

THE AMAZING ALWAYS

By Ross Howard

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Inquiries regarding performance rights to other plays should be addressed to Amy Marsh at: amyrose.marsh@concord.com

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The play requires seven actors. The casting of roles is specific and indicated below.

CAST	ACT ONE Omaha, Nebraska 1965	ACT TWO San Antonio, Texas 1978	ACT THREE San Antonio, Texas 2003
TRACK 1 <i>(Early 40s, white)</i>	ELEANOR ALWAY <i>(Matriarch, Joseph's wife)</i>	URSULA HENRICK <i>(Cheerleading coach)</i>	JENNA ALWAY <i>(Team owner, Caroline's daughter)</i>
TRACK 2 <i>(Early 40s, white)</i>	JOSEPH ALWAY <i>(Patriarch, Team owner)</i>	LOU EDWARDS <i>(League Official)</i>	JOHN ALWAY <i>(Jenna's Cousin, Joe Jnr's son)</i>
TRACK 3 <i>(Mid-30s, white)</i>	FRANCINE JOHNSON <i>(Joseph's secretary)</i>	CAROLINE ALWAY <i>(Joe Jnr's Sister)</i>	NATALIE ALWAY <i>(John's wife)</i> + LISA MARIE MORAN <i>(Francine's daughter, Bill's wife.)</i>
TRACK 4 <i>(Late 30s, white)</i>	COACH LAMBERT <i>(Team Coach)</i>	JOE ALWAY JNR <i>(Team Owner)</i>	RICK ZOLA <i>(General Manager)</i>
TRACK 5 <i>(Late-20s, black)</i>	NURSE TAYLOR <i>(A psychiatric nurse)</i>	TANYA ROSE <i>(A cheerleader)</i>	DR. SANDERS <i>(Team Doctor)</i>
TRACK 6 <i>(Early 20s, biracial)</i>	JIM HARRISON <i>(Quarterback on Practice Squad)</i>	JIM HARRISON <i>(A torment)</i>	COACH BISHOP & JIM HARRISON <i>(Team Coach & Ghost from the past)</i>
TRACK 7 <i>(Mid to late 30s, white)</i>	WOODY CARTER <i>(General Manager)</i>	DAN SCHILLACI <i>(Legal Representative)</i>	JAY FAISON <i>(Team Quarterback)</i> + BILL MORAN <i>(Lisa Marie's husband)</i>

ACT ONE

**OMAHA, NEBRASKA
1965**

Characters

JOSEPH ALWAY	<i>Team owner</i>
ELEANOR ALWAY	<i>His wife</i>
WOODY CARTER	<i>Team General Manager</i>
FRANCINE JOHNSON	<i>Joseph's secretary</i>
JIM HARRISON	<i>A Quarterback from Army</i>
COACH LAMBERT	<i>Team Coach</i>
NURSE TAYLOR	<i>Psychiatric nurse</i>

1.

(Past midnight, January 1st 1965.

JOSEPH is on the phone in his office.

A cigarette burns away on an ashtray nearby.

ELEANOR is at home, on the opposite side of the stage.

She is in very low light.

We can barely make her out. Almost a silhouette.

She smokes a cigarette from a cigarette holder.

She is on the phone to JOSEPH.)

JOSEPH

Did we know them?

ELEANOR

They were just like us, Joe. They were Always.

JOSEPH

A group of us with the name?

ELEANOR

Yes.

JOSEPH

Some get-together of folk with the same last name. It was a convention?

ELEANOR

Yes. It was a convention. We had *convened* on the bridge. Some were lagging behind us. Some had raced ahead. But there we were, Joseph Alway. Right there.

JOSEPH

Was it Golden Gate Bridge?

ELEANOR

Nah-uh.

JOSEPH

Brooklyn Bridge? Chesapeake Bay Bridge?

ELEANOR

Joe.

JOSEPH

Mackinac Bridge, Tacoma Narrows-

ELEANOR

Will you stop.

JOSEPH

What? I'm just trying to follow your story.

