is in a classroom of about twenty STUDENTS. All are seated in various chair-desks aligned throughout the room. Jimmy is sitting in a desk that is too large for him and leans over to Mitch, who is sitting in a desk too small for him. Mitch is one of the tallest - and thinnest - kids in his classroom.

JIMMY

(whispering)

Do you know anything about the teacher?

Mitch shakes his head.

The teacher (MRS. BRADLEY), a short stocky lady in her mid-50s, enters the room and a sudden hush hits the students.

MRS. BRADLEY

(like an Army Drill
Sergeant)

Alright. You 6th graders who had me
last year, you know the routine.
6th graders take your seats on this
side of the room

(points)

Those of you in the 5th grade, take
your seats on this side.

(points)

The room is suddenly alive with movement and Mitch and Jimmy
both get up and find desks on the 5th grade side.

EXT. WESTFALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LATER

Mitch and Jimmy are outside for lunch recess, tossing a
baseball back and forth.

Two larger 8th grade boys, PETE Cole (13) and DENNY Martin
(13), approach Mitch. Pete is the biggest and toughest kid in
the school and he let's the other kids know it. Both are
carrying their ball gloves with them.

PETE

Hey, you... you with the PATCHED
PANTS.

MITCH

Who? Me?

PETE

Well, you're the only one wearing
patched pants.

MITCH

So.

PETE

Aren't you Jonesy's little brother?

MITCH

Who? Mark?

PETE

Yeah.

MITCH

Yeah. What of it?

PETE

Well, on this end of the school for recess, when we play catch, we play "burn out". You know what that is?

MITCH

Yeah. I've played it with Mark.

PETE

Good. So let's you and me have at it.

Pete throws the baseball hard at Mitch. Mitch catches it with no difficulty. Then throws it back at Pete, a little faster.

PETE (CONT'D)

Is that all you've got? You throw like a girl.

Pete throws another hard one at Mitch and Mitch catches it with no difficulty.

This time, Mitch lets loose with a rocket at Pete. POP! The ball nearly rips the glove off Pete's hand. After catching it, he WINCES slightly.

PETE (CONT'D)

You think that was fast, sissy? Take this one.

DENNY

Yeah, give it to him, Pete.

Pete GRUNTS this time as he throws the ball to Mitch. Mitch once again catches it with no difficulty.

In return, Mitch again rifles one towards Pete. Again, the glove POPS when the ball hits it. Pete shakes out his gloved hand afterward.

PETE

You think you're hot stuff? If recess time wasn't about over and I had more time to warm up, I'd have you crying with a sore hand, I would.

(turning toward Denny)

Come on, Denny, let's leave these two girls alone so they can practice their throwing and catching.

They turn and walk away and Mitch and Jimmy continue tossing the baseball back and forth.

JIMMY
I think you hurt his hand.

MITCH
Maybe, but he sort of asked for it.

JIMMY
Yep. But I hope they don't start
picking on us now.

MITCH
We'll just have to see.

JIMMY
Oh, and cool pants! I like the
patches on patches. Where'd you get
them.

MITCH
They were Mark's. Mom and Dad can't
afford to buy us all new clothes so
I always get hand-me-downs from
Mark.

JIMMY
Oh... anyway, they're different. I
think they look cool.

MITCH
Thanks.

INT. JONES BARN (SPRING 1967) - DAY

It's RAINING and DREARY outside so Mark and Mitch are playing
catch in the loft of the barn. Dad, in his overalls, is
working on the tractor below. Dad hears the baseball
frequently BANGING into the wall of the barn and ROLLING on
the loft floor. Dad gets a puzzled look on his face, sets
down his tools, and heads up the SQUEAKY stairs to the loft.

DAD
What's up, guys?

MARK
Mitch is trying to pitch, but he's
all over the place.

MITCH
And Mark can't catch anything.

MARK
(somewhat defensive)
I can't see the ball very well.

MITCH
 (also somewhat defensive)
 Well, my foot keeps slipping.

Dad glances at the floor by Mitch and sees SHORT SKID MARKS in the dust and straw. He also looks around and sees ONE NAKED LIGHTBULB overhead.

DAD
 Tell you what guys, why not take a break and cool off a bit and let's see what we can do about this.

They both AGREE and Dad tousels both boy's heads as they walk to the stairs. Dad turns around and glances back at the loft with critical eyes as he reaches over and flips off the light.

EXT. JONES FARM - NEXT AFTERNOON

It's still WET and DRIZZLING outside when Mark, Mitch, and Mike get off the school bus at their home. They run into their house with their backpacks and lunch boxes. Moments later Mark and Mitch race out of the house with their ball gloves and run into the barn.

INT. JONES BARN - MOMENTS LATER

When they get to the top of the stairs to the loft and flip on the light switch, the loft is ILLUMINATED ALMOST LIKE DAYLIGHT. Four large fluorescent shop-light fixtures have replaced the single bulb. Mark and Mitch are completely awestruck for a few moments before walking to their places to play catch.

As Mark gets to his location, he notices a 16" x 16" SQUARE PIECE OF PLYWOOD, painted white, resting on the floor. When Mitch gets to his location, he notices a PIECE OF WOOD 18" x 4" x 1/2" nailed to the floor as a pitching rubber.

They take their positions and Mitch begins pitching some balls to Mark. Each pitch POPS in Mark's mitt.

A little later, they hear FOOTSTEPS on the SQUEAKING stairs leading to the loft. They stop throwing the ball and look in the direction of the stairs. Dad appears. Mitch and Mark stop their catch game and give Dad a big grin.

MITCH
 Thanks, Dad!

MARK
Yeah, thanks, Dad!

DAD
You're welcome. How's it working.

MITCH
It's working great - my foot's not slipping anymore.

MARK
And I can see the ball when he throws it now.

DAD
Great. So, let me see.

Mark and Mitch resume their positions - Mark behind home plate and Mitch at the pitching rubber. Mitch winds up and throws a couple pitches - both are a little wide of the plate.

DAD (CONT'D)
Time out!
(to Mitch)
Let's see what we can do about your accuracy.

Dad walks over to the hay bales, grabs one and carries it to home plate - standing it upright about a foot to the left of home plate. He grabs a second bale and stands it upright about a foot to the right of home plate, creating a narrow crevice for Mitch to throw through.

DAD (CONT'D)
Now, these here are batters. You need to learn to not hit the batters. Let's see what you can do.

Dad moves out of the way and Mitch winds up and delivers two pitches, each one NAILING one of the hay bales.

DAD (CONT'D)
Time out!
(to Mitch)
OK, Sandy Koufax, let's slow it down some. Learn how to throw accurately first, then increase your speed. You need to practice until it becomes automatic - where you don't need to think about it. You need to pitch by feel.
(pause)

As Dad pauses, Mark walks over to Dad and Mitch as Dad is talking to him.

DAD (CONT'D)
When you're in the outfield and you're throwing the ball to second base, do you stop and think about where and how you're going to throw it?

Mitch shakes his head.

DAD (CONT'D)
No, you just throw it. You've done it so many times that you don't have to think about it - it just happens. It's the same thing with pitching. Learn to pitch right down the heart of the plate every time, *then* you can work on learning how to move it around within the strike zone.

MARK
I didn't know you knew baseball.

DAD
I know a little. I was a pitcher in high school.

MARK
Were you any good?

DAD
I guess so, yeah.

MITCH
Teach me.

DAD
Well, it's been a long time, but yes, I'll see what I can do.

Mitch grins broadly.

MITCH
Gee, thanks, Dad.

DAD
OK. Well, I've got things I've got to get at and you need to just keep on practicing.

MITCH

I will.

DAD

(to Mark)

Oh, and Mark... if you're going to be a catcher, you need to give the pitcher a good target to hit. Hold that mitt out in front of you right where you want the ball to end up.

(to Mitch)

And Mitch, you need to aim for and learn to hit that mitt. It's really that simple.

MITCH

OK. Thanks heaps, Dad.

MARK

Yeah, thanks Dad.

Dad turns towards the stairs.

MITCH

Hey, Dad.

DAD

What, Mitch?

MITCH

(serious)

Can you teach me how to throw a curve ball?

DAD

Yeah, sure son. But not today.

MITCH

OK. Thanks, Dad.

Dad exits the loft via the stairs.

EXT. JONES FARM - LATE AFTERNOON

Mark and Mitch are playing catch in their front yard. Mark tosses the baseball to Mitch and assumes a good catcher's squat. Mitch looks in for the sign. Mark points his index finger towards the ground and holds out his mitt as a target. Mitch nods, winds up, and fires a rocket blast towards Mark, a little bit high. Mark raises his catcher's mitt following the trajectory of the baseball, but misses the ball and it sails over the 4-foot wooden fence, over the gravel road in front of their house, and into the cornfield.

MITCH
Did you see that?

MARK
Yeah, it looked like it actually
went up.

MITCH
Yeah, cool.

MARK
Yeah, but now we gotta find the
ball.

They exit their front yard and enter the knee-high cornfield
in search of the ball.

After a few moments, Mark finds it and yells to Mitch.

MARK (CONT'D)
Go back into the yard and I'll
throw you a bomb.

Mitch runs back to his "pitching mound" in the yard and Mark
throws the ball high in the air to Mitch and Mitch catches
it.

MITCH
Stay there and I'll throw you an
even bigger bomb.

Mitch winds up and gives the ball a big heave. The ball sails
high... then THUD, it hits something and falls straight down
to the ground. The other object - a barn swallow - also falls
to the grass in the yard, not too far from the ball. Mark and
Mitch cautiously jog over to the bird. Mark NUDGES it with
his foot, but the bird doesn't move.

Both boys run into the house.

INT. JONES KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Patricia Jones (MOM) is in the kitchen preparing dinner.

MARK
Mom, Mitch just killed a bird!

MOM
What on earth are you talking
about.

MITCH

Yeah, I just killed a bird. I threw the baseball and it hit a bird and killed it. What should we do?

MOM

I guess you should bury it. Take it into the field and dig a hole and bury it there.

MITCH

You think that will be OK?

MOM

Honey, I'm sure it will be OK.

EXT. JONES FARM - CONTINUOUS

Mark and Mitch exit the house, run to the barn and grab a shovel, then run to the location of the dead bird. However, the bird is gone.

MARK

Mark, where's the bird?

MITCH

I don't know.

MARK

Maybe we didn't kill it after all, and only knocked it out and it came to and flew away.

MITCH

I hope so. I didn't like the feeling of killing.

MARK

Me neither.

MITCH

I think I'm done for the day.

MARK

Yeah. Me too.

They turn and walk slowly back towards the barn to return the shovel.

TITLE: SPRING 1967

EXT. WESTFALL COMMUNITY BASEBALL FIELD - AFTERNOON

The elementary school BASEBALL TEAM is on the field tossing baseballs to each other. They're not dressed in uniforms, but rather just their school clothes - blue jeans and t-shirts and gym shoes. COACH MACKINZIE (35) exits the dugout and BLOWS HIS WHISTLE.

COACH MACKINZIE
Everyone take a lap!

The boys all drop their gloves and begin running around the perimeter of the field. Mitch is running faster than the other boys, and is soon near the front of the pack. He passes Mark and Denny and soon pulls up even with Pete, Pete begins running faster in order to not allow Mitch to beat him. Mitch picks up his pace and is soon edging ahead of Pete, who speeds up some more. As the two boys round the left field foul line and are in the home stretch, Mitch speeds up and beats Pete to home plate.

PETE
(HUFFING and glaring at Mitch)
You think you're hot stuff, don't you.

Mitch basically ignores the comment and walks towards the dugout.

COACH MACKINZIE
(to Mitch)
Jones, since you're still struggling with fly balls, I'm going to start having you learn first base.

RICK Plymier, an 8th grader, is the tallest player on the team, and is fetching the school's first baseman's mitt.

COACH MACKINZIE (CONT'D)
(to Rick Plymier)
Rick, I want you to take Jones here out to first base and teach him that position. Alternate plays, and show him the ropes. Teach him!

RICK
Sure, Coach.
(to Mitch)
Come on, Jones.

They jog out to first base.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- Rick shows Mitch how and where to stand and position himself at first base.

-- how to offer his mitt as a target

-- how to tag a runner

-- how to field a ground ball (using his body to block a ball from getting past him).

END MONTAGE

Pete is alternating plays at third base with ANOTHER PLAYER at this time. It's Mitch's turn. Coach MacKinzie hits a grounder to Pete, who easily scoops it up, then fires a fast ball to Mitch, however, in the dirt. To everyone's surprise (even Mitch's), Mitch DIGS OUT the errant throw and tosses the ball to Mark, the catcher.

MARK
(to Mitch)
Good catch, Mitch!

RICK
Yeah. Nice job!

Mitch grins broadly while Pete KICKS third base and MUTTERS to himself.

PETE
Just lucky.

TITLE: FALL 1970

EXT. JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

MITCH (14), now 6' tall and weighing in at about 120 lbs, is walking from the bike rack towards the front entrance of the high school. JIMMY (14) trots up from behind Mitch and SLAPS him on the back - sort of surprising him.

JIMMY
Hey Mitch. How ya doin'?

MITCH
Hey, Jimmy. I'm OK.

JIMMY
Don't be so excited. Today is the first day of *high school*.

Jimmy gives Mitch a playful shove.

MITCH

Yeah, I guess.

JIMMY

Hey, did you hear? Kenny and his family moved away to Davenport this summer. His dad got a new job in some factory there.

MITCH

Yeah, I heard.

JIMMY

Anyways... You ready for football tryouts this afternoon?

MITCH

I thought tryouts were already done. Hasn't the team been practicing already?

JIMMY

Yeah, but freshmen get to try out today. You gonna?

MITCH

No, I can't.

JIMMY

Why not?

MITCH

Because it's gonna be harvest season soon, and I'll need to help my dad with the harvest. It's going to be bad enough with Mark and me in school all day.

JIMMY

But Mark's going to play football again this year, isn't he.

MITCH

Yeah, probably. But he loves football, and he's pretty good at it. And I think Dad sort of likes having his son as a starter on the team. Me... I would just be riding the bench.

JIMMY

Maybe not.

MITCH

Well, it doesn't matter. I'm not
all that into football anyway.

Just then, PETE (18) and DENNY (18) and a couple other boys,
come walking by, all wearing their varsity letter jackets
(even though it was 90 degrees outside). The jackets of Pete
and Denny were adorned with a large "J" with multiple
football, basketball, and baseball pins.

DENNY

(elbowing Pete)
Hey look, Pete.

PETE

Well, if it isn't Jonesy's brother.

DENNY

Yeah, little Jonesy.

PETE

Look here, pipsqueak, you may have
gotten away with being a hot-shot
in grade school, but you're in my
domain now. You're not going to get
any preferential treatment here,
and Mark's not going to be around
to *protect* you all the time.

Pete, about the same height as Mitch but much heavier, GRABS
Mitch by the front of his shirt and pulls Mitch close to him.

PETE (CONT'D)

(in a near whisper)
You try any of your stuff here at
Jefferson, and I'll ensure you're
dead meat. My name is going up on
the wall as this year's baseball
MVP - just like last year - the
first two-time winner in school
history, and nobody's gonna stop
that - not even you. Got it? So
stay outta my way, loser!

DENNY

Yeah, loser!

