

PEANUTS AND CRACKER JACK

a play by

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CHARACTERS

DAVE WEBSTER, New York Yankees third baseman, 27.

STAN "WHITEY" LaMONICA, New York Yankees manager, 62.

SETTING

The home dugout and locker room, Yankee Stadium, New York.

TIME

One baseball season in the latter part of the 20th century.

NOTE

Three off-stage voices are used: STADIUM PUBLIC ADDRESS ANNOUNCER, UMPIRE, RADIO AND TELEVISION ANNOUNCER.

ACT ONEScene One

(Lights come up on the LOCKER ROOM in Yankee Stadium. DAVE is finishing dressing following a game. His baseball equipment is strewn on a bench in front of his locker, one of a long line. HE is alone.)

DAVE

(flinging glove hard into locker)

Shit. Christ Almighty...

(HE throws his cleats into the locker, as WHITEY enters.)

WHITEY

Let it out, boy. A few more shits'll do you good.

DAVE

Hiya, Whitey. Thanks for keeping the reporters away from me.

WHITEY

'Salright, but you're not that young anymore. You've got to learn how to deal with the press. Little shits. But, that's what you gotta take to be a Yankee. And boy, you're a Yankee to be proud of.

DAVE

Even though my throw hit the first baseman in the head?

WHITEY

It's okay, son. It was just a hairline fracture.

DAVE

Even though I struck out twice, and hit into three double plays? Even though I swung so hard the bat flew out of my hands and maimed Coach Sparkman at third base?

WHITEY

He was a major league catcher, Davey. He's used to it.

DAVE

And even though I don't have a hit yet, and the season's almost a week old?

WHITEY

All right--so you've had your...misfortunes. You're lucky you're a Yankee. There're people to pick up the slack.

DAVE

Oh, yeah. Goddamn right I'm lucky to be a Yankee. There was...Christ, there was a time I could have made that play. I never used to hit into double plays, either.

WHITEY

Now cut it out, Webster. You're a pro. You've been in the majors five years now. Even the great ones had slumps. Why, even Joe DiMaggio went years without hitting a single home run!

DAVE

(after a slight pause)

He was in the Army! It was World War Two!

WHITEY

That's...that's irrelevant here. He came back. He fought the Nazis, and came back to center field in Yankee Stadium. He might not have come back! He fought Hitler out there so you could have the privilege of wearing those pinstripes.

DAVE

Oh, come off it! You know why I'm wearing this uniform, and so do I. I got a bonus you wouldn't believe. Hell, I didn't believe it at first. If the Tigers, or Kansas City had offered me a bigger bonus, I would have taken it. Even...yes! Even the Boston Red Sox!

WHITEY

No! Not the BoSox, Dave! You can't mean the BoSox!

DAVE

And why not?

WHITEY

Davey, you're a Yankee. There's tradition to think about!

DAVE

Fuck tradition!

(HE slams his cap to the floor.)

Tradition's only for old timer's games, when all the old farts come back with their spare tires and bald heads and arthritis and think they can still pitch and hit and run and throw like they used to. It's pathetic.

WHITEY

And hitting triple-zero isn't pathetic?

DAVE

I'm in a slump! Even Joe DiMaggio went through years without hitting a single home run.

WHITEY

That's good, Dave. You're learning. But you don't throw your cap on the floor, dammit.

(WHITEY picks up DAVE's cap, dusts it off, and puts it back on DAVE's head.)

That's where your cap belongs, so everybody can see what's on your forehead. Or, up on the shelf... But never... never, Dave, on the floor. Last man I saw throw his cap on the floor...he was traded to Oakland.

(DAVE puts his cap in his locker.)

DAVE

Just because he threw his cap on the floor?

WHITEY

He didn't know respect, Dave--d'you know what I mean? There's something special about being a Yankee. You're not a goddamn St. Louis Cardinal, for Christ's sake. You've got to learn Yankee tradition--what it means to be a Bronx Bomber. The Mantles, the Berras, the Fords, Moose Skoworon, Lefty Gomez, Allie Reynolds, Twinkletoes Selkirk, Eddie Lopat--BABE RUTH, LOU GEHRIG--Bill Dickey, Casey Stengel... I could go on for ages, Dave. Ages.

DAVE

(after a slight pause)

None.

WHITEY

What?

DAVE

Not a single third baseman. You didn't name a single third baseman. I'm a third baseman. You didn't mention a single third baseman.

(WHITEY thinks this over.)

WHITEY

Red Rolfe! There--happy?

DAVE

Yeah. Uh, Whitey, why am I...

WHITEY

(cuts him off quickly)

You've got a hitch in your swing--you're dropping your hands. You're hesitating a split second too long on curve balls, and you're not concentrating on where you're throwing the ball. Look at the first baseman, not the banners with your name on them.

DAVE

Right. Thanks.

WHITEY

Look, if you'd like to sit with me during the trip next Wednesday, that's okay. We could talk. Or, you don't have to. Either's fine.

DAVE

I think we've got a poker game going. You want to join in?

WHITEY

No sir. We're going to Chicago, and the last time I played poker going to Chicago, well, we came within inches, Dave, inches of a major catastrophe. Screaming, hollering--I was scared silly!

DAVE

Mid-air collision?

WHITEY

Nah. Almost hit a cow.

DAVE

A cow?

WHITEY

We almost derailed. Trains. Trains don't fly, Davey.

DAVE

I'm leaving. When are you going to change?

WHITEY

Never! I'll always be a Yankee!

DAVE

Your clothes.

WHITEY

Oh, my clothes. My uniform. Soon. Soon as I get a chance.

DAVE

Well, I'll see you tomorrow, when I extend my hot streak to oh-for-thirty one.

(DAVE exits.)

WHITEY

That's what I like. A positive approach to the game.

(WHITEY begins to exit, but the locker room telephone rings. HE answers it.)

Yeah. I know Mr. Blackmun. I know you own the club. I know you own half of Manhattan. Yes, and most of Brooklyn, too. I know he's a big favorite with the fans. Yeah, the banners and all. Sure, I know we're not drawing. I realize... And I know we're not winning, Mr. Blackmun. Yes. Yes, I know I'm not winning. Look, you give me the talent, I'll win for you. My hitters aren't hitting, my pitchers aren't pitching. And his knees aren't going to get any better. Yes, I want to bench him. Well, sure...I know we're not drawing... But I've got Pete Ward to put in at third. Well, yes, but... Is that an order, Mr. Blackmun? A direct order? It is? Oh. Okay, Mr.Blackmun. He stays at third. Yeah. No, I don't want to speak to your wife. G'bye, Mr. Blackmun.

(WHITEY hangs up.)

Son of a bitch.

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Two

(The Yankee dugout. WHITEY is alone, pacing up and down the dugout during a game. Crowd noises and ballpark organ "charges" are heard.)

WHITEY

Okay now--two out, top of the eighth. One more, boys, just one.

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting fifth for Oakland, number five, third baseman Sal Bando.

WHITEY

Well, now--Bando! Can't fuck around with Sal Bando. He can kill you. Just keep it low...

(SOUND: Ball hitting the catcher's glove, hereafter referred to as "Pitch.")

UMPIRE

Ball!

WHITEY

Not that low. Can't keep it low, can't get it up. Just keep it low.

(SOUND: A ball hitting a bat solidly, hereafter referred to as "Hit.")

WHITEY

(calling to fielders)

You got room back there! You got room!

(The ball is caught.)

Christ Almighty, he caught it! All right! All right! Hustle in here, let's hustle it in here!

(DAVE trots in from third base.)

That Bando's really a son of a bitch with the stick, eh?

DAVE

(sitting on bench)

He sure is something else.

WHITEY

Now there's a third baseman!

(THEY exchange looks.)

No offense meant.

DAVE

None taken.

WHITEY

Fine.

DAVE

Right.

WHITEY

Yeah.

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting eighth for the Yankees, number 41, catcher Jake Gibbs.

WHITEY

Okay, Jakey. We got a lead--slim lead, two runs--just make contact with the ball.

DAVE

Just meet the ball.

WHITEY

Just tap it.

(A soft thud. WHITEY is pained.)

He bunted!

(HE sees Gibbs is safe at first.)

Look at that beautiful bunt! On the first pitch!

DAVE

All right! Surprise 'em!

WHITEY

All right, Jakey! Who would expect a big, slow catcher to bunt on the first pitch! Beautiful drag bunt, and he's on!

DAVE

He runs like a slab of concrete on square wheels!

WHITEY

Well, there he is on first! Now go beat that!

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting ninth for the Yankees, number 17, shortstop Gene Michael.

DAVE

So, whatcha gonna have Michael do?