ELEANOR

It wasn't any of those bridges. It was just a bridge.

JOSEPH

But you said it was big.

ELEANOR

The drop was big, yes. It was a sheer drop.

JOSEPH

Okay. So, what? We were walking across this damn bridge? The four of us? Me, you, Joey and Caroline?

ELEANOR

And he was there too.

JOSEPH

Who?

ELEANOR

You know who. But he was all grown up. It was like we'd seen a ghost.

(Pause)

JOSEPH

I have to go, Ellie.

ELEANOR

Why?

JOSEPH

You're drunk. You should go to bed.

ELEANOR

Who's drunk? *(A beat)* Joe? *(Almost singing, haunting)* Joseph....

(A beat)

JOSEPH

Yes. So, we're walking across....

ELEANOR

Yes. To get to the other side.

JOSEPH

Sure. And this cement bridge, this wonder of modern engineering, was squeaking.

ELEANOR

The nuts and bolts-

JOSEPH

The nuts and bolts were squeaking.

ELEANOR

Eek, eek, eek. They were coming loose. The whole thing was going to collapse beneath us. We were going to fall, Joe. All of us. Just fall. *(A beat)* Come home.

JOSEPH

I can't. I have to stay here.

ELEANOR

To hell with you.

JOSEPH

Look, Ellie. It was just one of those dreams. But you know bridges.... they just don't go down like that. That never happens.

ELEANOR

Joe. I hate Omaha. I want to kill myself.

(A beat)

JOSEPH

Listen. I got work to do. I'll speak to you t'morrow. You get some rest.

ELEANOR

Is Francine with you?

JOSEPH

No, no one is here.

ELEANOR

Francine's a bitch. What do you even do over there? It's New Year's Day! The season's over! You didn't win. It's a terrible team. It's a terrible team that won't win a damn thing.

JOSEPH

It's never over. We're planning for next season. There's a lot to figure out.

ELEANOR

That goddamn ball club. Sell up and let's go back to New York. The three of us should have left you the day you bought it.

(No response)

ELEANOR

Hey, guess what?

JOSEPH
(*Wearily*)

What?

ELEANOR

What?

JOSEPH

You said guess what?

ELEANOR

Yes. I'm going to leave you. And I'm taking our babies with me.

JOSEPH

They're not babies. They're both in college.

ELEANOR

I'll turn them against you.

JOSEPH
(*Sighing*)

Ellie...

ELEANOR

You don't think I can do that? I have influence, Joseph.

JOSEPH

You do. I need to go. I will see you in the morning.

ELEANOR

It's morning now.

JOSEPH

You know what I mean.

ELEANOR

Come home. I need you here.

(*Pause*)

ELEANOR

You never think where he is? About the young man he's become? Twenty-two years, Joseph...

JOSEPH

I'm going now. Good night.

ELEANOR

... twenty-two years today since we took that drive to Illinois.

JOSEPH

Happy new year, Eleanor.

ELEANOR

Why'd I let you do that to him, Joe?

(A beat, then JOSEPH puts the phone down)

ELEANOR

Happy new year.

2.

*(It is July 1965. In spotlight, COACH LAMBERT
Addresses the audience.)*

COACH LAMBERT

Welcome back to summer camp, fellas. I hope you got to relax a little. I hope you got to spend a little time with the family. And I hope you got to realizin' that when you got back today, and that from this moment on, an' over the next month for sure, we're gonna be busting our asses and sweating out blood, getting this football team into the shape it needs to be in to compete. Now, there's one question a man asks himself continually. Or let's say, two. Two questions. There are two questions a man asks himself. Even without knowing it, even subconsciously, he's asking himself these two questions over and over and over and over again in his mind.... *Who am I? And is that going to be enough?* I'll say those to you again.... *Who am I? And is that going to be enough?* Now winners know who they are. And just like in life, football rewards the man who knows who he is, who knows what he wants, and who knows what it takes to get there. Now I'm here to help you, and we're all here to help each other to get to where we all want to be. So, when you look at yourself in the mirror tonight. And you're asking who's that guy staring right back at you. And you're asking if that's gonna be enough.... I want you to say to yourself "Hey, I'm an Omaha Alway. I'm gonna work hard, train hard and play hard. I'm an Omaha Alway, and I got Bud Lambert as my Head Coach. And by golly, that's gonna be more than enough."