As Pete releases Mitch, he gives Mitch a slight SHOVE
backwards. Mitch holds his ground, though, and merely stares
expressionless back at Pete. Pete and Denny walk away,
CHUCKLING.

JIMMY

Don't let him get to you. You know
you're better than him anyway.

MITCH

Yeah, whatever.

TITLE: SPRING 1971

EXT. JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

It's a bright Spring afternoon and the high school baseball game is underway - Jefferson vs. Marshalltown. Mr. & Mrs. Jones (Dad and Mom) are sitting in the bleachers. Mitch (now 15) is sitting on the bench as team is in the field. Pete is on the mound pitching and MARK (17) is catching. Pete gets the signal and delivers his pitch.

UMPIRE

Ball four.

Pete KICKS the mound in disgust as the BATTER trots down to first base.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

That loads up the bases.

COACH CASE (42) begins a walk from the dugout to the pitcher's mound.

COACH CASE

Time!

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Uh oh, it looks like Coach Case
might be thinking about a pitching
change.

Mark joins the coach on the mound.

COACH CASE

(to Pete)

Well, Pete, I think you're done for
today.

PETE

Coach, I can finish this.

COACH CASE

Naw... You held them for a few
innings. Let's bring in a fresh arm
to close it out.

The coach turns to the dugout and signals to Mitch.

COACH CASE (CONT'D)
Jones! You're up.

Mitch jumps up, grabs his glove and trots out to the pitcher's mound.

PUBLIC ADDRESS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
It looks like Mark Jone's little
brother, Mitch, who... let's see...
is a freshman this year, is going
to be coming in to pitch.

As Mitch approaches the mound and passes by Pete, Pete BUMPS into Mitch and GROWLS at him

PETE
You'd better not blow this! This is
my win!

Mitch gets to the mound, accepts the ball from the coach, and immediately begins stretching his arm and shoulder.

COACH CASE
It's all yours, Jones. Let's see
what you can do.

Coach Case turns and walks back towards the bench.

MARK
(to Mitch)
You can do this. Just like Dad
said. Just hit my mitt.

Mark turns and trots back to home plate.

As Mitch tosses a few warm up pitches, Dad YELLS from the stands.

DAD
Go get 'em, Mitch!

Dad immediately begins coughing heavily. Dad reaches into his shirt pocket and withdraws a white handkerchief and wipes his mouth with it. As he pulls it away, he and Mom notice bright red blood on it.

MOM
(to Dad)
Bill, you need to get that checked
out.

DAD
Yeah, I will.

PUBLIC ADDRESS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Alright, looking at Mitch Jones's statistics this year. Hmmmm... It doesn't look like he has any stats yet. Well, it's only the second game of the season and we'll soon see what he can do... Regardless, he'll have his work cut out for himself... It's the top of the ninth, score tied, with one out, but the bases are loaded and Marshalltown's top hitters due to bat.

UMPIRE
Play ball!

A TALL LANKY BATTER (18) steps up to the plate. Three fastball strikes quickly retire that batter.

Then, a LARGE MUSCULAR BATTER (18) steps up to the plate and gives Mitch a wink and a fake distant kiss. Mitch ignores him. Mitch checks the runners at first and third base, then delivers a rocket with a POP into Mark's mitt. The batter doesn't swing.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Strike!

Mark tosses the ball back to Mitch.

MARK
Nice throw, Mitch!

Mitch again checks the runners, and delivers his pitch. The batter swings, but the ball is already in Mark's mitt when his bat crosses the plate.

UMPIRE
Two!

Mark tosses the ball back to Mitch

MARK
(to the batter)
Wow, that one had some zing to it!
You know, he's only a freshman and not all that accurate. He just might hit you if you're not careful.

The batter STRIKES home plate with his bat and really DIGS IN his rear foot. Mitch again checks the runners, and delivers his pitch - a slider that begins it's path looking like it will hit the batter. The batter initially begins to back away from home plate, then freezes in place as the ball breaks suddenly over the heart of the plate and SLAMS into Mark's mitt.

UMPIRE

Three! Batter's out!

The batter glares at Mitch as he walks back toward the dugout.

Mark rolls the ball out to the mound as the team jogs off the field. Mark slaps Mitch on the back on their way to the dugout.

MARK

Nice pitching!

Mitch glances at his parents in the stands. Mom is CLAPPING excitedly and Dad is grinning and gives a big "thumbs up".

Coach Case slaps Mitch on the butt.

COACH CASE

(to Mitch)

Grab a bat. You're up first.

Mitch grabs his bat, and walks out to the on-deck circle and begins warming up his swing while the PITCHER throws his warm up pitches.

UMPIRE

Play ball!

Mitch takes his place in the batter's box and focuses on the pitcher - the tall lanky batter who Mitch had just struck out.

MITCH (V.O.)

I'll bet he'll try to strike me out
right away like I did him.
Fastball...? Yeah, fastball.

The pitcher winds up and delivers. Mitch swings and CONNECTS with the ball.

A startled crow CAWS and leaps off the telephone wire just beyond the left field fence a split second before the baseball flies by.

As Mitch trots around the bases, his teammates (all but Pete) are JUMPING WITH JOY. Coach Case once again SLAPS Mitch across the butt as he rounds third base. Mitch's teammates are excitedly POUNDING on him as he works his way back to the dugout after stepping on home plate. Pete is sitting alone on the bench, glaring angrily.

Mitch's Mom is JUMPING up and down and passionately CLAPPING her hands. Dad is standing there grinning from ear to ear while also CLAPPING. He nods his approval to Mitch.

FADE TO:

TITLE: JUNE 1974

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The camera pans along a wall above the school's trophy case and slowly zooms in on a plaque "Varsity Baseball Most Valuable Player". On it, we see Mitch's name listed as the Baseball MVP for 1971, 1972, 1973, and 1974.

An announcement is broadcast over the school PA system.

PRINCIPAL JENSEN (V.O.)

Well, it's been another great year here at Jefferson. For everyone except our graduating seniors, I hope you have a wonderful summer and return in the Fall ready for another good year. For you graduating seniors, as you depart Jefferson, the faculty and staff here all want to wish you great success in all your future endeavors. Remember, *Carpe Diem!*

The bell rings and the hallway is immediately flooded with cheery STUDENTS.

MITCH (18) and JIMMY (18) pass by Coach Case, who is standing in the hallway.

COACH CASE

(to Mitch)

Hey Mitch, you sure I can't change your mind about playing ball at Iowa? I'm sure I can still get you a scholarship for baseball there.

Jimmy, with a smirk, gives Mitch a big nudge.

MITCH

Thanks, Coach. But I can't. I gotta help Dad with the farm now that he's gotten sick.

COACH CASE

Yeah, I understand. And I'm sorry about your dad. But look, if things change, just let me know. You're the best ball player I've ever coached.

MITCH

(nodding meekly)

Thanks, Coach. I'll see ya around.

COACH CASE

OK. I'll count on that.

Jimmy and Mitch are weaving their way down the CROWDED HALLWAY.

JIMMY

You still gonna try to attend Marshalltown CC?

MITCH

Yeah, probably - at least to start.

JIMMY

What about after that?

MITCH

I've been thinking about Iowa State after that. It's still close enough so that I could help with some of the farm work and if I could get an ROTC scholarship, I'd probably go there after Marshalltown.

JIMMY

How about playing ball with them?

MITCH

I don't know. Ball season pretty much hits planting season. I'll just have to wait and see. You still planning on Marshalltown?

JIMMY

Yeah. It's the only place I've been accepted.

MITCH
 Hey, at least we'll both be there
 together.

JIMMY
 Yeah.

They exit the school building.

INT. WESTFALL FUNERAL HOME (SUMMER 1974) - DAY

Mitch stands stoically in front of Dad's casket, staring blankly at the casket. He turns and walks from the main room to a smaller room reserved for family. There are some tables with food on them and a couple sofas. Most of Mitch's family is gathered in that room with Mom sitting on one sofa being CONSOLED by her SISTER. MARK (20) is standing near one of the food tables. Mitch PLOPS down on one of the empty sofas. Seeing this, Mark walks over and joins Mitch on the sofa.

MARK
 You gonna eat something?

MITCH
 I don't know. I'm not really
 hungry.

They both sit there quiet, Mitch staring at the floor and Mark taking a couple bites from his plate.

MARK
 I know this is tough for you.

MITCH
 Yeah.

MARK
 It's tough for all of us,
 especially Mom.

MITCH
 Yeah, I know.

MARK
 You know, Dad said that he thought
 you had what it takes to play
 college ball... and maybe go pro.
 (long hesitation)
 And I agree.

Mitch sort of glances as Mark.

MARK (CONT'D)

I talked it over with Mom and we all want you to go to college and to play ball.

MITCH

But, the farm....

MARK

I'll handle the farm. I've got my Ag degree from Marshalltown and can take this on while you go to school. You've basically taken care of Mom and the farm these past two years, and it's my turn now.

MITCH

But you'll need help.

MARK

Mitch, I'm 20 yrs old, and with help from Mike and Mel, we can handle it.

MITCH

Mark, I can't... We can't afford for me to go to college now.

MARK

Look, you've already been accepted at Marshalltown. You'll be able to live at home and commute to school. I'm sure you'll be able to carpool with others... maybe Jimmy. And you'll be able to work here on weekends. And there's all sorts of scholarship money available, especially for someone with your grades... Mitch, I've been there, I know. It'll be alright. We can make this happen. You've got more potential than any of us brothers.

MITCH

I don't think...

MARK

(interrupting)

Hey, I'm the man of the family now, and that's what you need to do.

Mitch just sits there silently looking at the floor as a TEAR silently rolls down his cheek.

MARK (CONT'D)
Think about it.

Mark TAPS Mitch on the knee, stands up, and leaves the room.

TITLE: IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY, FALL 1976

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY - DAY

An tall square-jawed elderly gentleman COACH TIMM (68), wearing black horn-rimmed glasses and an Iowa State University cap and windbreaker, is leaning on the chain-link fence watching TWO INTRAMURAL TEAMS play. He watches as MITCH (20) strikes out the last batter to end the game.

As the PLAYERS are gathering up their gear, the Coach approaches Mitch near the dugout.

COACH TIMM
(hollaring to Mitch)
Son!

Mitch, hearing the Coach call out, turns his head and looks at the Coach.

MITCH
(pointing to himself)
Who? Me?

COACH TIMM
Yeah, you. Come here, son.

Mitch, wearing grey sweat pants and a t-shirt, walks over to the Coach.

MITCH
What can I do for you, sir?

COACH TIMM
Two nice home runs and a three-hit shut-out. That's quite impressive.

MITCH
It's really nothing.

COACH TIMM
Yes, it is. You've got a natural swing and a strong arm - that's something any team would like to have.

MITCH
Thank you, sir.

COACH TIMM
(offering his hand to
Mitch)
I'm Coach Timm, coach for the
baseball team. I was just walking
by when the crack of the bat on
your first homer caught my
attention.

Mitch shakes Coach Timm's hand.

COACH TIMM (CONT'D)
You have any experience with
organized ball?

MITCH
I played a couple years at
Marshalltown Community College.

COACH TIMM
Oh, for Coach Brown?

Mitch nods his head.

COACH TIMM (CONT'D)
Were you on that championship team?

MITCH
Yes, sir. Both years.

COACH TIMM
Odd. He didn't talk to me about
you.

MITCH
I asked him not to.

COACH TIMM
Why?

MITCH
I play baseball just for fun. I
knew I wouldn't have the time to
commit to playing on the ISU team.

COACH TIMM
Tell you what... Why don't you
swing over to the Athletic
Department and look me up.

(MORE)

COACH TIMM (CONT'D)

I think you can help me and I think I could help you while you're at ISU.

Mitch shakes Coach's hand.

MITCH

Thank you, sir. I'm flattered. But I don't think I can. With my job and ROTC, I don't think I would have the time needed.

COACH TIMM

But, how about if I was to offer you a scholarship?

MITCH

That sounds very tempting... and I thank you. But I'm a firm believer in loyalty and I've already committed to ROTC and have a scholarship with them.

COACH TIMM

You sure?

MITCH

Yes, sir. Sorry.

COACH TIMM

No, no. Don't apologize. Loyalty is a very important virtue that I try to instill in all my players. And I admire you for your stand.

(slight hesitation)

I, myself, took four years off of baseball to serve with the Navy during World War II. It did me good.

(slight hesitation)

You're sure I can't change your mind?

MITCH

Yes, sir.

Coach Timm offers his hand.

COACH TIMM

Son, I wish you great success. By the way, what's your name?

MITCH
 (grasping Coach's hand)
 Mitch Jones, sir.

COACH TIMM
 Well, Mitch Jones. If, by chance,
 your situation should change,
 please stop by the Athletic
 Department and chat with me.

MITCH
 Sure. Thanks, Coach.

They go their separate ways.

TITLE: NORTHERN PAKISTAN 1988

EXT. NORTHERN PAKISTAN (1988) - AFTERNOON

A pick-up game of baseball is underway on the dusty ground of the MILITARY BASECAMP. The SOLDIERS, including Mitch (32), are all wearing their desert field uniforms with their blouses off. Mitch is pitching.

A SOLDIER runs up and SHOUTS to Mitch.

SOLDIER
 Sir, COLONEL DUBOIS wants to see
 you ASAP!

Mitch nods his acknowledgement of the message and tosses the baseball to ANOTHER PLAYER. He jogs over and puts on his uniform blouse and cap and jogs away.

INT. COLONEL DUBOIS' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Mitch, back in his field uniform, removes his hat and knocks on the door.

COLONEL DUBOIS
 Enter!

Mitch enters the room, stops a couple paces in front of the colonel's desk, and snaps a sharp salute.

MITCH
 Captain Jones reporting as
 directed.

COLONEL DUBOIS (44), an officer in the French military, returns the salute.

COLONEL DUBOIS
Stand at ease.

Mitch moves to a modified parade rest position.

Colonel Dubois stands and walks over to a large map on the wall.

COLONEL DUBOIS (CONT'D)
Captain Jones, we've received reports of harassment actions by the Moujahedeen against Pakistani troops in this vicinity.
(points to a spot on a map)
This is in direct violation of the peace accord. I would like you to take your unit up there tomorrow and ensure there are no more violations. Comprene?

MITCH
Yes, sir.

COLONEL DUBOIS
The area is now considered unsecure. So, be careful.

MITCH
Yes, sir.

Mitch gives a crisp hand salute, does an about-face, and exits the room.

EXT. NORTHERN PAKISTAN - MORNING

A group of half a dozen SOLDIERS, including LIEUTENANT RIVERS, LIEUTENANT WHITSON, and LIEUTENANT DREHER, all attired in combat gear and flak jackets, and donning blue UN peacekeeper helmets, are gathered around Captain Mitch Jones as he stands beside an easel holding a map board.

MITCH
Once again, gentlemen, we're merely looking for signs that the peace agreements are being properly enforced. LIEUTENANT RIVERS (23), your platoon will patrol along the East, here (pointing using a long pointer stick), and LIEUTENANT WHITSON (24), your unit will be on the West, here (pointing with his pointer).

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

I'll be accompanying LIEUTENANT DREHER (24) as he patrols up the center, here (points with his pointer). We move out in two hours. Questions?