(WHITEY thinks it over.)

WHITEY

Well, you don't want two bunts in a row. Michael's not that hot with the stick...but he's a battler...he'll rise to the occasion... Hit and run.

(HE mimes signals to third base coach.)

DAVE

What are you doing? Gibbs can't run and Michael can't hit, and you're calling a hit and run! Smells like a double play to me--strike out, and Gibbs caught stealing at second.

WHITEY

But look at him there on first! You see him jumping up and down there--he's pumping, he's really pumping up there. When was the last time he bunted--hell, when was the last time he was on first? He's excited, he's got his whadayacall, his adrenalin going, and you just go up there and touch 'im, and he's off--right now, right now, he'd beat Jesse Owens!

DAVE

It's been three years since Gibbs stole a base!

WHITEY

But he's ready to now! Anybody can steal a base, Dave. It's just a case of when. And Gibbsie's "when" is now.

(DAVE sighs, gives up. WHITEY mimes the same signals again.)

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Strike!

DAVE

I thought you called for a hit-and-run!

WHITEY

I did!

DAVE

Good thing he didn't run! He'd've been out by a mile.

WHITEY

He missed the sign? Can't miss the signs on this club.

(WHITEY mimes the signals more broadly.)

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Strike!

WHITEY

What the hell is going on out there? Time out!

(HE exits in a huff, onto the field.)

DAVE

Gene Michael and Jake Gibbs on a hit-and-run! Amazing!

(WHITEY re-enters.)

DAVE

What'd he say?

WHITEY

You know what Gibbs--that asshole--d'you know what he said to me? He said he "disagreed with my judgement." Can you fuckin' believe it!

DAVE

Sure--I disagree with your judgements all the time.

WHITEY

But you're not standing on first base! I told Gibbs to run his ass off on this pitch.

(WHITEY and DAVE watch the play. Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Strike three!

DAVE

He missed it! He missed it!

WHITEY

Hit the dirt! Get down! Hit the dirt!

(WHITEY gives a grunt of exasperation as
Gibbs is out at second base.)

DAVE

Double play--strikeout, caught stealing at second. Well, we've still got one more out.

WHITEY

(musing)

There he was, jumping up and down, looking like a wild horse just before the gate goes up. You ever see the look Jackie Robinson had in his eye before he stole a base, Davey? When he was leading...just inching off first? Hell, I knew he could do it.

DAVE

But he didn't. When was the last time he even saw the hit-and-run sign?

WHITEY

Y'know, back when I was young, you didn't have hit-and-runs and bunt-and runs, and run-and-hits and all that shit. Everybody was expected to steal a base when he had to, so they did. Not often, but they did. Ahh, nobody steals bases anymore.

DAVE

What are you talking about? Guys are stealing seventy, eighty, a hundred bases every year.

WHITEY

Yeah, but how many people we have here who stole twenty, even thirty bases? Nobody. I don't want a specialist, for chrissakes. If I wanted a specialist, I'd've called a doctor.

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting first for the Yankees, number six, left fielder Roy White.

WHITEY

Now there's an old-time ballplayer! White...not only can he hit and run...

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Ball!

WHITEY

...See? He's got a good eye, too. He knows the strike zone...

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Strike!

WHITEY

He can field, too. He can beat you with his glove...

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Strike!

WHITEY

He can beat you with his legs and his bat, too.

(Hit. WHITEY and DAVE follow the flight of the ball in a high pop-up.)

DAVE

Wouldn't expect it to go so high so close to sea level, would you?

(The ball is caught.)

WHITEY

He's a damn fine ballplayer, but not even Roy White can beat you with a pop-up. I want you to remember that, Dave. Keep it on your mind for...for further use.

(DAVE grabs his glove and heads for the field.)

DAVE

Uh, Whitey?

WHITEY

Yeah?

DAVE

D'you...would you mind if I call you "Skip"? Like in Skipper?

WHITEY

Why, Dave?

DAVE

I don't think any man over fifty should be called "Whitey" in public.

(Pause.)

WHITEY

I'll keep that in mind. Now get out there!

(DAVE runs out.)

And play Good!

Scene Three

(The dugout. WHITEY and DAVE are sitting on the bench. DAVE is fielding ground balls off the dugout steps.)

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

(in black)

And now, please rise and join Eddie Layton at the Yankee organ for Our National Anthem.

(Lights fade up. WHITEY stands up like a shot, while DAVE continues fielding.)

WHITEY

"Oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early..." Well?

DAVE

Well what?

WHITEY

Stand up, for Chrissakes. This is Our National Anthem here.

DAVE

Damn! I missed one. Give me one good reason.

WHITEY

Respect for the country.

DAVE

I've got to practice my fielding, Skip. Gotta look my best for my fans.

WHITEY

Respect for the game of baseball.

DAVE

(still fielding)

Nope.

WHITEY

Well, how about respect for the fact that we're on nationwide television and there's a camera looking at us right now, you idiot!

(DAVE looks up, sees the camera, and slowly puts his glove away and stands next to WHITEY. A grin slowly creeps over his face.)

WHITEY finishes the anthem, but DAVE,
smiling, does not sing.

WHITEY
(after the anthem)

Play Ball!

(mutters)
Stupid son of a bitch...

(Lights fade out.)

(Lights up on the dugout, a few minutes
later, during an Old Timer's Day game.
WHITEY is watching the game with relish, but
DAVE, disinterested, is reading a newspaper.

(Hit.)

WHITEY
God, I love these old timer's games. It's so good. Hank Bauer,
Gene Woodling. And not just the Yankees--there's Duke Snider,
Minnie Minoso, Monte Irvin...

DAVE
With their spare tires and bald heads and arthritis thinking
they can still pitch and hit...

WHITEY
You see that old lady in section 23?

(HE points her out to DAVE.)

DAVE
Next to the blonde in the red number in section 24?

WHITEY
I'm talking important stuff here, Dave. You see that lady? You
know who that is? That's Mrs. Lou Gehrig, Dave. You do know who
Lou Gehrig is, don't you?

DAVE
Yeah, yeah. I saw the movie.

WHITEY
You know what this is, Dave?

DAVE

Yeah--a waste of time I could use for batting practice. And God knows I need it. How long is this gonna take? We've got a game to lose today.

WHITEY

Take it easy. You've got to make time for fun every once in a while. That's your problem, Dave. Baseball isn't fun for you. It's fun for me. It's a game. A kid's game. Don't ever lose your perspective.

DAVE

The only time I ever had fun with this goddamn game was when I was a kid. You see those guys on the field--Snider, Mino, Irvin--they're not flesh and blood to me. You know why? All those guys remind me of little three-by-two cards.

WHITEY

Baseball cards?

DAVE

Playing cards. When I was twelve, I invented this table baseball game with playing cards and dice. I'd figure out the statistical averages for all the players in, say, the 1952 season, and I'd write them up into a mathematical equation, which would give me exact figures on what each player could be expected to do in each variable situation. This was all before computers, of course. What I could have done with a computer! I'd flip a card, say, the Jack of Diamonds, and each card, in conjunction with a number rolled for the pitcher, would yield a batting result. We got up a whole league in my neighborhood. I was the manager of the 1946 Boston Red Sox.

WHITEY

Davey, not the Red Sox!

DAVE

Well, it was the BoSox, with Ted Williams. I managed the '46 Red Sox into a pennant. That's when this game was fun for me.

WHITEY

Rolling dice in your bedroom is one thing. Playing it every day is quite another. Now, look at this--the spring air, the old guys getting together again, have a few beers after the game... Look at what you're doing here, Dave! There's a guy standing on a hill of dirt throwing a little white ball as hard as he can between your arm pits and your knees, and you're standing up there like a dumb son of a bitch with a stick, and you've got to try to hit this little white ball out of the reach of eight other guys, then you run like hell for ninety feet--hell, Dave,

it's got everything in it but "ollee-ollee-oxen-free!" It's the silliest damn game there ever was. But it's fun! It's a kid's game.

DAVE

They're not kidding around when they pay someone a hundred thousand dollars to sign a contract right out of high school. That's no game. What I played when I was a kid was a kid's game.

WHITEY

Come on--don't you feel like a kid now and then, playing a kid's game and making what you make? Doesn't that make you feel a little silly?

DAVE

Yeah, and isn't it silly that the man managing the Yankees had exactly three at-bats in the major leagues? In five seasons! Don't talk to me about "silly."

WHITEY

That's right! I was on the bench all the time, right next to the manager, listening to everything and picking up everything I could.

DAVE

And doesn't it make you feel silly to be called "Whitey," Skip? Why the hell are you called "Whitey," anyway?

