

THE CHOSEN ONE

by

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CHARACTERS

NOAH 34, African-American. Professional athlete with a reputation for being a bit of a playboy.

NORA 41, Caucasian. Noah's wife. An aspiring artist.

FAITH 35, Caucasian. Noah's first wife. A mathematician.

LAUREN 17, Caucasian. Faith's student. A math prodigy.

ROBERT 35, Caucasian. Nora's brother and Noah's agent.

FATHER 50's, African-American. He is unseen by others. He also plays the ANNOUNCER and BARKEEP.

SETTING

Various locales in the vacation town of Door County, WI, and Chicago.

TIME

Scenes take place between the present and the last five years.

Note: Dialogue on a separate line indicates a slight pause or shift in conversation.

NOAH

Here is my first idea.
Here is my second.

PROLOGUE

(The lights half rise to reveal ANNOUNCER behind a microphone. He is calling Game 7 of the National League Championship Series.)

Game 7, bottom of the ninth. Chicago's down to their last out, down three-to-two. Tying run on third, the winning run on second. Johnson strides to the plate. Chicago's last and best hope. Philadelphia took the lead in the top of the inning on his error so you know he wants to come through here. A trip to the World Series hangs in the balance. A goat or a hero. It all rests on this at-bat. The best player in the game - some say the best player God's put on this Earth with a chance to send his team to the World Series. He digs in. Gutierrez takes his sign - boy that's one nasty man. Best slider in the game. The wind up and the pitch-

Strike one! A ninety-seven mile per hour fastball on the inside corner. Philadelphia is two strikes away from the pennant. You can feel the tension in the stadium. The pressure builds with each passing moment, the hopes and dreams of a city hang in the balance.

Strike two! Johnson didn't like that call. Thought it was low and outside. But now's not the time to be worrying about balls and strikes. Just one strike separates Philadelphia from the pennant. All of Chicago's hopes rest on Johnson's shoulders. Will the pressure get to him again?

He steps out of the box. Readjusts his gloves. Taps his helmet. What must be going through the young man's mind at this moment? The ground ball that went through his legs, the strikeouts earlier in the game - years of postseason struggles. He can erase them all right here. Come through now and all is forgiven - all is forgotten. The entire season boils down to this. 0-2 count, the game's most dominant closer on the mound. He steps back into the box. Takes a few cuts. Gutierrez has his sign. The wind up and the pitch-

Johnson swings-strike three! Strike three! - Philadelphia wins the pennant! Philadelphia wins the pennant! Johnson strikes out to end the game. The Chosen One does it again.

SCENE 1

(Present. The scene shifts to a modest hotel room in Door County, WI. NOAH and his wife, NORA, are celebrating their one year wedding anniversary.)

NORA
It wasn't going.

NOAH
Yes it was.

NORA
Not even a flicker.

NOAH
This isn't so bad.

NORA
Very romantic. Nothing says love quite like a twin bed at 'The Woodsman.'

NOAH
It was the only place with a room. On the bright side no one will find us here.

NORA
Except Ted Bundy.

NOAH
It was going. Smoking.

NORA
Smoking?

NOAH
Where there's smoke there's fire.

NORA
I told you to bring kindling.

NOAH
What can I say, I guess I'm not a woodsman.

NORA

You didn't even stake the tent.

NOAH

See, I'm not even sure what that means.

NORA

It was your idea.

NOAH

You said you used to come up here as a kid. I thought you'd like it. So really, it's actually your idea.

NORA

Is that so?

NOAH

How many black guys voluntarily go camping?

NORA

So that's how you're going to play this then?

NOAH

(Sitting on the bed.)

You can still sleep on the ground if you want.

NORA

I'm not touching anything in this room, least of all the floor.

NOAH

I'll be your bed.

NORA

What is that supposed to be? Charming? Sexy?

NOAH

Yes.

NORA

Are there any outlets in this room?

NOAH

I'm not going to lie, I'm a little insulted.

NORA

For my phone.

NOAH

You know if we hadn't turned around an hour into the trip to get your phone I probably could have gotten that fire going. I just ran out of daylight.