Everyone shakes their heads.

MITCH (CONT'D)

OK, let's get it done.

EXT. DIRT ROAD LEADING INTO A PAKISTAN VILLAGE - LATER

A patrol of about twelve SOLDIERS are lined up and tactically spaced while walking along the road. Mitch is near the rear of the line, walking beside him is his radio man, PFC THOMAS (19).

Suddenly, there is an EXPLOSION at the front of the column, followed by SMALL ARMS FIRE and BULLETS LANDING ALL AROUND the group of soldiers. Everyone in the group races to the ditches to the right and left of the dirt road, and dives in while the bullets are WHIZZING by.

PFC THOMAS

(shouting to Mitch)

Bravo 1-3 reports that the road is mined and snipers are firing from behind the wall to their left... He also reports that the snipers are outside hand grenade range and the wall is not conducive to using a 203 or LAW. He requests permission to call in an air strike.

MITCH

(to PFC Thomas)

No. Tell him I'll be up there in a moment. You wait here.

Mitch removes his rucksack, gets up, and sprints up the road, weaving as he runs. BULLETS ARE HITTING THE GROUND around him as he runs. He jumps into the ditch beside a SOLDIER.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Where's Lt. Dreher?

SOLDIER

Up ahead about twenty meters, on the left, I think.

MITCH

OK. Thanks.

Mitch takes off again and sprints ahead about twenty meters with BULLETS again landing around his feet and jumps into the ditch beside Lt. Dreher.

MITCH (CONT'D)
What's going on?

LT DREHER
We're pinned down by snipers over there (points) and there (points). PRIVATE SAMUELS, our point man triggered the ambush when he tripped an IED.

MITCH
Where is he?

LT DREHER
Um... Samuels? He's over there (points).

PRIVATE SAMUELS (19) lays motionless in the middle of the road.

MITCH
What's his status?

LT DREHER
What?

MITCH
What's his status? Is he dead?
Alive? Wounded? What's his status!?

LT DREHER
Um... I don't really know.

MITCH
(a little irate)
And you're just going to leave him there?

LT DREHER
Um... The snipers are shooting at us.

MITCH
No shit! And you're just going to leave him there.

Mitch raises up a little and looks out over the road.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 (sternly)
 You stay here!

LT DREHER
 Sir?

MITCH
 (sternly)
 You stay right here where it's
safe.

As Lt Dreher watches, Mitch jumps up and begins running the 50 meters to where PRIVATE SAMUELS (19) lies. BULLETS again begin landing all around him. Suddenly, he sees an RPG heading directly for him. He dodges as the grenade EXPLODES at his feet. He stumbles and falls, rolling over, then immediately gets up and sprints again towards the wounded soldier.

Not stopping, Mitch reaches down and grabs onto Samuels' equipment harness, and begins DRAGGING him towards a nearby ditch. They both collapse in the ditch, Mitch on top of the private.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 Samuels... Hey, Samuels... You OK?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
 (somewhat stunned)
 Captain Jones?

MITCH
 Yeah. You OK?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
 Yes, sir. I think my arm is
 broke... and I think they might
 have ruined my vest and ruck.

Mitch helps Samuels remove his tattered rucksack and sees Samuels bleeding from just above his left elbow. He opens his first aid pack and removes a bandage, wraps Samuels' arm with it.

MITCH
 Unfortunately, I don't have
 anything to use as a splint, but
 I'll wrap this tight which should
 help immobilize it some...

Samuels nods his head.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 And should help stop the bleeding.
 (chuckling slightly)
 It's a good thing you played possum
 out there. Everyone thought you
 were dead... even the snipers.

PRIVATE SAMUELS
 When the IED went off, I blacked
 out for a short while, then decided
 to play dead, thinking that they
 wouldn't shoot a man who'd already
 been blown up. I came to just a few
 moments before you dragged me away.

Samuels looks down and sees Mitch's left boot is severely
 damaged - about half of this boot toe missing and blood is
 covering the lower part of the tan boot. He also sees blood
 on Mitch's left leg, below the knee.

PRIVATE SAMUELS (CONT'D)
 Sir, you're bleeding.

Samuels nods his head in the direction of Mitch's injured
 foot.

MITCH
 Yeah. I'm OK. Got any grenades?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
 Yeah. Why?

MITCH
 Give me a couple.

Samuels hesitantly hands two grenades to his Captain.

Mitch again sticks his head up to glance over the roadway and
 BULLETS immediately begin landing around him.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 You gonna be alright if I leave you
 for a for a little bit?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
 Sure. But what about you?

MITCH
 I'll be fine. I'm going to take out
 those bastards.

PRIVATE SAMUELS
 Sir, I'll lay down a little
 suppressive fire.

MITCH
With that arm?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
Yeah, sure. That's my non-firing
arm anyway.

MITCH
OK. Thanks. But don't expose
yourself. They've got this site
pegged. Wait 'til I give you the
signal.

Private Samuels nods his head.

Mitch slides along the ditch about twenty feet, looks at Samuels, and nods his head. Samuels immediately raises up slightly and begins FIRING HIS WEAPON in the direction of the snipers. Mitch leaps out of the ditch and zig-zags to the ditch on the opposite side of the road, nearer the snipers, as BULLETS are flying all around him.

Once in the ditch, things quite down again.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Samuels, you still there?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
Yes, sir.

MITCH
When I give the signal, give 'em
another burst, OK?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
Yes, sir.

Mitch pulls the safety pin from one hand grenade, but still squeezing the spoon handle against the round body of the grenade.

MITCH
Alright... Ready... Go!

Samuels begins FIRING again while Mitch kneels in the ditch and throws the grenade towards the wall of the snipers. Just after it clears the wall, it DETONATES. Mitch immediately repeats this action with the other hand grenade, throwing it over the wall at the site of the other group of snipers. It, too, DETONATES almost immediately after it clears the wall.

After that second blast, everything goes QUIET. After a few moments, Samuels is heard.

PRIVATE SAMUELS
Sir, I think you got 'em.

MITCH.
Yeah, maybe. You still OK?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
Yes, sir.

Mitch reaches down and grasps his bloodied left leg and WINCES. Then he lifts his head to look towards the snipers' positions. Nothing but quiet.

With an audible GRUNT, he leaps up and sprints up the slight rise to the wall, pauses, then quickly vaults over the wall. He discovers a couple dead bloodied bodies and he FIRES A COUPLE ROUNDS from his rifle into each of them to ensure they are indeed dead. He then moves over to the second position and REPEATS THIS PROCEDURE with the single body he discovers there. After carefully looking around, Mitch climbs back over the wall and walks back to Samuels' position, limping.

MITCH.
How about let's get you out of here.

Mitch helps Samuels to his feet, grabs his rucksack, and together they limp down the road towards the rest of the unit, Samuels with his bandged arm hanging loosely at his side. After just a short distance, a couple other TROOPS, one a MEDIC, run up and take hold of Private Samuels. The medic sees Mitch's blood-soaked leg and boot.

MEDIC
Sir, your leg...

MITCH.
Yes, I know. But tend to Samuels here. I'll be alright.

As they're escorting Samuels from him, Mitch calls out.

MITCH
Private Samuels!

Samuels turns back towards Mitch.

MITCH (CONT'D)
(nodding and winking)
You did real good, son! Thanks.

Samuels squirms free from the grasp of his escorts, gives a big grin and snaps a salute with his good right arm. Mitch proudly returns the salute.

PFC Thomas runs up to his Captain, stops, and looks at Mitch's damaged lower leg.

PFC THOMAS
Sir, your...

MITCH
I know, I know. I'll be fine.

PFC THOMAS
I've called in a medevac which should be here any moment now.

MITCH
Good. Thanks. Is everyone else OK?

PFC THOMAS
Yes sir. As far as I know. There have been no other reports of injuries.

MITCH
Great. Thanks, Thomas.
(brief pause)
Get Lieutenant Whitson on the horn and let him know what's gone on and that he's now in charge.

PFC THOMAS
Yes, sir.

As they walk down the road, with Mitch severely limping and Thomas ON THE RADIO, they pass by Lieutenant Dreher. The Lieutenant takes a couple steps towards the Captain, but Mitch merely holds up a hand and glares at Dreher, and continues his walk down the road towards a medivac helicopter LANDING on the road.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, WALTER REED MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

Mitch, wearing an Army PT shirt and shorts, is lying in his hospital bed, left leg in a cast from toe to knee and elevated in a traction sling. A white sheet covers his good leg and his waist. Jimmy (30) is sitting in the chair beside the bed.

JIMMY
So, have you seen your family yet?
I heard that they were coming to visit you.

MITCH

Yeah, Mom, Mark, and Mike came by yesterday and again this morning. The other brothers couldn't make it due to school. They're heading back to Iowa this afternoon.

JIMMY

You know, they were really worried, especially your Mom, when they heard that you'd been wounded and evacuated to Walter Reed.

MITCH

Yeah, that's what they told me. But I think they were pretty much relieved when they saw that I'm actually doing OK.

JIMMY

Doing OK?

MITCH

Yeah. Nothing life threatening... and I'll be as good as new soon.

JIMMY

Let's hope so.
(long hesitation)
Man, you've been gone a long time.

MITCH

Ten years.

JIMMY

And things haven't changed a bit in Westfall in all that time.

MITCH

How much longer you going to be there?

JIMMY

Shoot, I was born there and I'll probably die there. I'm not the world traveler like you.

MITCH

Thanks to my Uncle Sam.

They both chuckle then go silent as a NURSE ASSISTANT (20) enters and begins taking Mitch's vital signs and recording them onto the clipboard.

JIMMY

Hey, man, I've got to split. I've got a flight departing in a couple hours.

MITCH

Hey, thanks for visiting me.

Jimmy stands up and leans forward in a very awkward attempt at giving Mitch a hug, then gives up on that and merely grasps Mitch's hand in a wrestler handshake.

JIMMY

You take care now, and don't be such a stranger to Iowa.

MITCH

(grinning)

Sure. No problem. Thanks again. And take care of yourself.

JIMMY

You too.

Jimmy leaves the room and the nurse assistant returns the chart to the hook at the foot of the bed and leaves right behind Jimmy. Mitch picks up a crossword puzzle book laying on the tray beside his bed and begins working on a puzzle.

We see an arm in a white labcoat reach out and a hand grabs Mitch's chart. Mitch is also oblivious to this because of the frequency with which this happens. However, his attention is quickly refocused when he hears a female voice with a definite New England accent - the voice of CONNIE (27).

CONNIE

Good morning, Captain Jones. My name is Captain Williamson, and I've been assigned to help you with your rehabilitation.

Connie is a very attractive young woman.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I see by your chart that you underwent some repair to your lower left leg and major reconstructive surgery on your left foot.

MITCH

Yes, Ma'am.

CONNIE

Although the surgeon had to amputate three toes, the prognosis for you is quite positive. However, you will have to undergo some lengthy rehabilitation to learn how to walk properly, and it's likely that you'll never be able to run again.

Mitch just sits there staring at Connie.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Where are you from, Captain?

MITCH

The 82nd Airborne Division

Connie attempts to stifle back a snicker, but does so poorly.

CONNIE

No, not your unit... Where are you from?

MITCH

Oh, sorry, Ma'am. Iowa... I'm originally from Iowa.

CONNIE

Well, Captain Jones... from Iowa... You don't have to call me Ma'am. I'm not your superior officer.

MITCH

(somewhat embarrassed)
Oh, I'm sorry Ma'am... Oops.

CONNIE

No problem.

MITCH

Are you my doctor?

CONNIE

No. I'm your physical therapist.

MITCH

I see... And may I ask, where are you from?

CONNIE

From the Walter Reed Department of Rehabilitative Services.

MITCH
 (snickering)
 No, not your unit. Where are you
 from?

Connie gives a little chuckle.

CONNIE
 Good one.

MITCH
 Yes, Ma'am.

CONNIE
 I'm from Maine.

MITCH
 Maine?... Never been there, but
 I'll definitely have to visit there
 if all the girls in Maine are as
 pretty as you.

CONNIE
 Well, we'll see, but we've got to
 get you back on the road to
 recovery first... Tomorrow
 morning... Ten AM. Someone will
 bring you down to the Rehab Center
 and we'll begin. OK?

MITCH
 (grinning big)
 Yes, Ma'am. Looking forward to it.

CONNIE
 (smiling back)
 And stop with all this Ma'am
 garbage.

MITCH
 (grinning, nearly
 laughing)
 Yes, Ma'am.

Connie leaves the room and Mitch just lies there smiling.

INT. REHAB CENTER - DAY

-- Mitch, wearing Army Physical Training (PT) shorts and t-shirt, is lying face down on a table. His leg is no longer in a cast, but his calf and foot are still heavily bandaged. Connie is working on his left ankle as his left leg is flexed to about a 90-degree angle.

CONNIE
You doing OK there, soldier?

MITCH
(significant wincing)
Yeah.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- Mitch, wearing Army sweatpants and a t-shirt, is sweating and GRIMACING as he is walking along a slightly elevated platform, which has two waist-high parallel bars to help support Mitch's weight as he walks between the bars. Connie is walking beside him.

-- Mitch wipes sweat and some tears from his eyes as he sits cycling on a stationary bike. Connie is in the background.

-- Mitch is swimming laps in an indoor swimming pool. Connie is watching from the sidelines.

-- Mitch walking down a hallway, using a cane and with a significant limp. Connie is walking alongside him.

-- Mitch GRIMACING as he steps up and down wooden stairs, holding onto the adjacent handrail. Connie looking on.

-- Mitch, GRIMACING while walking slowly on a treadmill. Connie smiles as she makes some annotations on his chart.

END MONTAGE

INT. REHAB CENTER - DAY

Mitch, attired in his PT uniform, is laying on his stomach on a work table with Connie assisting Mitch with stretching his leg and ankle.

Private Samuels, wearing Army sweats, enters with his arm in a cast and sling, and sees Mitch.

PRIVATE SAMUELS
(grinning)
Captain Jones?!

Mitch looks up to see Samuels grinning in front of him.

MITCH
Private Samuels?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
Corporal now.

MITCH
Hey, congratulations!

PRIVATE SAMUELS
Who's your girlfriend?

Mitch looks at Connie with a puzzled look, and she blushes while simultaneously smiling. Mitch looks back towards Samuels.

MITCH
Samuels, this is Captain
Williamson, my physical
therapist... the best in the Army.

Mitch glances at Connie and sees that she is blushing even more.

PRIVATE SAMUELS
(nodding towards Connie)
Captain. Nice to meet you.

Connie returns the nod.

CONNIE
Thank you. Nice to meet you, too.

PRIVATE SAMUELS
(to Mitch)
Well, don't get too attached.
You'll soon be leaving here, like
me. I'm heading home tomorrow.

MITCH
Hey, that's great. How's your arm?

PRIVATE SAMUELS
It's good... nearly like new. How's
your leg?

MITCH
It's great. Connie's... Captain
Williamson... is working hard to
get me back into shape. She's a
real miracle worker.

PRIVATE SAMUELS
Hey, well, it's great seeing you.
By the way, I heard you got a
Silver Star for that little
exploit, saving me and all.

MITCH

Yeah, I guess. Did you get your medal for your actions?

PRIVATE SAMUELS

Yeah, I got a bronze star with V-device.