WHITEY

Because I was the only white umpire in the old Negro leagues. That answer your question?

(An uneasy pause, as WHITEY begins to laugh.)

DAVE

You know, Skip, you really get to me sometimes. "Whitey"!

WHITEY

Now there--Whitey Ford. There's a guy who earned his name. Now this, Davey, this is tradition! This is what baseball history is made of. Cooperstown comes to life!

(DAVE throws down his newspaper.)

DAVE

I am so fucking tense, man. I'm three-for-87 or something, and I want to get out there and prove myself.

WHITEY

You see those banners out there? "Whitey ain't mighty." "Without Dave at third, the Yanks are turds." No respect from these fans, Davey, and that's what I'm teaching you here--respect for the game, respect for tradition, respect for baseball...how the hell am I supposed to manage like I should with treatment like that, I ask you? Who tells 'em to bring those goddamn banners to the park, anyway?

DAVE

Public relations. The fans come here, they buy hot dogs and soda pop and scorecards and yearbooks--they have a good time.

WHITEY

Yeah, and where does all that money go? Straight up to the owner's box, right into his Park Avenue hotels, and those ads with his wife in 'em.

Davey, you ever hear of Connie Mack? Connie Mack was the owner of the Philadelphia Athletics, something you'd know if you read the Sporting News and not the Wall Street goddamn Journal. He owned 'em, and he managed 'em. For fifty years. He didn't have to take any shit from some guy in a three-piece suit who knows more about midtown real estate than he does about Ty Cobb. Or some corporation that thinks a baseball team's a good investment for their fucking portfolio. A baseball team's not a business, for Chrissakes.

DAVE

Did you know you could buy stock in the Chicago Cubs? Really. I own a hundred shares. In a blind trust, of course.

WHITEY

The Chicago Cubs?!

DAVE

A friend gave them to me as a joke, but my broker said they'd make a good hedge against inflation.

WHITEY

But the Cubs haven't been in the World Series since 1935!

DAVE

Yeah, but they split two-for-one last year.

WHITEY

Don't try to explain it. Split two for one? What's that got to do with a ball team? That's a wonderful attitude to take for

somebody who keeps telling the newspapers he wants to manage.

(DAVE begins to throw a baseball from hand to hand, nervously.)

What's the matter?

DAVE

You wouldn't understand.

WHITEY

Try me.

DAVE

It was different when you were playing. You didn't have everybody on your back. Lawyers, agents, fuckin' reporters. Jesus--sometimes I wonder why I ever got into this game.

(Pause.)

WHITEY

Me, too. Yeah--me, too.

(CROSS FADE to the locker room, after that day's game. WHITEY and DAVE are crossing from the dugout.)

Good game there, Davey. You're picking up.

DAVE

One-for-five. Must be my lucky day.

WHITEY

Say, Dave, somebody told me your Dad was a ballplayer.

DAVE

I guess you could say that. He had a cup of coffee with the Oklahoma City Outriggers. Yep, Daniel Patrick Noah Webster.

WHITEY

Your father was Scotch Whiskey Webster? Skip Webster?

DAVE

You knew him?

WHITEY

I heard of him. Left fielder in the Texas League, right?

DAVE

From what I hear, he was a sucker for the curve ball.

WHITEY

I guess that makes it hereditary, eh?

(WHITEY laughs.)

DAVE

Yeah, he used to laugh about it, too. And he laughed when they talked me into selling shaving cream. And he laughed every time he opened a newspaper, or turned on the TV, and there I was, selling something. He laughed because he thought I was a dumb rookie who didn't know what the game was about. By then, I was a rich dumb rookie, laughing all the way to the bank.

WHITEY

Hey, Davey? Why is it you make all those commercials, and nobody's ever asked me?

DAVE

Well, I'm a popular player, and you're the manager of a third-place team.

WHITEY

You're only hitting two-thirty-seven.

DAVE

Yeah, but I'm young, good looking, the fans like me. Guess the Madison Avenue boys figure I can sell.

WHITEY

Davey...?

DAVE

Yeah?

WHITEY

Uh, what do they play for that, anyway?

(Pause.)

DAVE

Untold riches, Skip. Untold riches.

(DAVE exits, leaving WHITEY dumbfounded, watching the television.)

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Four

(Lights up on the dugout, accompanied by the cheers of the crowd. WHITEY is alone, during a game, freezing. DAVE is off-stage, playing third base.)

WHITEY

Fuckin' Bronx, fuckin' stadium, fuckin' weather...

(HE grabs a warm-up jacket and struggles to put it on.)

Watch your step out there, it's like a goddamn swamp! Jesus Christ, probably fuckin' snow in the fifth inning. Might as well be playing in the goddamn Hudson fuckin' River!

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting fifth for the Indians, number twelve, third baseman Graig Nettles.

WHITEY

Damn good third baseman, that Nettles. Lots of power, not much else though. Just keep it out of his power zone and you're all right, you're okay.

(Hit--a high pop-up. WHITEY follows the flight of the ball.)

Oh, it's up there, it's wayyyy up there. Awright, Clarke, that's...Davey, what the hell are you doin'? That's Clarke's ball. Davey, get the hell out the way...oh, for God's sake!

(The ball has fallen, safe, uncaught.)

Get him at second, get him at second!

(WHITEY kicks the dirt as the batter is safe at second. Pause.)

All right, Webster! Get your butt up out of the mud now!

(WHITEY looks closer at the field.)

Davey...?

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Five

(The dugout. WHITEY is standing on the edge of the dugout steps. DAVE is sitting on the bench, resting his ankle, bandaged or in a cast, on the end of the bench. There are crutches next to him.)

(As the lights come up, DAVE opens a can of beer.)

WHITEY

I see you're having breakfast.

DAVE

Yep. Breakfast of Champions.

WHITEY

I used to drink when I got injured. But I'd be drinking the hard stuff--scotch, gin...

DAVE

Well, this is very strong beer.

WHITEY

Does it do anything for the pain?

DAVE

Not the pain in my leg. Ahhh, I could see it coming. I needed a vacation anyway. Say, Whitey, you think we could... you think we got a lawsuit here? Injuries, mental anguish...

WHITEY

What the hell were you doin' behind second base?

DAVE

Just helping out.

WHITEY

You're a third baseman. A third baseman plays at third base. Not at second base, not short right field--third goddamn base! Got it?

DAVE

Oh yeah! I got it!

(HE takes a newspaper clipping from his hip pocket.)

"Well, we're always looking for new talent," said Yankees' manager Whitey LaMonica after yesterday's loss to Cleveland...

WHITEY

Because you were at goddamn second base!

DAVE

"...after yesterday's loss to Cleveland! Sure, I've heard Sal Bando and Graig Nettles, two fine third basemen, are available..." Now what the hell was that supposed to mean?

WHITEY

Look! We have one job--to win for the Yankees, for the pinstripes. When you screwed up yesterday, who took the blame for it, huh? Me. I did. If we lose, it's my ass. And the way things are going, I'm going to be out on my ass unless we start winning.

DAVE

We're doing okay. We're what--two, three games out of first place, it's the middle of June, and we're in the middle of a pennant race.

WHITEY

We shouldn't be in a pennant race! We're three and a half games out of first, and we should be at least five games ahead with the people we've got here!

DAVE

But a pennant race sells tickets!

WHITEY

Are you here to win the pennant or sell tickets? It's always some dumb-ass, bonehead play, and who catches hell for it? Me. I do. But this...this accident you had yesterday... This puts everything in a new light. You were one hell of a fielder, too.

DAVE

Were?

WHITEY

In your prime.

DAVE

What do you mean, "in my prime"? I'm 27 years old--this is my prime.

WHITEY

Yeah, but... Third basemen just don't come back from broken ankles.

DAVE

But I...

WHITEY

(cuts him off sharply)

It doesn't happen.

DAVE

Hell, broken ankles get better.

WHITEY

Oh, they do. They most certainly do. In a few weeks, you'll be able to walk a block or two and pick up a newspaper with no trouble. Problem is, it'll take you two hours to do it.

DAVE

What are you trying to tell me? That I'm finished?

WHITEY

Well, you're not going to lead the league in stolen bases this year. You're not going to lead the league in much of anything this year, except maybe splinters. I'm taking you off the roster. You're out for the season.

DAVE

Why?

WHITEY

Why? You've got a broken ankle. You can't go to your left, your arm's sore, and you're barely hitting your weight. And you're not that heavy.

DAVE

But my fielding...

WHITEY

You're fielding your weight, too. You're barely hitting your uniform number. So--number nine--I've got a question for you. You say you think you can manage. Now, you see, managing a baseball team is more than just throwing your hands all over yourself, relaying signs to your third base coach--hit and run, bunt, take--managing a baseball team is controlling the destinies of 25 players and five coaches. You see what I'm getting at?