NORA

I told you it wasn't going.

NOAH

No—

NORA

I'm expecting a call.

NOAH

Nicholas is fine. Your mother has my number.

NORA

She doesn't like calling you.

NOAH

What?

NORA

It's just awkward. Look I'm expecting another call. From Marilyn.

NOAH

It's our anniversary. It can wait.

NORA

The whole world stops for you whenever you want.

NOAH

Well...

NORA

Oh please.

Look, this is really important to me. Don't make fun of me. We don't all live such a charmed life. People don't just give me what I want.

NOAH

It's not always what I want. Sometimes I want a Pepsi and they bring me a Coke. I say it's not a big deal, but sometimes you just really want a Pepsi.

NORA

It's a really big gallery and it would be a big step for my career. She said she'd call as soon as she found out.

NOAH

You're gonna get it. Some British guy will buy that one with the branches and eyes for way too much money and you'll be the hot new artist. Quit worrying about it. You worry too much.

NORA

I'm a worrier.

NOAH

Stories about you in the paper, interviews. People will be clamoring for your work.

NORA

The hot new artist huh?

NOAH

You could have just touched the wood and we would've had a fire.

(There is a knock at the door.)

NORA

How do they know? You promised no autographs.

NOAH

It's okay. I ordered a surprise.

(He opens the door. There is an old TV tray with a cheap bottle of champagne and nearly rotten strawberries.)

NORA

What's that smell?

NOAH

Romance.

NORA

I think those strawberries are rotten.

NOAH

I'm not sure which cost more, this champagne or the strawberries.

NORA

How much was that contract you signed? Ninety million was it?

NOAH

Ninety-four.

NORA

You sure know how to spoil a girl.

NOAH

It beats whizzing in the woods.

NORA

Whizzing? Are you an eight year old from 1952?

NOAH

I sure hope not or we're in trouble.

NORA

It's okay Othello.

NOAH

So does that mean I'm going to kill you. Because believe me sometimes—

NORA

Very funny. You can't even open that bottle.

NOAH

Just a second.

NORA

It's a twist off. It says so right there on the bottle.

NOAH

Oh, I didn't see it.

(Pouring her a glass.)

A glass for my sweet Desdemona.

NORA

Thank you my liege.

NOAH
To one year. And thirty more.

NORA
To a divorce in thirty years.

NOAH
Cheers.

(They kiss.)

NORA
Don't take this the wrong way, but I'm actually more excited about going to sleep than sleeping with you.

NOAH
I love you too.

NORA
C'mon, I haven't slept through the night in three months.

NOAH
You can sleep all you want afterwards.

NORA
I'm not doing anything in this room.

NOAH
It's not so bad.

NORA
It smells like dirt in here.

NOAH
Dirt doesn't have a smell.

NORA
I hope he's okay.

NOAH
He's fine.

NORA
I hope he's being good.

NOAH
He is.

NORA

I hope I left enough milk. God, I feel like livestock sometimes. Just talking about him is making me leak. I'm going to have to pump.

NOAH

We are in the Dairy State. You fit right in my sexy little cow.

NORA

For someone with a reputation for charming the ladies you sure don't always say the best things.

NOAH

He'll probably sleep through the night. Your mother puts everyone to sleep.

NORA

Very funny. The baseball comedian.

NOAH

I need something to do when I retire.

NORA

Let me see the pictures again.

NOAH

Later.

NORA

I was reading in a magazine while you were failing at being a man and providing fire for your family that parents can give their kids cavities by sharing utensils with them. Everything is so scary. Don't lay them on their backs. Don't lay them on their stomachs. Don't lay them on their sides. It's like you can't do anything without endangering their life, ruining their college chances or giving them cavities.

NOAH

You can't believe everything you read.

NORA

I'm just scared.

NOAH

You're doing great.

NORA

I just got to a point where I didn't think it would happen and then all of a sudden it happened. It's a little terrifying quite frankly to be doing this at my age.

NOAH

We're going to be fine. You're a great mother.

NORA

And an old one. I'm going to be nearly sixty when he graduates from high school.

