

THE AMAZING ALWAYS

By Ross Howard

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AUTHOR NOTE

The play requires seven actors minimum. If doubling or tripling, those tracks are specific and outlined on the next page.

Whatever the casting approach, one actor plays Jim Harrison in Act One, Reverend Phillips in Act Two, and Staff Sergeant Quinn and Coach Bishop in Act Three. This is not incidental. The same presence moving through four decades and three generations of a single family is central to the play's meaning. The nature and intention of that presence is alluded to in the prologue.

This is a play of incarnations and visitations, and of what goes unacknowledged.

The remaining tracks are likewise fixed and should be observed as written. The echo of faces and bodies across time is as integral to the dramatic arc as the echoes of conduct, language and moral fallibility across the Alway bloodline.

As for the design, locations should be suggested rather than reproduced. The play should move fluidly across forty years without realistic scene changes.

There are two constant elements: a set of old bleachers, which remain throughout, and an owner's desk and chair, which pass down the generations. In Act Three the office may move to a different corner of the space, furnished in the corporate style of 2003; the old desk may remain visible, unused.

The period lives in costume, props and sound rather than architecture. The fewer things on stage, the more each one should mean.

~ Ross Howard

CASTING	ACT ONE - 1965	ACT TWO - 1978	ACT THREE - 2003
TRACK 1 <i>(Late 30s to 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 Jr. 's son)</i> + JOSEPH ALWAY <i>(Patriarch, Team founder)</i>
TRACK 3 <i>(Mid-30s, white)</i>	FRANCINE JOHNSON <i>(Joseph's secretary)</i>	CAROLINE ALWAY <i>(Joe Jr. '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>(Head Coach)</i>	JOE ALWAY JR. <i>(Team owner)</i>	RICK ZOLA <i>(General Manager)</i>
TRACK 5 <i>(Late 20s to early 30s, black)</i>	NURSE TAYLOR <i>(A psychiatric nurse)</i>	TANYA ROSE <i>(A cheerleader)</i>	DR. SANDERS <i>(Team Doctor)</i>
TRACK 6 <i>(Mid-to-late 20s, biracial)</i>	JIM HARRISON <i>(Quarterback on Practice Squad)</i>	REVEREND PHILLIPS <i>(A community leader)</i> + JIM HARRISON <i>(A presence)</i>	STAFF SERGEANT QUINN <i>(Armed Forces liaison)</i> + COACH BISHOP <i>(Head Coach)</i> + JIM HARRISON <i>(As himself)</i>
TRACK 7 <i>(Mid-to-late 30s, white)</i>	WOODY CARTER <i>(General Manager)</i>	DAN SCHILLACI <i>(Family lawyer)</i>	JAY FAISON <i>(Team Quarterback)</i> + BILL MORAN <i>(Lisa Marie's husband)</i>

ACT ONE

“The Kid Harrison”

OMAHA, NEBRASKA

1965

Characters

JOSEPH ALWAY

Team owner

ELEANOR ALWAY

His wife

WOODY CARTER

Team General Manager

FRANCINE JOHNSON

Joseph’s secretary

JIM HARRISON

A quarterback from Army

COACH LAMBERT

Team Coach

NURSE TAYLOR

Psychiatric nurse

(Spotlight on JIM. He is dressed in regular civilian clothes, which are not time specific.)

JIM

Always. That's a hell of a word. To put on a team. On a family. On anything you expect to last forever. I was born on New Year's Eve. Which is when the world is either marking an ending, or a new beginning.

Football. I loved the game once. Loved it the way some men love God. The way some men love their country. The way some men love the men they lead.

In one form or another, you will see all of that tonight.

I have been around a long time. Longer than you might think. Longer than most.

They say you should always remember who you are and where you come from. Maybe.

But I say you should also remember who and what you owe.

I've been around this a long time.

(He gives a slow military salute to the audience. Lights fade to black.)

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 Always. 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 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. 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. JIM is standing around in JOSEPH's office. He is dressed for practice. FRANCINE enters and is startled by his presence.)

FRANCINE Oh! Mr. Hutchison!

JIM Ma'am.

FRANCINE Mr. Hutchison-

JIM Harrison. It's Harrison. Jim Harrison.

FRANCINE Mr. Harrison, you just gave me the fright of my life! You cannot be seen to be in here.

JIM Is Mr. Alway around?

FRANCINE Mr. Alway is not around. But he will be. Now, please-

JIM I thought he may be around.

FRANCINE Well, he is not. He will be here shortly, now-

JIM Y'know why I thought that he was around?

FRANCINE No, I-

JIM I thought he may be around on account of that glass of water just there.

FRANCINE The glass....

JIM The glass of water over there. You weren't at your desk, so I swung by here and saw no one was here either. But then I thought, that's a half drunk glass of water sitting right there. Maybe Mr. Alway and Miss Francine have stepped out some place. But Mr. Alway's gonna want to

get right back here and get back his tasty glass of water. With it being so warm and all.

FRANCINE

Aren't you meant to be getting ready to practice?

JIM

Do I not look ready for practice, ma'am?

FRANCINE

Mr. Harrison. Can we continue this conversation at my desk?

JIM

I was just admiring the view of the practice field. So, he watches us from here, huh?

FRANCINE

Yes, he does.

(Pause)

JIM

Watches intently. It's a real nice view. You're on top of things with a view like this. I'll sure need to be at my best if I want to make the team with Mr. Always watching from up here.

FRANCINE

Well, he often has other work to do. Paperwork and so forth.

JIM

Of course.

FRANCINE

He doesn't just have his face pressed against the window. You do not have to be so nervous, Mr. Harrison.

JIM

Who's nervous?

(Pause)

JIM

Look. I apologize, Miss Francine. I did not mean to spook you.

FRANCINE

That's quite all right.

(Silence)

JIM

You know, I like it here!

FRANCINE

It's a nice office.

JIM

No, I mean here. The organization. Just a feeling I get. Feels like some kind of family.

FRANCINE

I'm happy to hear that.

(FRANCINE goes to fetch the glass.)

JIM

What are you doing with that glass?

FRANCINE

It's been there since, well, I don't know how long it's been there. Now, please. Come on. Out. And what is it that I can do for you?

(FRANCINE and JIM start to exit together.)

JIM

Oh, I just need some more towels.

FRANCINE

Towels?

JIM

They gave me one towel!

FRANCINE

I think one is all you get.

3.

(In spotlight, COACH LAMBERT addresses the audience.)

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."

4.

(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 of 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 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 them 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.... 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 is 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. How’s business?

JOSEPH

Business is business, real estate’s real estate. I’ve missed *this*.

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

JOSEPH Harrison?

WOODY Yeah.

JOSEPH Do you have to tell them anything?

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

JOSEPH He's on the practice team.

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

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

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

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

WOODY Who, Sister Agnes or Sister Ignatius?

JOSEPH Huh?

WOODY Kid's had a real rough life. He was raised by nuns out in New Lenox.

JOSEPH New Lenox?

WOODY Illinois.

(Silence)

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. Rumor 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.

5.

(It is night. JOSEPH is lying 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.)

JOSEPH *(Stage whisper)* Pssst. Francine.
(FRANCINE looks around her.)

JOSEPH *(Stage whisper)* Francine....

FRANCINE Who's there?

JOSEPH *(Stage whisper)* Francine. Over here on the bleachers.

FRANCINE Mr. Alway?

JOSEPH *(Stage whisper)* Yes, it's me. I'm here on the bleachers.

FRANCINE I can see you. Why are you whispering?

JOSEPH *(Stage whisper)* Why am I whispering?

FRANCINE Mr. Alway, there's no one around. It's okay. I'm the last to leave.

JOSEPH *(No longer a stage whisper)* Okay. Join me.
(FRANCINE joins him, a bleacher below him.)

FRANCINE What are you doing?

JOSEPH It's magical, isn't it? Hey, lie back.

FRANCINE What?

JOSEPH Lie back and look up.
(She does.)

FRANCINE Wow.

JOSEPH I know.

FRANCINE The stars are so pretty.

JOSEPH Makes you feel tiny, doesn't it? Seeing all that.

FRANCINE It sure does.

JOSEPH Do you know if our heads are facing in the right direction?

FRANCINE I didn't even know there was a right direction.

JOSEPH There is. It's towards the magnetic north. You never heard that?

FRANCINE I don't think I have.
(A silence.)

JOSEPH So, I was hoping to talk to you, Francine.

FRANCINE Okay.

JOSEPH But it's a sensitive issue.

FRANCINE Oh well, I can be discreet. What is it?

JOSEPH So, I'd really appreciate-wait...

FRANCINE What?

JOSEPH I think we should sit up for this.

FRANCINE Okay...
(They both sit up.)

JOSEPH So, it's about Eleanor....

FRANCINE Mrs. Alway?

JOSEPH Yes. My wife. I'd like you to go out there and see her.

FRANCINE Is this to do with the phone call you got today from Dr. Costacurta?

JOSEPH He thinks she'd appreciate a visitor. So, what'd you say?

FRANCINE You want me to go and see-

JOSEPH My wife. Yes, please.

FRANCINE But isn't she-

JOSEPH In a psychiatric hospital?

FRANCINE Well, yes.

JOSEPH Does that make you uncomfortable?

FRANCINE Mr. Alway, I'm just not sure if it's my place.

JOSEPH Yes, but thing is, Francine, I'm making it your place.

FRANCINE Is she okay?

JOSEPH That's what I'm trying to find out.

FRANCINE Do you not want to see her yourself?

JOSEPH I don't think it's a good idea. Me going. Not a good idea.

FRANCINE Of course. *(A beat)* Why? May I ask.

JOSEPH I know it sounds unorthodox.

FRANCINE Well?

JOSEPH I sent her there, Francine. Well, I mean, I had it arranged that she was sent there. The doctor tells me that she's still not happy about it.

FRANCINE No, I mean, I can imagine. Do your children know?

JOSEPH Joe Jr. and Caroline?

FRANCINE That you're asking me to go see her. They don't see her, do they?

JOSEPH See, that's why I was asking you. For discretion mainly. I don't want the kids to know. What?

FRANCINE I don't think I should go there all on my own. Are you sure- I mean, Mrs. Alway and I barely knew one another. Well, outside of the cocktail parties and the summer picnics.

JOSEPH You would answer the calls when she called here though, right? I mean, there were never any incidents.

FRANCINE Well, I-

JOSEPH You got on okay, is what I'm saying? Woman to woman?

FRANCINE I would just put the calls through to you, Mr. Alway. And if you weren't there or were too busy, I'd just take a message.

JOSEPH I think all that went smoothly. *(A beat)* I can see you're uncomfortable. Okay, well I can maybe ask Woody to accompany you. Mr. Carter. Is that better?

FRANCINE Yes. I would feel better with Mr. Carter with me.

JOSEPH Let me think about that.... now lie back.

FRANCINE Huh?

JOSEPH Let's lie back again and look up again.
(She does. JOSEPH does that too. A silence.)

FRANCINE Do you not miss her?

JOSEPH Eleanor?

FRANCINE Yes.

JOSEPH You remember what she was like, don't you, Francine? Towards the end? That really was the tip of the iceberg. The drinking, the pills ... we just couldn't go on.

(Silence)

FRANCINE Where did you and Mrs. Alway get married?

JOSEPH Why?

FRANCINE Just asking.

JOSEPH Uh, Montauk. We honeymooned in Benares.

FRANCINE

JOSEPH Northern India. Along the banks of the Ganges. They believe that only immersing the ashes in the river will release the soul from the cycle of rebirth and suffering in this world. It was intense. *(A beat)* Do you believe in reincarnation?

FRANCINE I believe in the Holy Spirit. *(A beat)* Do you?

JOSEPH What?

FRANCINE Believe in reincarnation?

(JOSEPH shrugs.)

JOSEPH Some say it's just a justification for their caste system. Bad deeds in past life punished in this one. But who knows. If I lived there, I might.

(Silence)

JOSEPH Thank you, Francine.

FRANCINE For what?

JOSEPH For everything you do. Truly. Thank you. *(A beat)* Do you want another cigarette? I have some.

FRANCINE No, I'm good. Thank you, Mr. Alway....

JOSEPH Okay. Just tell me when....

(They continue to look up at the stars.)

6.

(The training field. JOSEPH lights a cigarette. COACH LAMBERT enters.)

LAMBERT Anything I should know about, Mr. Alway?

JOSEPH How do you mean?

LAMBERT Saw you talking to Marshall.

JOSEPH Willy's on leave until the end of the week. He'll be back in practice Monday.

LAMBERT Any good reason for that?

JOSEPH Yes, he's going to Las Vegas and marrying a white woman. You have a problem with that, Bud?

(A beat)

LAMBERT Not in the least, sir.

JOSEPH Good. Her name's Mary.

LAMBERT Very nice.

JOSEPH We can handle it. (*A beat*) Still, you might want to use the time while Willy's away to break it to the fellas. Establish some kind of ground rules. I don't want there to be any brouhaha about this here.

LAMBERT We have a good group.

JOSEPH Glad to hear it. (*A beat*) Woody said you wanted to speak to me.

LAMBERT Yeah, about Jim Harrison.

JOSEPH Woody warned me about how much you like him.

LAMBERT *He warned you?*

JOSEPH Just a turn of phrase.

LAMBERT I'd like for us to take him as our rookie quarterback.

JOSEPH We already took Stark. He's our rookie.

LAMBERT Stark's not as far along as Harrison. Stark's dumb as a doornail.

JOSEPH So, coach him. You drafted him.

LAMBERT Harrison damn near knows the playbook already. And he's under the radar. You saw Stark out there this morning. It was chaos. It was like a Chinese fire drill.

JOSEPH You're exaggerating. Give him time.

LAMBERT What? We bring the kid into camp, I see what we can have, and then you take him away?

JOSEPH Now calm down, Bud.

LAMBERT I am calm.

JOSEPH Look, I'm glad you like the kid. Truly. But there's nothing we can do in that area. And I'm not taking him away. He's in the army, for Christ's sake. He has active duty obligation for two more years.

LAMBERT I think there may be a way around that.

JOSEPH What way?