DAVE

I don't have the slightest idea.

WHITEY

Well now, this problem I have here, how would you solve it? I got a popular player here, who isn't coming back this year, and possibly not ever. He's 27, smart, knows baseball, but he isn't...enthralled by the game. He just doesn't feel about it the same way I do.

DAVE

We've gone over this all before.

WHITEY

Well, yeah. So I got this guy here, right? And I've got a 73-year old first base coach who's showing signs of advanced senility. A guy gets to first, asks him if he should run or not, and he say, the hell with that, I'm in the Hall of Fame. Plus, the owner is not crazy about...this player...being out of uniform for a long time. So...what do I, as manager, do?

DAVE

Does this player have a shot at making a comeback in, say, a year or two?

WHITEY

He'll never be what he was before.

DAVE

Well then, it seems kind of simple to me, Skip. You, ah, give the coach his walking papers...

WHITEY

He's got one hell of a pension coming...

DAVE

...and you make me...

WHITEY

At least you're honest. Yes, that's what you do. And you bring up a left-handed relief pitcher from Spokane to fill your place on the roster. Very good, Dave. You've got a future in the dugout.

DAVE

Uh, Skip...

WHITEY

Call me Stan.

DAVE

Stan?

WHITEY

If you work for me, you call me Whitey. If you're trying to kiss ass with me, you call me Skip. If you're working with me, you call me Stan. It's a hierarchy. A tradition. It's what should be done when you're a manager. Remember that. It'll come in handy...someday. Meantime, get outta here and go on home. Go on, go home, rest and get ready for tomorrow. Tomorrow, you make your major league coaching debut at first base. Come to the park early. I've got a few thousand things to go over with you.

DAVE

You mean I've got to learn the signs?

WHITEY

(turns in amazement)

You don't know the signs?

DAVE

Hell no. I've been guessing at what you wanted. I never seemed to screw up, did I?

WHITEY

You never missed a sign!

DAVE

Sure I did. I missed 'em all. Well, see you tomorrow... Stan.

(DAVE exits, with his crutches and bandaged ankle.)

(WHITEY is totally perplexed for a moment, then goes to the dugout and calls.)

WHITEY

Owner's box, please. Hello, Mr. Blackmun. Yes, it's done. All done. He'll be coaching at first tomorrow. Well, I've got to teach him about coaching and all. You know, it's not all patting asses. I've got to teach him baseball savvy, Mr. Blackmun. He couldn't have started today, sir, no way. He's in the...he left. I sent him home. He left in one of those medic vans. He was in a wheelchair. And crutches. A wheelchair and crutches, Mr. Blackmun. Well, of course, not at the same time, but there they were. Yes, sir. Yes, I'll tell him tomorrow. Yes, sir. Yeah. All right. No, I don't want to talk to your wife. Okay. G'bye, Mr.

Blackmun.

(HE hangs up, and looks out at the field. HE gets up on the dugout steps.)

Come on, you bastards--let's save some jobs out there!

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Six

(WHITEY stalks into the locker room,
obviously worried.)

WHITEY

Where in the name of Duke Snider is he? Could never get to
ground balls in time, either.

(DAVE enters, walking with a cane.)

DAVE

Hey, Stan!

WHITEY

Where the hell have you been?

DAVE

The trainer. He gave me this cane--got rid of my crutches. I
think I look better with a cane--you know, less of an invalid.
Y'know, Stan, without my walking stick, I'd go insane. (Sings:)
"I can't look my best, I feel undressed without my cane."

(DAVE begins to do a playful soft shoe, and
collapses on his bad ankle. HE is caught by
WHITEY at the last moment. HE is in great
pain.)

That's that--no more old Irving Berlin songs for me. I'm okay,
Stan.

WHITEY

You're sure you want to go through with this, now. We could call
the whole thing off...just like that.

DAVE

What else am I going to do?

WHITEY

Can you stand?

DAVE

With the cane, yeah. I may not be a great coach, but I'll sure
as hell look continental.

WHITEY

You see, now you're talking something here. Everyone thinks it's

easy to be a coach, right? Well, it's not. I've been a coach, and let me tell you, it's ass-breaking work. You're going to have to hustle--as much as possible in your condition--and it'll be tough. The fans don't bring out banners for crippled coaches.

DAVE

Only for crippled third basemen?

WHITEY

And Yogi Berra. But I think you can do it. You're the stuff they carve great coaches out of, I tell you. Now, first base isn't an advisory position, I'll grant you that. But you'll still be an important part of the Yankees.

DAVE

Pat asses. All I'm going to do is pat asses. That's all first base coaches do. Pat baserunner's asses.

WHITEY

There's more to it than that. Much more. You've got to follow the game, keep the umpires alive, bother the other team's first baseman. When one of our guys makes the third out on a ground ball, you take his batting helmet, you go back to the dugout, and you bring him out his cap and fielder's mitt. You hobble, you crawl, but you do it. And why? Why do you do it?

DAVE

Because the player's a bonus baby with a no-cut contract?

WHITEY

No! You do it for the Yankees! For every coach that'll come after you, for every coach that's gone before you, and especially for every mediocre player who got a second chance in the coaches' box! That's why!

DAVE

Oh. I thought it was because that's what I'm paid to do.

WHITEY

That too. Jesus Christ--have some fun, for God's sake. It's a game, goddamnit, not some kind of board meeting. Ahhh, you'll change your tune soon enough. Now, we've gone over the primary, between-innings routine of the first base coach...

DAVE

The cap and glove?

WHITEY

Yeah. Now we look at the other responsibilities the concerned and conscientious coach must let fall on his shoulders. Like, when a batter gets a single, he's on first...

DAVE

Who's on first?

WHITEY

Don't start. This batter. He's on first. What do you do?

(Pause.)

DAVE

Pat his ass.

WHITEY

Well yeah, but what else you gotta do?

DAVE

Pat his ass lightly, so he doesn't get hurt?

WHITEY

You tell him if he's running or not. If he's running to second on the next pitch or not. This is what you gotta tell him. Remember a few weeks ago, Gibbs and Michael, Gibbs not running? Turns out on top of everything else, the coach didn't tell him to run. And he's the guy you're replacing. So you'll be the one not to tell him to run...or not. And who's gonna tell you to tell him to run or not to run? Me. You follow?

DAVE

If you don't tell me not to tell the runner not to run, does the runner run or not? And do I tell him to or not?

(THEY exchange puzzled glances.)

WHITEY

Coaching's harder than you thought, isn't it?

DAVE

Sure is, Stan.

WHITEY

Glad to hear it, Dave. Now, you pat asses, you receive and deliver equipment, and you relay messages from the dugout to the runner. Now, what do you do once you're out on the field? The first thing, what do you do?

DAVE

Try to steal the pitcher's signs?

WHITEY

Well, yeah, but we don't talk about that. The first thing you do on the field...is...?

DAVE

I...I give up, Stan. What's the first thing I do?

WHITEY

Okay, good, you're curious! That's a good sign! Now, where is the coach supposed to stay when he's on the field? In the coaches' box, right? Now, this box, you see, is outlined in white chalk.

DAVE

Stan, I've been in pro ball since I was 19...

WHITEY

Just bear with me now. This box is outlined in white chalk to keep the coach inside it, 'cause if he's outside it, and the umpire wants to make a stink, he can...well, he can do something. And we don't want the umpires doing much of anything. So the coach, a good concerned, conscientious coach, he wipes out the chalk lines, like this.

(WHITEY mimes this, erasing the lines with the tip of his shoe, surreptitiously.)

This way, the umpire won't know where the chalk it! You're a more valuable coach to the team!

DAVE

But Stan...

WHITEY

Yeah?

DAVE

Isn't the coaches' box a small patch of dark and muddy dirt in the middle of lush green grass?

WHITEY

Yeah--so?

DAVE

So, if you're on the grass, you're out of the box. Even if you wipe the chalk away, the umpire can tell the difference between dirt and grass.

WHITEY

Well...yeah...but...

DAVE

But what?

WHITEY

But...but you do it! And do you know why you do it? Because when you do it, you're paying tribute to every coach that came before you, and every coach that comes after you. What do you do up there, Dave? You don't do shit. You've got to do something up there, and you might as well wipe out the chalk lines as anything else. You know why you're up there at first base, and so do I, and consider yourself lucky.