NOAH

And you'll still be the hot mom that all the kids want to sleep with.

NORA

There's some of that charm. Nothing like telling a woman sixteen year old boys want to have sex with her to turn them on.

NOAH

I've got the senior class waiting outside. But I've got something else planned first.

NORA

What could possibly top this motel and rotten strawberries?

(He goes to the cooler.)

NORA

Oh, anything from a cooler must be special. Is it bacon?

(He pulls out a present.)

NORA

I didn't get you anything perishable.

NOAH

Open it.

(She does so. It is the top layer of their wedding cake.)

NOAH

Happy anniversary.

NORA

How sweet, frozen year old cake.

NOAH

It's tradition. And it's been defrosting all day.

NORA

Nothing says I love you like defrosting.

NOAH

I'm a romantic.

NORA

It's very sweet.

(She takes a bit.)

Okay maybe sweet isn't the right word.

NOAH

It's not so bad. A little freezer burny.

(He takes a bit and motions to smash it
in NORA's face.)

NORA

Don't you dare.

NOAH

C'mon. It's tradition.

NORA

It's silly. And disgusting. I don't want cake all over my
face.

NOAH

Just a bit on the tip of your nose.

NORA

See what happens.

(He hesitates for a moment, motions
toward her and then puts the piece in
his mouth.)

NORA

Why do people do this anyway?

Christening cake. NOAH

What? NORA

To save money. You'd save some of the wedding cake for a christening cake. NOAH

And how do you know this? NORA

I don't know. NOAH

That's why I love you. Mr. Random Facts Baseball Comedian. NORA

(They kiss.)

INTERLUDE

(The lights shift and rise on FATHER, a middle aged African American man. He is holding a baseball bat and has a jovial, angelic feel. He speaks to no one and everyone at the same time.)

FATHER

I played with Henry Aaron. For three months. The Indianapolis Clowns - 1952 Negro American League Champions. Going to see the Clowns was like going to the movies to see a Laurel and Hardy film. It was great comedy. You knew you were off to a great show and you got it. We played good baseball, of course. But it was the show, from batting practice through the last pitch, that drew the fans.

That wasn't necessarily the Pork Chop's style. He wasn't Hammerin' Hank back then you know. Hadn't hit all them home runs just yet. Said it was the only thing he knew to order off a menu. Shoot, the man ate pork chops three meals a day, two for breakfast. He wasn't a slugger then either, must have been all that white meat. When he first joined up he swung with a cross-handed grip. I let you figure out who showed him how to properly hold a bat.

Sold to the Milwaukee Braves later that year. Had offers from Milwaukee and New York. Giants. Back when they was still in New York. Went to Milwaukee 'cause a fella by the name of Willie Mays was with New York. Figured he had a better chance of makin' the team in Milwaukee. People think it's a team game, but it's really not. Sold him for ten thousand dollars. Still buyin' and sellin' us.

Knew the man for three months. Best hitter there ever was. Well, second best.

SCENE 2

(Five years ago. LAUREN, a young college student is in a major league baseball clubhouse. She is obviously nervous and carrying a notebook. She tries not to touch anything, mostly out of fear of getting in trouble, but also because it is essentially a male locker room. After a few moments NOAH, enters. He is wearing only a towel. Throughout the scene he has numerous opportunities to get dressed, but the most he does is put on an undershirt. Some of it is vanity, but mostly he is trying to assert his authority. He sees LAUREN and takes her in, watching her in his environment. After several moments he makes his presence known.)

NOAH

First time?

LAUREN

What?

NOAH

Is this your first time?
In a major league clubhouse?

LAUREN

Yes. Yes it is, Mr. Johnson.

NOAH

Not all it's cracked up to be, huh? Cramped, smelly-

LAUREN

Kind of depressing actually.

NOAH

I guess.
Look, don't be intimidated. I mean, I'm not going to lie. A lot of stuff happens here. You know, guy stuff. Stuff. Naked guys and fighting and...stuff. So don't get freaked

out or anything. Really, just don't pay attention to anything that happens. We're really just a bunch of five year olds craving attention. You just stick by me and you'll be fine.