LAMBERT We can win with Jim Harrison.
(*WOODY enters and joins them on the bleachers.*)

LAMBERT You just don't like him, is that it? This is some personal thing between you two?

WOODY Everything okay, fellas?

JOSEPH Bud. He's being deployed to Vietnam.

WOODY Perhaps we can take this somewhere private.

LAMBERT What if I told you I could get him out of that?

JOSEPH How?

LAMBERT I know his superintendent. From our time together in Korea.

JOSEPH *(To WOODY)* Did you know anything about this?

LAMBERT We can get him, Mr. Alway.

(Pause)

JOSEPH Have you spoken to Harrison about this?

LAMBERT That we want him?

JOSEPH That *you* want him. Yes, about him staying. About you pulling some strings for him?

LAMBERT

JOSEPH Bud....

LAMBERT I may have mentioned it to him, yes.

JOSEPH Woody, are you in on this?

WOODY It has its obvious issues. But yeah, I think if we trust our coach, and there's something we can do to improve the team, then maybe we should look at it.

LAMBERT Look, I just told Harrison I wanted him and asked would he want to leave the army and turn pro and play for us. And he does. He doesn't want to go fight a war and he doesn't have to. He wants to play football.

JOSEPH You've filled his head with false hope.

LAMBERT I also told him if he got married, there's a good chance they wouldn't send him. Shit, I'd let him take my daughter, if I had one, Mr. Alway. I never felt so sure about a rookie. He's got the smarts of a thirty-seven-year-old veteran.

JOSEPH He's not staying here. I'm sorry.

(COACH LAMBERT exits abruptly. WOODY stares intently at JOSEPH.)

JOSEPH What? He'll get over it. He's just had too much sun.

(A silence)

WOODY Saw you talking to Willy ...

JOSEPH It's been taken care of.

WOODY Good to hear. I'd have been happy to do that.

JOSEPH Yes, I know.

WOODY That kind of thing just ain't right.

JOSEPH What?

WOODY I got nothing against the negroes, but I just think we should all just stick to our own, know what I mean?

(No response)

WOODY Anyway, glad it's been taken care of. I love Willy. You know that. Our ground game is maybe our biggest strength. And when he's focused, he's a hell of a tailback-

JOSEPH Woody....

WOODY Yeah?

JOSEPH Forget it.
(Pause)

WOODY What the hell is it with you and Harrison anyway? The way you're digging your heels in. Coach is right, just doesn't make sense. Something personal between you and him?

JOSEPH Drop it, Woody.

WOODY But-

JOSEPH This issue is closed. Drop it.
(Silence)

JOSEPH Look, I need you to do something for me.

WOODY What? Oh. (A beat) This about Eleanor?

JOSEPH

WOODY Francine may have mentioned it.

JOSEPH So much for discretion. Well?

WOODY With respect, I'm not sure it's all that appropriate putting her in that position. This is your personal business. It's not what she's paid to do.

JOSEPH I gave her the choice.

WOODY Did you? Like you gave me much of a choice in finding someone to take Eleanor away?

JOSEPH

WOODY She thinks a lot of you, Joe.... like we all do.... But sometimes it feels like you take advantage of that just a little bit.

JOSEPH Forget it... I'll figure something out myself.
(Silence)

WOODY No...we'll go. It's not like there's much call for me 'round here right now....
(WOODY exits.)

JOSEPH Woody.

7.

(A psychiatric hospital in David City, Nebraska. WOODY and FRANCINE are sitting and waiting. Strained voices of distress and excitement off-stage suggest this is a lively environment. Both WOODY and FRANCINE seem a little on edge.)

WOODY This is a joke....

FRANCINE

WOODY It's *his* wife!

FRANCINE (*Sharply*) Mr. Carter.

WOODY (*Quieter*) This doesn't bother you?

FRANCINE Well, I wouldn't say I'm comfortable.
(*A silence.*)

WOODY I remember the Sunday they came for her... she came to his office with two suitcases packed. She thought he was taking her to Hawaii.

FRANCINE Why would she think that?

WOODY Because that's what he told her. This is the man we work for.

FRANCINE If she believed he was taking her to Hawaii, maybe *there was* something wrong with her.
(*A beat*)

WOODY You're just in love with him, that's your problem.

FRANCINE I am *not* in love with him.

WOODY Right.

FRANCINE Mr. Alway is a good man.

WOODY Oh, come on, Francine.

FRANCINE What?

WOODY I know how you feel about this.

FRANCINE How do you know how I feel? I really don't know what you want me to say.

WOODY Sure. But he's not here now. Just tell me that I'm not the only one of us who feels so....

FRANCINE What? Emasculated?

WOODY (*Correcting her*) Degraded. This is degrading.
(*A silence.*)

WOODY You know, I've always thought I could end up in a place like this.

FRANCINE

WOODY Come on, you don't ever think about that? Your sanity? Your hold on yourself?

FRANCINE I think I have a level head.

WOODY One wrong turn, one bad week.... just get your switch flipped and boom.... you're in an asylum.

FRANCINE It's not an asylum.

WOODY Oh no?

FRANCINE It's a psychiatric hospital.

WOODY A hospital? You actually *leave* hospitals. One way or another. *This* is an asylum.

(A silence.)

WOODY Where is... anybody?

FRANCINE They weren't expecting us until this afternoon.

WOODY I want to get back to the office this afternoon. *(A beat)* And we're here now.

(A silence)

WOODY What's taking so long?

(NURSE TAYLOR wheels out ELEANOR who is in a wheelchair and looks like she is asleep. She has bandages on her wrists and burn marks on her temples. But other than that, she looks remarkably well-kept. WOODY takes out a cigarette, FRANCINE intimates she would like one also. WOODY gives her a cigarette.)

WOODY How is she?

FRANCINE If you're allowed to tell us anything...

NURSE TAYLOR Mr. Alway is kept well-informed. And he already gave me permission to share or answer any questions you may have.

FRANCINE Good.

WOODY So... how's she doing?

NURSE TAYLOR The paranoid delusions Eleanor was having five months ago still present themselves from time to time. But much less than when she came here for monitoring. We think the pain medication she was frequently taking induced much of her psychosis. Fits of anger are certainly less commonplace. She has responded well to treatment. In regards to the ECT, before she had to be forcibly restrained, now she is more or less cooperative. She has tried to take her life. Several times. But we are working on that.

WOODY We were kinda expecting to speak to her.

NURSE TAYLOR That should be fine. Right now, she's pretending to be asleep.

(ELEANOR stops her pretense. This startles WOODY and FRANCINE.)

ELEANOR Hello, Mr. Carter. *(Gesturing to WOODY's cigarettes)* May I?

(WOODY looks over to NURSE TAYLOR as if for permission.)

ELEANOR They allow me to smoke, you goddamn weasel. I'm not a child.

WOODY *(Cheerily, maybe a little scared)* Sure thing, Eleanor.

(WOODY lights everybody's cigarette.)

NURSE TAYLOR I can certainly leave you to your privacy for a couple of moments.

FRANCINE No, really-

WOODY That'd be great.

NURSE TAYLOR Of course.
(NURSE TAYLOR exits.)

ELEANOR And how's *Francine*?

FRANCINE Oh, you know....

ELEANOR Yeeesss....

WOODY I think we're just happy and surprised to see you in such great shape, Eleanor.

ELEANOR Nobody asked you anything, weasel.

WOODY Now, I didn't come here to be insulted.

ELEANOR Oh no. What did you come here for? Weasel, weasel, weasel. Give me a cigarette.

WOODY You're already smoking one.

ELEANOR I want another.

WOODY For now?

ELEANOR No, for later. What difference does it make? You goddamn fucking weasel.
(WOODY offers ELEANOR the carton. ELEANOR takes a cigarette, and then rather choosily selects another from elsewhere in the carton.)

ELEANOR There. We're even. You were complicit in luring me to my husband's office, so I could be abducted and stuck in an institution against my will AND YOU give me three cigarettes. Sounds like a fair transaction.

WOODY

ELEANOR What are you here for?
(ELEANOR gives them both a narrow stare.)

ELEANOR Do you two fuck? I always wondered about what goes on over there.
(A silence.)

FRANCINE Mr. Alway sends his best.

ELEANOR He does, does he? Well....

FRANCINE He has a concern for you, Eleanor. He wants you to get better. We all want you to get better. Don't we....?

WOODY We sure do.
(A silence.)

ELEANOR So, what do you wanna know that the doctors and the nurses cannot tell you themselves?

FRANCINE

WOODY

ELEANOR

WOODY Does the name Jim Harrison mean anything to you?

ELEANOR Harrison? No. Should it?

WOODY What about Augustinian Nuns Monastery?

ELEANOR No, I have no idea-

WOODY New Lenox, Illinois. New Year's Day 1943.
(*WOODY realizes that means something to ELEANOR.*)

ELEANOR Jim Harrison? That's his name? How do you know about... Jim Harrison?

WOODY I want to know who he is and what he is to you and Joseph.

FRANCINE I think we should probably go.

WOODY No, Francine. We are staying right here.

FRANCINE ...

WOODY (*To ELEANOR*) Well?

ELEANOR (*Sings*) All around the mulberry bush, the monkey chased the weasel;
The monkey thought 'twas all in fun-

WOODY Eleanor.

ELEANOR (*Sings*) A penny for a spool of thread, a penny for a needle,
That's the way the money goes, Pop!-

FRANCINE Let's just go.

ELEANOR You really are a weasel, aren't you, Mr. Carter? Know why I say that....

WOODY

ELEANOR You're a man of weasel words. Just like Joseph. I see why he hired you. And Francine?

FRANCINE Yes?

ELEANOR You should get out while you can. (*A beat*) Weasel words, our whole lives built on weasel words. Weasels sucking out the egg and leaving the shell whole. Isn't that just the whole shooting match? The whole enterprise. The whole ball game. (*A beat*) The Always. Is it really that hard to see?

WOODY

ELEANOR Since you ask . . . I'll tell you exactly who this Jim Harrison is.

8.

(*JOSEPH is standing in his office. JIM is seated. He wears a US military uniform and his bags are packed.*)

JOSEPH The thing is, Jim, Pro football is getting more and more professional. And far less personal. There was once a... warmth about it. Guys who

could play knew guys who could play, and you assembled a team. There was nepotism, the good kind, and your reputation was based on the strength of your handshake and if you were as good as your word. Now, it's all cut-throat, you just have to take the best players. Or other teams will. What can I say? There's no honor among thieves. *(A beat)* You know, we're expanding our scouting networks all the time. We're even getting a computer to help us with that. *(A beat)* Look, I uh . . . I know how this comes as disappointing news to you, Jim. It just hasn't worked out for us this time.

JIM

I don't understand. Coach Lambert said he wants me.

JOSEPH

Lambert likes to build players up when he's working with them face to face. You're a real good guy.... we just don't think we can get you to where we want you to be.

JIM

I've only been here a week.

JOSEPH

I know, and you have to admit, even in that short space of time, you've been a little up and down. You have these waves of consistency, and I think you have to get to a point where those waves get a little bit smaller, and your consistency level is a little more consistent. Do you understand me? I want to be transparent with you. A level of consistency is paramount at this level.... And there just isn't the room here for three quarterbacks...Frank will always be Frank. And we have a lot invested in Stark.

JIM

Investment? So, this is about money?

JOSEPH

Hope mainly. We have a lot of hope invested in Stark.

JIM

But I'm better than Stark.

JOSEPH

Jim

JIM

If this is to do with money, you know I'd play for nothing.... until I prove myself.

JOSEPH

Look, I know all this is a tough pill to swallow....

(JIM breaks down. JOSEPH watches him for a few moments.)

JOSEPH

Come on, Jim. Straighten up. *(A beat)* Look. You could look at this day in two ways. Either as a deep disappointment. Or the best thing that ever happened to you.

(A brief silence)

JOSEPH

It's not like you're some hobo off the street. You're in the army. And you do have an obligation to complete your service.

JIM

But I want to play pro football.

JOSEPH

Well that may still be possible. Down the road....

JIM

Coach Lambert knows Superintendent Finch. They fought together in Korea. He said he could get me out of there.

JOSEPH

Coach shouldn't have raised your hopes like that.

JIM

Why would he say it if he didn't want me?

JOSEPH Bud's a rule unto himself.
(*Silence*)

JIM You know I'll be deployed to Vietnam.

JOSEPH I'm aware of that, yes.

JIM I'll be going to war.

JOSEPH Vietnam's not a big place. Maybe it'll be a short war. We could be in and out before you know it.

JIM And I could get killed.

JOSEPH You had to have considered that possibility when you signed up for service.

JIM

JOSEPH I didn't mean that.
(*Silence*)

JIM Thank you, Mr. Alway. This was the best week of my life... I'll never forget it...

JOSEPH Hey....
(*JIM puts out his hand to shake. JOSEPH takes it. JIM holds on a little longer than usual.*)

JOSEPH Uh, look, Jim. I have work I gotta do....

JIM Sure.

JOSEPH So long. And thank you for your service. We'll be rooting for you.

JIM So long, Mr. Alway....
(*JIM exits. JOSEPH exhales and goes to pour himself a drink and lights a cigarette. WOODY enters angrily.*)

WOODY We need to talk.

JOSEPH What is it? Aren't you meant to be in David City?

WOODY We were there this morning.

JOSEPH You were meant to be there this afternoon.

WOODY Change of plan.

JOSEPH How is she?

WOODY What the hell is that parade outside?

JOSEPH Parade?

WOODY Look out the window. What'd you see?
(*JOSEPH looks out of his window.*)

JOSEPH I don't see anything. Just the fellas sorta having fun....

WOODY Willy Marshall and his NOW wife are out there! Right now!
(*JOSEPH looks out of his window.*)

JOSEPH Where? Oh, yeah. Holy cow. He did good, didn't he? son of a gun.

WOODY They got married! In Las Vegas!

JOSEPH Yes.

WOODY You said you were dealing with this.

JOSEPH I did. I told them to go to Vegas and get married.

WOODY You did *what*?

JOSEPH Yeah, I told him that this little union might bring a little heat on all of us and it'd be better if they were actually married.