You know, when Joe DiMaggio retired, you know what the Yankees did? Now, I'll go to my grave with New York tattooed on my goddamn chest--I'm a Yankee, always was and always will be. But do you know what the Yankees did for Joe DiMaggio? Nothing. He ended up coaching--coaching first--for Oakland. And now he's hawking coffee machines. Joe DiMaggio should be over there at first, not you, not some hot-shot cripple who had a few good seasons and owns stock in the Chicago fucking Cubs!

(HE composes himself.)

All right, let's go. You need any help?

DAVE

No.

WHITEY

Fine. See you on the field.

DAVE

Yeah--I'll be the hot-shot cripple at first base.

WHITEY

Right.

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Seven

(Lights up to reveal DAVE in the dugout, his cane nearby. WHITEY is trying to keep the Yankees out of a sticky situation. Crowd cheers and organ charges can be heard.)

DAVE

See what I mean, Stan? I mean, even though I'm in terrific pain here, I can see Blefary is not who you want up in this situation. An important game, we're three-and-a-half games out of first--look, the Red Sox are losing! We could be two-and-a-half games out, and you put up a third-string outfielder who's hitting two-eleven. And he's already got two strikes on him.

WHITEY

You want to know why I started Blefary? You want to know why I've stuck with him? Is that what you want to know?

DAVE

Yes.

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Strike three, batter's out!

WHITEY

'Cause he looks the best striking out, that's why! And if you can't hit 'em, then for God's sake, don't look like an asshole.

DAVE

Uh-huh.

WHITEY

Well, sure--there's more to managing a team than baseball.

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting seventh for the Yankees, number 25, third baseman Pete Ward.

WHITEY

C'mon, Petey! Let's get out of the Bronx here!

DAVE

Ward's not a home run hitter--what are you doing? Beat out a bunt, Petey! Lay it down!

WHITEY

Who's managing this team?

DAVE

That remains to be seen.

WHITEY

What do you know?

DAVE

The same as you.

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Ball!

DAVE

Wait out a walk, Pete! He's wild high!

WHITEY

Don't listen to him--he's got a bum leg! Slap it out of here!

(WHITEY considers the situation.)

They expect him to talk, but they don't expect him to...bunt.

(Signs. Hit.)

That's no bunt! That's gone! That's out of here! That's...
caught.

DAVE

So much for your fuckin' managerial strategy, eh Stan?

WHITEY

(quietly)

Now watch it. You just watch it, huh?

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting eighth for the Yankees, number 26, second baseman Frank
Baker.

DAVE

Anybody looking at this lineup wouldn't know we're in a pennant
race.

WHITEY

I'm resting my players.

DAVE

Tomorrow's an off day! We don't play tomorrow! We're flying to Texas!

WHITEY

An off day isn't a vacation. This is a vacation. For God's sakes, we're only playing California!

DAVE

I don't want to look. I don't want to know.

WHITEY

Now take your time, Frank.

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Ball!

WHITEY

See! He's ahead of the count.

DAVE

Just leave me out of this.

(As DAVE gets his cane and begins to exit: HIT. HE slowly returns to the bench.)

WHITEY

Aaaand...yes! All right, Frank, all right! Hold there, stay right there! All right, Frank--good wood, good wood, yessir!

DAVE

So, he got a hit. Who've you got up now? Which great Yankee star have you pulled out of your bag of tricks, eh?

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting ninth for the Yankees, number 41, Jake Gibbs.

DAVE

I hope you're pinch-hitting for him! Jake Gibbs. Holy Christ.

WHITEY

C'mon, Gibbsie boy. Don't listen to any cripple here.

(Hit.)

All right, Jakey boy! Beau-ti-ful!

DAVE

Okay--you've got men on first and second, two out. You're gonna send someone in to run for Baker at second, 'cause he's pretty slow, you know.

WHITEY

If he can't score from second on a hit, he doesn't deserve to wear the Yankee pinstripes.

DAVE

You know he's not going to score. Why don't you send in a pinch runner? Why don't you do something?

WHITEY

Either he scores or he doesn't. I think the guy can do it, and the more I think so, the more he thinks so. Managing isn't knowing when to call for a hit and run--any kid can do that. Managing is getting all you can get out of your players, and then some. Remember that.

DAVE

Look--he's slow! You're not going to do anything?

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting first for the Yankees, number eleven, right fielder Ron Woods.

DAVE

Not anything?

WHITEY

Nothing. We've got this game in the bag.

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Strike!

WHITEY

Okay, Woodsey, pick your pitch.

(Hit.)

All right, Woodsey! Move your ass, Frank!

DAVE

It's going to be close. Rivers has one hell of an arm.

WHITEY

He's got it beat--c'mon, let's go and meet him.

(WHITEY begins to trot out onto the field to meet Baker at home plate, but is caught by:)

UMPIRE

Out!

WHITEY

He's out?

(Pause, as HE recollects himself.)

THAT BLIND SON-OF-A-BITCH!!

(With that, WHITEY dashes onto the field, cursing at the UMPIRE.)

DAVE

It's not that important, Stan! We can get 'em in the tenth!

(to himself:)

He was out.

(Slowly, WHITEY walks back into the dugout. HE is dejected, and looks back at the off-stage UMPIRE every now and then.)

He didn't, did he?

WHITEY

Yes, he did. He most certainly did.

DAVE

Why?

WHITEY

I said The Magic Word.

DAVE

That's why he threw you out? You said The Magic Word?

WHITEY

Yeah.

DAVE

Uh, Stan...?

WHITEY

Yeah?

DAVE

Stan--what is The Magic Word, anyway?

(WHITEY whispers something in DAVE's ear.)

You called the umpire a motherfucker?

WHITEY

It was in the heat of the argument!

(Pause, as HE composes himself again.)

Where's Sparkman?

DAVE

He's coaching first.

WHITEY

Where's Dahlgren?

DAVE

He's coaching third.

WHITEY

Where's Berra?

DAVE

He's in the bullpen.

WHITEY

Where's O'Connell?

DAVE

Scouting in Tucson.

WHITEY

Tucson?

DAVE

Tucson.

WHITEY

What the hell's he doing in Tucson?

DAVE

Call him and see?

WHITEY

When then...you're it now.

(Pause. HE points to the locker room.)

I'll be right in there, if you need me.

(HE exits. Dave looks around and realizes that HE is indeed the manager. HE runs to the dugout wall and rips the lineup card off. HE begins to write furiously.)

(In the locker room, WHITEY turns on a small television to watch the game.)

DAVE

Let's see here. Take out Blefary, Ward, Baker, definitely Gibbs, and put in White, Kenney, Clarke and Munson.

(Picks up the dugout telephone, and dials one number.)

Yeah, they threw him out. Is Waslewski warm? Great--bring him in. Me? I'm staying here--don't get around much anymore, you know. Yeah, you take care of that, Yogi.

(HE hangs up the telephone.)

All right--let's get these guys out of there!

(WHITEY sees DAVE's moves on the television, and finds them hard to believe. HE calls the dugout. The dugout telephone rings. DAVE, disturbed by this interruption, answers it.)

Yeah?

WHITEY

Davey!

DAVE

Yeah?

WHITEY

You changed the lineup! Completely!

DAVE

I know. I put everybody in. They were all well-rested.

WHITEY

You know what you're doing?

DAVE

I know what I'm doing.

WHITEY

You sure know what you're doing?

DAVE

Yeah. I'm sure I know what I'm doing.

WHITEY

Just asking, that's all...

(DAVE hangs up on him.)

DAVE

(calls onto the field)

Time, ump! Need to talk to my new pitcher.

(DAVE hobbles out to the field. The dugout lights fade as the lights come up full on the locker room. WHITEY is watching the post-game interviews on the television.)

T.V. ANNOUNCER

(voice-over)

And a fine example of courageous and gutsy managing today in the Bronx as coach Dave Webster, taking over as manager when Whitey LaMonica was thrown out of the game, guided the Yanks to a tenth inning four-three victory over the pesky California Angels, with Roy White, Jerry Kenney, Horace Clarke and Thurman Munson, all tenth inning additions, leading the attack. We've got Dave here, and Dave, you brought in those four players in the tenth after they hadn't played in the game!

DAVE's voice

Yeah. Uh, well, Phil, they were all well-rested--something Whitey did, so I owe him part of the credit.

WHITEY

Part of the credit...lousy son-of-a-bitch.

T.V. ANNOUNCER

Well, thanks, Dave, and for taking the time out of your busy schedule to be with us today, we'd like you to have this toaster...

WHITEY

(snaps off television in disgust)

You know, when I was playing ball, they didn't give you no toasters. They didn't give you nothin'. That's 'cause when we played ball, we played... If these walls...geez, the glory days. Murderer's Row, Wally Pipp, Joe D...

(HE points a finger straight out, then mimes swinging a bat--Babe Ruth calling a home run.)