MITCH

I'm glad to hear that. I doubt that we would have been successful had you not been able to do your part.

PRIVATE SAMUELS

I don't know about that. But thanks for putting me in for it.

MITCH

No problem... You earned it.

CONNIE

(looking at Samuels)
Silver Star?

PRIVATE SAMUELS

Yup. Your boyfriend... Um, Captain Jones here is a real hero. He saved my life and took out two enemy sniper positions. Have him tell you about it sometime.

CONNIE

(looking at Mitch)
Ayuh, I will.

PRIVATE SAMUELS

Well, I gotta go. Sir, thanks again for all you've done for me... and I'm glad you're doing alright.

MITCH

Yeah. Same here. Take care of yourself.

Samuels nods his head, turns, and walks away.

CONNIE

Silver Star?

MITCH

Yeah, I guess.

CONNIE

So what went down?

MITCH
I'll tell you about it, but only if
you'll join me for dinner sometime.

CONNIE
(somewhat sarcastically)
You mean, like a date?

MITCH
Um... I guess so.

CONNIE
OK.

MITCH
Really?

CONNIE
Yup. How about tomorrow night after
I get off work?

MITCH
I'm already looking forward to it.

Connie gives a somewhat wicked grin as she gives Mitch's
ankle a good bend.

CONNIE
Uh huh. We'll see about that.

MITCH
(wincing)
Ouch!

INT. FINE DINING RESTAURANT - EVENING

Mitch is sitting at a small table. He sees Connie as she
enters the lobby of the restaurant and immediately stands and
limps over to meet her. Mitch is wearing a pair of slacks and
a Hawaiian shirt, while Connie is attired in a very sharp
evening dress.

MITCH
I guess I under-dressed for this
occasion. But this is about the
fanciest outfit I have in my
wardrobe right now.

CONNIE
I'm sorry. Perhaps, I over-dressed.

MITCH

Oh no. You look like you could easily be a pork princess.

CONNIE

(quizzical look)
Uh... Pork princess?

MITCH

Oops. A pork princess is a beauty contest contestant in Iowa.

(pause)
You look... breathtakingly beautiful. Really.

CONNIE

(blushing somewhat)
Well, thank you, Captain Jones. And aren't you cunnin?!

MITCH

Cunnin?

CONNIE

Oh, sorry... adorable or cute.

MITCH

(assisting Connie with her chair)
Thank you. And it's Mitch... call me Mitch.

CONNIE

Only if you call me Connie.

Mitch smiles and nods his head.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- The server pours some wine into Mitch & Connie's wine glasses. Mitch holds out his wine glass as in a toast. Connie clinks her glass to Mitch's.

-- During their meal, Mitch is talking, quite serious, using his hands to illustrate the point. Connie is listening, clinging to every word.

-- Mitch and Connie are laughing at something Mitch must have said.

-- Mitch is enthralled with Connie as she is talking.

-- Connie holds out her wine glass as in a toast and Mitch clinks his glass to Connie's.

END MONTAGE

EXT. QUIET ROWHOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT (LATER)

Mitch and Connie are walking along, Mitch using his cane, and Connie holding onto to Mitch's other arm. They stop.

CONNIE
 (nodding her head towards
 the nearby house)
 This is where I live.

MITCH
 Nice.

They turn and look in each other's eyes for a few moments.

CONNIE
 I really enjoyed myself tonight.

MITCH
 Me too.

They stand there, somewhat awkwardly, gazing into each other's eyes. Mitch leans forward a little and Connie reciprocates. They kiss, very gently - somewhat awkwardly, almost hesitantly.

CONNIE
 You know, this is going to be
 difficult.

MITCH
 What do you mean.

CONNIE
 As your care provider, I am not
 supposed to fraternize with my
 patients.

MITCH
 (after a slight
 hesitation)
 Don't think of it that way... You're
 not fraternizing with me... I'm
 fraternizing with you.

CONNIE
 (shaking her head and
 smiling)
 Oh, Mitch Jones. What am I to do
 with you?

MITCH

I'm sure you'll think of something.

They kiss again.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Well, I'd better let you go. I've got a busy day ahead tomorrow with my physical therapist.

Connie grins broadly and nods her head.

CONNIE

Good night, Mitch.

MITCH

Good night.

Connie turns and walks up the flight of steps to the door of her row house. Mitch stands and watches her. She unlocks the door, turns back, blows Mitch a kiss, and enters her house, closing the door behind her.

Mitch begins walking away, grinning from ear to ear.

INT. WALTER REED CAFETERIA - DAY

Mitch, dressed in sweat pants and Army PT t-shirt, is sitting at a table, reading the Army Times newspaper after finishing his breakfast. He turns the page and sets the paper down, focusing on something that just caught his eye.

He abruptly gets up and leaves the dining room, newspaper in hand.

INT. REHAB CENTER (CONNIE'S OFFICE) - MOMENTS LATER

Mitch glances in through the window and sees Connie working on some paperwork in her office. Her co-worker, SUSAN (25), is at a nearby desk. He knocks on the door and opens it just enough for him to stick his head in.

MITCH

Captain Williamson, do you have a moment?

CONNIE

(glancing at the papers
sprawled across her desk)
I guess so. What is it?

Mitch places the newspaper on top of the papers on Connie's desk.

MITCH
I just saw this in the Army Times.

Connie glances at the newspaper.

CONNIE
What?

MITCH
(pointing to an article in
the paper)
This.

Connie scans through the article.

CONNIE
OK. It's the Army ten-miler. What
of it?

MITCH
The Army ten-miler. I'm going to
run in it.

Connie holds out her hands in front of her.

CONNIE
Hey, slow down there, Bub. I don't
want to burst your bubble, but
you're no way ready to run a race
like that.

MITCH
Why not?!

CONNIE
First, you're injured... you're
still needing a cane to walk....

MITCH
But I am getting better each day.
Right?

CONNIE
Yes, but you might never be able to
run again.

MITCH
Sure I will... With your help.
(pause)
Will you help me.

CONNIE

You can't be serious. Doing something like this so soon could cause further damage or set you back in your rehabilitation.

MITCH

(pleading look on his face)

Help me... Please?!

Connie shakes her head in surrender.

CONNIE

I'll see what I can do. And I make no promises. It's only six weeks away. It will be hard work... very hard work, and there's no guarantees.

MITCH

(face now beaming)

You're the best! Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Mitch turns and begins to exit, then turns back and grabs the newspaper from Connie's desk and gives her a wink before departing and closing her office door behind him.

Connie looks over at Susan and gives a frustrated look.

CONNIE

What can I do?

Susan just smiles and shrugs her shoulders.

BEGIN MONTAGE

INT. REHAB CENTER - DAY

-- Mitch is sweating profusely as he is riding the stationary bike. Connie walks by and glances at his effort.

-- Mitch is sweating significantly and tear lines are on his cheeks as he is walking at a very brisk pace on the treadmill. Connie walks by, patting him on the shoulder as she passes.

CONNIE

OK. Only two more miles to go.

-- Mitch is sitting on a weight bench doing leg extensions. He GRUNTS and STRAINS with each repetition. Connie walks by and adds two 2-pound weights to the weight bar.

-- Mitch is swimming laps in the swimming pool. Connie watches from the side of the pool.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 That's twenty laps. You're half way there.

-- Mitch is sweating profusely and GRIMACING with about every other step as he is jogging on the treadmill. Connie walks by and nudges up the speed by another tenth of a MPH.

END MONTAGE

Mitch, attired in his sweatpants and t-shirt, is sitting on a bench, soaked with sweat and wiping the perspiration from his face and brow. Connie enters and sits beside him. She is carrying a large shopping bag.

MITCH
 What's in the sack?

CONNIE
 Sack? It's called a shopping bag.

MITCH
 Oh, OK. Sorry. What's in the shopping bag?

CONNIE
 I've got something for you.

MITCH
 For me? Really?

Connie reaches into the bag and pulls out a gift-wrapped shoe box and hands it to Mitch.

Mitch gets a surprised expression on his face.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 What is it?

CONNIE
 Well, open it and find out.

Mitch begins to carefully unwrap the gift.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 (jokingly)
 Oh, come on. Don't unwrap it like a
 sissy... unwrap it like a man.

Mitch gives a big grin then tears the paper off, wads it up into a ball and tosses it at Connie. Mitch is now holding a plain shoe box.

MITCH
 What's this?

CONNIE
 Open it and see.

Mitch opens the box and pulls out a pair of New Balance running shoes. With a puzzled look on his face, he looks at Connie.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 The race is only ten days away and
 you've worked so hard to prepare
 for it. I thought you should have a
 decent pair of shoes to wear.

Mitch holds up the shoes and admires them.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 These are especially designed for
 you and your foot - to provide the
 support necessary for you to run
 more comfortably.

Mitch looks at Connie with TEARS beginning to well up in his eyes.

MITCH
 That's really Iowa nice.

CONNIE
 Huh? Well, go on... try 'em on.

Mitch puts on the right shoe first, then carefully the left shoe and laces them up snugly.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 How do they feel?

Mitch stands up and takes a few steps.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 (impatiently)
 Well???

Mitch looks down at Connie as a tear rolls down his cheek.

MITCH
They're wonderful. Absolutely,
amazingly wonderful.

Connie beams with pride.

CONNIE
You'll need to start wearing them
right away to ensure they're broken
in before the race and to ensure
that they'll work.

MITCH
How can I ever thank you? Here,
stand up.

Mitch offers Connie his hand, and she accepts it as she stands. Mitch immediately wraps his arms around her and gives her a big bear hug. Connie, caught by surprise, attempts to push him away, but he won't let go.

CONNIE
Mitch Jones... you're all sweaty.

MITCH
I know.

Connie stops trying to fight him and just goes with it.

TITLE: OCTOBER 1989

EXT. PENTAGON PARKING LOT - MORNING

It's a somewhat dreary day - overcast and a little cool. Mitch is clad in his Army PT sweat pants and a t-shirt that says "Walter Reed Physical Therapy Department". There are over a hundred other individual RUNNERS and a dozen SQUAD and PLATOON-SIZED UNITS replete with their guidons. Each runner has a number on a piece of paper pinned to their jersey.

Mitch is surrounded by some of the PHYSICAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT STAFF as they're all present to show him their support. Connie stands by, fidgeting nervously, as he does some final stretching. Suddenly Mitch stands still, looking like he is going to vomit.

MITCH
Where's the closest Kybo?

CONNIE
Kybo? Mitch, in English, please.

MITCH
Oh, sorry... port-a-potty.

CONNIE
(pointing)
Over yonder.

Mitch quickly runs off in the direction of the Kybo. He enters and we hear a distant MUFFLED VOMITING SOUND. A few seconds later he returns while wiping his mouth on his t-shirt.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
What was that all about?

MITCH
Oh, nothing... Just some nerves.

CONNIE
You all stretched out?

MITCH
Yep.

CONNIE
Here, let me help you stretch that leg one more time.

Mitch gently grabs Connie by both shoulders and looks into her eyes.

MITCH
(gently)
Connie, I'm stretched and ready. You helped me, remember? Don't worry. I'll be OK.

CONNIE
I know. But I worry anyway. I don't want you to injure yourself.

MITCH
I won't. I had the best trainer.

Mitch glances up as an announcement comes over the loudspeaker.

ANNOUNCER
All runners to the starting line.

Mitch carefully removes his sweat pants, revealing a long reddish scar along his lower left leg.

MITCH
Well, I gotta go. Wish me luck!

Connie and the OTHERS all pat him on the back and WISH HIM LUCK.

Mitch and all the other RUNNERS are soon lined up at the starting line, standing at attention as the NATIONAL ANTHEM concludes.

ANNOUNCER
Runners, stand by... Runners, GO!

A single GUNSHOT is heard as the runners (including Mitch) cross the start line and begin the course.

Connie stands there apprehensively and CALLS OUT.

CONNIE
Go Mitch!

Connie turns towards Susan, her colleague.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
I hope, dear God, that we're doing the right thing.

SUSAN
I'm sure it'll be OK. He's strong, smart, and in great shape. He'll be fine.

EXT. PENTAGON PARKING LOT - LATER

Hundreds of SPECTATORS crowd near the finish line of the Army Ten-Miler. Connie, Susan, and her other COLLEAGUES are standing there cheering for Mitch as he crosses the finish line. The large digital clock reads 1 hr 12 min 42 sec.

SUSAN
(to Connie)
He was only 20-minutes behind the winner.

CONNIE
(fighting back some tears)
I know... I know.

Drenched in sweat, Mitch places his hands behind his head as he walks, now limping a little and GASPING for breath. Other runners continue to cross the finish line behind him.

Mitch hears CONNIE'S CHEERING, turns towards her, and a big grin comes to his face. Susan and Connie's other colleagues are SLAPPING Mitch on the back and CONGRATULATING him. Mitch is oblivious to them and is focused only on Connie.

As Mitch gets to Connie, he wraps his arms around her and gives her a huge bear hug, lifting her off the ground.

Connie half-heartedly attempts to push herself free.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Mitch, you're all sweaty!

MITCH
I know.

Connie, relaxes and enjoys the moment, but only for a couple seconds. Then she pushes back from Mitch and looks him in the eyes with a very serious expression. Mitch slowly releases Connie.

CONNIE
How's your foot? You're limping.

MITCH
(smiling)
It's fine... just a little sore and tired... but fine.

CONNIE
Wow! Just over seven minutes per mile... You did it!

MITCH
But not without your help.

CONNIE
You earned this.

MITCH
Let's celebrate tonight. How about I pick you up at seven? I'm in the mood for a Maidrite and pop. How about you?

CONNIE
Maidrite and pop?

MITCH
(kiddingly)
Oh, yeah, you New Englanders don't
speak American very well... In
Iowa, that's what we call sloppy-
joe sandwich and a Coke.

CONNIE
Oh... Sure.

Connie nods her acceptance.

INT. D.C. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Mitch, donning a sport jacket, and Connie, wearing a nice
dress, sit at a table after completing their meal.

CONNIE
Maidrite and pop, right?

MITCH
Yep. And how was it?

CONNIE
Very tasty. Thank you.

MITCH
Good. Next time, maybe I'll take
you to get some gas station pizza.

CONNIE
What's that?

MITCH
Oh... in Iowa gas stations
frequently have some of the best
pizza around. That's why we call it
that... and it's quick, cheap, and
tastes great!

CONNIE
Next time? Well maybe next time
I'll take you to Maine for some
real food... lobster tail and
champagne.

MITCH
Yeah, OK. So, where in Maine are
you from?

CONNIE

Well, when I was younger, we lived way out in the willywacks. But then we moved Down East.

MITCH

Willywacks? Down East? What is that in English?

CONNIE

(snickering)

Living in the willywacks means living way out in the woods... away from the coastal area. And Down East is Maine's Eastern coastal region.

MITCH

Thanks. I see.

CONNIE

(somewhat jokingly)

And you? From whence dost thou hail?

MITCH

(snickering)

Madam, I hail from a small town called Westfall in Central Iowa. Our farm was located along the Grand Ridge crick.

CONNIE

(snickering)

What's a crick?

MITCH

Oh, sorry... Creeeeek.

CONNIE

(laughing)

Oh, I see.

(pauses to stop laughing)

Anyway, how's your leg and foot?