WOODY Well, this just takes the fucking cake!

JOSEPH What the hell is wrong with you, Woody?

WOODY What the hell is wrong with me? I just spent the last few hours with Francine and your wife in David City. Then I come back to this fucking circus!

JOSEPH How's Eleanor?

WOODY I know about Jim Harrison...

JOSEPH News travels fast. Yes, we've just said our goodbyes. He took it well.

WOODY What?

JOSEPH He's all cleared out.

WOODY You cut him?

JOSEPH Yeah, what were you talking about? And for the millionth time, he was never on the team.

WOODY I should have been present.... does Coach know?

JOSEPH Yes, it's done.

WOODY That should have gone through me.

JOSEPH You weren't here.

WOODY No. Because I was over in-you did that on purpose.

JOSEPH What?

WOODY Took advantage of me being out of the office, so you could get rid of him behind my back.

JOSEPH For Christ's sake, Woody, get a hold of yourself! This is my team!

WOODY You need to get back to real estate and leave the football to football people. You disgust me. You send a kid like that off to fight a war when he could help our team. Just so your dirty secret can remain a secret.

JOSEPH Secret?

WOODY Eleanor told me who Jim Harrison is! He's your own flesh and blood! He's your son!

JOSEPH Eleanor is delusional.

WOODY You know what I think? I think Eleanor's just fine!

JOSEPH Eleanor's lying.

WOODY Eleanor's not lying. You're lying! I cannot believe you got me to help you put her in there! She's not the one who should be there!

JOSEPH She needed help!

WOODY She told us everything. The way you bought off Jim's mom. How you and Eleanor drove that poor baby down to Illinois. Your donation to the monastery and giving them some cock and bull story about YOU being... cuckolded while fighting heroically overseas! Joseph Always, war hero! Family man! The Amazing Always! You make me sick! *(A beat)* I honestly looked up to you. I'd have done anything for you.

JOSEPH Let me explain.

WOODY Forget it, I quit!

JOSEPH Woody.

WOODY THAT KID NEEDS TO KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT WHO HE IS!
(Long silence)

JOSEPH Woody, I...
(A distressed JIM enters. He is brandishing a handgun.)

JOSEPH JIM!
(WOODY darts to shield JOSEPH.)

WOODY NO, JIM!

JIM I just wanted to play pro football. I'm not gonna go to any war.
(JIM gives a military salute, and puts the gun to his head. BLACKOUT on sound of gunshot.)

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

“The Amendments”

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

1978

Characters

JOE ALWAY JR.	Team Owner, Joseph and Eleanor’s son
CAROLINE ALWAY	Joe’s Sister, Joseph and Eleanor’s daughter
URSULA HENRICK	A cheerleading coach
TANYA ROSE	A cheerleader
LOU EDWARDS	National Football League Official
DAN SCHILLACI	The Alway family lawyer
REVEREND PHILLIPS	Community leader
JIM HARRISON	A ghost from the past

1.

(TANYA does a cheerleading routine while singing the fight song.)

TANYA

Always, they'll be really behind us
 When we take the field
 Always, they'll be really behind us
 And we will not yield!
 They'll cheer, every yard we are making
 All year, and you won't see us breaking
 Oh we will fight with all our might
 For the San Antonio A's!

Always, they'll be praying and hoping
 In every down we play
 Always, while we won't boast we're the best
 That's what the rest will say!
 Let's bring it, just as we brought it before
 We'll sing it just as we've fought it
 Oh we will fight with all our might
 For the San Antonio A's!

2.

(It is night. JOE JR. is waiting on a bridge. REV. PHILLIPS enters from the shadows.)

REV. PHILLIPS

Welcome to Texas, Mr. Alway....

JOE JR.

Thank you, Reverend....

REV. PHILLIPS

We hope everything so far is to your liking.

JOE JR.

It sure is.

REV. PHILLIPS

The new stadium is a sight to behold. A welcome addition to the skyline of San Antonio. Only last week I was on a plane coming into the city, I looked out my window and there it was. I called out to everybody on board, "Finally. An NFL team in San Antonio. Thank you, God." And there was applause.

JOE JR.

We intend to do the city proud.

REV. PHILLIPS

I'm sure. You know, even when the team was in Omaha, I always had a soft spot for the Always.

JOE JR.

You don't say.

REV. PHILLIPS

Herb Pinkett. Willy Marshall....

JOE JR.

Yes.

REV. PHILLIPS

Boy Willy done good, huh? Flashing us that smile on TV every week on Monday Night Football.

JOE JR.

Yes, Willy's done well for himself. We're very proud of him.

REV. PHILLIPS

Evander McCoy. Frank Drinkwater.... Coach Lambert. These were men.

JOE JR. Those were some tough guys, that's for sure.

REV. PHILLIPS Your father too was a great man. A tough guy. Are you a tough guy, Joe Jr.?
(*Pause*)

REV. PHILLIPS Your father was flawed no doubt, no doubt about it. Flawed, but a great man nonetheless. He was human. He was fallible. But he was a man. You should be proud of your daddy.

JOE JR. I hope I haven't done anything to suggest that I'm not.

REV. PHILLIPS Big shoes to fill, I expect. Big shoes.... I imagine Joseph Alway casts a large shadow. (*A beat*) You're performing admirably.

JOE JR. I think the move here is a good one.

REV. PHILLIPS Yes, you're the new king of the castle right here.

JOE JR. Well, it's a new beginning for sure-

REV. PHILLIPS You'll grow into it. It was bound to take a little gettin' used to.

JOE JR. What can I do for you, Reverend Phillips?

REV. PHILLIPS Your father was esteemed in our community.

JOE JR. San Antonio?

REV. PHILLIPS (*Amused*) The black community, Mr. Alway. The way he stood by Willy Marshall.

JOE JR. Oh, right. Of course. Yes, it was a cause that was dear to him. It's dear to me.

REV. PHILLIPS He stood up for our brothers. He stood up to prejudice. Course he took care of our sisters too. Or so I hear.

JOE JR. I don't like what you're implying.

REV. PHILLIPS Come now, Mr. Alway.

JOE JR. That's nothing but innuendo and pure gossip.

REV. PHILLIPS Anyway.... I'm here on behalf of a friend. A friend that is dear to me. And who now needs *your* support.

JOE JR. He sent you here?

REV. PHILLIPS He asked me. Nobody sends me anywhere.
(*Silence*)

JOE JR. A friend of yours is a friend of mine. I support your struggle. How much does he need?

REV. PHILLIPS My friend is white, Mr. Alway.

JOE JR. Oh.

REV. PHILLIPS Very white. And we ain't asking for money. At least not yet.

JOE JR. What are you asking for?

REV. PHILLIPS Governor Hanson has found himself in a lot of trouble.

JOE JR.

REV. PHILLIPS You know who Governor Hanson is, do you not?

JOE JR. I do.

REV. PHILLIPS Yes. He knows that too.

JOE JR. He knows what?

REV. PHILLIPS He knows you know him.

JOE JR. I'm not denying it.

REV. PHILLIPS Denying what?

JOE JR. Denying I know him.

REV. PHILLIPS Would you say he was important in helping you bring the Always to San Antonio, Mr. Alway?

(No response)

REV. PHILLIPS Mr. Alway? Would you say-

JOE JR. Yes, he was. He was important.

REV. PHILLIPS Crucial, as a matter of fact.

JOE JR. He was an important factor, yes.

REV. PHILLIPS Integral? Vital? Necessary?

JOE JR. Yes, he was all those words.

REV. PHILLIPS That shiny new stadium....

JOE JR. Yes....

REV. PHILLIPS The one you can see from the window of an airplane. I've been around this a long time. Couldn't have happened. Couldn't have happened without the help of Governor Hanson. He's a dear friend of mine. And he's in a lot of trouble.

JOE JR. For?

REV. PHILLIPS Corruption, fraud, extortion. He's being investigated as we speak.

JOE JR.

REV. PHILLIPS So, you can see, Mr. Alway, he's in a fix.

JOE JR. And is there anything to this? Do they have anything on him?

REV. PHILLIPS Why does it matter?

JOE JR. It matters to me.

REV. PHILLIPS Why?

JOE JR. I don't understand what you need from me.

REV. PHILLIPS You're now a *prominent* figure in San Antonio. A prominent figure in the state of Texas. Why, you're the owner of an NFL team. You have a real estate empire, Mr. Alway. The Governor could use friends like you right now. If Governor Hanson is innocent, and this is an

orchestrated smear from the Republicans to damage the Democratic candidate before the elections, we need to put this to bed right now. You understand?

JOE JR. And what if he's not innocent? I would lose all public credibility.

REV. PHILLIPS Do you have a reason to doubt him?

JOE JR.

REV. PHILLIPS We need to win that seat. *(A beat)* Mr. Alway, your move to San Antonio....

JOE JR. Yes?

REV. PHILLIPS Your "collaboration" with Governor Hanson.... it was all above board, was it not?

3.

(URSULA sits in a chair in JOE JR.'s office. Her legs are up resting on his desk. She is smoking a cigarette. There is a glass of water on the other side of the desk. URSULA is looking at it suspiciously. Finally, JOE JR. enters.)

URSULA Hey.

JOE JR. Will you please stop doing that?

URSULA Good morning to you too.

JOE JR. I'm serious, Ursula. You have to wait until I'm in the office. Just like everybody else. Those are the rules.

URSULA Whose rules?

JOE JR. Life's. Mankind's. America's. It's pretty established etiquette. You don't wait for your boss in his office. You wait to be called in.

URSULA You got it, Boss.

JOE JR. Besides it bothers Francine. Understandably.

URSULA Oh, Francine.

JOE JR. Makes her feel she's not doing her job properly.

URSULA Francine let me in.

JOE JR. Francine does not let you in. Francine relents because she's very busy and doesn't have time to deal with you being a pain in her ass.

URSULA This place is haunted by the way.

JOE JR. What? It's not haunted. Don't even joke about that.

URSULA It's true. Take that glass of water over yonder.

JOE JR. What about it?

URSULA Take a look.

JOE JR. I'm looking.

URSULA Just watch it for a moment.

JOE JR. I don't have time for this.

URSULA Just watch.

(Silence as they both stare at the glass of water. Nothing is happening.)

JOE JR. Stunning.

URSULA I swear! It was moving just before. The water inside, just kinda gently swishing against the sides of the glass. God's honest truth. This place is haunted.

JOE JR. I'm haunted, the facility is fine. *(A beat)* Trust me. Omaha, maybe. Not here.

(Pause)

JOE JR. Now come on, my sister's on her way over and I need to go down and meet her.

URSULA This is bad, Joey.

JOE JR. How bad? And is this not something you can deal with on your own? You're their coach.

URSULA She wants to take this to the top.

JOE JR. The top?

URSULA That's you. It's a serious claim. She's talking sexual harassment.

JOE JR. What, you think she'll file a suit against the franchise? How serious is she?

URSULA Who knows.

JOE JR. And do you believe her? That this actually happened?

URSULA Look, we all know the players, Joe, they're.... they're grabby, sure.

JOE JR. Grabby?

URSULA They grab at you. Slapping asses, pinching asses, hands under the skirt when they run past. I mean, they're Neanderthals most of them.

JOE JR. Well, sure.

URSULA Full of testosterone.

JOE JR. Sure, but I wouldn't want to change that.

URSULA Change what?

JOE JR. The testosterone. We really could use some of that for the football. Is it worth me talking to Coach?

URSULA And say what? It's 1978, Joey, chivalry is dead.

JOE JR. I could ask him to tell his men to stop getting fresh with the cheerleaders.

URSULA Well that's just it, you know? Some of them like it.

JOE JR. Who? The players?

URSULA My girls. They like it. They get on very well with the players. I mean, everyone's just having fun. It's just a bit of fun. This is all meant to be fun, right?

JOE JR. Right. (*A beat*) No. Sorry, I don't follow.

URSULA Honestly, personally, I find Kim Banks to be a pain in the ass. She likes attention.

JOE JR. A-ha. So, you *don't* believe her?

URSULA I didn't say that.

JOE JR. Ursula, you gotta give me something here. This really isn't my area. I mean, "sexual harassment". How long has that even been a thing? Like a couple of years?

URSULA Joey.

JOE JR. You're gonna have to help me out here.

URSULA Look, it just puts us all in a tough position.

JOE JR. You bet your ass it does.
(*Pause*)

JOE JR. If I bought her a new car, would that help?

URSULA I don't think that's wise.

JOE JR. No?

URSULA You set a precedent like that and it'll open the floodgates. I mean, I can think of five of our girls off the top of my head right now that are still using public transportation. When they hear new cars are going-

JOE JR. Okay, yes. I got it. Bad idea. (*A beat*) Fuck!
(*Pause*)

JOE JR. Look, I guess I can ask Tommy what happened.

URSULA Okay.

JOE JR. And if he did do what Kim's saying he did, honestly.... I don't want that going on at my ball club.

URSULA You're a good man, Joey. So, you'll cut Tommy?

JOE JR. Well, no, I won't cut him.... it's Tommy Nesbitt. But I'll fine him. I'll fine him the maximum I can fine him. How's that?

URSULA

JOE JR. What?

URSULA And would you fine Dirk for doing the same?

JOE JR.

URSULA And Terry?

JOE JR.

URSULA And Dick? And Wayne? And Jerry and Eddie? Jonny? Moses, Ernie, Freddie, Roger, Kermit and Bing?

JOE JR.

URSULA Coach O'Brien.

JOE JR. Christ.

URSULA They all do it!

JOE JR. What about our kicker?

URSULA No, Brian is respectful.

JOE JR. Ah, well. He's a Jesuit.

(Silence)

URSULA I don't want my girls to start getting the wrong idea. I don't want them thinking or looking at things in a whole new light.

JOE JR. How do you mean?

URSULA You know, making things sound and look worse than they are.

JOE JR. Okay....

URSULA As cheerleading coach, it doesn't make me look too good.

JOE JR. No...

URSULA I have a reputation. And it's harmful to the reputation of the whole organization.

JOE JR. We agree on that.

(Silence)

URSULA Joey, when Kim said Tommy grabbed her cooch, she said Tanya Rose was standing right there. That she saw what went on.