3.

*(JOSEPH is standing by the window of his office,
looking out onto the practice field.
WOODY is seated, waiting for him to speak.)*

WOODY

Joe?

(No response)

WOODY

It would really give us an edge.

JOSEPH

....

WOODY

The way I see it, if it's good enough for the Olympics, and the guys over there in Houston, then it's good enough for us.

JOSEPH

Wait, the Oilers are already using this?

WOODY

What?

JOSEPH

Houston.

WOODY

Oh, no. I mean NASA.

JOSEPH

I see. Sure. You mentioned any of this to Lambert? Or any the other scouts and coaches?

WOODY

I have not.

JOSEPH

Why's that?

WOODY

I wanted to come to you first.... you know, they may feel threatened by it, or think it was some kind of science fiction, like a robot would be replacing them. You know how they are. "You need a horse sense and a keen eye!" "Heck, you need to know the game!"

JOSEPH

Right. *(A beat)* But it's not going to be scouting players. You already said that. That'd be absurd.

WOODY

This is purely for how we collect and handle the data. This computer is not going to replace them. It's going to help them. It's going to help us. In Squaw Valley at the Winter Olympics this thing calculated all the statistics, medal standings, record times. Just think what it could do for us, all that information we have on prospects at college level. It's less paperwork for them to do and this will free them up to see more ball games.

(JOSEPH turns back to the window, watching practice.)

WOODY

You okay?

JOSEPH

Huh? Yeah.... just excited. Summer camp... *(A beat)* Coach Lambert's really riding the fellas. They're really sucking for wind out there. It's good to see.

WOODY

Rather than us, hey Chief?

JOSEPH

It's funny. When you meet him, he looks like an actuary, but when he's out on that field, he's like General Patton. *(A beat)* Did you know he only drinks milk? Only in America....

WOODY

Anyway....

JOSEPH

Yes. I like the sound of it. A computer. It's a modern way of looking at things. So, what'd you need from me?

WOODY

Well, it's pricey.

JOSEPH

Okay. Shoot.

WOODY

We'd be looking north of 800,000 dollars. As an estimate.

JOSEPH

Christ, Woody.

WOODY

I know. But I was thinking we could reach out to some of the other teams in the AFL. The Chargers maybe, the Jets. See if they want in and we can split the cost three ways. Share the burden. But I promise you, Joe.... The technology *is there*. *(A beat)* Look, the NFL are already moving on this for themselves.

(A silence)

JOSEPH

They are, huh? Well that's settled then. How to go, Woody.... we're not going to let those bastards make us look like a bunch of yahoos back here. Count us in, with or without other AFL help.

WOODY

You won't regret it, Joe.

(JOSEPH turns back to the window.

WOODY watches him for a moment.)

JOSEPH

It's a hell of a thing to be back, Woody.

WOODY

I'm sure.

JOSEPH

I missed it.

WOODY

Say, what do you want me to tell the press about our new black Quarterback from Army?

Harrison?

JOSEPH

Yeah.

WOODY

Do you have to tell them anything?

JOSEPH

Just if they ask. I mean, they're gonna ask.

WOODY

He's on the practice team.

JOSEPH

Lambert likes him. He's his new prize pig.

WOODY

Prize pig? It's been, what? Two days?

JOSEPH

Says Jim's a bright kid. With an arm like a slingshot.

WOODY

Really? (A beat) What's his family like? Have we met his folks?

JOSEPH

Who, Sister Agnes or Sister Ignatius?

WOODY

Huh?

JOSEPH

You hadn't heard? Kid's had a real rough life. He was raised by nuns out in New Lenox.

WOODY

New Lenox?

JOSEPH

Illinois.