And don't talk to any of the reporters. They love to cook stuff up, so don't give them any reason. They know the story they want to tell before they tell it, so don't say nothing to them. They'll make whatever you say fit whatever it is they want to say.

And most importantly, whatever you see, don't tell Dr. Johnson.

I'm kidding.

About Dr. Johnson.

LAUREN

I won't tell a soul.

NOAH

So you're the numbers wizard, huh?

LAUREN

I don't know—

NOAH

No need to be modest.

LAUREN

You certainly aren't.

NOAH

(Jokingly.)

I'm sorry. I thought I put on my shirt. My eyes are shit.

LAUREN

I'm good with numbers.

NOAH

Better than good the way I hear it.

LAUREN

Well I can't control what you hear.

NOAH

Bet you don't think you're beautiful either. Probably got boys lined up around the block.

LAUREN

I don't know.

NOAH

What do you mean you don't know? You either have or you haven't. Unless you have but you don't know that you have and think that you haven't.

LAUREN

Maybe.

NOAH

Okay. Maybe it is.

LAUREN

Dr. Johnson said that you wanted some help tracking pitches?

NOAH

That's right.
Are you getting extra credit for this?

LAUREN

No. I'm doing it for Dr. Johnson.

NOAH

You do know that Dr. Johnson is my wife?

LAUREN

Yes.

NOAH

You don't have to call her Dr. Johnson.

LAUREN

I don't see how your marital status affects what I call your wife.

NOAH

Wow, that's a loaded statement.
You can call me Noah.

LAUREN

Okay.

NOAH

Okay if I call you Laura?

LAUREN

I prefer Lauren.

NOAH

We need to get you a nickname. All the guys have one.

LAUREN

Okay.

NOAH

How about Stats?

LAUREN

Stats?

NOAH

Yeah. Or Numbers, or The Tracker. Something like that.
Yeah, The Tracker.

LAUREN

I really just like Lauren.

NOAH

So did my wife explain everything to you?

LAUREN

I think so.

NOAH

I need you to watch every at bat and track the pitches. I want to know location, velocity and spin. You know what I mean by spin?

LAUREN

Curve, slider, splitter, cutter, sinker, four-seam.

NOAH

Okay.

LAUREN

My father wanted me to be a boy.

NOAH

My father wanted me to be the best there ever was.
(He hesitates slightly and decides against furthering the subject.)

You also have to track the pitchers. There really aren't that many when you get down to it, so that shouldn't be that hard. I want specific pitchers and types - you know, crafty lefties, hard throwing righties, side arm guys, starters, relievers, - you get the gist.

LAUREN

Yes.

NOAH

And of course I need you to track what I do with each pitch.

LAUREN

Of course.

NOAH

Can you do that?

LAUREN

I think so.

NOAH

I don't want what the scouts already give me. I want somebody who knows what they're doing.

LAUREN

I won't let you down.

NOAH

And then I'll rewrite the record books and you and my wife can write a paper about it and publish it in some obscure journal that forty people will read.

LAUREN

I think Dr. Johnson's planning to write a book about it. For tenure.

NOAH

Ah, the all elusive tenure. The academic blank check.

LAUREN

It would be an honor to help her with that. She's sort of like you to math geeks. The Chosen One.

NOAH

Maybe you two will become rich and famous off of me.
Wouldn't be the first.

LAUREN

And maybe you'll stop swinging at sliders in the dirt when
you're behind in the count on the road in night games.

NOAH

Look at you. Been doing our homework.

LAUREN

My dad. He thinks you're a bit of a hot dog.

NOAH

Does he now?

LAUREN

Yeah.

NOAH

What do you think?

LAUREN

I don't know.

NOAH

Come on now, if this is going to work we have to be honest
with each other.

LAUREN

I think you are a great player.

NOAH

But....You have a but coming don't you?

LAUREN

But you over think things when the pressure is on.

NOAH

Wow. I thought you was gonna say I was a little too flashy.