JOE JR. Tanya Rose? The new girl? The Afro-American? Kim has a witness, then?

URSULA I guess she does.

JOE JR. And have you spoken to Tanya about this?

URSULA No.

JOE JR. Why?

URSULA She'll be in later. She has a doctor's appointment this morning.

JOE JR. So, what'd you suggest?

URSULA I *suggest* I bring them both up here later today. We'll even wait outside until you call us in. Just like it says in the rules.

JOE JR. See this face? Am I laughing right now? So, we talk to them both?

URSULA Yes.

JOE JR. We have to nip this in the bud, Ursula. I got too much on my plate right now to be dealing with all this "He said, she said" nonsense.

URSULA Don't worry.
(URSULA gets up to leave.)

URSULA You know, Tanya Rose loves it here, Joe.

JOE JR. Well, yeah. Sure, I'm glad. The fans love her. We all love her.

URSULA Listen to me, Joey. Everyone's got a price. And Tanya Rose *loves* it here. And she's very grateful we gave her this opportunity.

JOE JR. Grateful, huh?

URSULA If we can speak with her first. Maybe she has a different perspective from Kim of what happened last night?
(Pause)

JOE JR. I see.

URSULA If she's a team player, and she wants to remain in the NFL, maybe she'll know what she saw and what she didn't see?

JOE JR. Maybe.
(A beat)

URSULA We'll be up later. Say hi to Caroline for me. And seriously, keep an eye on that glass.
(URSULA exits. JOE JR. looks at the glass of water.)

4.

(The training field. CAROLINE is sitting on the bleachers, watching practice. JOE JR. enters with an ice cream for both of them. They both wear sunglasses.)

CAROLINE Thank you.
(They sit in brief silence.)

JOE JR. You should have seen us last night, Linny....

CAROLINE A guy at the hotel told me about it. Bad?

JOE JR. The whole team played like they had malaria.

CAROLINE It's just an exhibition game.

JOE JR. Season starts next week.

CAROLINE Why put yourself through it?

JOE JR. Because it's football, Caroline. It's a great fucking game. *(A beat)* And when was the last time you saw kids wearing Alway Corporation T-shirts? When I fly home from Tucson after closing on some luxury adobe condos, nobody's cheering at the gate.

CAROLINE So, it's vanity?

JOE JR. It's not vanity. It's the opposite of vanity. It's giving something back. And, it's.... I don't know, what can I say? I guess it makes me feel less lonely.

CAROLINE They're never going to win, Joey. This team is cursed. You can take this team to Mars, and they still won't win a damn thing.

JOE JR. You sound like Mom.

CAROLINE God rest her soul....
(*A beat*)

JOE JR. How's little Jenna?

CAROLINE She's not so little anymore. I don't know, we need to find her a psychologist.

JOE JR. A shrink, huh? Can I join you?
(*They share a laugh.*)

CAROLINE She reminds me of you actually. Skittish, not a people person, not at ease in her body.

JOE JR. Okay, okay...

CAROLINE She shouts in her sleep. But it's a difficult age. Might be that she just misses her dad. She's spending the week with him.

JOE JR. I wish you'd have brought her with you.

CAROLINE Next time. (*A beat*) How's John?

JOE JR. John's fantastic. He's such a boy.
(*Silence*)

JOE JR. Where are you staying?

CAROLINE Down by the River Walk.

JOE JR. Sure beats Omaha, huh?

CAROLINE I prefer New York.
(*Pause*)

JOE JR. You never wanted to feel part of something so uniquely American? Not just a little bit? You really don't see the attraction in all this?

CAROLINE I see you've retained the furniture.

JOE JR. Hey. Francine's done nothing to you. The woman's a gem. I don't know what I'd do without her.
(*Silence*)

JOE JR. You know, you really need to learn to let that go. You really do. Geez.
(*Pause*)

JOE JR. We're on our way back, Linny...

CAROLINE Not on the evidence of last night.

JOE JR. I'm not talking about the team. I'm talking about America. And football's gonna be a big part of that. There may have been some.... confidence crisis there for a while. Vietnam was.... it wasn't good for anybody. But we're gonna be making strides again very soon. And this

is community right here. This is civic pride. This is show business. It's got everything you'd want. Look all around you. And it's ours. Yours and mine. You need to forget your beef with Dad and that whole mess and enjoy this... privilege. Take pride in it.

(No response)

JOE JR. The man's five years dead, what more do you want?

CAROLINE *My beef with Dad.*

JOE JR. Sure, it's a beef. What else is it? You're obsessed with the past. And as your big brother, I'm here to tell you that what you're carrying is pathological.

CAROLINE Oh really?

JOE JR. Yes, really. It's made you a bitter young woman, Caroline. And I'll wager it was a contributing factor to your marriage going south. And what've you got now? You've got an eleven-year-old daughter shouting in her sleep because she misses her daddy. So, try pulling your head outta your ass once in a while.

(Silence)

CAROLINE You don't convince me one bit.

JOE JR. I don't, huh?

CAROLINE Pathological? The only thing pathological around here is your imposter complex. Was that whole speech for me or for you?

JOE JR. I don't know what you mean.

CAROLINE Yes, you do. *(A beat)* I just wonder if the crown doesn't sit right on your head right now because deep down you know it's not rightfully yours.

(A silence. JOE JR. breaks down.)

CAROLINE What, are you gonna cry now?

(No response)

CAROLINE What? What is it?

JOE JR. I thought the feeling would go, Linny. I really did. I thought moving here was gonna fix it. Was gonna make everything better. But I I can't shake it and it's like, I feel someone's watching me the whole time. I feel like everyone wants a piece of me. I think I'm about to go crazy.

CAROLINE This was the urgency? This is why you wanted to see me face to face?

(JOE JR. exhales.)

CAROLINE Joey....

JOE JR. Oh Caroline, I'm in deep shit. I'm in deep fucking shit.

CAROLINE Go on....

JOE JR. I did something dumb. Real dumb.

CAROLINE What is it? Just tell me.

JOE JR. I was extorted. And I didn't report it. I didn't report it and I'm an idiot and I paid it.

CAROLINE You were extorted?

JOE JR. Yeah. And it's all going to come out that I paid a bribe. I know it's gonna all come out.

CAROLINE Who extorted you?

JOE JR. Do you know Edwin Hanson?

CAROLINE The Governor? Governor Hanson extorted you?

JOE JR. We NEEDED to get out of Omaha! We needed to get out of there! I just couldn't take it anymore. That place needed an exorcism!

CAROLINE Joe-

JOE JR. What could I do? I was desperate. I couldn't wait for Carolina. Tennessee was too complicated. Las Vegas was a no go. I was scrambling. Really scrambling for a move. Hanson wanted a team here, sure, but he knew I was desperate. And he knew why I wanted to move.

(A silence)

CAROLINE We should have just sold this fucking team when Dad died.

JOE JR. What? When the NFL exploded? When it finally started printing money? When all the TV contracts and revenues finally came in!

CAROLINE But look what it's doing to you! Just give it up, Joe. Please. Just give it up.

(Silence)

CAROLINE What happened with Hanson?

JOE JR.

CAROLINE Joey.

JOE JR. I paid him a kickback. It wasn't much.

CAROLINE Joe-

JOE JR. 400,000 is all he wanted. But then he said he would greenlight the whole thing. Go up in front of the state legislature. Petition the league. Greenlight a new stadium. And he got it done. He did it all. Just like that.

CAROLINE So, who knows about this?

JOE JR. I don't know.

CAROLINE So, you don't know for sure if-

JOE JR. Look, he's being investigated by the FBI. And his people want me to back him publicly. That's all I heard. But this is all going to come out. I know it's all going to come out.

CAROLINE Will you go to prison?

JOE JR. Prison? No, it's extortion. But failure to report it, I'll get a slap on the wrist most likely....

CAROLINE Can the team stay here?

JOE JR. Sure, they're not gonna overturn that.

CAROLINE Well then. We're talking a slap on the wrist. Maybe that's the wake-up call you need.

JOE JR. When it gets out, I'll be suspended. A year or two probably. It'll be an embarrassment...and pressure from the other owners for us to sell the team.

CAROLINE Then sell it! I don't care.

JOE JR. I'm not selling the team! This is *our* team!

CAROLINE This team has laid waste to our family!

(A beat)

JOE JR. I want you to take it.

CAROLINE What?

JOE JR. The team.

CAROLINE Me? Why the hell would I want-

JOE JR. Just for the next few years. Or however long it is they ban me for. And I'll take it back, when I'm in the clear. When I get my head straight. Please do this for me. I'm your big brother. I've never asked you for anything. And I'm begging you. Please. For me.

(A beat)

CAROLINE I don't know, Joe...

JOE JR. We'll hire some good people. Football people with a pedigree. You won't have to do anything. I'll sell a 10 percent share of the team to you, for a dollar, let's say. That'll make it 60/40, you the owner and keep the club in our name.

CAROLINE This team is cursed, Joe!

JOE JR. It's not cursed! It's a fucking goldmine! And it'll continue to be. Football is going to get bigger and bigger, Caroline. It's huge already.

CAROLINE Just like Dad.

JOE JR. What?

CAROLINE You're just like Dad. You have brought shame to this family. You have brought shame to this family's name.

(Pause)

JOE JR. So, will you do it?

5.

(JOE JR., URSULA and TANYA are in JOE JR. 's office. CAROLINE is seated to the side. She is still wearing sunglasses. A silent witness.)

TANYA I'm sorry, Mr. Alway, but I can only say what I saw.

URSULA We can work on that.

TANYA What the hell does that mean?

JOE JR. It's a pretty serious allegation Kim Banks is making, you understand that, don't you, Tanya?

TANYA I understand that, Mr. Alway. I mean, it was a pretty serious thing that happened.

JOE JR. You know, our team is next to useless right now, and we're relying on early picks in the next draft to set us in the right direction.

TANYA So?

JOE JR. So, safety is not going to be one of the positions we'll be looking to fill. Tommy Nesbitt is actually half-decent.

URSULA Which makes him one of our best players.

TANYA I know he's a great player. Still doesn't give him a right to lay his hands on any of us. Let alone grab Kim like he did.

JOE JR. We understand that too.

URSULA But by raising a stink about it, it's not just the football team this affects. It has negative repercussions for the whole cheerleading squad too.

JOE JR. She's right.

TANYA How in the world? If this kinda thing is called out then it's gonna protect us in the future.

URSULA Tanya.

TANYA What? You have a duty of care to all those women. Including Kim, including me. All of us.

(TANYA looks to CAROLINE. No reaction from CAROLINE.)

URSULA This is not getting us anywhere. Mr. Alway?

TANYA You always give us the big speech about us representing the team and ... and acting accordingly. Well with respect, that cuts both ways!

(Silence)

JOE JR. Well honestly, I'd rather just scrap it completely.

TANYA Huh?

URSULA Mr. Alway?

JOE JR. The cheerleading squad.

TANYA I'd be out of a job now?!

(CAROLINE briefly lowers her sunglasses, trying to meet JOE JR. 's eye. JOE JR. proceeds. CAROLINE raises her sunglasses.)

- JOE JR.** Not just you. Kim, Ms. Henrick here. All of you. I mean, hey, why not?
- TANYA** You gotta be kiddin' me right now?
- JOE JR.** Think of it from my side. I mean, there's already just so much to think about with a football team. All those thoughts and emotions and desires of men under one roof. We're a family ball club, and I treat ALL my employees as if they're my own. But maybe this is biting off more than we can chew. Taking on the responsibility and welfare of half-dressed women mincing around for light entertainment. My dad just didn't get this kinda issue with his halftime brass band. *(A beat)* Huh, Linny?
- (No response)*
- TANYA** What are you sayin'?
- URSULA** Yes, Mr. Alway. What are you saying?
- JOE JR.** Sure, the fans love it, but they'll love something else. Fans are fickle like that. Hell, we could get a magician. A freelancer.
- URSULA** Let's not get hasty. I think what Mr. Alway is trying to say, Tanya, is that the squeaky wheels will not be getting the oil here.
- JOE JR.** You bet. That's a good way to put it.
- (A silence)*
- URSULA** You're a great cheerleader.
- JOE JR.** One of our best.
- URSULA** But not irreplaceable. And neither's Kim.
- JOE JR.** So, you're saying, Ms. Henrick, if we were to keep the cheerleading squad, and just let go of Kim and Tanya here....?
- URSULA** Then we'd be okay.
- JOE JR.** We'd be covered?
- TANYA** You'd fire me and her for this?
- URSULA** Tanya, the state of Texas is football crazy and full of young women.
- JOE JR.** True.
- URSULA** Literally thousands of cheerleaders who'd give their right arm to be part of the NFL!
- JOE JR.** *(To TANYA)* You were one of them, right? Not so long ago.
- URSULA** You've got a choice to make here, honey. We're listening to what you gotta say, but you gotta see the big picture.
- JOE JR.** What you're doing here affects a whole hell of a lot of people. I urge you to consider if this is all worth it. For you, for Kim, for everyone else.

TANYA You're blackmailing me?!

JOE JR. No one's blackmailing anyone!

URSULA We're just going through our options.
(A beat)

TANYA I understand. Completely.

JOE JR. Well?

URSULA Shall I go get Kim?

TANYA No! Look, this ain't right! Kim's our captain. If this can happen to her, it can happen to any of us!
(JOE JR. and URSULA glance at each other.)

JOE JR. Tanya, to tell you the truth, between us four and the Germans, Ms. Henrick was going to make a change in that area anyway, weren't you?

URSULA Yes.

JOE JR. You weren't really supposed to know that....

URSULA We were gonna look for a new captain of the cheerleading squad anyway.

JOE JR. You're new here, Tanya. And what you also might not be aware of.... is this kind of issue, surrounding Kim Banks, back in Omaha or now that we're here, is nothing unique. Not exactly this kind of thing. But this kind of mischief making is just not going to be tolerated any longer going forward. She has an overdeveloped sense of injustice.

URSULA About everything.
(A beat)

JOE JR. We thought you'd be a good captain, Tanya. That's what makes all of this so unfortunate right now. You weren't to know, but the timing of this has been uncanny.