WOODY

(Silence)

WOODY

This kid could damn near break your heart. Says he wants to make the grade in pro-football and then go find his mommy and daddy. Cute, huh? The sisters seem to think his mom was some young Manhattan princess/society type and his dad was some jazz musician/lothario character out there in Harlem.

(Laughs) That's two needles in two haystacks right there!

JOSEPH

How old is he?

WOODY

I guess when the poor bastard who married her returned home from the war, she gave birth to Jim and then it was “*get he to a nunnery!*”

JOSEPH

Woody. How old did you say he was?

WOODY

I didn't. But he turned 22 last New Year's Eve. Why?

(Silence)

WOODY

You okay?

JOSEPH

What? Why'd you keep asking me that?

WOODY

You just seem wound tighter than nuts on a new bridge is all.

(Pause)

JOSEPH

Don't tell the press anything. He's not our quarterback. He'll be gone in a couple of weeks.

WOODY

I knew that was it!

JOSEPH

What?

WOODY

You're nervous about having a Half Bake Quarterback. That he's mixed race-

JOSEPH

I'm not nervous about that. And please don't use that phrase.

WOODY

What phrase? Mixed race? The kid's mixed-

JOSEPH

Half Bake. I don't like it.

WOODY

.....

JOSEPH

.....

WOODY

Listen, I should warn you, Lambert wants you to sign him.

JOSEPH

Leave Lambert to me. Do you have anything else? I want you to get on with this thing.

WOODY

What thing?

JOSEPH

With IBM. The computer.

(FRANCINE enters.)

JOSEPH

Francine.

FRANCINE

Mr Alway, sorry to disturb, but I have a call from Dr. Costacurta.

JOSEPH

Tell him I'll call him back.

FRANCINE

It's about Mrs Alway.

JOSEPH

I'm sure it is. Tell him two minutes.

FRANCINE

Yes, Sir.

(FRANCINE exits.)

JOSEPH

Are we finished here?

WOODY

There is something else. Kinda related....

JOSEPH

Go on.

WOODY

We got an issue with Willy.

JOSEPH

Willy Marshall? What? He looks fine.

WOODY

He's been horsing around town with a new lady friend. Rumour is she's living with him now.

JOSEPH

Good for him. Is that really any of our business?

WOODY

She's a white girl, Joe.

JOSEPH

Right. *(A beat)* I take it you disapprove?

WOODY

It's not what I think that matters.

JOSEPH

I'll talk to him.

WOODY

This could be very bad for us and the reputation of the AFL. Who knows what the NFL will make of it. If this gets out. They could use it against us.

JOSEPH

Okay. Let's not jump the gun-

WOODY

We can't have anything that sabotages that merger, Joe. We need it.

JOSEPH

I told you I'd handle it.

WOODY

You got a lot on your plate. I'm happy to do it.

JOSEPH

Woody. I said I'd talk to him.

(A beat)

WOODY

Sure. Well I should get back to my office.

JOSEPH

Good idea.

WOODY

We missed you, Joe...

JOSEPH
Bullshit. Woody?

WOODY
Yeah?

JOSEPH
The kid Harrison.

WOODY
Yes?

JOSEPH
He's military and he needs to complete his service. And it was only ever for the practice team. He can't stay here. I'll smooth it over with Lambert.

WOODY
Okay. Talk to Lambert. Talk to Willy. You know where I am if you need me. I'm just the General Manager.

JOSEPH
Don't be like that. You did a fine job while I was away.

(No response)

JOSEPH
What do you want me to say? I appreciate you.

WOODY
I can manage team affairs, Joe if you let me.

JOSEPH
Maybe you got a little used to me being away. *(A beat)* Just get us that computer.

WOODY
You bet.

JOSEPH
Because we're joining the space age, Woody Carter. We're going to the moon.

4.

(It is night. JOSEPH is lay across one of the bleachers on the practice field looking up at the sky. The sky above is lit by an impressive field of stars. He is drinking from a flask. FRANCINE enters. She looks like she has punched out for the day and is ready to go home. JOSEPH watches her momentarily.)