MITCH

Just fine. And how are you doing?

CONNIE

I couldn't be happier than a clam at high tide?

MITCH

What?

CONNIE

(chuckling again)

Oh, that's right, you Mid-Westerners don't speak proper English yet. What I said was, "I'm still thrilled at your accomplishment."

MITCH

Oh, I see. While I was running this morning, I got this idea in my head.

CONNIE

Yeah, what kind of idea?

MITCH

A good idea.

CONNIE

OK. So what is your idea?

MITCH

I think I might try the Ironman competition.

CONNIE

(laughing)

You're kidding... right?

MITCH

No. I think I want to try to do the Ironman and I would like for you to help me train for it.

CONNIE

(now serious)

Oh, I don't know if I...

MITCH

(interrupting)

You're a miracle worker! Look at what you've done already.

CONNIE

But that was just the Army ten-miler. The Ironman is a whole nother ball game. It's a 2-mile rough water swim, a 100-mile bike race, and a full 26-mile marathon.

MITCH

I know. But I think I can get there
and do it... but only with your
help.

CONNIE

My help?!

MITCH

Yeah. You inspire me.

CONNIE

No, it's you who inspires me.

MITCH

Anyway... If I can finagle an
assignment here with the Old Guard,
you could train me.

CONNIE

I don't know. My tour with the Army
is just about up and I need to be
thinking about what I'm going to do
once I get out.

MITCH

When is that?

CONNIE

In about eleven months.

MITCH

Well, that gives me at least eleven
months to prepare with you.

(giving his best sad puppy
dog look)

Come on... Please?!

CONNIE

Oh, Mitch Jones, stop that.

(pause)

I'll have to give it some thought.

Mitch reaches into his suitcoat pocket, pulls out a small
ring box, and places it on the table by Connie.

MITCH

OK. So while you're thinking about
that, would you also think about
marrying me?

CONNIE

(shocked, but not unhappy
or angry)

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Whoa there, Bub. Where'd this all
come from?

MITCH
(smiling)
From my pocket... and my heart.

CONNIE
I'll have to give this some
thought, too.

MITCH
(still smiling)
I know.

CONNIE
Mitch Jones... You're the
everlasting optimist.

MITCH
Yes, ma'am. I am.

Connie just chuckles.

INT. REHAB CENTER - EVENING

Connie, wearing her white lab coat, holds a clipboard, and a
stop watch, while Mitch is swimming laps in the pool, using a
kickboard.

CONNIE
(calling out to Mitch)
Come on, Mitch, you need to use
your legs more when swimming. You
can't just use your arms or you'll
never get there.

Connie's colleague, Susan, walks into the pool room and
stands next to Connie.

SUSAN
How's he doing?

CONNIE
Not bad, but we've a long way to go
before he's ready, and time's
quickly running out.

Connie turns her wrist to look at her watch. A diamond ring
comes into view on her left hand.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 (to Susan)
 Speaking of time, we've only got
 about thirty minutes more. I'll
 lock up when we're done.

SUSAN
 OK. Thanks. Good night.

CONNIE
 Yeah. See you tomorrow.

Susan turns and exits the pool room.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 (shouts to Mitch)
 Come on, Mitch. Kick! Kick! Kick!

Mitch just GRUNTS and kicks harder.

TITLE: KAIULA BAY, HAWAII - OCTOBER 1990

EXT. ALI'I DRIVE, KAIULA BAY, KONA, HAWAII - MORNING

Mitch is nervously stretching in preparation for the Ironman Competition. Connie is assisting and appears even more nervous than Mitch. Mitch, clad only in his swim suit, has the number 136 greased onto his upper arm and on his swim cap.

CONNIE
 How are you feeling? Are you loose
 yet?

MITCH
 Yeah.
 (pauses)
 Where's the nearest kybo... port-a-
 potty?

Connie points.

CONNIE
 Over yonder.

MITCH
 Thanks.

He then dashes off to the kybo and enters it. Again, we hear MUFFLED VOMITING. A few seconds later, he exits the kybo, wiping his mouth with the back of his arm and hand.

CONNIE
Nerves?

MITCH
Yup.

CONNIE
Feel better now.

MITCH
Much better.

An announcement is heard over the PA system.

PA ANNOUNCER
All competitors move to the water.
The race will begin in five
minutes.

CONNIE
I'll be at the finish of the swim.
I'll have a towel, your shirt and
shoes, and have your bike ready.
You just go out there and do your
best.

Mitch nods nervously.

MITCH
I gotta go.

CONNIE
Good luck! And Mitch, I love you.

Mitch grins, and attempts to give Connie a quick kiss. Connie turns her head abruptly and offers her cheek to him instead.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Mitch Jones, not after you just
puked.

Mitch looks at Connie, with a big grin appearing his face. He turns and walks towards the water.

Connie looks towards Heaven and breathes a quite prayer.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
God, please look out for Mitch.

The CONTESTANTS all mass in the water - about waist deep. A horn suddenly sounds and the mass of bodies all start swimming at the same time, looking like a great school of salmon attempting to negotiate a small salmon run. Soon all that is seen are arms flailing and water SPLASHING.

EXT. ALI'I DRIVE, KAIULA BAY, KONA, HAWAII - LATER

About an hour later, contestants are exiting the water, running to take a quick fresh-water rinse, change into their biking attire, and hop on their bikes.

Mitch is in the middle of the pack. As he runs from the shower area and into the changing area, Connie hands him his towel, bike clothes, and shoes. As he runs out of the changing area and gets to his bike, he tosses his towel and swim attire to Connie and she hands him his helmet and sunglasses and helps him get on his bike.

CONNIE

You're doing wonderful!

MITCH

Thanks.

About two minutes has elapsed between leaving the water the starting out on the bike.

EXT. ALI'I DRIVE, KAIULA BAY, KONA, HAWAII - LATER

About five hours later, Mitch coasts in to the transition point between the cycling and the marathon run. He doesn't appear to be having any difficulty, unlike many of his other competitors. Connie hands him a bottle of Gatorade and his running clothes and shoes as he runs into the changing tent.

Exiting the tent about a minute later, heading out onto the running course, Connie jogs a few yards alongside Mitch and shouts some encouragement to him.

CONNIE

Mitch, you're doing great. Just keep putting one foot in front of the other and focus on the man in front of you. Just stay with him.

(then as almost a passing thought)

And drink - stay hydrated to avoid cramping!

EXT. ALI'I DRIVE, KAIULA BAY, KONA, HAWAII - LATER

The sun is beginning to set as Connie sees Mitch jogging out the last yards of the race. Mitch is limping noticeably. Many runners are still far behind him. The large digital clock reads, 10 hrs, 52 min, and 38 seconds as Mitch crosses the finish line.

He is immediately mobbed by PEOPLE, one placing a flower lei around his neck, another handing him a bottle Gatorade, and, of course, Connie, giving him a towel and a big hug.

CONNIE
 (excited with tears
 forming)
 You did it! Mitch, you did it!

MITCH
 I'm all sweaty.

CONNIE
 (crying and clinging to
 him)
 I know.

INT. REHAB CENTER (CONNIE'S OFFICE) - DAY

Mitch, dressed in his usual sweatsuit, and now sporting a wedding band, gives a courtesy knock on the door to Connie's office as he enters. Boxes are stacked in various locations. Connie is standing behind her desk looking intently at a framed PHOTO of the rather large wedding party for their wedding.

Mitch walks to Connie and gives her a quick kiss, then standing behind her, he glances at the photo she's holding. He then wraps his arms around her.

MITCH
 Great wedding, wasn't it.

CONNIE
 Ayuh, it was... even though we had to wait a couple minutes because someone suddenly had to visit the men's room.

MITCH
 (looking at Connie)
 I couldn't help it. I was very nervous.

CONNIE
 Wow, that sure was a large wedding party, though... six groomsmen.

MITCH
 Yeah, but I had to allow all of my brothers to participate... and with Jimmy as my best man....

CONNIE
 (interrupting)
 And because of that, I had to find
 enough ladies to accompany each of
 them.

Mitch turns Connie around so that they are facing each other.

MITCH
 But you are happy now?

CONNIE
 Yes, very much so.

She leans forward and gives him a nice kiss.

MITCH
 You're sure this is the right thing
 to do? Getting out of the Army, I
 mean.

CONNIE
 Yeah, I think so.

Susan enters the office with a roll of package tape.

MITCH
 (to Susan)
 Susan, is Connie doing the right
 thing by leaving the Army?

SUSAN
 Yes, it's the right thing. After
 Sports Illustrated wrote about your
 success in the Army Ten-miler and
 Ironman, and how you attributed it
 all to Connie, the phone's been
 ringing off the hook with pro
 athletes wanting Connie to work
 with them. Something about being a
 personal trainer... whatever that
 is.

MITCH
 (to Connie)
 Is that true?

CONNIE
 Yeah, I guess.

MITCH
 (excited)
 Honey, that's great! That's a
 perfect job for you!

CONNIE

But we'll be moving to different locations every couple years due to your assignments.

MITCH

I don't think that will be a problem. If they want you to work with them... and I'm confident they will... they will be willing to come to you... wherever you are.

SUSAN

You know he's right.

Connie shrugs her shoulders.

MITCH

I'm sure you'll be working with them during their off-season. And I'm sure we can find or even build you a gym to use, regardless of where we are stationed. You're too talented to waste all your time just working with me.

CONNIE

Now wait just a min....

MITCH

(interrupting Connie)

And pro athletes have money... and you know we can sure use that.

SUSAN

Amen!

Mitch and Connie both look at Susan with questioning expressions. Susan merely shrugs her shoulders, then begins taping boxes.

Mitch gently grabs Connie by each of her shoulders and looks deeply into her eyes.

MITCH

It's all going to be fine! Trust me on this.

Mitch nods towards the boxes.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Now, what needs to go?

Connie points to a couple of boxes. Mitch picks them up and exits the office with them.

TITLE: FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY - SEVEN YEARS LATER

INT. CONNIE'S HOME OFFICE - AFTERNOON

JORDAN TOMAS (32), shortstop with the Cincinnati Reds, attired in a grey silk suit, walks around Connie's office, admiring all the photos on the wall and Mitch's awards, including three certificates for completing the Ironman Competition, one indicating (Top Ten Finisher).

Connie (38) enters the office and takes a seat behind her desk and motions Jordan to a seat in front of her desk. Jordan sits.

CONNIE

Jordan, how nice to finally meet you. I apologize for being late, but I ran into a little traffic after dropping Mitch Jr. off at his soccer practice.

JORDAN TOMAS

No problem. And I'm so happy to finally meet you. I want to thank you for agreeing to talk with me. Chris and Landon and Reggie all rave about how you've helped them.

Connie glances at some papers on her desk.

CONNIE

Let's see... you're the shortstop for the Reds?

JORDAN TOMAS

Yes, ma'am.

CONNIE

So, how can I help you? What exactly are you looking for?

JORDAN TOMAS

Well, this season's over and I'm not as young as I used to be... obviously. I want to play baseball a few more years, so I need to build my strength and stamina and shave a second or two off my base running or I'll be gone soon.

(MORE)

JORDAN TOMAS (CONT'D)

The younger guys are just too strong and fast now.

CONNIE

I see.

JORDAN TOMAS

Do you think you can help me?

CONNIE

How much time do you have?

JORDAN TOMAS

(confused by the question)
Huh? What?

CONNIE

When do you need to reach your target?

JORDAN TOMAS

By spring training.

CONNIE

That would be mid-to-late February, right?

JORDAN TOMAS

Right.

CONNIE

And how much time can you commit?

JORDAN TOMAS

As much as you need.

CONNIE

Are you single or married?

JORDAN TOMAS

(puzzled expression)
Single. Why?

CONNIE

Are you willing to reside with us, here?

JORDAN TOMAS

(confused)
What?

CONNIE

For the best bang for your buck, it would be best if you stayed right here with us while you're in training.

JORDAN TOMAS

I can do that... What about your husband?

CONNIE

Mitch? He's all for it. As a matter of fact, you'll be working out alongside him just about every day.

JORDAN TOMAS

(glancing at a photo of Mitch crossing the Ironman finish line)

What's he do?

CONNIE

Mitch is the head of the Army ROTC department at the University of Kentucky... in Lexington.

JORDAN TOMAS

Don't get me wrong... You're the expert here... I mean Mitch and his accomplishments are admirable... but isn't he a little old?

Connie leans forward, resting her elbows on her desk and interrupts Jordan.

CONNIE

Oh, trust me, Jordan. He may be 42 years old, and he may not beat you in any sprint races, but he'll sure give you a good run for your money.

(pause)

Jordan, you said you wanted more longevity to your baseball career. Mitch is the epitome of longevity and remaining physically fit. You'll be lucky if you can hang with him during the workouts.

Connie stands and walks to the front of her desk and sits on it.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Look, Jordan, Mitch and I are a team.

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I wouldn't be successful without him, and he wouldn't be as successful without me. He trains alongside my clients. That's the way we do it... and it works.

Connie walks back around to her chair behind her desk.

JORDAN TOMAS

OK.

CONNIE

So, when can you start?

JORDAN TOMAS

Since the season is over... just about any time you want.

CONNIE

How about next week... Monday? Can you be here by 6:00 AM?

JORDAN TOMAS

I guess so.

CONNIE

Jordan, is that a Yes? or No?

JORDAN TOMAS

Yes, I can be here at that time.

CONNIE

Alright. We'll plan on beginning next Monday morning. I'll email you with other details.

JORDAN TOMAS

Sounds good.

Connie stands up and offers a handshake. Jordan stands up and takes it.

JORDAN TOMAS (CONT'D)

Thank you. I'll see you next week.

Connie escorts Jordan to the door.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- Mitch (42) and Jordan in sweaty sweatsuits, jogging along a back road. It's frosty outside and we can see their BREATH as they exhale.

- Mitch and Jordan knocking out pushups.
- Mitch and Jordan knocking out situps.
- Mitch and Jordan doing pullups on a chin-up bar. Mitch shifts to one-handed chin-ups.
- Mitch and Jordan tossing a weighted medicine ball to each other.
- Mitch and Jordan on battle ropes.
- Mitch and Jordan cycling fast down a back road.
- Mitch and Jordan swimming laps at a local pool.
- Mitch and Jordan and MITCH JR. (8) playing catch.
- Mitch and Jordan, both quite sweaty, sprinting at the end of a long jog. Both GASPING for breath.

END MONTAGE

MAY 1998

EXT. SOFT BALL FIELD - NIGHT

Connie and Jordan sit in the bleachers along with about a couple dozen other SPECTATORS, watching a softball game. Mitch's TEAM is in the field, with Mitch playing center field. Jordan's arm is in a sling.

JORDAN TOMAS

Thanks for helping me with my injury.

CONNIE

Sure, no problem. That was some brutal collision you had.

JORDAN TOMAS

Yeah, neither one of us saw each other when we were going for the ball.

CONNIE

It happens more frequently than one would think.

JORDAN TOMAS

How long do you think it will take me to get off the disabled list and back in the lineup?

CONNIE

I think only a couple weeks. Good thing you didn't have anything broken or any tears - just some strained ligaments and tendons, according to the doctors' reports.

JORDAN TOMAS

Yeah, I guess it could have been a lot worse.

CONNIE

We'll get you back into form in no time.