URSULA You have leadership abilities.

JOE JR. And you'd have been the first black cheerleading captain in the NFL.

URSULA Imagine that?

JOE JR. If we were gonna keep the squad of course. And not just let the whole thing die. Let all the girls go.

TANYA My God.

JOE JR. What?

TANYA What kinda fool do you take me for?

JOE JR. No fool. Just telling you what was on the table.
(Pause)

URSULA Tanya, are you and Kim that close? I really had no idea.
(Pause)

JOE JR. I mean, you think if the tables were turned, she'd make the kind of sacrifice you're making now for her?

TANYA I-

URSULA Now think very hard before you answer that question truthfully.
(Silence)

TANYA Okay. I can't say if she would or she wouldn't. I ain't been here that long.
(JOE JR. briefly glances at CAROLINE. Then turns his attention back to TANYA.)

JOE JR. Look, I'll talk to the players. I'll talk to the coach.

URSULA There'll be disciplinary action internally, won't there, Mr. Alway?

JOE JR. Fines. Reprimands. You name it. A new code of conduct, I promise. This kind of behavior that's been described, it's just not gonna happen here any longer under my watch. I can guarantee that.

URSULA Now will you go get Kim?
(No response)

JOE JR. You didn't see anything last night, did you?

TANYA I already said I did.

URSULA But thinking about it some more, maybe you were mistaken?

JOE JR. Maybe what Kim Banks said happened influenced what you thought you saw.

URSULA That can happen.

JOE JR. Happens all the time.
(No response)

URSULA Tanya?
(A beat)

TANYA Maybe.

JOE JR. Bring her in.
(TANYA gets up to exit, she stops.)

TANYA *(To JOE JR.)* Mr. Alway. You're not even close to the man I thought you were.

URSULA Tanya.

TANYA I'll play your game. I've worked too damn hard to get where I am not to. An' let me just say, Ms. Henrick. Woman to woman: shame on you.
(TANYA exits. Silence. URSULA looks to CAROLINE for some sort of acknowledgement/support. She does not receive it. Lights fade.)

6.

(JOE JR. and LOU are in JOE JR. 's office. JOE JR. is signing a bunch of papers.)

LOU It's a hell of a thing to see you go, Joey. You've been an asset to the league. We'll miss you at the owners' meetings, that's for certain.

JOE JR. Well, thanks for saying that, Lou.

LOU Caroline's gonna be just great. I'm sure she'll keep us fellas on our toes.

JOE JR. She'll sure do that.

LOU As long as you're keeping it in the family, I guess. You know we like that.

JOE JR. I know you're nervous, Lou, but she'll bring in some good people. She's not going to be so hands on.

LOU Understood. You're gonna miss it, Joe.

JOE JR. I'm sure.

LOU But you'll do well in whatever you choose to do next.

JOE JR. Other areas need attending to and real estate's the family's bread and butter, Lou. Not as exciting, I grant you. But hey, that 40% share of the team isn't going anywhere.... who knows, maybe I'll be back someday.

(CAROLINE and DAN enter.)

CAROLINE Good afternoon. Where do I sign?

DAN *(To LOU)* Dan Schillaci. The Alway family's legal representative.

LOU *(To DAN)* Lou Edwards. National Football League. Pleased to meetcha'

(LOU takes out a couple of documents.)

LOU Ms. Alway, I just need you to sign this one. And this one. There. And there.

(CAROLINE signs the documents.)

JOE JR. Is that it?

LOU *(Checking all the documents)* That. Is. It.

JOE JR. Great.

LOU Congratulations, Ms. Alway. You are now the new owner of the San Antonio Always.

CAROLINE Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

LOU Joey, I love ya'. Now if you'll excuse me. I gotta plane to catch.

JOE JR. Francine will show you out.

LOU No need. *(A beat)* And again, great facility.

JOE JR. Thanks.
(LOU exits.)

DAN So that's it. All went smoothly.

CAROLINE Dan?

DAN Yeah?

CAROLINE Can you give Joey and I a little privacy?

DAN Sure thing. I'll have a car waiting.
(DAN exits. Leaving CAROLINE and JOE JR. alone.)

JOE JR. We did it, Caroline. A toast?

CAROLINE No, thank you....

JOE JR. I'm going to have one, if you don't mind.
(JOE JR. fixes himself a drink.)

JOE JR. So, how's it feel to be the owner of a pro football team?

CAROLINE How do you feel?

JOE JR. Funny. I feel funny. Sad. Relieved....

CAROLINE Off the hook?

JOE JR. Sometimes in life you just gotta punt. What can I say? I'll get the ball back.

CAROLINE Any news on Governor Hanson?

JOE JR. Zilch...not a squeak. Anyway, we're out of the woods. Let the chips fall as they may. Cheers.
(No response.)

JOE JR. What?

CAROLINE I'm not going to be your babysitter, Joey. You should know that.

JOE JR. Excuse me?

CAROLINE I'm now the majority shareholder in this team. I am the owner of this team.

JOE JR. Yeeesss, for now, sure. For the time being. We have to see what happens with Governor Hanson.
(Pause)

CAROLINE Dan thinks I should keep the team. Whatever happens.

JOE JR. He said that?

CAROLINE Yes. He agrees with you, that it's an asset appreciating all the time, as the game gets bigger. Thinks I'd be foolish to just hand it back when it suits you.

JOE JR. That's absurd. Look, whatever we've just signed....and over the long term, this is my team. I think I made that pretty clear.

CAROLINE Dan also raised an issue that I'm ashamed to say I never even considered.

JOE JR. And what might that be?

CAROLINE Jenna.

JOE JR. Jenna?

CAROLINE What if she wants to own a football team?

JOE JR. She's eleven.

CAROLINE Well, not now. But one day. What if she wants to own a football team? What if she wants to one day own the Always?

JOE JR. She won't.

CAROLINE Why? What if she grows up knowing our family history and wants a shot at owning the team too?

JOE JR. That team is my birthright. I'm the oldest son.

CAROLINE Are you?
(Silence)

JOE JR. So that's what this is about? This little game you're playing right now. You're just being vindictive.

CAROLINE Vindictive?

JOE JR. You're just using this to fuck with me. This is about you and your feelings, and about what happened with Mom and Dad.

CAROLINE Joey.

JOE JR. This team is mine. It is my birthright. And it's John's birthright when I'm gone. That's just how it is.

CAROLINE I own it now, Joe. It's mine. And Jenna will have that choice. Dan said that-

JOE JR. I don't care what Dan-

CAROLINE Am I supposed to tell Jenna that she could have had it, but I gave it back to her Uncle Joe?

JOE JR. You can tell her whatever the hell you want-

CAROLINE Uncle Joe, who loaned it to me, because when it became public that he paid a bribe to a politician he'd have been suspended? (A beat) That's no longer gonna be the way the Always do things.

JOE JR. Jenna? Jenna's ten years old, shouts in her sleep and likes things that are pink.

CAROLINE Jenna's eleven years old and you last saw her when she was eight, and she no longer likes pink.

JOE JR. She's disturbed!

CAROLINE She's eleven!

JOE JR. We had an arrangement! You don't even like football. I am not Joseph Alway, Caroline! I am not Dad, okay? And she was my mom too!

CAROLINE The assets once divided between us, have been amended. You take the real estate, I take the team. You're not going to starve, Joe.

JOE JR. You don't mean this. You don't want the team. What you are is fucking sick in the head. Your mind's all twisted.... just like Mom's.

CAROLINE Maybe the Alway men shouldn't own football teams. *(Exiting)*
Goodbye, Joseph.

JOE JR. Caroline . . . CAROLINE!

(JOE JR. goes after her. Moments later, JOE JR. re-enters his office. His office chair spins around to reveal JIM, in a military uniform, sitting in the chair and facing him. JIM salutes JOE JR.)

End of Act Two.

ACT THREE**“Heads Will Roll”****SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS****2003****Characters**

JENNA ALWAY	Team owner, Caroline’s daughter
JOHN ALWAY	Her cousin, Joe Jr.’s son
NATALIE ALWAY	John’s wife
DR. SANDERS	Team Doctor
RICK ZOLA	Team General Manager
COACH BISHOP	Team Coach
LISA MARIE MORAN	Francine’s daughter
BILL MORAN	Lisa Marie’s husband
JAY FAISON	Team quarterback
STAFF SERGEANT QUINN	Armed Forces liaison
JIM HARRISON	A ghost from the past
JOSEPH ALWAY	A ghost from the past

1.

(JENNA is in her office with QUINN. He wears a military uniform.)

QUINN

Whitney Houston blasting out the anthem, families of all generations waving the flag, servicemen of diversity saluting, it was an iconic moment.

JENNA

It was 1991. There was a context. We were in the Persian Gulf.

QUINN

Exactly where we are now.

JENNA

And that was the Super Bowl.

QUINN

But imagine if that was every Sunday.

JENNA

What you're suggesting sounds like manufactured nationalism.

QUINN

It's integrated armed forces branding with mutual benefit to the image of the league. And the fans will love it. And it'll make the players feel like they're twelve feet tall. Ms. Alway, this goes hand in glove. What is the NFL if it's not a wholesome, family-friendly version of warfare?

JENNA

So, have you proposed this to the Commissioner?

QUINN

Not yet. We first wanted to get the view of the owners. We know the Commissioner answers to the owners.

JENNA

Who else have you asked?

QUINN

I'm not at liberty to say.

JENNA

That's admirable, but who else have you asked?

QUINN

You're my first.

JENNA

I'm not a soft touch, Staff Sergeant.

QUINN

No, I think you're smart. And you should take it as a distinct compliment that I came to you first. I have a confession to make. I'm a San Antonio fan. And I want my team to be leaders on this.

JENNA

That's cute.

QUINN

And I forgive you for trying to take the team to Los Angeles.

JENNA

I don't want to talk about that.

QUINN

I'm sure you don't. People are suspicious of you. She replaces a veteran coach with a black coach with no experience.

JENNA

And we're 4 and 0.

QUINN

She wants to move the team to LA. She summers in Lebanon. She has fancy foreign friends.

JENNA

Staff Sergeant-

QUINN

Baalbek, wasn't it?

JENNA

....

QUINN

Ms. Alway, I've been around this a long time. You have an image problem as an owner. Are you going to tell me I'm wrong?

JENNA Yes, well most of that is just....

QUINN What? *Sexism*?

JENNA You're denying that's a factor?

QUINN Your mother was a popular owner. She had grace.

JENNA She was popular because she stayed in the background.

QUINN This will put you front and center. And this is why I came to you first.

JENNA

QUINN Because I like you. And I'm rooting for you. And you need this. *(A beat)* Veterans Week. A ceremony. The players alongside servicemen. The networks, the anthem. Faison out front.

JENNA Jay's our quarterback. Not a recruiting poster.

QUINN Ms. Alway. Here's the bottom line. This decade is going to be one of long overseas conflicts. This is the War on Terror. And we would appreciate your support.

JENNA We can start with Veterans Week. And we'll see how it goes.

QUINN You got it. I will see to it myself that this gets full exposure.

JENNA Who told you about Lebanon?

QUINN These things get around.

JENNA It's a summer festival around Roman ruins. It's not so crazy. You should sample it yourself. You might appreciate it.

(Pause)

QUINN Ms. Alway, you're in Texas now for the foreseeable future....

JENNA I am fully aware of that.

QUINN That's good. So maybe you should try harder to fit in.

2.

(The stage is dark. The loud sound of jet planes overhead. It should sound a little intimidating at first, almost like an air raid. We hear the sound of cries and shouts of humanity in response to the planes. Difficult to discern if they are the cries and shouts of excitement or fear. The sounds of explosions. Is it gunfire, bombs or just fireworks? More cries and shouts. Then the swelling sound of a cheering crowd becomes clearer. More jets fly over, more explosions. It was fireworks. The hum of a Sunday football game. The muffled sound of a stadium public address system. It is November 2003. COACH BISHOP emerges from the darkness into the light. He prowls the stage. He is a ball of testosterone with the oratorical agility of a preacher.)

BISHOP Aight, aight. Listen up, men.... So, we lost Jay. We lost him and he ain't coming back for the second half of this ball game. He's at the hospital right now. But we got Ferris, and we know Ferris will do a man's job out there. He knows the plays, he's great in the pocket and

he can make plays. AND WE KNOW that he can look after the football. Now, we're also going to be using our backfield just a little bit more, AND WE ALL KNOW TOO that Angelo is a roughrider and he'll be busting a gut, moving the chains, getting us those yards and inches we need. Guys, it's a three-score game, so we're looking pretty good, huh? We're looking pre-tty fuck-ing good.... NO. NO. NO. NO. NO. THIS IS WHEN things get a little hot. THIS IS WHEN things get a little tough. They're gonna come for us. They're gonna come for us this half in a big, big way. Jay's out now AND WHEN THE LION IS DOWN, in come the jackals, in come the hyenas and I'm tellin' you, they smell blood! SO, IT IS CLEAR TO ME. And to everybody watching this game. It's clear to your Momma, and your Nonna and your Daddy and your Granddaddy, that our defense and our O-Line are now going to have to step up in a big, big way to make sure we see this one out! I know you can do this. Mine eyes have seen the glory! But guys, all of you, you know what I need you to do.... I need you to LAY THE BOOM. On the snap, I want you growling, I want you fighting, I want you snarling, and I want you to HIT. I want you to hit them HARD. I want you to hit them so fucking hard, they gotta be sticking their toothbrushes up their asses for the next month just to brush their teeth. We can win this, guys. We can win this game, but we gotta Lay The Boom. SO, LAY THE FUCKING BOOM!

3.

(A darkened hospital room. JAY is sitting up in bed. DR. SANDERS sits on the edge of the bed. JAY looks at DR. SANDERS with a puzzled expression on his face.)

JAY Where am I?

DR. SANDERS You're in the hospital. Do you know what year it is?

(Pause)

JAY 2003.

DR. SANDERS And who is the president?

JAY Bush.

DR. SANDERS Which one?

JAY

DR. SANDERS There's two.

JAY George W.

(A beat)

JAY Wait.