The Bambino. Ah, it was good while it lasted.

(DAVE enters, a toaster under his arm.)

DAVE

My toaster. Now, if I only had some bread... So, Stan. How'd I do?

WHITEY

How do you think you did?

DAVE

I think--I think I did one hell of a job for my first game.

WHITEY

That's what you think, huh?

DAVE

Yeah.

WHITEY

Then that's what you did. One hell of a job.

DAVE

You mean that?

WHITEY

I didn't say it. You did.

DAVE

What do you mean by that?

WHITEY

Nothing. I didn't say nothing.

DAVE

Well, what do you think? How did I do?

WHITEY

We won, didn't we? You deserve part of the credit.

(The locker room telephone rings. WHITEY looks at it. Finally, after the third or fourth ring, DAVE answers it.)

DAVE

Hello? Oh, yes, this is Dave Webster. Why, thank you. Thank you very much. No, I don't want to talk to your wife, sir. Why, yes, he's right here.

(to WHITEY:)

Stan, it's for you.

WHITEY

(slowly taking telephone)

Hello, Mr. Blackmun.

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

(END OF ACT ONE.)

A C T T W OScene One

(The dugout. WHITEY is looking out at the field, watching the players taking batting practice before a game. HE has a pencil in his mouth, and talks through it.

(DAVE is sitting on the bench, tossing a ball back and forth.)

WHITEY

(slowly, quietly)

Look. Just because Blackmun named you assistant manager --something I was totally against, and I'll tell you that straight, my friend--just because you've got an "in" with the owner, that doesn't mean you know what the hell you're talking about.

DAVE

Thanks for the vote of confidence.

WHITEY

Quite all right.

DAVE

I'm the first assistant manager in baseball history, you know that?

WHITEY

I'm aware of that, I think it stinks. Back in 1963, the Chicago Cubs didn't have any one particular manager, They had three coaches, and they alternated as manager. "It's my turn," "No, it's my turn." They wound up in ninth place, ahead of, of course, the New York Mets, who the year before had the distinction of losing three out of every four games they played.

DAVE

The Mets lost over 100 games in 1962, and the Yankees won the World Series. But still, the Mets outgrew the Yankees that year. Oh, I don't know. Maybe Blackmun wants to draw more people to the park.

WHITEY

Maybe Blackmun wants us to lose a hundred games.

DAVE

I doubt that.

(Pause. WHITEY takes the lineup card from his hip pocket, puts it in his cap, and drops the cap on the floor.)

WHITEY

I guess Blackmun wants me to go over the lineup with you.

DAVE

(perks up)

He said you needed my approval?

WHITEY

No. But what else are you going to do to assist me?

DAVE

Out of a hat?

WHITEY

Brings good luck. It's a tradition to pick the lineup out of a hat when you're not doing so well.

DAVE

Not doing well? We're two and a half games out in the middle of August. We're in the thick of the pennant race.

WHITEY

We shouldn't be in the thick of the pennant race! We should have clinched on July fourth!

(HE points to the cap on the floor with the lineup card in it.)

WHITEY

Here's the lineup I'm gonna go with.

DAVE

Aren't you supposed to pick the names out one-by-one for it to work?

WHITEY

Hey--I may be dumb, but I'm not stupid.

(DAVE, reluctantly, stoops down and picks up the card, leaving the cap on the floor. WHITEY eventually picks his cap up.)

DAVE

You're leading off with Baker again?

WHITEY

Yeah.

DAVE

No. You lead off with Clarke at second. Why? Because Joe Decker's pitching for the Twins, and Clarke's always hit well against Decker. Why? Because Decker's a curve ball pitcher. Why does Clarke hit Decker, a curve ball pitcher, so well? Because he's slightly near-sighted, and only sees the ball after it curves, not when it starts out, so he doesn't have to compensate, For him, it doesn't curve. See?

WHITEY

(giving in)

Clarke at second in for Baker at short.

DAVE

Right. Now, we have two second basemen and no shortstop...

WHITEY

(to himself)

And two managers.

DAVE

...so what you've got to do is move Michael, who's at second, to shortstop, but you move him to second spot in the batting order, because if Clarke gets on, you need someone who doesn't strike out, who can hit the ball, to advance Clarke to second.

WHITEY

(after a short pause)

Oh, yeah.

(DAVE takes the pencil from WHITEY's mouth, and scribbles his changes on the lineup card.)

DAVE

So now we've got Clarke leading off and playing second, and Michael batting second and playing short. There you go, Stan.

WHITEY

Yeah. Thanks.

DAVE

Anytime And this third place hitter will never do.

WHITEY

Oh, no?

DAVE

You've got Roy White up third. Munson should be up third.

WHITEY

Why? Third's your position for your best singles hitter. White's hitting two-ninety-four, Munson two-ninety-five no difference there.

DAVE

True. But White's also a big home run hitter. and he's be off up fifth, so if you've got a big inning, he's got more men to knock in. Plus, if you've got two on, two out, you'll have your number five hitter up, who's also hitting, by the way, two-ninety-four. You've got the best of both worlds. You can have your cake and eat it, too. You can...

WHITEY

Right! Let's see. What have, er, we got now?

DAVE

Clarke leading off at second, Michael batting second at short, Munson batting third and catching, Murcer batting fourth--your big power hitter, that's good, I agree with you there--in center field, Roy White batting fifth in left field...and what's this? What...what's this love affair you have with Curt Blefary?

WHITEY

He's a good player.

DAVE

He's hitting two-eleven. Is there something I should know about between you and him? He's your brother-in-law, right?

WHITEY

He's a good right fielder, I like him We're friends from a long time back. Besides, who the hell else am I gonna play? I shouldn't have said that.

DAVE

What about that new kid you just brought up from West Haven--Jimmy Lyttle? He's batting three-fifty-one. Give him a break.

WHITEY

Give me a break!

DAVE

Jimmy Lyttle batting sixth in right field. You've got Cater at first!

WHITEY

Yeah! And try to talk me out of that one! He's batting two-ninety-four, got 67 RBI's. and he's one of the best fielding first basemen in the league!

DAVE

He's in room 131 at St. Luke's Hospital with torn cartilage in his right knee.

WHITEY

Oh yeah?! Was that him? I thought that was you.

DAVE

Batting seventh, big Johnny Ellis at first base.

WHITEY

Ellis? He's my back-up catcher!

DAVE

You've got Gibbs.

WHITEY

Jake Gibbs, right.

DAVE

See? Told you to carry three catchers. Comes in handy, doesn't it?

WHITEY

Yeah. Handy.

DAVE

And you know, Stan. I'm good friends with Pete Ward, but Stan, you know as well as I do , .

WHITEY

Kenney at third?

DAVE

You're catching on, Jerry Kenney batting eighth at third base. And that leaves us with Stan Bahnsen, one of the aces of the staff, whose choice to pitch today I heartily commend. Nice job,

Stan.

WHITEY

Thanks.

DAVE

Here's the lineup card, Stan. All filled out and ready to go.

WHITEY

I don't want it. You can give it to the umpires today.

DAVE

I can?

WHITEY

Sure. It's mostly yours anyway.

DAVE

Stan, am I getting in your way?

WHITEY

No. Not really. No.

DAVE

All for the good of the Yankees, right?

WHITEY

Yeah. Right.

DAVE

We're gonna give 'em hell today, huh?

WHITEY

(slowly; to himself)

Give who hell?

(DAVE exits at a fast trot, out to the field. As HE passes WHITEY, DAVE pats him on the backside.)

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Two

(DAVE, in a spotlight, is at a press conference.)

DAVE

(Points to a questioner)

No, it really wasn't a surprise, but still, there's never been another assistant manager in baseball history, so it is kind of bucking tradition. But, I've always been known as a real buckner.

(Question.)

Yes, I know about the '63 Cubs. but that doesn't apply here. We're inching closer to the Red Sox--we're only two games back now, three games left in the season, they're all here at the Stadium, and with some of the changes Whitey and I have made in, say, the lineup, the defensive alignment, I think we've got one hell of a chance to sweep the series and meet Kansas Cite in the Playoffs

(Question.)

No, I don't know about any kind of relationship between Whitey and Curt Blefary, except that he's a player like anyone else, who happens to look good striking out, that's all.

(Question.)

I don't know of any plan to dump Whitey. I haven't been in touch with the owner recently. Besides, who would take over for him? Who could take over for Whitey LaMonica--a man who's played on every minor league team imaginable: a man who joined the Yankees twenty years ago when they needed him, and guided them to pennant after pennant: a man who's given his entire life to baseball, to the often futile quest for the Holy Grail, a small blue and white flag to fly over a stadium--the American League pennant. Who could take over for this man? I know of no one.