LAUREN

That too. But that's part of the game now. Intimidation.
Marketing. Branding.

NOAH
My father was a Clown.

LAUREN
I don't like clowns.

NOAH
I've got a good feeling about you.

LAUREN
You should.

(Lights fade out.)

INTERLUDE

(The lights half rise to reveal ANNOUNCER behind a microphone. He is breaking a news story.)

ANNOUNCER

It has been alleged that Chicago's Noah Johnson is the latest athlete to be tied to performance enhancing drugs. Unconfirmed sources say that Johnson's father has come forward alleging he has been giving Johnson human growth hormone for years to help The Chosen One overcome minor injuries. Several prominent players have been tied to the drug, which has been hailed by some as a sort of fountain of youth. HGH enhances tissue growth by stimulating protein formation, which helps build muscle, lowers recovery time for injuries and recovery time for weight training. There have been murmurs about Johnson's usage for years but the recalcitrant Johnson has vehemently denied them. Johnson has denied any contact with his father and has declined comment on the current scandal.

SCENE 3

(Scene shifts to the same as Scene 1, around midnight. NORA is in bed. She is wearing pajamas, shoes, hat and gloves. NOAH is on the floor in shorts and an undershirt. Both are asleep. After a few moments there is a knock at the door. No answer. Another knock.)

NORA

What was—? Get the gun.

(A knock.)

NOAH

Settle down. Go into the bathroom.

NORA

I told you this place was a serial killer waiting to happen.

NOAH

It's probably nothing.

(A knock.)

Just get into the bathroom.

NORA

Can't I go in the closet? It's so disgusting—

NOAH

Just be quiet and lock the door.

NORA

Put on some pants.

(She goes into the bathroom. A click is heard as she locks the door. NOAH picks up the champagne bottle.)

NOAH

Who there!?!

FAITH

Noah?

NOAH
Who the fuck is it?

FAITH
Noah, open the door.

NOAH
My wallet's in the car. There's nothing in here.

NORA
Don't murder us!

NOAH
Shut up.

FAITH
I have enough of your money.

NOAH
What?

FAITH
It's me. Open the door.

(NOAH opens the door.)

FAITH
What the hell's the matter with you?

NOAH
What are you doing here?

FAITH
I could hear you guys you know.

NOAH
Why are you here?

FAITH
For future reference, if you don't want an intruder to know
Nora's here she shouldn't talk so much.
(Referring to the champagne bottle.)
I'd love a drink.

NOAH

Why are you soaking wet? The parking lot is conveniently attached to the hotel.

FAITH

I was checking camp sites for you.

NOAH

What? Why are you here?

(NORA bursts out of the bathroom screaming, brandishing a hair dryer and charges at FAITH. NOAH reaches out and grabs her.)

NOAH

Nora, stop. Stop. Settle down. It's just Faith.

NORA

Faith? What are you doing here?

FAITH

I'm sorry, I know this is awful timing.

NOAH

You think?

NORA

Why are you all wet?

FAITH

It's raining. What were you going to do with a hair dryer?

NOAH

What do you want?

FAITH

Who goes camping in October?

NOAH

What do you want?

NORA

Noah...

FAITH

I must have searched fifty tents looking for you guys.

NOAH

Are you insane? You can't just go into someone's tent in the middle of the night?

NORA

You're lucky you weren't murdered.

FAITH

You're making it seem worse than it really was.

NOAH

Funny how I have a tendency to do that.

NORA

Noah.
What are you doing here?

FAITH

Look, I know this seems really rash and weird and I'm sorry to bust in on you like this—

NOAH

How did you even know we were here?

FAITH

There was a story about it in the paper.

NOAH

What?

FAITH

About how you made plans for a weekend outing in October. You know, the whole World Series thing is really getting blown out of proportion.

NOAH

They wrote an article about my vacation?

NORA

Anniversary.

FAITH

More like an op-ed.

NOAH

They probably said I did it on purpose.

FAITH

I don't know. I didn't read the whole thing.

(NOAH grabs his jacket, gives Nora an
'I told you so' look, rubs his eyes in
frustration and heads out.)