DR. SANDERS Yes, that's right.

(JAY smiles.)

DR. SANDERS You suffered a concussion today.

JAY Who did we play?

DR. SANDERS Tampa Bay.

JAY Did we win?

DR. SANDERS Yes, you won.

JAY Did I play well?

DR. SANDERS Very well. You're top of the division.

JAY Oh. Well, that's... good. The way you're looking at me. Feels like... one of those episodes from "The Twilight Zone." You ever watch that show when you were a kid?

DR. SANDERS You're going to be okay.

JAY My dad used to love that show. Or I think he did. Maybe it was Mom.

DR. SANDERS Jay, you will be okay.
(A silence.)

JAY Are my girls here?

DR. SANDERS Amanda and your daughter are waiting in reception.

JAY Can I see them?
(RICK enters briskly.)

RICK How we doing? You gave us quite a scare there, gunslinger. That was one hell of a half you played, Jay. One hell of a half.

JAY *(To DR. SANDERS)* I want to see my wife.

RICK *(To JAY)* We'll be right back. You're doing great.
(DR. SANDERS and RICK step out.)

DR. SANDERS He won't be ready to play next Monday.

RICK What about Thursday?
(A beat.)

DR. SANDERS Jenna sent you here. Look, it's the last thing Jay needs this week. Shaking hands and being some performing seal-

RICK I agree one hundred percent. But Jenna's dead set on him being there.

DR. SANDERS Surely an entire football team minus one will suffice.

RICK She's not interested in the rest of the team. She wants him.

DR. SANDERS To play Captain America?

RICK It's not like that.

DR. SANDERS Uh-huh.

RICK Look, she's my boss! Like she is yours. What do you want me to do, tell her to go fuck herself?

DR. SANDERS Stop being her lapdog! Stand up to her!

RICK You have to clear him for Thursday. So, Jay got hit a bit harder this week. He's tough.

DR. SANDERS He's lucky to be alive.

RICK Let's not get hysterical.

DR. SANDERS It was a big hit.

RICK And now he's sitting upright. Wanting to see his wife.

DR. SANDERS I won't do it.

RICK Doc. Listen to me. Jenna's under a lot of pressure right now....

DR. SANDERS We're 7 and 2!

RICK Pressure to keep the team. John and Natalie-

DR. SANDERS Oh, this old tune! John Alway's not interested in owning this fucking team.

RICK No, but his wife is.

DR. SANDERS I like Natalie! She'd be better!

RICK Hey, unless you're willing to hand in your resignation now, Jenna Alway is still your boss!

(No response)

RICK Listen, I don't understand her fixation with having Jay front and center at this Veterans thing, but you know... there it is. And if Jenna's feeling anxious about something and we can alleviate that, why wouldn't we?

DR. SANDERS She should take after her mom. At least Caroline left the decisions to people who knew what they were doing.

RICK You talk real tough, Doc, but did you express these sentiments to Jenna's face when you saw her?

(No response)

RICK Tell Jay he's going to be fine and clear him for Thursday. Will you do that?

(No response)

RICK Just do that for me now and I'll work on Jenna.

(Pause)

DR. SANDERS Head traumas like what Jay suffered today-

RICK Hey, it is what it is. It's the game. And the nature of the game is never going to change. And for those who play in the National Football League, they consider it a fucking privilege. You know you're as waist-deep in this fucking swamp as the rest of us. It's a little late for you to bow out now. *(A beat)* Now pretty fucking please, do what you need to do.

(Pause)

RICK Thank you, Doctor.

(DR. SANDERS exits. RICK goes back into the room. JAY is still sitting up in bed. JAY looks at RICK with a puzzled expression on his face.)

JAY Where am I?
RICK You're in the hospital.
JAY Why am I here?
RICK You just got your bell rung.
JAY Who did we play?
RICK The Bucs.
JAY Did we win?
RICK Yes, we won.
JAY Was I good?
RICK You were great....
JAY Oh. Well, that's good....

4.

(A Mexican restaurant on San Antonio's River Walk. JOHN is seated alone at a table. RICK enters and JOHN signals for him to join him.)

JOHN Rick....
RICK John.
JOHN Pull up a chair...
RICK I'm meeting somebody.
JOHN Are they here?
RICK Doesn't look like it.
JOHN So that's okay.
(A pause, then RICK tentatively joins him at the table.)
JOHN What a pleasant surprise.
RICK Natalie?
JOHN Restroom. She'll be thrilled. You ever had one of their margaritas here?
RICK No, I...I don't think I have.
JOHN Best margaritas in town.
RICK So they tell me. How's things?
JOHN Things are great, yeah.
RICK I got a meeting here in a little while-
JOHN You said. Your ears must be burning. We were-
(NATALIE enters.)

NATALIE If it isn't Mr. Zola. We were just talking about you.
(RICK gets up suddenly.)

RICK Yeah, well maybe I should leave you guys to that.

NATALIE One drink. C'mon.

RICK You know...

NATALIE Now, now... we're all friends here. No one's going to bite.

RICK I wish we were friends, but...

JOHN Hey...

RICK but you can't have everything so.

JOHN *(Standing up)* Rick. Please.

NATALIE Five minutes of your time. That's all we're asking.

RICK I can't get mixed up in this beef y'all have with Jenna. I can't and I won't.

NATALIE Will you please give us a little credit and sit down?
(RICK hesitates for a moment, and then sits again.)

JOHN Are you sure we can't get you any-

RICK Just say what you need to say, John.

NATALIE You like getting straight to business. No chit-chat with Rick Zola. I like that.
(Pause)

RICK Okay. Shoot.

NATALIE What if I were to tell you John and I are going to own the team by March whether people in your camp like it or not?

RICK This really is none of my business.

NATALIE Really? Even if I told you that we want to keep you on as General Manager? Even then, would it be none of your business?

RICK *(To JOHN)* C'mon, John. Why are you doing this? You've never given one shit about owning this team.

NATALIE John's had a change of heart.

RICK I'd like to hear it from him, if that's all right.
(NATALIE gives JOHN a look.)

JOHN Look, three years ago, if you were to ask me if I'd want to own the team over what I've been doing, you're right, I would've turned it down. I love what I do. I love real estate. And that side has always been as much part of the family legacy as the football. And a damn sight more successful.

RICK That's about to change.

JOHN I can see that. *(A beat)* The point being, while the fallout between my dad and Aunt Caroline was unfortunate-

RICK Jenna's always tried to make you feel part of the organization. She didn't have to do that.

NATALIE Rick, we own 40% of the team.

RICK John owns 40% of the team.

JOHN Jenna has always made us feel welcome. You're right. But that started with Caroline. Caroline made us feel welcome too.

RICK So, what's changed? Because we're now looking like contenders you now want in?

NATALIE The bloodhounds are sniffing, Rick. Jenna is about to be embarrassed on a seismic scale. And she'll take the team down with her. We are not prepared to let that happen.

RICK Embarrassed how?

NATALIE Has Jenna ever mentioned Baalbek?

(A beat)

JOHN Rick.

RICK Is this Lebanon? I know she vacations there. Or has.

JOHN That's all you know?

NATALIE *(To JOHN)* Why would she tell him? It's going to be reported that she did a lot more than that.

RICK Go on.

NATALIE She made a donation. From the foundation.

RICK This is all a little above my pay grade. I don't understand.

JOHN There was a banquet. People stood up and spoke. And said things. Made toasts.

NATALIE About "the resistance." About the war. Guys there from Al Jazeera.

JOHN You'll get to read the rest. The Always won't survive this association and you know it.

NATALIE They've barely got rid of the smell of burning flesh in Lower Manhattan. You understand that now, don't you, Rick? *(A beat)* The family just can't take another scandal.

JOHN What message are we sending to the public?

NATALIE Football is a patriotic business. Jenna Always's time is up. The plates are shifting.

RICK And does Jenna know about this? About this . . . report?

(RICK looks to JOHN.)

RICK Were you a source?

JOHN We cooperated where we could.

NATALIE I think that's a good term to use.
(Pause)

RICK Good to know the blood stays thick around here.

NATALIE Rick. We also know that you and Jenna have.... well, what would you call it?

JOHN It's really the worst-kept secret.

RICK You are both way out of line.

NATALIE Not sure there's a lot of other owners out there in the NFL who would be willing to overlook that kind of office conduct if that gets out too. Not to mention your wife.
(A beat)

NATALIE And there's Jenna's mental health to consider, but that's a whole other story, isn't it?

RICK There's nothing wrong with Jenna's mental health.
(JOHN and NATALIE glance at each other once more.)

JOHN You find nothing erratic about Jenna's recent behavior?

RICK

JOHN Rick, you're tired of this. So are we.

NATALIE So, let's stop pretending the inevitable isn't going to happen and let's move forward.

JOHN We think you're the best GM in the league.

NATALIE We do. And John and I are going to take this team to the top. So, before you permanently go down in history as the infatuated chump who went down with the ship, consider what we're offering.

JOHN On the field, the team is looking good. That's because of you.

NATALIE Finish what you started. With us.
(RICK takes a moment and looks around the restaurant.)

RICK *(Standing up)* I have to go. My guest has arrived.

NATALIE If anything else comes to mind. Anything else you think we should know. You know where to find us.

RICK John. Natalie.
(RICK exits.)

5.

(JENNA in her office with RICK and JAY. JAY is wearing sunglasses.)

JENNA Jay, if Dr. Sanders has said it's okay then that's her best judgment. I think you can trust that. Rick?

RICK She's right. If Sanders is happy, you can rest assured.

JAY But Amanda would-

JENNA Your wife loves you. Of course she's concerned. That's her job. But this is yours. You're the face of the franchise.

JAY What about Damien and Angelo, hell, we got Quinton who can step in, no?

JENNA They all look like Democrats. Look, you just have to stand there. You can even sit down. We're not asking you to deliver the Gettysburg Address.

JAY I look like shit.

JENNA Even better. When you come out for an event like this clearly not 100%, you'll look patriotic.

JAY And I can still be wearing these? The light still bothers me.

JENNA We'll get you some aviators. You'll look great.

RICK Amanda will come around.

JAY Okay, I'll do it. I want to do it.

JENNA Thank you.
(JAY starts to exit.)

JAY Tomorrow, right?

JENNA Thursday.

JAY Yeah. That's what I-

RICK Today's Tuesday.

JAY Right. Sorry.

RICK It's okay. To be expected.

JAY Still, a little fuzzy.

JENNA Fuzzy?

RICK *(To JENNA)* Fuzzy. You know, fuzzy. What?

JENNA Just hearing a man say the word "fuzzy". It's, I don't know....

RICK It was a big hit.

JENNA Sure. Jay, you're the closest thing this franchise ever had to a Johnny U, and we're talking one hour and then, I don't know, rest up. You can take a week off.

JAY You got it.
(JAY exits.)

RICK *A week off?* You know we have a game Monday night.

JENNA Yes. Why?

RICK Why what?

JENNA Why do you feel you have to remind me we have a game on Monday night? This whole thing is for Monday Night Football.

RICK Because we're a football team. And we need him for Monday night. To play.

JENNA Look... if he's feeling queasy at the thought of sitting down and fist-bumping some men who *actually* put their bodies on the line so guys like Jay can throw a ball around for a living, then he's not going to be ready to play a game on Monday night.

RICK

JENNA I told you I'm trying to get George Senior and Barbara for Thursday, right?

RICK

JENNA You have to trust me, Rick. This is off-the-field stuff that will pay off on the field. It's the kinda shit that made the Cowboys the Cowboys. Look where they are now. They can't find their ass with both hands. But we're not going to fuck this up. It's our time now.

RICK Jen-

JENNA Y'all want me to be silent like my mom was, but we're in a different time and I own this casino. I've got an opportunity here to contribute in a real way. So, either help me nail this event on Thursday or move out of my way because I'm through arguing with you about it.

(A beat)

RICK I don't want you to ever be silent.

(RICK tries to kiss her but JENNA flinches and backs away.)

JENNA And do me a favor and tell Coach Bishop I need confirmation on whether or not any of his family or extended family are going to be there. I need to know by end of day tomorrow.

RICK *(Sulkily)* Yeah, I'll be right on it.

JENNA Rick.

RICK What the hell was that?

(A beat.)

RICK You met up with this Staff Sergeant guy lately?

JENNA Yes, we're in regular communication.

RICK Sure, seems that way. What's his name again?

JENNA Uh, Quinn. Staff Sergeant Quinn. What?

RICK Nothing. Are we still on for tonight?

JENNA What's tonight?

RICK Dinner on the River Walk?

JENNA Are you sure we said tonight?

RICK Look, if you've got something you want to tell me, I wish you'd let me know.
(*A beat*)

RICK Huh.
(*A beat*)

JENNA Can we please just focus on work for now? I'm sorry. There's a lot going on, right now. That's all.
(*Pause*)

RICK You can tell me about these things. Whatever is going on with you. (*A beat*) Is there someone else? You haven't been the same since-

JENNA I can take a summer vacation wherever I want without running it by you.
(*Pause*)

JENNA And no, I am not sleeping with Staff Sergeant Quinn, if that's what you were insinuating.
(*No response.*)

JENNA Rick, I've got stuff to do.

RICK Come here.
(*No response.*)

RICK Just come here.
(*JENNA goes to RICK. He holds her.*)

JENNA Please.
(*JENNA moves away from RICK.*)

RICK Listen, I know that this... recent erratic behavior is more due to stress, but you really should know-

JENNA Excuse me? All of a sudden, I'm erratic because I don't feel like letting you fuck me in my place of work?

RICK No, no...I'm just saying.... I'm not the only one who's noticed.

JENNA Noticed what?

RICK Your behavior. Your recent episodes. Your.... flying off the handle.

JENNA Okay, call me crazy, but-

RICK Well, you see, that's just it. A lot of people are, Jenna.

JENNA What?

RICK You're misunderstanding. I'm saying I can't protect you anymore from people who are starting to get curious, okay?

JENNA Curious about what?

RICK Jesus Christ! Your state of mind!

JENNA

RICK Jenna, look we all know where you came from. Something . . .

JENNA Something what?