No, I don't think I'm ready yet. There's more to managing a team than baseball. for cryin' out loud.

(Question.)

Would I like to be? Well, hell--I could use the raise.

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Three

(The locker room before a game.)

DAVE

You are not playing Curt Blefary! Not while I've got these pinstripes on!

WHITEY

You? You're talking to me about Yankee pinstripes? You--you're telling me about tradition?

DAVE

It. . .it comes with the position,

WHITEY

What position?

DAVE

(quietly)

Well, you know.

WHITEY

No! I don't! You're not the damn manager yet, goddamn it!

Now, we're down to one game against one team for the oh, God...the Playoffs! Like the old ten team league wasn't good enough for 'em. Sure, used to be, you win the season and ham--right into the World Series. But now--now we've got to play Kansas Cite--hell, they used to be our farm team! You'd be ashamed to say you played for Kansas City, because that meant you weren't good enough to play for the Yankees. But now, we gotta play 'em just for the pennant, and maybe lose in the Series, Hell, it don't make no sense anymore, Where'd it go? Where'd it all go?

DAVE

They buried all that when they buried Casey Stengel.

WHITEY

I just lived too long. Baseball's no place for an old man. It's a kid's game, and I'm a 62-year old kid.

DAVE

You're 62?

WHITEY

Yeah.

DAVE

Geez...

WHITEY

Look, Davey You've done a good job with the club for over a hundred games now. You realty picked 'em up when they needed it, and I'm proud of you. You...you take the club now.

(WHITEY takes a baseball, and starts tossing it from hand to hand.)

I'll coach first. You take 'em, give 'em a good talk, do all those things you've been doing there--I don't know what they are, but they seem to work--and if you win, fine, you get the credit, all of it. If you lose, you get the blame. No more "part of the credit" bullshit.

DAVE

(very carefully)

You talk this over with Blackmun?

WHITEY

Yeah. After yesterday's game. I told him what's been going on, how it's been getting bad between us, how you handle the club so well, and how I'm, well, I'm just out of it now.

(HE tosses the ball to DAVE, who catches it.)

It's your ball game, Davey.

DAVE

Thanks, Stan.

WHITEY

Welcome aboard, Skip.

DAVE

Uh, yeah. Thanks. Stan.

(WHITEY exits to field.)

Skip, huh?

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Four

(The dugout, the ninth inning of the last game with the Red Sox, DAVE is pacing back and forth, while WHITEY sits on the bench, watching.)

DAVE

All this goddamn rain, goddamn soot in the goddamn night, all the pollution, it all hits Yankee goddamn Stadium whenever we're trying to win a goddamn baseball game! Awright, boys, all right --under new management now, yes sir. Just gotta hold 'em, boys. Yes sir, win this one and that's it! Catch the next flight out to Kansas City! You lose it--well, boys, van lose it, and it's a one-way ticket to Palookaville. Yes yes.

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting third for the Red Sox, number eight, left fielder Carl Yaztremski.

DAVE

Oh, we got 'em now, boys, we got 'em now--Yaztremski's old! He's washed up! We got 'em now. Get him low and inside.

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Ball!

DAVE

When it's low and inside. he's supposed to hit it! If he doesn't, well then...

{Pitch.}

UMPIRE

Ball!

DAVE

...That's what happens, you get ball two. See? So simple Such a simple game. Baseball.

(Hit.)

Oh, shit--oh, shit-shit-shit! Ohhh..yes! Yes sir! A beauty of a catch! BeautY, yes! Could Curt Blefary do that? No!

WHITEY

Nervous, huh?

(HE sits on bench and fidgets.)

DAVE

Shouldn't you be out there coaching first?

WHITEY

I don't coach first for Boston, So, it comes down to this. Two out, three run lead, one out from the pennant!

DAVE

The division title. We've got to play Kansas City for the pennant.

WHITEY

Oh, jeez...Kansas City.

DAVE

Uh, I think I can handle the last out from here, Stan.

WHITEY

Oh. Yeah, sure.

DAVE

Stan, can you open a bottle of champagne?

WHITEY

Why sure! Done it a hundred times.

DAVE

Well, you do it then, 'cause I can't. See you after the game, at the party.

WHITEY

At the party, right.

(WHITEY begins to leave.)

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting fifth for the Red Sox. number fifteen, first baseman George Scott.

DAVE

Ah, yes--Boomer. Sucker for the curve ball, Two out, catch the one-thirty-two out of LaGuardia tomorrow, yes sir!

(Hit.)

First ball hitting, ground ball to Michael and...all right!
Yes!! Kansas City, here we come!

(DAVE runs out onto the field, leaving
WHITEY alone in the dugout.

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Five

(WHITEY and DAVE are in the locker room,
before a game.)

DAVE

Yes, I know we are losing, we are losing!

WHITEY

It's only two games to one, Davey.

DAVE

Yeah, but they've got the two! We could be gone tonight!
Finished! Done for! Done in! How does that make you feel?

WHITEY

It's only a game, Davey, a goddamn game.

DAVE

Then it's the goddamnest game I've ever played,

WHITEY

Well, it just might be, So...finding managing enjoyable?

DAVE

I can see now why you left for the comfy confines of the
coaches' box.

WHITEY

I'd rather pat asses than kiss 'em, So, how're you gonna handle
this?

DAVE

I don't know, After all, it's just another game, right? We won
off 'em before, we can do it again Sure--somebody had to be up
two games to one after three games, and hell, it turned out to
be them, but shit, we can come back. Can't we?

WHITEY

We can...

DAVE

Sure,

WHITEY

...but then again...

DAVE

Well, yeah. true, but...

WHITEY

...we could get our asses kicked...

DAVE

Possibly...

WHITEY

...or we could kick ass. There are many possibilities.

DAVE

Myriad possibilities.

WHITEY

True.

DAVE

Plus the added advantage of being at home...

WHITEY

Nothing like it.

DAVE

Home sweet home, eh?

WHITEY

Sure is, yes.

DAVE

The New York fans, the banners, the yelling..,

WHITEY

The fearful feeling that creeps over the opposition when they play in the House That Ruth Built, Add them all up, they spell victory.

DAVE

The tradition!

WHITEY

Surely.

DAVE

I think we've got them right where we want them, Mr. LaMonica, Do you agree?

WHITEY

No.

DAVE

You don't?

WHITEY

No, I don't. You know why?

DAVE

No, I don't.

WHITEY

Then I'll tell you. My head hurts. I've got gallstones that have to come out sooner or later. I've got so much heartburn I must be pregnant. It's been five months since I've seen my wife, and the worst of it is,..I'm beginning to like hockey more than baseball. Can you imagine that? Hockey. Back in the old days, the only time I'd see ice was floating in a glass.

DAVE

I didn't know you were married.

WHITEY

I'm not so sure myself. That's what this goddamn game does to you. It rips Your guts out, then it makes you a hero. Jesus Christ, in twenty years. some old bastards some Sundae afternoon some winter'll be talking, and it'll come up--"Do you remember Whitey LaMonica?" And then one of 'em will let out one of those long, low whistles and say, "Christ Almighty, yeah, Whitey LaMonica ..he was the quarterback for the Oakland Raiders, wasn't he, huh?" And they'll all say, "Yeah, yeah."

If you're looking for fame, kid, this ain't the way, You go rob a bank if you want fame. You want your guts ripped out, well then, hey--you've come to the right place,

DAVE

Look--it's not something I want to do. I have to. What else can I do? I've got to play a goddamn kid's game, Look what I've done with the team. And I know you don't like it, but I won, dammit! And that's what we're here to do--win.

WHITEY

Well, maybe it is, and maybe it isn't. All I know, Davey, is that win or lose, there's a hell of a lot of people out there who would give anything they had to shake your hand, have a beer with you, sit down and talk with you, just so they could tell

their grandchildren they shook the hand of Dave Webster, manager of the New York Yankees, the greatest baseball team there ever was. Win or lose.

DAVE

Stan, aren't you going to ask me who I'm starting?

WHITEY

No.

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Six

(The dugout. WHITEY and DAVE are standing during the National Anthem.)

DAVE

Why aren't you singing?

(Pause.)

I said, why aren't you singing?

WHITEY

I...uh...well...

DAVE

Yeah?

(Pause.)

WHITEY

I, uh...I forgot the words.

DAVE

You forgot the words, huh?

WHITEY

Yeah.

DAVE

Some Yankee you are.

(The anthem ends.)

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Seven

(The dugout.)

DAVE

Why aren't you out at first base?

WHITEY

Everything's all right. Turner's coaching first.