NORA

Where are you going?

NOAH

Nowhere.

FAITH

Noah.

NORA

Just let it go. You can't let them get to you.

NOAH

(To Nora.)

Please find out why the hell my ex-wife is here?

(NOAH exits.)

NORA

Strawberry?

FAITH

No thanks. Any champagne left?

(FAITH picks up the bottle and takes a
drink straight from it.)

FAITH

I'm really sorry.

NORA

Do you want some dry clothes or something?

FAITH

No, I'm fine.

NORA

You're going to freeze to death.

(She goes to her suitcase and pulls out
an outfit, which she hands to Faith.)

Put this on while your clothes dry out.

FAITH

I don't want to impose. I know this is terrible timing.

NORA

It's fine.

FAITH

I'm sorry. Thank you.

(FAITH exits to the bathroom.)

NORA

Try not to touch anything in there. I think there might be syphilis on that toilet.

FAITH

(From the bathroom.)

Again, I'm really sorry to just burst in on you guys like this.

NORA

Is everything okay?

FAITH

When I left it was only six o'clock. I didn't factor in the drive time.

NORA

That's okay.

FAITH

I wasn't in my right mind.

NORA

I'm sure.

FAITH

You have no idea.

NORA

Care to explain?

(FAITH re-enters dressed in Nora's clothes.)

FAITH

Not a bad match. Guess Noah has a type.

NORA

Oh my God! Put something on your feet. I can't believe you were in there barefoot.

FAITH

I'm fine.

NORA

If you get gout don't blame me.

FAITH

I guess you're wondering why I'm here.

NORA

You could say I'm a little curious.

FAITH

Your brother's cheating on me.

NORA

What?

FAITH

I know.

NORA

What happened?

FAITH

I was putting his laundry away and I noticed a small box in his dresser. My birthday was coming up - well is today -

NORA

Happy birthday.

FAITH

(She finishes whatever champagne is left.)

And I took a quick peek. A beautiful bracelet.

NORA

Oh.

FAITH

I'm not a fan of necklaces, they make my neck look thick. Anyway, guess what he gave me for my birthday?

NORA

A bracelet?

FAITH

A farmer's almanac.

NORA

Wow.

FAITH

And he's just been acting strange lately. I just know. God, it's all so cliché.

NORA

I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?

(FAITH begins to cry.)

FAITH

No. I'm sorry for dumping this on you guys. You must hate me.

NORA

I hate my brother.

FAITH

I should have seen it coming.

NORA

Don't say that. It's not your fault.

FAITH

It's somebody's fault.

NORA

Robert's.

FAITH

What is wrong with me? Why do all of my husbands cheat on me?

NORA

You've only had two.

FAITH

What?

NORA

All of my husbands makes it sound worse than it really is.
And Noah did not cheat on you.

FAITH

I know you have to say that, but it was all over the news.
Do you have any idea what that's like? To have the worst
moments of your life play out in the press? And I'm the one
that introduced them.
I'm sorry. I'm not here to talk about Noah and my students.

NORA

Then why are you?

FAITH

I'm not.

(Pause. She tries to drink more but the
bottle is empty.)

NORA

I'm sorry. Here.

(She puts slippers on FAITH.)

FAITH

The article isn't that bad. I don't think they even mention
you.

NORA

I don't read that stuff.

FAITH

'Mr. May makes holiday plans for October.' I think that's
the headline.

NORA

They act like he doesn't want to do well.

FAITH

I wish I had a cool nickname. I was just 'the mathematician
wife.'

NORA

That's actually a pretty rockin' nickname.

FAITH

Not like Mr. May.

NORA

I don't think it's meant as a compliment.

FAITH

No? I don't know anything about baseball.

NORA

Seems like a stat geek like you would love it.

FAITH

I'm a mathematician not a statistician.

NORA

Same difference. It's all numbers. The whole game is numbers.

FAITH

Life is numbers.
Like 41.

NORA

Below the belt. Besides, Noah needs an older woman.

FAITH

Math lets us explore, expand and understand our universe.

NORA

Explain?