RICK Something, I don't know. In the blood. Genetic.

JENNA You are not irreplaceable, Rick. I would hate to see you make that assumption.

RICK Just remember who your friends are is all I'm saying. Because it's not looking like you got a great many left.

(Silence)

RICK I'll go check now with Coach to see if any of his family can make Thursday.

JENNA I'm off site for the rest of the day. I just need to know by tomorrow.

RICK Oh, where are you headed?

JENNA Rick.

RICK You have a good rest of your day, Jenna.

(RICK exits.)

6.

(A modest backyard in McQueeney, Texas. There is a footbridge upstage. Birds chirp, a general ambience of off the beaten track. A white linen sheet and other laundry hang on a clothesline. Two laundry baskets are nearby. One full of wet clothes, one empty. BILL sits in a rocking chair, drinking a beer. LISA MARIE sits in another chair, pairing socks and folding laundry. An expensive-looking coat drapes over a third and unoccupied chair. There is a briefcase to the side of it and on top rests a cell phone and an expensive pair of sunglasses.)

BILL You're bein' stubborn, Lisa Marie. The woman's only tryin' to make peace. No need to be impolite.

LISA MARIE Who's bein' impolite?

BILL I like her.

LISA MARIE I'm sure you do.

BILL What's that supposed to mean?

LISA MARIE You know what it means.

(Pause)

BILL Lisa Marie, she told you they were sad to hear of Francine's passin'. All they wanna do is recognize the contribution she made.

LISA MARIE The contribution she made. *She* made the flowers grow. That's what Joe Jr. said about momma. He took her all the way to Texas with him.

BILL He did. An' you can see just lookin' at this place, how much that time in her life meant to her. Francine obviously meant a lot to the Alway family.

LISA MARIE Just not Caroline.

BILL Ah, it was a long time ago.

LISA MARIE She fired her, Bill.

BILL That was her old lady. Not her.

LISA MARIE Why you doin' her pitchin'? What are you, best friends all of a sudden?

(Silence)

LISA MARIE Besides, she's not here for any of that. She's here because she wants to know what I know. She's on a mission of discovery.

BILL A mission of discovery? What the hell do you know that she don't know?

LISA MARIE That girl is lost.

BILL So, she came to you? Lisa Marie Moran: The Oracle of McQueeney, Texas? You're as nutty as a turd from a squirrel.

LISA MARIE You can laugh. But I think she looks.... well, I just don't think she looks well inside.

BILL How can you tell somethin' like that?

LISA MARIE Just can. *(A beat)* It takes a woman to know.

BILL Oh really?

(Pause)

LISA MARIE That poor family.

BILL They seem to be doin' alright to me.

(Brief silence)

BILL Say, how much you think that coat's worth?

LISA MARIE Won't Gil and the boys be wonderin' where you are?

BILL Come on, Lisa Marie.

LISA MARIE Come on what?

BILL Do I not have a say in this?

LISA MARIE Not really. I'm her daughter and it's her memory. Now shoo.

BILL Can I at least finish my beer?

(Silence)

BILL Ask her for money.

LISA MARIE I will not ask her for money.

BILL Why? She's got plenty.

LISA MARIE We are not like that, Bill Moran.

BILL Speak for yourself.

LISA MARIE Just finish your beer and get back to work and leave us be.
(BILL downs the rest of his beer and gets up.)

BILL Fine. But if you let her leave here without so much as guaranteed season tickets for the rest of our lives, then I married the wrong girl.

LISA MARIE Oh really?

BILL Damn straight.
(BILL gives LISA MARIE a peck on the cheek. JENNA enters.)

JENNA This is such a cute place.

BILL Yeah, Francine kept it real nice. Been no reason to do nothin' to it.

LISA MARIE Bill's gotta get back to work.

JENNA Oh, of course. Well it was so nice to meet you, Bill.

BILL Pleasure's been all mine, Ms. Alway. I wish you well. And don't let those bastards get you down.

LISA MARIE Bill.

BILL I just mean, we watch the TV, we listen to the radio.... No one's light bulb got brighter by dimmin' some other folk's is all I'm sayin'. You understand me, don't you?

LISA MARIE Get back to work.

BILL Dammit woman, Ms. Alway and I are connectin' here!

JENNA Enjoy your afternoon.

BILL I will. *(A beat)* Lisa Marie, I'll see you tonight. You see about those season tickets.
(BILL exits. Leaving JENNA and LISA MARIE alone. LISA MARIE gets up, picks up an empty laundry basket and starts to take down the dry clothes from the line.)

JENNA Bill seems like a good man. It's obvious he cares for you a great deal.

LISA MARIE He obviously took a shine to you.
(No response)

LISA MARIE He's alright. We get by just fine.
(Pause)

LISA MARIE Do you have...somebody?
(A beat)

JENNA No. Of course the team.... you make sacrifices...it's just not conducive- just haven't met the right one, I guess.
(JENNA takes a look around and then sits.)

LISA MARIE If you'd let us know you were comin', I'd have made sure that seat had a cushion.

JENNA Why? It's absolutely fine.

LISA MARIE Still not quite what you're used to, I'm sure.

JENNA I'm not the Queen of England, Lisa Marie.
(No response)

JENNA Can I help you with any of that?

LISA MARIE No, you sit down right there. I just need to gather all this and hang out a new load.

JENNA Okay.

LISA MARIE But I'm listenin'.

JENNA Francine's an important part of the team's history. We want to acknowledge that. We want to honor that in some public way.

LISA MARIE We?

JENNA Me. I do and the franchise. We want to honor that. What? Would you have felt better if we didn't acknowledge Francine's contribution when we heard she passed?
(No response)

JENNA Why are you reluctant? You think all this is fraternizing with the enemy?

LISA MARIE I didn't say that.

JENNA But you feel that way?
(LISA MARIE laughs.)

JENNA What?

LISA MARIE I betcha folks don't say no to you all that often, huh? Team owner. I betcha have the whole world on a string.

JENNA You'd be surprised. But I mean THAT'S what I want, Lisa Marie. The WHOLE world on a string.
(LISA MARIE laughs briefly and relaxes a little.)

LISA MARIE What, you findin' it tough?

JENNA A little.

LISA MARIE I guess walking away from it all is not an option, huh?

JENNA I'm not gonna walk away. *(A beat)* I just want to make some kind of difference. Build something. Just not sure I'll get that opportunity.

LISA MARIE Why's that?

JENNA I can't do it on my own. I need people with me. *(A beat)* Perhaps it's because I'm a woman in a ma-... I don't know. Perhaps it's just the times we're in. Whatever it is, seems to get people bent out of shape whenever you try and actually get things done.

LISA MARIE Maybe it's a little of both.

JENNA Yes, maybe.

LISA MARIE You hang in there, honey.
(Silence)

LISA MARIE Folks don't like what's familiar becomin' unfamiliar. I know that. And people don't like others who want to stand out from the crowd.

JENNA But they used to, didn't they?

LISA MARIE When?

JENNA Back in the day. You know, real pioneers.

LISA MARIE You talking about Joseph Alway? Well, that's a different ball of wax, ain't it? My father used to say momma never got over your granddaddy.

JENNA Really? You mean his death?

LISA MARIE Yes, his death, for sure. And....

JENNA And what?

LISA MARIE You know, whether somethin' happened between the two of them. Daddy was obsessed with that. Wonderin' and wonderin' what went on back then. Must be tough for a man knowin' his wife used to work so close with such a great and important man once upon a time. Think he was intimidated by it....
(Pause)

JENNA Why do you think he was so great and important?

LISA MARIE You don't think so?

JENNA I just want to know what makes him great and important in your eyes? I mean, you're not alone in thinking that.

LISA MARIE Is that the bee in your bonnet? How you match up? Are you envious of Joseph Alway?

JENNA Not envious, no. I mean, I'd like the same respect. Is that so wrong? You never wanted to be significant in your own right?
(No response)

JENNA Obviously not.

LISA MARIE If significance and respect is what you value the most, you'll never feel you have enough of either. I don't know much but I know that.
(A silence)

LISA MARIE You think Caroline showed my mother respect when she let her go?
(A beat)

JENNA I wasn't there so I can't say. Maybe she didn't think she was good at her job.
(Silence as this comment stings LISA MARIE a little.)

LISA MARIE *(Looks up to the sky)* It's gettin' cloudy out.
 (A beat)

LISA MARIE Family's a funny thing, ain't it?

JENNA I guess so.

LISA MARIE All that history. It's really somethin'.
 (Silence)

JENNA Lisa Marie, look... I'm not saying Joseph wasn't a great man.

LISA MARIE I know. *(A beat)* You were more talkin' about yourself.

JENNA And I'm sure Francine was very good at her job. I'm sure my mom had her reasons. But I'm not my mom, okay?
 (LISA MARIE laughs.)

JENNA What?

LISA MARIE Do you have trouble deciding whether you should stand up or sit down?

JENNA How do you mean?

LISA MARIE I don't know if you're proud of your heritage or you resent it.
 (A beat)

JENNA Maybe I shouldn't have come.
 (A beat)

LISA MARIE Maybe what you need is approval.

JENNA Doesn't everyone?
 (JENNA's phone rings.)

JENNA Excuse me. I should...

LISA MARIE You go ahead.

JENNA *(Into the phone)* Allô ? Amid ? Oui, je t'entends. Non, je suis avec quelqu'un, mais je peux parler. Oui, ça va. Qui ? Baalbek ? Pourquoi ils diraient ça ? Mais qui ? Et ils m'ont vue ? Qui le leur a dit ? Jeudi ? Fuck! *(Angry)* C'est n'importe quoi ! C'était un dîner. Un dîner pour des enfants ! C'est n'importe quoi ! *(Quieter)* Mais ce n'est pas vrai. Tu ne peux rien faire ? *(Deflated)* Oui. D'accord.
 (JENNA ends the call and hangs her head.)

LISA MARIE Are you okay?

JENNA Yes. Fine.
 (LISA MARIE watches her for a moment, then continues with the laundry.)

LISA MARIE So how much do you know about all that?

JENNA About what?

LISA MARIE About Omaha?

(JIM in 1965 practice uniform appears on the footbridge upstage. JENNA sees him, LISA MARIE does not. Seconds later, JIM is gone.)

LISA MARIE Ms. Alway?

JENNA Yes....ahm, what about it?

LISA MARIE Well you read ol' Woody Carter's book?

JENNA Yes.

LISA MARIE And?

JENNA I think Mr. Carter had an axe to grind.

LISA MARIE How so?

JENNA You disagree?

LISA MARIE No. Just wanna know why you think he'd write such a thing.

JENNA To sell books?

LISA MARIE I guess.

(A beat)

JENNA Look, Willy Marshall was there that day and he said that Joseph had fired Woody. I think that tells you everything you need to know about Woody Carter's motives in writing that book.

LISA MARIE *(Ruefully)* Willy Marshall.

JENNA Yes, well. That was a tragedy what happened there.

LISA MARIE Willy Marshall was my mom's favorite player. When I was maybe 10 years old, we got to stay with him and Mary and their three kids over there in Key West.

JENNA Sounds nice.

LISA MARIE 'Course that was when his mind was still right. When he was on TV all the time. Such a handsome man. Mary was lovely too. Can't imagine what that'd been like. That poor woman. Imagine wakin' up from an afternoon nap starin' down the barrel of a shotgun, with ol' Willy mounted over you?

(Silence. JENNA starts to get her things together.)

JENNA I really need to go. So....so you're saying no to this? My thought was to have a little presentation before our last home game of the regular season in December. Anyway, I can leave you to think about it. You'll be well looked after. You and Bill.

(LISA MARIE pulls out Willy Marshall's brain dripping with blood from the laundry basket and hangs it up on the clothesline.)

LISA MARIE You think Willy got that way cause a' those dings to the head playin' football?

JENNA

LISA MARIE What about that Harrison kid who was cut from the team and blew his head off? You know anythin' about that?

JENNA *(Turning away slightly)* I know the hearsay if that's what you're implying.

LISA MARIE In Woody Carter's book?

JENNA *(Turning away more)* Yes. Why are you asking about that?

LISA MARIE About Joseph being that boy's real daddy?

JENNA Yes. And that Eleanor told them that.

LISA MARIE At the asylum?

JENNA At the hospital. Did Francine say anything about that?

LISA MARIE No, she didn't want to talk about it.

JENNA Why, do you think? Why she didn't want to talk about it.

LISA MARIE I don't know. Cause she was loyal, I guess. *(A beat)* Joseph Alway inspired loyalty.

JENNA Right.
(Silence)

LISA MARIE Loyalty. You ain't got nothin' if you don't have that. *(A beat)* Yes, I think when Joseph Alway died it damn near broke my mother's heart.
(Pause)

LISA MARIE It was his intestines, wasn't it?

JENNA Yes.

LISA MARIE Painful.
(LISA MARIE pulls out Joseph Alway's intestines dripping with blood from the laundry basket and hangs them up on the clothesline. LISA MARIE wipes her hands against her dress, smearing it with blood.)

LISA MARIE Say, do you wanna go inside for a while or do you have to hit the road?

7.

(The Veterans event. DR. SANDERS and RICK are standing around.)

DR. SANDERS We cannot seriously be going ahead with this.

RICK It's a report.

DR. SANDERS It's breaking news. *(A beat)* I mean, *Al Jazeera*?

RICK She has a right to reply.

DR. SANDERS Maybe. But it doesn't look good. And right now, it's making us look like assholes.
(JENNA enters.)

RICK Are you okay?

JENNA Never better.

DR. SANDERS Are you sure?

JENNA Yes. It's total BS and I'll respond later. Let's just get through this. The players get here at two-thirty. The Vets have just arrived. So.... we got about an hour to walk them through the ceremony.

(COACH BISHOP enters wearing his coach's gear. JENNA immediately notices COACH BISHOP's garb.)

JENNA Coach Bishop, nice of you to dress up for the occasion. *(Urgently)* Okay. We need to make sure we have a player allocated for every single Vet. Sergeant Brant, who you just met, I want Jay standing alongside him, front and center, when Kelly John is singing the anthem....but like I said, we'll go over everything once-

BISHOP Who in the hell is Kelly John?