A RUNNER slides into third base with a high throw from the LEFT FIELDER.

MITCH JR. (age 8) runs up and taps Connie on the arm.

MITCH JR.

Hey Mom, can I go play ball with the other kids?

Connie looks and sees a group of YOUNG BOYS tossing a football around in an open area near the left field fence.

CONNIE

I guess. But go easy on them.

She tousles his hair as he turns to run off.

JORDAN TOMAS

Good kid!

CONNIE

Thanks. He definitely takes after his dad.

A BATTER steps up to the plate. He swings at the first pitch and hits a fly ball to center field. The runner on third tags up.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Oh no. That idiot's going to try and take home.

Mitch catches the ball and rifles a throw to the CATCHER who tags the runner out by a couple steps.

JORDAN TOMAS

Holy shit!

Jordan glances at Connie and puts his hand over his mouth.

JORDAN TOMAS (CONT'D)

Sorry about that.

CONNIE

(snickering)

Well, that guy was an idiot.

Later, Mitch is at bat. The pitcher lobs a nice slow pitch towards the plate. Mitch swings and connects. The outfielder didn't even bother to try to go after it... it was that far gone over the fence.

JORDAN TOMAS

Wow! That's his third homer tonight.

CONNIE

(between bites of popcorn)

Yep. And he didn't even get all of that one.

JORDAN TOMAS

Unbelievable!

CONNIE

Yep.

INT. MITCH JONES' HOUSE - EVENING

Mitch, Connie, Mitch Jr., and Jordan are sitting around the dining room table, finishing their meal.

MITCH JR.

Mom, can I go watch TV?

CONNIE

Yes, but nothing inappropriate. Got it!?

Mitch Jr. nods his head and runs off into the other room.

JORDAN TOMAS

(to Connie)

That was delicious! What'd you call it?

CONNIE
 (grinning and glancing at
 Mitch)
 Maidrite.

JORDAN TOMAS
 Well, it certainly was made right.

JORDAN TOMAS (CONT'D)
 (looking at Mitch)
 Mitch, I heard you were a good
 baseball player when you were
 young.

MITCH
 Who'd you hear that from?

JORDAN TOMAS
 (glancing at Connie)
 A little bird told me.

Mitch glances at Connie, than back at Jordan.

MITCH
 Yeah? Well maybe.

JORDAN TOMAS
 So, why'd you give it up?

MITCH
 I guess I felt a higher calling
 than baseball.

JORDAN TOMAS
 That's admirable, but you've done
 your duty. Why not see about
 playing ball again.

MITCH
 I do. You saw me last night.

JORDAN TOMAS
 Yeah, and that was something else!
 But I'm talking about real
 baseball.

Mitch gives Jordan a puzzled look.

JORDAN TOMAS (CONT'D)
 You know, the Reds will be
 conducting open tryouts in early
 June, and I think you should try
 out.

Mitch briefly looks at Connie before responding.

MITCH
I'm too old now.

JORDAN TOMAS
Maybe... maybe not. You won't
really know unless you try out.

Mitch again looks at Connie.

CONNIE
Like Jordan said, you won't really
know unless you try out. And if you
don't at least try out, you may
have regrets sometime down the
road. And honey, I don't want you
to have any regrets.

JORDAN TOMAS
Hey, if it will make you feel more
comfortable, I'll try to ensure I'm
there.

MITCH
I'll think about it. Anyway,
(chuckling)
How can you be there if you're
playing in a game somewhere else
and preparing for the All Star
Game?

Everyone chuckles.

JORDAN TOMAS
(glancing at his arm in
his sling)
Well, that's not going to happen
this year.

MITCH
(giving Connie a quick
smile)
Ayuh. Sorry about that.

JORDAN TOMAS
No problem.
(serious)
Seriously, think real hard about
it.

Mitch again looks at Connie and she gives him a nod and a
warm smile.

EXT. RIVERFRONT STADIUM, CINCINNATI - DAY

Mitch is standing in the line for the registration table along with about thirty YOUNG MEN between the ages of 16-22.

A hand reaches out and taps Mitch on the shoulder. Mitch turns around to find Jordan standing there.

JORDAN TOMAS

Hey, Mitch. Glad to see you came today.

They embrace in a little "man-hug" and pat each other on the back.

JORDAN TOMAS (CONT'D)

I've got someone I'd like you to meet.

Jordan nods in the direction of a man (mid-50s) clad in a Cincinnati Reds polo shirt standing about forty feet away and dissecting with his eyes the line of REGISTRANTS.

Mitch follows Jordan as they walk to the man.

JORDAN TOMAS (CONT'D)

Coach, this is Mitch Jones, the guy I've been telling you about. Mitch, this is MILTON BAGLEY, senior scout for the Reds.

Mitch extends his hand.

MITCH

Nice to meet you, sir.

Bagley shakes Mitch's hand, and without letting go, quickly examines Mitch from head to toe.

MILTON BAGLEY

You've got a good firm handshake. You look fit. But Jordan tells me you're forty-two.

MITCH

Forty-three now, sir.

MILTON BAGLEY

I have to tell you, I have my doubts. But I'm allowing you to tryout solely based on Jordan's recommendation. You'll get no breaks during this tryout.

(MORE)

MILTON BAGLEY (CONT'D)

You'll be treated just the same as all the twenty-year olds. You understand?

MITCH

Yes, sir. And I wouldn't expect anything less.

MILTON BAGLEY

OK. We'll see.

MITCH

Thank you, sir. And nice meeting you.

Bagley turns and walks away. Mitch turns and looks at Jordan, who shrugs his shoulders.

JORDAN TOMAS

He may not be the friendliest guy, but he's a good scout.

Mitch nods his head and returns to the registration line.

Later, two lines of HOPEFULS are formed in the outfield. A gun sounds and two individuals race each other through a sixty-yard course.

Mitch is stretching as he moves up in the line. Finally, it's his turn.

The gun sounds and Mitch and his opponent are in a wild sprint. Although Mitch is nosed out, he records a time of 6.7 seconds.

The OTHER RUNNER turns to Mitch following the race.

OTHER RUNNER

Nice job. You're pretty fast.

MITCH

(slapping the other runner on the back)

Yeah, but you're faster.

Later, Mitch is loosening up in the outfield, tossing a ball with another HOPEFUL PITCHER. He sees OTHER REGISTRANTS looking at him and talking amongst themselves with their gloves concealing their mouths as they talk.

HOPEFUL PITCHER

Don't mind them. They're just curious as to who this old man is and what he's doing here.

MITCH

Yeah, me too.

HOPEFUL PITCHER

Talk is that it's just another
Reds' publicity stunt.

MITCH

Yeah, well it could likely be just
that.

HOPEFUL PITCHER

I heard that if you can't break
ninety, you're going home right
away.

MITCH

That's pretty harsh.

HOPEFUL PITCHER

Yeah, but we don't make the rules -
they do.

MITCH

You OK with that?

HOPEFUL PITCHER

Yeah, I think so. What about you?

MITCH

Yeah, I hope so.

(pause)

Well, good luck.

HOPEFUL PITCHER

Yeah. You too.

COACH BRYANT, Reds' pitching coach and attired in a Reds
uniform, calls out from his position near the pitching mound.

COACH BRYANT

Jones! You're up.

Mitch jogs out to the mound, does a final stretch of his arm
and shoulder, and picks up a ball out of a five-gallon bucket
while Coach Bryant gives the instructions.

COACH BRYANT (CONT'D)

You've got fifteen pitches... five
fastballs, five breaking balls, and
end with five more fastballs.

You've got five warmup throws, then
you're recorded. Got it?

MITCH
Stretch? Or windup?

COACH BRYANT
Although stretch is preferred, you
can wind up if you want.

Mitch nods his head, scrapes the rubber with his right foot,
then throws his five warmup pitches - about 3/4 speed.

COACH BRYANT (CONT'D)
OK, you're on the record now.

Mitch again nods his understanding. He sets up from the
stretch position, then fires a fastball right over the heart
of the plate. The ball POPS when it hits the catcher's mitt.
The radar gun display reads "93" mph.

Mitch sets up again, and throws his second pitch - "97" mph.

His next pitch registers "99" mph.

Most eyes in the stadium are fixed on Mitch as he delivers
his next pitch - "101" mph.

The REGISTRANT who was talking behind his glove about Mitch
earlier looks to the other player.

REGISTRANT
Impossible!

Mitch throws his fifth fastball, another strike, this time
with an audible GRUNT. The POP is more pronounced as the ball
hits the catcher's mitt. All activity in the stadium has
stopped as everyone eyes the speed display - "103" mph.

REGISTRANT (CONT'D)
(to his playing partner)
And that was from the stretch?

COACH BRYANT
OK. Let's see some breaking balls.

Mitch sets up and throws a 88-mph curveball that appears to
have dropped off of a table, bouncing right on top of home
plate.

He then throws a slider that looked like it broke 3-feet.

Another two curveballs and another slider.

COACH BRYANT (CONT'D)
OK. Give us the heat again.

Mitch throws five more pitches from the stretch, each one POPPING the mitt and exceeding "100" mph.

It's afternoon now, and the number of hopefuls has dwindled significantly. The REMAINING INDIVIDUALS are awaiting their turn in the batting cage. A double-tire pitching machine is set up on the pitcher's mound and rifles pitches to the awaiting hitters.

COACH BROWN, the Reds batting coach stands near the batting cage.

COACH BROWN
Jones! You're on deck!

Mitch grabs his bat, adjusts his helmet, and walks to the on-deck circle, where he begins swinging and loosening up, timing his swing with the release of the ball into the pitching machine.

Soon, it's his turn.

COACH BROWN (CONT'D)
You get ten pitches... all eighty-five miles per hour. Every pitch counts. Got it?!

Mitch nods his head, then steps into the batter's box.

The first pitch, Mitch checks his swing as the ball zips through the heart of the strike zone. The next pitch, he rips a foul ball down the third base line.

The third pitch, Mitch hits a line drive right through the pitching mound, nearly hitting the INDIVIDUAL manning the pitching machine. The next pitch, Mitch sends into the seats behind the left field wall.

The fifth pitch, Mitch sends a screamer down the first base line and into the right field corner. The sixth pitch is hit over the wall in center field. The next, over the wall in left field.

It looks like he has found his groove because the last three pitches, Mitch crushes into the seats behind the outfield walls.

COACH BROWN (CONT'D)
OK. That's enough. Next!

Mitch is putting his gear away in his bag when Jordan walks up.

JORDAN TOMAS

Well, that was some show you put on out there today.

MITCH

Was it?

JORDAN TOMAS

Yeah! Six homers on ten pitches. No one else came close to that.

MITCH

Well, they were feeding me softballs out there.

JORDAN TOMAS

Yeah... and no other pitcher broke a hundred. You impressed a lot of people today.

MITCH

Well, we'll see.

JORDAN TOMAS

I'm sure they'll be talking it over, but I'd bet a paycheck that you'll be getting a call from them in a couple days.

MITCH

Well, if it happens, it happens. But I'm not going to hold my breath waiting for a call.

JORDAN TOMAS

How can you be so stoic all the time? Man, you're a rock... You never show any emotion.

MITCH

That's just the way I am... the way I was raised... not to get too hyped up because you might not get what you want and then get angry. It's better just to not get your hopes up in the first place.

JORDAN TOMAS

Well, that's not me.

MITCH

(breaking into a big grin)
And I'm glad it's not.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

You have enough hope for both of us. So, I don't need to worry about that.

Mitch SLAPS Jordan on the back.

JORDAN TOMAS

(chuckling)

Thanks... I think.

MITCH

You're welcome.

They walk out of the ballpark together.

INT. MITCH JONES' HOUSE - DAY

Mitch and Connie are sitting in chairs in their living room. Milton Bagley of the Reds is sitting on the sofa.

MILTON BAGLEY

Mitch, I have to say that in all my years scouting, I've never seen anything like the demonstration you put on last Saturday.

MITCH

Well, I could have done better.

MILTON BAGLEY

I don't know how. Of all those youngsters who were trying out that day, I'm only visiting one... You, Mitch.

MITCH

What about the others? There were some fine ballplayers there that day.

MILTON BAGLEY

Yes, and maybe someone will get picked up by a team somewhere down the line. But not this time. You were the only one who met, or should I say, exceeded the standards we had set for those tryouts. You impressed a lot of people.

MITCH

That's very kind of you to say.

MILTON BAGLEY

Mitch, we'd like to offer you a contract to play in the Reds' franchise. Of course, you'll have to spend some time in the minors first and work your way up, just like everyone else. Like I said, we can't cut you any slack. You'll be treated just like everybody else.

Mitch nods his head.

CONNIE

When would he start?

MILTON BAGLEY

We'd like Mitch to begin as soon as possible. We'd like for him to start with our double-A team in Chattanooga. We need to ensure that he can withstand the day-to-day rigors of baseball.

CONNIE

That won't work! If Mitch is going to play with the Reds, he needs to start no lower than the Louisville Bats.

MILTON BAGLEY

That's International League... triple-A.

CONNIE

Yep, I know. And Mitch is more than good enough for that team. And he can withstand the rigors of day-to-day baseball. Look, he's a lieutenant colonel in the Army and withstands greater daily rigors than what baseball entails. Baseball is fun-time... play-time for him, it's not work... and it's definitely easier than Army life.

MILTON BAGLEY

You're firm on this?

CONNIE

(looks at Mitch)
Yes. We're firm on this.

MILTON BAGLEY

OK. I'm sure I can arrange that.
 (looks at Mitch)
 When can you start?

MITCH

I'll have to put in my retirement paperwork. I'm not sure how long it will take to be approved, but with all the excess leave time I've accrued, I imagine I could be available in a couple weeks.

MILTON BAGLEY

That sounds good. That gives me enough time to make the necessary roster changes to get you on board. I'll have a contract sent to you as soon as I get things firmed up.

Mitch nods his head.

CONNIE

Thank you, Mr. Bagley.

They all stand, and Bagley shakes everyone's hands. Mitch and Connie escort Bagley to the front door. Bagley turns as he's about to pass through the doorway.

MILTON BAGLEY

We'll be in touch.

After the front door is closed, Mitch and Connie stand there, looking at each other in disbelief. Suddenly, Connie springs forward and wraps her arms around Mitch.

CONNIE

You did it, Mitch. You did it!

Mitch pushes Connie away slightly.

MITCH

You handled that so well in there.
 I was a nervous wreck.

We see perspiration all over his forehead and neck.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I'm all sweaty.

Connie re-wraps her arms around him and squeezes him tightly.

CONNIE

I know.

INT. MITCH JR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mitch Jr. (now 9 years old) is laying in his bed, reading a comic book. Mitch softly knocks on the door, opens it, enters the room, and sits on the edge of the bed.

MITCH
I need to talk to you about something.

MITCH JR.
Yeah, Dad? What?

MITCH
It looks like there's going to be a few changes happening around here.

MITCH JR.
Like what?

MITCH
Well, I'm going to quit the Army.

MITCH JR.
And what are you going to do then?

MITCH
Well, I've been asked to play baseball for the Cincinnati Reds.

Mitch Jr. just stares at his father as he processes what was just said.

MITCH (CONT'D)
That means that during the baseball season, I'll be away from home a lot... especially when we have games in other cities. When we have home games... in Cincinnati... I should be able to come home to live.