FAITH

Well, it's a little complicated—

NORA

No, explain. Explore, expand and explain. It keeps your e-theme.

FAITH

Oh, okay. I thought you meant explain, like explain what I meant.

NORA

I'm sorry Faith, it's too late for me to get excited about math.

FAITH

That's because they don't tell you what math can do.

NORA

I never could really get past Algebra.

FAITH

Robert loved math.

NORA

That's why I set you guys up. The only two people I know who like math.

FAITH

I didn't want to give up myself.

NORA

You guys didn't do it?

FAITH

Baseball.

NORA

Oh. Good. I mean, he's my brother so, you know, that's sick, but good. Wait, who are we talking about?

FAITH

And now look at me.

NORA

Life isn't fair.

FAITH

Yes it is.

(Pause.)

NORA

(She pulls out a pump from her bag.)

I don't mean to be insensitive, but my boobs are about to explode. Do you mind?

FAITH

Oh sure, I'm sorry. I think I saw a coffee shop or something that I wanted to check out.

NORA

Thanks.

(FAITH exits.)

INTERLUDE

(The lights half shift to FATHER.)

FATHER

I was born on Christmas Day, 1929. My mother wasn't expecting me for a few more months, but I've always had trouble stayin' in one place too long. My father said I was the chosen one. Gonna fix the country, put people back to work, and save the world. Said I had so many good ideas that I had to share them with the world. Couldn't wait nine whole months. If it weren't for Mr. Roosevelt stealin' my thunder I probably would have to. He always used to say, my father that is not Mr. Roosevelt, 'My boy is wise beyond his years. Destined for great things. Why he wasn't but one week old and he's already got two decades of experience.'

SCENE 4

(Five years ago. LAUREN is in the clubhouse after a road game in Pittsburgh. After a few moments NOAH enters. He has a band-aid on his arm as though he has just given blood.)

LAUREN

Nice game.

NOAH

What have you got?

LAUREN

Here.

(She hands him the book.)

NOAH

(Referring to his eyes.)

I just got some drops.

LAUREN

(She begins reading from her notes. She is talking in shorthand related to the pitch tracking. The audience understanding the exact meaning is not important.)

One: six x quadrant seven velocity six. Result: double.
Two: three x quadrant six velocity six. Result: home run.
Three: four z quadrant n/a velocity n/a. Result:
intentional walk.
Four: eight-

NOAH

That's enough. Leave the info in my locker.

LAUREN

Result: strikeout. Two left on base.

NOAH

Why do you have to go and ruin a two-for-three day like that?

LAUREN

I di-

NOAH

And you left out the two rbi's I had on the double.

LAUREN

In the fourth inning.

NOAH

What's that supposed to mean? Do runs count for less in the fourth inning?

LAUREN

Nothing. I'm just giving you the raw data. You can spin it any way you like.

NOAH

Spin it?

LAUREN

You can read it as two-for-three with two rbi's and two runs scored.

NOAH

Or?

LAUREN

Or two left on base in the bottom of the eighth. Final score Pittsburgh 4 Chicago 3.

NOAH

You know, I can't get a hit every time Stats.

LAUREN

Yes you can. Lauren.

NOAH

I appreciate the support, but the best hitters in the game-

LAUREN

-fail seventy percent of the time. Are you a bad stand-up comic now?

NOAH

It's a fact. Do you have any idea how hard it is to hit a ball coming at you ninety miles an hour that's moving up and down side to side with a bat that's only slightly

larger than the ball? And to do it all in about a quarter of a second?

LAUREN

(Referring to his band-aid.)

Is that why you're getting B-12 injections?

NOAH

I had to give blood.

LAUREN

I bet.

NOAH

Drug testing.

LAUREN

Nothing.

NOAH

It's not.

LAUREN

I didn't see anything.

NOAH

That's right. You didn't see anything so don't jump to any conclusions.

LAUREN

You don't need it.

NOAH

Need what?

LAUREN

Nothing.

You don't...

I didn't know that they took blood from your backside.

NOAH

What?

LAUREN

Last week. I saw it.