DR. SANDERS She almost won *American Idol* last year.

RICK She got to the final.

BISHOP Well color me fucking giddy. Can I just say....

JENNA Yes?

BISHOP This is the most asinine, stupid ass, dumbass, three-ring shit show I think I ever saw!

JENNA Not now, Coach.

BISHOP And putting my banged-up quarterback up on stage like a prize pig, woowww.... Mine eyes have seen the glory!

JENNA Coach Bishop, none of this is helpful. Jay's fine. I double-checked with him this morning.

BISHOP Like Jay Faison's gonna tell you no? Any player on this team's gonna do whatever the hell it is you think they should be doing and you know it.

JENNA *(Ignoring COACH BISHOP)* Dr. Sanders, I was thinking you could walk on with Coach and myself after all the Vets and players are in-

BISHOP Y'know, I'm sick of this shit already! Y'all have a nice time.

JENNA Coach... you're gonna stay right here! You're going to smile. You're going to be accommodating. And you are going to be proud to be A FUCKING AMERICAN!

BISHOP No. No, no, no, no.... here's how this goes, Jenna. I'm gonna go home. I'm gonna have a cheeseburger. And I'm gonna reflect. I'm gonna reflect the shit outta this Thursday afternoon an' try to figure out how I'm gonna win a game for this ball club on Monday night! And if you don't like that, you can type up my official resignation on kissmyass.com

JENNA

BISHOP Now y'all have a blessed day!

(COACH BISHOP exits.)

JENNA That went well. *(A beat)* Dr. Sanders, you mind checking in on him?

DR. SANDERS On who?

JENNA Coach Bishop. Calm him down. Keep him here.

DR. SANDERS I'm a doctor, Ms. Alway, not his wet nurse.

JENNA How about you just do as I ask? Let's try that.
(A beat)

DR. SANDERS Of course. Whatever you say.
(DR. SANDERS exits.)

RICK You okay?

JENNA Coach Bishop... fucking prick.

RICK Yeah. Some hostility there. Did you lead him on too?

JENNA What?

RICK Coach Bishop. *(A beat)* Hey, I'm kidding.

JENNA Don't you ever, EVER, talk that way to me again. You understand?

RICK It was a joke.

JENNA I am still your boss, and if you want to keep your job-

RICK What? If I want to keep my job, what? You have no clue how close you are to falling off the cliff. Not a clue.

JENNA Oh, I'm more tuned in than you think.

RICK Hard to be tuned into anything with your head so far up your ass.

JENNA Okay. Get the fuck away from me.

RICK Jenna.

JENNA You're fired.

RICK What?

JENNA I said you're fucking fired.
(RICK stifles an impulse to hit her.)

JENNA Go ahead...hit me....

RICK Know what?-

JENNA I demand loyalty and respect.

RICK You have to earn that, Jenna.

JENNA Yeah, go home and tell that to your wife, Rick. Fuck you, getting so high and mighty.

RICK Fine. But what can I say? It's just difficult to look at you as a leader, when I've already seen you as a whore.
(JENNA slaps RICK across the face.)

RICK You deserve everything that's coming to you.

(RICK exits. JENNA is alone on stage. She is spiraling. She takes out her cell phone, but has no idea who to call. RICK re-enters with NATALIE.)

JENNA What the fuck are you doing here?

NATALIE Rick's not going anywhere.

JENNA He is. I just fired him. I said what the fuck are you doing here?

NATALIE Jenna, can we go some place private? You're gonna want to go some place private.

JENNA *(Shouting offstage)* Your wife been sampling the punch again, John?
(A beat) You're a weak man, John! Just like your father!

NATALIE Jenna-

JENNA I mean it. You want to get dirty, fine. But not now. Not today.
(JAY enters.)

JENNA Jay! Thanks for being here. It means a lot.

JAY Ms. Alway, you might want to switch on a TV. A story just broke. We just saw it on the way over here.

JENNA You don't need to concern yourself with that.

NATALIE Let's go to your office.

JENNA This is a non-story. I've done nothing wrong. *(A beat)* Staff Sergeant Quinn! Has anybody seen Staff Sergeant Quinn?

NATALIE Jenna.
(No response)

JENNA Can someone please find me Staff Sergeant Quinn. He should be here.

RICK Jenna.
(The lights begin to fade leaving JENNA in spotlight.)

JENNA I NEED QUINN!
(No response)

JENNA WILL SOMEONE PLEASE GET ME STAFF SERGEANT QUINN RIGHT FUCKING NOW!
(No response. A beat. Blackout.)

8.

(Jenna's office. JENNA is with DR. SANDERS.)

JENNA We need to get back down there.

DR. SANDERS We're not going anywhere. Your day is done.

JENNA Look, what can I say? I'm embarrassed. I don't know what happened....

DR. SANDERS You blacked out.

JENNA Listen, I took a glass of champagne from a tray. It'd already been poured. Someone could have spiked it. We can investigate all that tomorrow, but look at me. I'm fine. And I'm not crazy.

DR. SANDERS Trust me, you're better here. Just let it go for today.

JENNA I'm not ashamed because a bullshit story just broke either.

DR. SANDERS I don't care about that right now. We need to get you checked out. Could be any number of things. Sure, could have been something in the champagne, could be stress and fatigue. It could also be the onset of a progressive neurological condition.

JENNA *The onset?* Look, you're all overreacting here.

DR. SANDERS Who were you shouting for?

(Pause)

JENNA Okay, I promise I'll get myself checked out. But please, this fuss is uncalled for.

DR. SANDERS No one's fussing. Just doing my job.

(NATALIE enters.)

NATALIE How is she?

JENNA What the hell do you want?

DR. SANDERS I told her she needs to go to the hospital.

JENNA I'm fine!

(A beat)

NATALIE Can you give us a moment, Doctor?

DR. SANDERS If you two are going to get into it, I'm not sure it's good-

NATALIE Please. I'd really appreciate it.

DR. SANDERS *(To JENNA)* Ms. Alway?

(JENNA nods.)

DR. SANDERS O-kay. Page me if you need me. Either of you. But please. No blood.

(DR. SANDERS exits.)

NATALIE So?

JENNA I want to make peace. This atmosphere is not good for anyone. It's not good for the family. And it's not good for the future of this franchise.

NATALIE It's too late. You look terrible.

JENNA If you love this team like you and John say you do, you'll let us get on with what we're doing. It's the best season this team has had in years and we're headed for the post-season.

NATALIE So why have you just fired the General Manager?

JENNA I'll make sure we have a replacement, someone even better.

NATALIE Your position now is untenable. The Al Jazeera associations and Baalbek donation are a disaster.

JENNA I donated to a children's hospital.

NATALIE Yes, and whose children? Whose side are you on?
(*Silence*)

NATALIE Who in the hell is Staff Sergeant Quinn? Nobody's heard of this guy.
(*A beat*) You're unstable.
(*Pause*)

JENNA I'm not mentally unstable.

NATALIE It's best for you and your health that you walk away. Before something terrible happens. We'll protect you from that.

JENNA I am the owner of this team. I care about this team.

NATALIE So do we. You don't really care about this team. You only care about yourself. What are you holding on for? Look what it's doing to you.

JENNA Do you even care about football? At games you're always talking on your phone. You just want revenge. You just want something back that you think was stolen from his father. You'll be sick of it in a year.

NATALIE We'll see about that.

JENNA You'll see that no one likes you. That everyone's got an opinion. That everyone could do a much better job of it than you. You'll learn that most of it is being in the company of some of the most boorish and boring men you've ever met in your life. You'll learn this thing you own is not really yours anyway. That it owns you. Then it'll fucking eat you. And that everybody wants a fucking piece of it and more than that, they feel entitled to it.

NATALIE I can't wait.

JENNA You're only an Alway because you married one.

NATALIE I think an Alway in name but without the mental infection of your bloodline is an ideal candidate to take this franchise forward.

JENNA I introduced you to John. You and your cheap perfume and fake designer clothes. You'd have never met him if it wasn't for me.

NATALIE And I'll always be in your debt for that. Thank you.

JENNA This Lebanon thing is preposterous. It's a preposterous non-story.

NATALIE This is the story. On a day when you're trying to marry the idea of a football team with patriotic pride and the sacrifice of war, all the chatter down there is of the hypocrisy and naiveté of the team owner. Now do the only honorable thing you can do right now and walk away. Or you think today's a bad day? This will just be the start.
(*No response*)

JENNA I was invited to a charity dinner at a summer festival! There were lots of people at that dinner. You actually think I-

- NATALIE** We didn't help the reporter because we thought you were knowingly funding terrorism, Jenna. We went to the Post to show you up and knock you off your perch. As you know from all your time spent watching football, when you need to get an edge, you grab what you can.
- JENNA** You actually think you can just lie and scrap and punch your way up in the world? You think there's really a shortcut from blue collar to blueblood just by getting with John? GET YOUR OWN FUCKING TEAM. You are NOT an Alway! What exactly have you done to deserve this? You know what it takes? Sacrifice. Endurance. Grace. What have you sacrificed, huh? Sacrifice. You wouldn't know sacrifice if it slapped you across the face! Do you know how much has been given to get us where we are now? How much pain, and endurance, and punishment. The personal cost, the emotional cost, the mental cost. Lives have been lost. Marriages and childhoods forsaken, for ALL THIS to grow and thrive! And staving off fucking sharks like you licking their chops trying to take a bite! The risks, the casualties. The shit my grandmother and my mother had to take for ALL THIS to succeed! That is what it takes to be an Alway! That is what we have had to endure! That is what it means to own a team! You can't just swoop in now and take it like some... what? Like some vulture! And grace? Oh, Grace! You have none. Zero. The whole organization will hate working for you. Your complete lack of sophistication. Your total lack of imagination. You'll see! They may not respect me now, but they will loathe you. They will loathe you.
- NATALIE** Your tenure here is over. Accept it.
(JENNA breaks. NATALIE watches.)
- JENNA** I'm sorry.
- NATALIE** Don't apologize. *(A beat)* Have a rest. Recharge. Travel. You'll uncover what you need to do next. Just go live in New York or LA....go to Hawaii. But Texas is not your home. It never was. So, let it go.
(Silence.)
- NATALIE** You deserve a lot of credit for this year, Jenna. Whatever happens in the post-season.
(No response)
- NATALIE** Clean yourself up. We'll meet again in 48 hours. Work out how we take it from here. But the majority shares go back to us. Let's not drag this out longer than it needs to be. And I strongly suggest you give Monday Night Football a miss.
(No response)
- NATALIE** And get yourself checked out. Do what Dr. Sanders suggests.
(No response)
- NATALIE** I really have to go.

JENNA Natalie...

NATALIE And fake designer clothes maybe, but I never wore cheap perfume.

JENNA I know, I'm sorry.
(*A beat*)

JENNA Are you going to reinstate Rick as General Manager?

NATALIE What do you think?
(*A beat*)

JENNA I let personal feelings get.... I obviously wasn't 100% when I fired him earlier.... he's a good General Manager. He's done a great job this year.

NATALIE We can do better. Besides, I don't feel like we can trust him.

JENNA So, you're not going to reinstate him?

NATALIE No.

JENNA Good. I didn't really want you to.

NATALIE See you in a few days, Jenna.
(*NATALIE exits.*)

9.

(*NATALIE and COACH BISHOP are on the practice field, watching the team.*)

NATALIE How we looking?

BISHOP Jay's not gonna be ready for Monday night. He saw Sanders this morning.

NATALIE I heard.

BISHOP Ferris will step up. O-Line will protect him. We're gonna be A-OK.
(*Pause*)

NATALIE Look, Coach?

BISHOP Yeah?

NATALIE I just want you to know that everything's gonna be alright.

BISHOP I know.

NATALIE And I want you to tell your agent just that. If that's a conversation you two have at some point in the next few days. I want you here next season.

BISHOP This is my team, Mrs. Alway.

NATALIE I'm happy to hear that. This always was a three-year project with you as coach and none of that has changed, okay?

BISHOP You bet.... How is she? You heard anything?

NATALIE No....but she'll be fine.

BISHOP She gave me my first head coaching job. I'll never forget that. *(Out to field)* LET'S TAKE THAT BACK. ONE MORE TIME!

NATALIE As well as new owners, you may have a new General Manager come next season. That's as much as I can tell you.

BISHOP Huh.

NATALIE Is that gonna be an issue?

BISHOP Mrs. Alway. I've been around this a long time. This is football. The faces change and the years go by, but the goal remains the same. I'm just thinking about beating Miami.

NATALIE Thank you.

BISHOP We're gonna kick their ass.
(As NATALIE exits, behind her back, COACH BISHOP gives a military salute in her direction. He looks back at the training field and immediately sees something that animates him.)

BISHOP *(Out to field and on exit)* RAASHAD! YOU'RE KILLIN' ME, MAN! MOVE YOUR FUCKING ASS! IF YOU CAN'T GET OPEN, YOU'RE NOT GONNA GET THE FUCKING FOOTBALL!

10.

(It is night. The sky above is lit by an impressive field of stars. Just as in Act One, JOSEPH is lying across one of the bleachers. He is dressed as he was on that night in 1965. A silent mix of statue and presence. JENNA enters. She does not see JOSEPH, but she adopts the same position as FRANCINE did in Act One, and similarly lies across the bleacher below. JOSEPH watches her momentarily.)

JENNA I lost it, Gramps. The team, that is. Maybe more than the team, but I lost it. It's with her. Sure, John is there in name but it's hers now. He's just the passenger. She's the one driving. It's outside of us now.

I want you to know that I'll be going away for a while. Varanasi, Northern India. Along the banks of the Ganges. They believe that only immersing the ashes in the river will release the soul from the cycle of rebirth and suffering. It sounds intense.

Always. That's a hell of a word. To put on a team. On a family. On anything you expect to last forever.

(JIM enters. He wears the 1965 US military uniform and has a bag over his shoulder.)

JIM *(To the audience)* Nothing is always.

(JOSEPH sits up with a start. JOSEPH and JIM stare each other down. JENNA sees nothing but the stars. A beat. Then blackout.)

END OF PLAY