DAVE

But he's my bullpen coach! What if I need a new pitcher in the tenth inning?

WHITEY

What tenth inning? It's six-to-two, and they've got the six! We're down by four and the bottom of the order's coming up. If I were you, I'd book a flight home for tonight. You can't win every year, Davey. The Yankees are changing, baseball's changing. The whole world is changing. Even a chickens hit town like Kansas City deserves a winner every once in a while. We had a chance to win before, and now we have a chance to lose.

DAVE

You never have to lose, Stan. Never.

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting seventh for the Yankees, number 23, first baseman Johnny Ellis.

DAVE

By the way, why in hell are you here?

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Ball!

WHITEY

End of an era.

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Strike!

DAVE

You give up easy, don't you?

WHITEY

I don't think so. Maybe I do.

(Pitch.)

Maybe I don't.

DAVE

C'mon, Johnny!

(Hit. A high pop-up over the catcher's head, caught easily.)

WHITEY

Two left--I figure about, oh, seven more minutes Still got a chance to catch the five o'clock flight out of Kennedy for Boulder.

DAVE

Going home?

WHITEY

You're damn right.

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Batting eighth for the Yankees, number two, third baseman Jerry Kenney.

DAVE

He's got to get on. Got to!

WHITEY

Yeah, I've got this little place out there--mountains, snow, the works. I'm gonna go home and have a...

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Ball!

WHITEY

...really good time. Yes sir, one hell of a time.

(Pitch.)

UMPIRE

Strike!

(Pitch.)

Two!

(DAVE fidgets. Pause. Pitch.)

UMPIRE

(garbled; the result is shown on DAVE's face
and body)

Strike three yet out!

WHITEY

Well, look at it this way, Dave--you tried.

DAVE

I ain't finished yet.

(Calls down the bench.)

Hey, number thirteen, get your ass up there for Bahnsen.

WHITEY

Well, now you're a manager,

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, your attention, please. Batting for the
pitcher, Bahnsen. number thirteen, Curt Bleary.

WHITEY

I am suitably impressed.

DAVE

I knew you would be.

WHITEY

Ooh--that sounds like it.

(HE exits into locker room.

(DAVE watches the ball being caught.)

DAVE

It is.

(GRADUAL BLACKOUT.)

Scene Eight

(After the game. in the locker room. DAVE is emptying his locker into a suitcase.)

(HE reaches into the locker, and pulls out various toiletries from the top shelf, putting them in the suitcase. HE finds a shaving cream can, looks at it, poses with it like a magazine advertisement, laughs, and throws it in the suitcase.)

(HE begins to go to work on his clothes. HE finds an old pair of socks, buried for many months, and smells them. HE wrinkles his nose at them, and tosses them into the suitcase.)

(HE finds his toaster. HE puts it in the suitcase. However, it looks ludicrous--much too big for the suitcase. HE takes it out, opens a nearby locker, and puts it in there.)

(HE takes off his cap, unconsciously. HE looks at it, and in a surge of frustration, throws it on the floor.)

Goddamn it.

(HE regards the cap on the floor, picks it up, dusts it off, and puts it on the top shelf of his locker.)

(HE reaches in and takes out his old fielder's glove. HE looks it over, chuckles quietly, and puts it on. HE bends down to field an imaginary ground ball, catches it, straightens up to throw, and collapses on his right leg.)

Jesus Christ! My ankle.

(WHITEY enters.)

WHITEY

So, boy--this is it, isn't it?

DAVE

(still on floor)

Yeah. Don't any football Players finding old toenail clippings or something, huh?

WHITEY

That's right--don't the Giants play here in the winter still? God--football. What kind of tradition does football have? Sure, they'll say they've got people like Bronco Nagurski, Sid Luckman, Red Grange... Yeah, but still, they don't have much. It's not a one-on-one game. When you're up at bat, it's you and only you against nine sons-of-bitches out there. Nothing to compare with baseball.

DAVE

Uh, Stan...

WHITEY

Yeah, Skip?

DAVE

Don't call me Skip! Uh. Stan...

WHITEY

Yeah.

DAVE

Aren't you gonna change?

WHITEY

Yeah, yeah--gimme a chance, huh? I just want to savor this place while I'm still here. Remember it--the monuments in center field--Ruth, Gehrig, Miller Huggins--I want to remember 'em right where they are, smack dab in the middle of center field, 'cause they're moving them to the bullpens. where nobody's ever Donna climb on 'em to catch a 450-foot drive again. I want to remember the longest fence in the majors, and the shortest, and the most beautiful facade of any ballpark in God's sweet creation. 'Cause they're going to tear it down, and they're gonna make the longest fence shorter, and the shortest fence longer. And the scoreboard. You know, there's a guy behind there, Emil Frye, and he puts in all the numbers and lights all the lights. Been doing it for 51 years now. They fired him this morning. Well, when you're playing in this new stadium here next year--you tell me what it's like.

DAVE

You'll be back in April. You will be back in April, won't You?

WHITEY

Well, I don't know.

(HE takes a garment bag from his locker and goes behind a dressing screen.)

Coaching first is kind of, well, unrewarding. You know.

DAVE

But Stan, we need you.

WHITEY

We?

DAVE

The, uh, Yankees.

WHITEY

Oh! The New York Yankees need me! Well then, I must reconsider. No.

DAVE

Why can't you dress out in the open like everybody else? It's only me out here.

WHITEY

You and thirty-five years. Oh, I don't know. You think it's okay for a 62-year old man to show his private parts to a 27-year old man?

DAVE

Only in a locker room in Yankee Stadium.

WHITEY

Ah, yes. Only in Yankee Stadium can an old first base coach show his manager his pecker. Just think of the peckers these walls have seen! My goodness!

DAVE

So, Stan, why aren't you coming back next season--if you really aren't, that is?

WHITEY

Oh, many reasons. Skip, First of all, I want to spend some time with my wife and the Rocky Mountains, not necessarily in that order. Second, they treated me here like dog shit, And third..,

(WHITEY enters from behind the dressing screen wearing a different uniform.)

I got a great offer to manage in Boulder!

DAVE

(laughing: surprised)

Boulder? But that's minor league! Triple-A!

WHITEY

It's near home. I can be with my wife, my mountains, my snow...and finally, a team I all my own I bought a 51-percent share in it! I had to hock damn near everything I had, take a second mortgage on my house, but I got myself a job with no hassles, Just got to watch out for the minor league reporters is all.

DAVE

But isn't it a step down for you?

WHITEY

Better than distributing beer like Roger Maris, or selling insurance like Don Larsen. And I'm gonna love it! Boulder's on the way up, and I'm on the way down. It's a perfect match!

I was never on a baseball card, Dave. There's no stories to tell about me. But you just wait a few years. We're gonna play this game the way it's supposed to be played. Day games, doubleheaders on Sundays, pitchers batting ninth, baggy uniforms, a guy behind the scoreboard putting up numbers, Ladies' Days, peanuts and cracker jack--that's what this game is, dammit, not exploding scoreboards and night flights to Atlanta and Astroturf and goddamn domed stadiums! And everybody's Donna hit home runs and everybody's Donna steal bases, and you're only coming out of the game if you break your arm.

And GRASS. Davey! Real grass that gets your uniform dirty.

(WHITEY takes off his Yankee cap--HE is wearing the Boulder jersey and trousers--looks at it, and puts it on the bench.

(HE opens his locker, takes out his Boulder cap. HE puts it on.)

WHITEY

So, Denver, here I come.

DAVE

Say, Whitey, um...

(WHITEY cuts DAVE off with a gesture.)

WHITEY

Bye-bye, Davey-boy, and you remember your old Whitey when you're losing by ten in the middle of the goddamn Bronx here! Yes sir!

(WHITEY exits.)

(DAVE laughs to himself, shakes his head, and continues to pack his suitcase. HE finds WHITEY's cap on the bench HE puts it on, admires himself in a mirror, much the way a young child does when he puts on his father's clothes, spits like WHITEY, and takes a gruff pose.)

DAVE

(as WHITEY might)

And I'll go to my grave with "New York" tabooed on my goddamn chest.

(DAVE laughs again, takes WHITEY's cap off, and pauses as HE decides whether or not to put it in his suitcase or back in WHITEY's locker.

(HE decides not to keep it. HE goes to WHITEY's locker, opens it, and puts it away on the top shelf,

(As DAVE closes the locker:)

Oh, well. There's always next year.

(HE begins to walk out toward the showers. After a short pause, the locker room telephone rings.

(DAVE stops suddenly, turns around, and watches the telephone ring, arms folded. At the third ring--GRADUAL BLACKOUT,

(END OF ACT TWO.)