Mitch Jr. still doesn't respond other than his blank stare.

MITCH (CONT'D)
And after the season is over, I'll be able to come home and stay here until the next season begins.

Still no response from Mitch Jr.

MITCH (CONT'D)
What do you think of that?

Mitch Jr. simply shrugs his shoulders.

MITCH (CONT'D)
I know it's going to be a lot
different around here... a lot
harder for all of us... with me
being gone much of the time. But I
hope you understand that it's just
for a while... not forever.

Mitch Jr. merely looks at his dad with a blank expression.

MITCH (CONT'D)
And I'll try to call every day and
come home whenever I can.

Mitch Jr. only shrugs his shoulders again

INT. JONES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Mitch enters the bedroom and slips into bed, Connie is
already sitting in the bed, reading a book.

CONNIE
So, how'd that go?

MITCH
Rough.

CONNIE
What do you mean - rough?

MITCH
I don't think he understands what's
going on. I thought he'd be
excited.

CONNIE
I'm sure it will sink in as time
goes on.

MITCH
I'm afraid.

CONNIE
About what?

MITCH
Afraid that I'm making the wrong
decision here.

CONNIE
Nonsense! You've never been afraid
of anything in your whole life.
(pauses as she looks
deeply at Mitch)
Have you?

MITCH
(beginning to tear up)
Yes.

CONNIE
When? You've never shown any fear.

MITCH
When my dad died... When I was in
battle Afghanistan... And after I
got wounded. When I entered the
Army Ten-miler and the Ironman for
the first times.

CONNIE
Really? How so?

MITCH
That I wouldn't be able to finish
and would let you and everyone else
down.

CONNIE
That's nonsense.

MITCH
Then, when you were getting out of
the Army, I was afraid that I'd
hastily forced you into a bad
decision.

CONNIE
Rubbish!

MITCH
(tears begin to well up in
his eyes)
And now this... I gambling with
giving up a good career. And I
don't want my personal desires to
adversely affect our family. This
family is my life.

Connie sets aside her book and turns and embraces Mitch.

CONNIE

And baseball is your passion. We've thought this through and I firmly believe you're doing the right thing.

MITCH

But what if I fail? I've never failed at anything in my life.

CONNIE

At least give it a try. If it doesn't work out, then it doesn't work out... and we'll move on from there.

MITCH

And what about you and Mitch? I'll be gone a lot.

CONNIE

Mitch and I will both be fine. You'll just need to focus on playing your best.

Mitch hugs Connie and they kiss passionately.

TITLE: LOUISVILLE SLUGGER FIELD
 HOME OF THE LOUISVILLE BATS

INT. LOUISVILLE BATS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

TEAM MEMBERS are conversing while suiting up for today's game. Team manager, RICH SWEET (40), enters the room with Mitch following close behind.

RICH SWEET

Listen up!

(pauses until it gets
quiet)

This here is Mitch Jones, just signed with the Reds as a pitcher, and assigned to play with us.

A voice (PLAYER 1) from the back of the room is heard.

PLAYER 1 (O.C.)

Hey, gramps, did you bring your grandson with you to be our batboy?

The room is filled with chuckles. Mitch merely shakes his head and smiles.

RICH SWEET

OK. Enough. Mitch's going to be with us, starting today. So get to know him. Jeff, show Mitch his locker.

Rich Sweet turns, pats Mitch on the shoulder and exits the room.

JEFF ZURICH (24) walks up to Mitch and offers his hand.

JEFF ZURICH

I'm Jeff.

MITCH

Mitch.

JEFF ZURICH

Where'd you play your college ball?

MITCH

Marshalltown Community College.

JEFF ZURICH

(looking surprised)
Really?

MITCH

Yeah, really. Two years, back in the late 70s.

JEFF ZURICH

Oh....

Jeff points to a locker with Mitch's uniform hanging neatly inside it - number 43.

JEFF ZURICH (CONT'D)

Looks like you're going to be over there.

MITCH

OK. Thanks.

Jeff walks away, and Mitch begins taking items out of the dufflebag he's carrying.

EXT. LOUISVILLE SLUGGER FIELD - LATER

Mitch sits watching the game from the bullpen. The phone on the wall RINGS. The PITCHING COACH answers it, listens briefly, then returns the handle to the receiver.

COACH
(shouts)
Jones, start warming up.

Mitch jumps up, begins stretching his arm and shoulder, picks up a ball from the five-gallon bucket nearby and walks to the bullpen mound. He starts throwing easy tosses to the CATCHER, each one gaining more speed.

The phone rings again. The coach answers and listens, then hangs up.

COACH (CONT'D)
You'll be going in at the start of the next inning.

Mitch nods his head in acknowledgement.

A few minutes later, Mitch is on the mound throwing some warm-up pitches while the PA ANNOUNCER drones through the amplified system.

PA ANNOUNCER
Well, folks, it's the top of the ninth and it looks like the Bats have called in their newest member, Mitch Jones, to try to close out this ballgame. As a matter of fact, Jones just arrived with the team just this morning. Let's all give Mitch Jones a warm Louisville welcome as he attempts to salvage the Bats' 6-4 lead.

Following the last warm-up pitch, the catcher, JOSE MARTIN (28), trots out to the mound. Mitch is digging at the pitching rubber with his cleated foot.

JOSE MARTIN
You ready, Mitch?

MITCH
Yeah, I guess so.

JOSE MARTIN

Well, don't hurt yourself. You've only got to get three outs with less than two runs scoring. You up for that? You know the signals?

MITCH

Yep.

JOSE MARTIN

OK. Let's give 'em hell.

Jose turns and trots back to his position behind the plate.

Mitch's first pitch - a 98 mph fastball down the heart of the strike zone - Jose's mitt POPS when the ball hits it. The BATTER doesn't even attempt a swing at that pitch.

His second pitch - a 87 mph curveball that took a nose-dive just before it reached the plate. The batter swings wildly, and misses wildly.

Mitch's third pitch is another fastball, this time clocking in at 101 mph - POP! The batter swings, but is way too late.

The NEXT BATTER steps up to the plate. Mitch winds up and delivers a 102 mph fastball that the batter merely watches go by. POP!

His next pitch is a slider that starts towards the right-handed batter, freezing the batter in his shoes, then breaks over the plate for strike two.

Mitch's third pitch is another 101 mph fastball which the batter hesitates too long - POP! - and swings too late.

The THIRD BATTER - a lefty - steps up to the plate. Mitch's first pitch to him looks like it will be well outside, but then breaks across the plate. The batter checked his swing, though. Strike one.

Mitch's second pitch is a 102 mph fastball high in the zone. POP! Although the batter swings, he misses it by a mile.

Mitch's third pitch is a 85 mph curveball that Mitch disguised as a fastball heading for the heart of the strike zone, but then suddenly takes a nose-dive right as it reaches home plate. The batter, expecting a third-pitch fastball, swings and misses the ball by at least a foot.

Mitch strikes out the side with nine pitches.

JOSE trots out to the mound and hands Mitch the ball.

JOSE MARTIN (CONT'D)
Nice pitching!

MITCH
Thanks.

As they walk off the field, the PA announcer is heard.

PA ANNOUNCER
Well, how about that folks! The
Bats win with a nine-pitch ninth
inning by Mitch Jones. I'm not sure
where Jones has been, but welcome
to the Louisville Bats!

INT. LOUISVILLE BATS LOCKER ROOM - A COUPLE WEEKS LATER - DAY

Mitch is getting dressed after showering following a ball game. Jose Martin, the catcher, has ice-packs on his knees as he sits there on the bench watching Mitch. He sees Mitch's damaged foot (even though covered by a sock) and ugly scar running up the length of his lower leg.

JOSE MARTIN
(nodding his head towards
Mitch's foot)
Hey, Mitch. What's up with that?

MITCH
What, my leg and foot?

JOSE MARTIN
Yeah.

MITCH
Nothing really... just an old war
injury.

JOSE MARTIN
War injury? You were in the Army?

MITCH
Yeah.

JOSE MARTIN
What happened?

MITCH
It got shot up.

JOSE MARTIN
Did it hurt?

MITCH
Then? Yeah... some.

JOSE MARTIN
How'd you get through that?

MITCH
I just wouldn't think about it.

JOSE MARTIN
What about now? You're old and I
don't never see the trainers
working on you. How come?

MITCH
(chuckling)
I am old... but I have my own
private trainer at home waiting to
take care of me.

JOSE MARTIN
No, seriously, Mitch.

Mitch thinks for a moment than looks directly at Jose.

MITCH
Pain is an element of the mind.
When my leg and foot got injured, I
told myself that if I could
overcome that pain, I could
overcome any pain. I just don't let
pain affect me.

JOSE MARTIN
Wow... OK.

MITCH
(chuckling)
Plus, I do have my own personal
trainer at home. And she does take
good care of me.

JOSE MARTIN
OK. Can you show me..? teach me how
to do that? My knees....

MITCH
(shrugging his shoulders)
Yeah, I suppose we can try.

JOSE MARTIN
Thanks, man!

INT. JONES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mitch and Connie are lying in bed, both reading. Mitch puts down his book and looks at Connie.

MITCH

You know, most of the Bats players make less than twenty thousand a year.

CONNIE

Yes, but they get their housing free, and they only play for about seven months each year.

MITCH

Maybe, but that's still not enough to live on for a whole year. A bunch of them pick up side jobs during the off season.

CONNIE

Such as?

MITCH

Some mow yards and do some landscaping work. Some work as bus boys in restaurants. Some work as baggers in grocery stores. One even drives a taxi cab. I mean, they're all over the place, pulling odd jobs.

CONNIE

And your point is..?

MITCH

Oh, I don't know. I just wish we could do something for them... to make life a little easier for them.

CONNIE

Honey, you're so soft-hearted. But you can't change the world. There's too many minor league players in the game. And what could you... one person... do?

MITCH

(thinking hard)
Really, not much.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

But maybe we could bring them here a few times, since we live close by, and give 'em a good meal and a chance to relax. Give 'em a family away from their family. Maybe provide them with some free consultation regarding strength conditioning and staying in shape. Maybe celebrate their birthday or treat them to a party... at least help them feel special.

CONNIE

Honey, let's think about this some more before we act. I don't want you to start something that you won't be able to finish. But I do want you to know, though, that whatever you decide, I'll support you.

MITCH

Thank you, dear. Good night.

Mitch leans over and gives Connie a kiss. They both put their books on their respective night stands and turn out their respective lamps.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- One of the ball players blowing out twenty-one candles on a large birthday cake in the Bats' locker room, following a ball game. Mitch and many other players are holding bottles of beer. Mitch offers the player a beer.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Here's to being 21. You're legal now.

ALL

Here, here! Hooray! Yeah! etc.

-- Mitch buying tickets for a couple ballplayers at a movie theater.

-- Mitch and Connie and Mitch Jr. hosting a couple ballplayers at their house for a meal.

-- Mitch playing putt-putt with Mitch Jr. and a couple ballplayers.

-- Connie showing a couple players some conditioning drills in her gym at her home.

- Mitch and Mitch Jr. playing catch with a couple of players.
- Mitch riding a roller coaster with Mitch Jr. and a couple ballplayers at Kentucky Kingdom and Hurricane Bay.

END MONTAGE

INT. RIVERFRONT STADIUM, CINCINNATI - DAY

Three men are sitting in an executive office. CARL LINDER (80), owner of the Cincinnati Reds, sits behind his large executive desk. JIM BOWDEN (40), the general manager of the Reds and Milton Bagley (55) sit in two chairs in front of the desk.

CARL LINDER

I just read a blurb in the Digest about a player in Louisville tearing up the International League.

JIM BOWDEN

Really? I didn't see it.

MILTON BAGLEY

Me either. But I would assume that it's about our new player there - Mitch Jones.

CARL LINDER

Yeah, that's him. How come I hadn't heard of him before?

JIM BOWDEN

(looking at Bagley)
Isn't he that new rookie we just took on?

MILTON BAGLEY

Yeah. He's been with the Bats for about six weeks.

CARL LINDER

Where'd he come from?

Bowden and Bagley look at each other.

MILTON BAGLEY

From the Army.

CARL LINDER

The Army?

MILTON BAGLEY

Yeah.

CARL LINDER

And we put him directly into the
Bats mid-season with no prior
experience?

MILTON BAGLEY

Yeah. That was my decision.

CARL LINDER

Says here, he's pretty old.

MILTON BAGLEY

I think he's 43.

CARL LINDER

43?! Ball players are retiring
before that age.

MILTON BAGLEY

Yeah, but you should see this guy
play.

CARL LINDER

What position?

MILTON BAGLEY

Well, he's a pitcher.

CARL LINDER

(interrupting)

Yeah, but a 43 year old pitcher?
Come on, Milt, what were you
thinking.

MILTON BAGLEY

Hey, he throws over 100 and has the
best ERA in the league.

CARL LINDER

100..?

MILTON BAGLEY

Yeah, and he hits, too.

CARL LINDER

Says here that he's hitting 422
with 17 home runs.

MILTON BAGLEY

That doesn't surprise me.

CARL LINDER
And all in six weeks? How's that possible for a pitcher?

MILTON BAGLEY
About that. On days he's not pitching, he's the DH.

CARL LINDER
Why the Bats?

MILTON BAGLEY
I wanted to vet him to make sure he could handle the daily play.

CARL LINDER
And is he?

MILTON BAGLEY
Looks that way.

CARL LINDER
(to Bowden)
Can we bring this guy... Jones... up here on the expanded roster before the September deadline?

JIM BOWDEN
I don't see why not.

CARL LINDER
(to Bagley)
Think he'll make it?

MILTON BAGLEY
He plays like someone half his age. Yeah, I think he'll make it.

CARL LINDER
(to Bowden)
OK, let's get it done... before he gets any older.

INT. LOUISVILLE BATS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The players are celebrating after another victory on the field. Rich Sweet, the GM, enters the room and walks over to Mitch, who is sitting on the bench in front of his locker.

RICH SWEET
Mitch, can I see you for a minute?

MITCH
Sure, skipper.

RICH SWEET
(nodding towards his
office)
In my office.

Mitch stands and follows Sweet into his office.

RICH SWEET (CONT'D)
Close the door and take a seat.

Mitch closes the door and sits in the chair in front of Rich's cluttered desk. One-by-one, the other players stop what they were doing and look towards the office to try to ascertain what was going on. The silence becomes palpable.

MITCH
What's up?

RICH SWEET
(very somber)
Mitch, you've been a great asset to our team... putting us in contention for the championship.

MITCH
Well, it's been a team effort.

RICH SWEET
Yes, it has. And you've been a great leader in this effort.
(pause)
But, as you know, I'm paid to make tough decisions.

Mitch gets a puzzled, concerned look on his face.

Outside the office the players are crowding around the office window, studying what is playing out in the office.

JOSE MARTIN
(whispering to Jeff)
What's going on?

JEFF ZURICH
I don't know, but it looks pretty serious.

RICH SWEET
Mitch... I've got to let you go.

Mitch's expression changes to one of confusion. He just sits there stunned.

JEFF ZURICH
(to Jose Martin)
I think Mitch just got fired.

JOSE MARTIN
What? No way! He's just the best player on the team.

Back inside the office.

RICH SWEET
I'm sorry.

MITCH
I'm sure it's not your fault.

RICH SWEET
No, you're right about that.

MITCH
Can I ask... What happened?

RICH SWEET
I got a call from the front office just a few minutes ago... and I was ordered to cut you from our roster today.

MITCH
But why? Did they tell you?

RICH SWEET
Yeah. It seems that you can't be on our roster and the Red's roster at the same time. I guess there's some rule against that.

MITCH
Huh?

RICH SWEET
(grinning now)
You've been called up to the Reds.

MITCH
What?

RICH SWEET
You're going to Cincinnati to play for the Reds.

MITCH
What? When?

RICH SWEET
You're to report there tomorrow.

MITCH
No way!

RICH SWEET
Yes, way! And congratulations!

Sweet stands and offers his hand. Mitch stands, comes around to the side of the desk, grasps Sweet's hand and pulls him into a big bear hug.

MITCH
(somewhat choking up)
Thanks, coach! Thanks for all
you've done.

Sweet separates himself from Mitch slightly and looks him directly in the eyes.

RICH SWEET
You know, you didn't quite handle
this like I thought you would.
Normally, when I tell a player I'm
releasing them, they shove all the
stuff on my desk onto the floor and
cuss me out royally. But you didn't
do that. You were honorable the
entire time. I'll really miss you.

MITCH
Thanks, coach.

RICH SWEET
No, thank you. Come, I've got an
announcement to make to the rest of
the team.

They exit the office and face a stunningly silent and curious team.

RICH SWEET (CONT'D)
Guys, I've got some good news...
and some bad news for you... Mitch
is leaving us.

Audible moans and groans are heard from the team.

PLAYER 1
That's a load of shit, man!

RICH SWEET

That was the bad news. But the good news is that Mitch is going to the show. He reports to the Reds in Cincinnati tomorrow.

CHEERS break out throughout the locker room. Players are slapping Mitch on the back and congratulating him. Jeff and Jose approach Mitch.

JOSE MARTIN

Hey, Mitch, congratulations! You'll do good.

JEFF

Yeah, congratulations! It seems like just a couple weeks ago I was showing you where your locker was. Now, you've got to start all over again.

Mitch chuckles and gives them each a big hug.

MITCH

Thanks, guys. You've been great!

EXT. KAUFFMAN STADIUM (HOME OF THE ROYALS) - DAY

Mitch sits in the dugout, warm up jacket over his throwing arm.

Jordan Tomas comes up and gives a playful punch on Mitch's non-throwing arm.

JORDAN TOMAS

Good game today. Only three hits off you on your first start. Not bad for a rookie.

MITCH

Yeah, just lucky.

JORDAN TOMAS

Yeah, sure... Hey, isn't your family here today?

MITCH

Yeah. We're all going to meet at the hotel then go out to dinner. You want to join us?

JORDAN TOMAS
 (thinking for a moment)
 Naw. I think I'll pass today. I'll
 let you enjoy your time with your
 family. But thanks for the offer.

MITCH
 No problem. Maybe next time.

JORDAN TOMAS
 Yeah, sure. Thanks.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - THAT NIGHT

Mitch and Connie are sitting at a table along with Mitch's MOM (now 75), MARK (45) and his WIFE (44), and MIKE (40) and his WIFE (40). Mitch Jr. (9) and five of his COUSINS (ages 7-10) are sitting at another table nearby. While the other cousins are talking and laughing, Mitch Jr. merely sits there and really doesn't interact with them.

MARK
 Wow! Great game today, Mitch. What
 a way to start of your career in
 Major League Baseball.

MIKE
 Yeah. You were really throwing some
 heat today.

MITCH
 Well, I was just lucky to have you
 guys be here and celebrate with me
 today. Thanks.

Mitch glances over to Mitch Jr. and sees him withdrawn.

MARK
 Wouldn't have missed it for the
 world.

MOM
 Mitch, I just want you to know how
 proud I am of you... for all you've
 accomplished.

MITCH
 Thanks, Mom.

MOM
 And your father would be so proud,
 too. I only wish he could have seen
 you play today.

MITCH

Yeah. Me too.

MIKE

Yeah.

(begins snickering)

But Dad would have been yelling at you when you nearly walked that batter in the second inning.

Everyone chuckles. Mitch again looks over at Mitch Jr. - no change.

MARK

Too bad we didn't get to see you bat today, though.

MIKE

Yeah.

MITCH

Well, that's OK. I'm sure there will be plenty of other opportunities for you to laugh at me when I strike out.

Everyone chuckles again.

MIKE

Hey, can you get us tickets to a Cubs game?

MITCH

(chuckling)

Probably, but we'll have to see.

MARK

So, what's it like... living your dream... playing big league ball?

MITCH

Oh, I don't know. I'm excited to be playing, but it's tough being away from Connie and Mitch when we're on the road.

Mitch looks at Connie and she just smiles.

MITCH (CONT'D)

It's not necessarily all the glamour that many think it is. Since our pay is tied to our performance... and with all the fans' expectations...

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)
there's a lot of pressure for us to
constantly perform well.

MARK
But you've handled pressure before.

MITCH
Sure, but this is a little
different.

MIKE
Different than being shot at?

MITCH
(chuckling slightly)
Yes... Different.

MARK
Well, don't let the pressure get to
you. You're really good and we're
all excited to see you playing
where you belong.

Others at the table nod their heads in agreement.

MITCH
Thanks.

Mark holds up his wine glass and offers a toast.

MARK
To Mitch... may your arm mow 'em
down while your bat finds its mark.

Everyone clinks their glasses together while saying "Here
here", "Amen", or "to Mitch".

Mitch merely sits there looking at everyone while wearing a
huge grin, then glances over to his withdrawn son.

EXT. BUSCH STADIUM - DAY

Jordan Tomas takes a seat beside Mitch in the dugout while
the Reds are at bat. They're wearing their "Visitor" uniform.

JORDAN TOMAS
Man, you've been here only a few
weeks and you're tearing things up.
No other pitcher also serves as the
DH when he's not pitching. And not
only that, but you're the oldest
rookie in the major leagues. . .
(MORE)

JORDAN TOMAS (CONT'D)
 maybe even in the history of the
 major leagues.

MITCH
 Well, it's just luck.

JORDAN TOMAS
 Luck, my ass! Your ERA is the
 lowest in the league and your
 batting average is over 400 - these
 don't reflect it as just luck.

Just then, one of the bat boys delivers a folded note to
 Mitch. Mitch opens the note and reads it.

JORDAN TOMAS (CONT'D)
 What? A love note from a stricken
 fan?

MITCH
 No, it's a just a note stating that
 Connie had called and that I need
 to call her back after the game.

JORDAN TOMAS
 Like I said a note from a love-
 stricken fan.

MITCH
 I hope it isn't any thing serious.

JORDAN TOMAS
 Trust me, it's not. Mitch, I'm sure
 she's just missing you.

MITCH
 Yeah, hopefully that's all it is.

JORDAN TOMAS
 Yup. Trust me.

INT. RIVERFRONT STADIUM LOCKER ROOM - SEPTEMBER - DAY

The team is celebrating their victory, but Mitch is sitting
 on the bench in front of his locker, quietly staring at the
 floor. Jordan Tomas approaches Mitch.

JORDAN TOMAS
 Hey, Mitch. Sorry about your game
 today. Hey, Bowden wants to see you
 in his office.

Mitch looks up at Jordan and nods his head in acknowledgment.

INT. BOWDEN'S OFFICE - LATER

Mitch, standing outside Bowden's office, knocks on the door. Bowden waves Mitch in. Mitch enters and closes the door behind him.

JIM BOWDEN

(motioning Mitch to take a seat)

Hey, Mitch, how's it going?

MITCH

Oh, OK, I guess.

JIM BOWDEN

Mitch, I need to ask you what's going on inside your head. These last few days you haven't been the same person you were when you first got here. You had a great batting average going up 'til this week, but you haven't gotten on base - shoot, you haven't even hit the ball this week. And I hate to say it, but the game you pitched today was dismal. That's why I had to take you out so early. What's going on?

MITCH

(after thinking for a moment)

Coach, I know very well what it's like to have subordinates who have some type of problem going on that's affecting their performance. And I know that pride normally keeps that individual from sharing his problem so it can be resolved. And I know how one individual's poor performance can adversely impact on the entire team's performance. I've experienced that as a leader in the Army.

(pause)

I think that's what's happening here and it's obviously affecting the whole team's performance.

JIM BOWDEN

What is?

MITCH

My problem.

JIM BOWDEN

So, what's your problem? And let's see what we can do to fix it.

MITCH

That's the hard part... I don't think you or the Reds can fix it.

JIM BOWDEN

How's that?

MITCH

(after a sizable pause)

I spoke with Connie, my wife, the other day when we were in Saint Louis. She told me that our son, who's nine years old, is having some terrible problems at home and school. The school psychologist suggests that his behaviors are quite common among children who are in single-parent families... with absent father figures.

JIM BOWDEN

Well, that's a simple fix. We'll bring him to all the home games so that he can spend more time with you.

MITCH

Yeah, I've thought about that. But I don't think that will solve the problem. Our remaining schedule has us on the road for nearly all of the remainder of this season. And, if by chance we should make it into the playoffs, since we'd be the low man on the totem pole, we'd be away more than at home.

JIM BOWDEN

Well, there's got to be some other option that would work.

MITCH

I was hoping so, too. But I've been giving this a lot of thought, and that's probably why my mind hasn't been in the game lately, causing my poor performance.

(pause)

I don't see any successful option but one.

JIM BOWDEN

And that is...?

MITCH

I need to resign so I can be with my son and help him. And if I resign now, you should still be able to backfill my slot with another player from Louisville or one of the other farm teams.

JIM BOWDEN

I don't know, Mitch. That sounds rather drastic, doesn't it?

MITCH

Yes. But I think it's the only viable option.

JIM BOWDEN

You know that if you resign now, it would be impossible to get back on with the Reds, and maybe even with any other team. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you.

MITCH

Yeah, I understand that... and I'm grateful for this opportunity. But, I have to look at it this way, too. I'm one of the oldest players in the major leagues. If I'm lucky, I might have one or maybe two seasons left to play. But I have a lifetime ahead of me with my son. I can't afford to place my desires... I can't afford to misplace my priorities. The legacy I leave with my family is much more important than any legacy I leave with baseball. I hope you understand.

JIM BOWDEN

I know I'm not as old as you, nor do I have the wisdom you've acquired. You are an inspirational man. And everyone who comes in contact with you benefits from your wisdom and spirit. Although I don't really like it, I can understand your reasoning and desire. But you're sure this is the only option?

MITCH
Yeah, I'm sure.

JIM BOWDEN
When would you leave us?

MITCH
I don't think I should delay your opportunity to get someone else on the roster who can help you with the rest of this season... and hopefully, the team's post-season. And I'm definitely not helping the team in the funk I'm currently in. I think I need to resign immediately... now... so I can get home as soon as possible and your team can get on with their season.

JIM BOWDEN
Mitch, you know that you've been a great asset to the Reds' organization and you will be missed.

MITCH
Thank you. It's been a terrific experience for me. Thank you for giving me this dream-come-true opportunity.

JIM BOWDEN
Mitch, you've earned it. I wish you God's best for you and your family.

MITCH
Thank you.

Mitch stands up, shakes Bowden's hand, and exits his office. As Mitch walks away, we again see his smiling eyes.

JIM BOWDEN

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL STADIUM (2026) - AFTERNOON

The camera is zoomed in on Mitch's smiling eyes, then it pulls back to see the reporters still gathered around Mitch and Connie and their family as they stand near the bleachers. Many other SPECTATORS have joined with the reporters, just eavesdropping to what Mitch is saying.

REPORTER 3

Mitch, do you have any regrets?

MITCH

Well, I honestly think that if I had stayed in the Army, I likely would have progressed further up in the Army ranks, but other opportunities arose and I opted for them. Yeah, I often wonder if I would have made Colonel or General. But no one will ever know, and we can't dwell on the past with what could have been.

REPORTER 4

Do you regret leaving the Reds before completing your first season?

Mitch briefly glances over to Connie and the rest of his family standing beside her.

MITCH

No. Family is much more important. My family needed me at that time and so that's what I did. I was fortunate to get a great job teaching and coaching here at Central - things I love anyway.

REPORTER 2

You went through the "Troops to Teachers" program, right? What do you think of that program?

MITCH

It's a terrific program. The military teaches many skills that can be extremely effective in classroom environments. All the soldier needs is some help with some of the technical things...

(chuckling)

like remembering all the things he forgot from junior high and high school.

Everyone chuckles.

Superintendent Adams comes up to Mitch, interrupting the reporters.

ADAMS

Mitch, there are some people dying
to meet with you... Guys?!

A group of seven young men weave their way through the crowd towards Mitch, each one nicely dressed in slacks and wearing a major league team jersey loosely over a polo shirt.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

I think you know these young men.

Mitch's face beams as he recognizes each player.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

(to the reporters)

Each one of these young men played baseball here at Central under the coaching of Mitch Jones. Mitch taught them success then, which they carried with them into the major leagues.

As each player, in turn, approaches, Adams calls out his name to the reporters and Mitch gives each one a big hug and slaps him on the back.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

TOM (32) here plays for the Oakland A's.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

AARON (28) plays with the White Sox.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

MIGUEL (29) plays with the Diamondbacks.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

TREVON, (26) plays with the New York Mets.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

JASON, (30) plays with Houston Astros.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

MARSHALL (28) plays with the Colorado Rockies.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

SAMUEL (25) plays with the Twins.

TOM steps forward to address Mitch and the reporters.

TOM

You know, Coach. If it weren't for you, none of us would be where we are today. It was your teaching, your coaching, your perseverance and patience in mentoring each of us, that we're what we are today. Thank you.

MARSHALL

Yeah, and Tom here... it was his idea for us to come here today. And it was his idea that we all chip in to help get this new stadium.

TOM

There were more... but unfortunately, Luis, Niko, and Trey couldn't make it today. They wanted to be here, but couldn't due to their games today.

As everyone looks on, each one of the players takes off his jersey and hands it to Mitch.

With his arms now full, and as cameras CLICK away, tears break free from Mitch's eyes and trickle down his cheek.

MITCH

Thanks, guys. This is so wonderful...

Just then, Mitch's youngest grandchild, ANNA (4) steps up beside Mitch and tugs on his pants leg.

ANNA

I've been waiting for a long time. Can we go get ice cream now?

Mitch hands Mitch Jr. the armload of jerseys and reaches down and scoops Anna up into his arms.

MITCH

Yes, Anna, we can.
(to the reporters)
I think it's time to say good bye.
Thank you.

Mitch turns and guides Connie and the rest of his family away from the crowd of reporters. Mitch is carrying Anna and holding hands with Connie who has her arm around one of the other grandchildren.

REPORTER 1

(shouts out)

So, Mitch, any regrets about
leaving baseball behind and with
that, your legacy?

Mitch stops momentarily, causing the rest of the family to
also halt. He turns, grins, and responds.

MITCH

My legacy...? What do you think?

He turns back, puts his arm around Connie, and pulls her
close to him as the family continues their exit. He leans
over and kisses Connie on the top of her head and Connie
snuggles in under his arm.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END