NOAH

What are you doing checking out my butt?

(Pause. LAUREN blushes, taking NOAH slightly by surprise. NOAH pulls a hotel key card out of his locker.)

LAUREN

In case you wanted to further discuss today's game.

NOAH

(He puts the key into his pants pocket.)

You think I'll win the MVP? I'm hitting .420 the last eight weeks.

LAUREN

I think the league is going to catch up to you.

NOAH

That's what I have you for.

LAUREN

I'm here as an impartial researcher.

NOAH

I don't think I'd call you impartial.

LAUREN

What's that supposed to mean?

NOAH

Nothing.

LAUREN

Nothing?

NOAH

You know what I mean.

LAUREN

Do I?

NOAH

I think you do.

(He approaches her as though he is going to kiss her, but simply slides past her. Pause.)

LAUREN

Other teams have scouts you know. They do the same kind of thing I'm doing.

NOAH

I heard you.

LAUREN

But you're not listening.

NOAH

You're smarter than them.

LAUREN

Being smarter means you get there first, not that you're the only one who gets there. You're vulnerable to high velocity inside.

NOAH

So is everybody.

LAUREN

That's your hole. They'll find it.

NOAH

I'll take my chances.

LAUREN

And of course you're still vulnerable to sliders low and away.

NOAH

No I'm not.

LAUREN

What pitch did you strike out on?

NOAH

Just record the data.

LAUREN

And leave you to analyze it? I don't think so.

NOAH

I do just fine on my own.

LAUREN

It's such a lazy weakness. You don't have any willpower. It's the first thing they teach you in the minors - lay off the slider in the dirt.

NOAH

First, you don't know anything about the minor leagues-

LAUREN

Neither do you.

NOAH

I spent half a season in Double-A.

LAUREN

As the chosen one. I'm sure you picked up a lot of lessons.

NOAH

And second, it isn't the easiest thing in the world to differentiate between a fastball and a slider.

LAUREN

It's your job to differentiate. That's why I'm here.

NOAH

Is that why you're here?

LAUREN

Yes.

NOAH

Seems like you've been a little distracted with other pursuits lately.

LAUREN

(Pause.)

What pitch do you think you're going to face when the season is on the line? Hmm? A fastball right down the middle from a middle reliever or back end starter?

NOAH

You should heed your own advice.

LAUREN

What?

NOAH

You can't go wearing that around.

LAUREN

What?

NOAH

That bracelet.

LAUREN

It's a birthday present.

NOAH

Do you remember what I told you?

LAUREN

Of course.

(He pulls out a newspaper and tosses it to her.)

LAUREN

I...

NOAH

'Clubhouse Mistress Shows Off Her New Present.'

LAUREN

They don't mention you.

NOAH

They will. They've all seen you around me.
Hopefully this'll just blow over.
You've got to be more careful.

(Pause.)

LAUREN

I've predicted three changes already. You've been able to stay ahead of the curve because of me. I'm telling you where the next curve is coming. Why won't you listen to me?

NOAH

Because I make me. Not you. Not my wife. Not my father. Not

anybody. Me. It's me out there. On an island. I have to hit the ball. It's me.

LAUREN

Funny, I thought baseball was a team sport.

NOAH

With individual matchups. I have to beat that pitcher. Not you, not my teammates. Me. You think I'm the chosen one? You think the chosen one's father runs out when he's two? Seen him one time in thirty years? I just want him to see me play. All the other guys playin' catch with their dads as kids, still calling them on road trips for advice. My dad? Tells reporters I'm using. Tells 'em I bet on games. Tells 'em whatever will get him attention. I've got to be the best there ever was just to get his attention. Win two straight MVP's and what do I get? A postcard. To his friend. Sent to me by accident.

You think the chosen one has to watch his friends get gunned down because his mother can't afford an apartment in a half-way decent neighborhood because his father just up and left her with nothing but me? You think this is easy for me? You think I've been on this straight line to stardom? I've got a chance to change my life. Right now people are discussing giving me millions of dollars because I can hit that ball better than anyone ever has. They want to make me rich because they want me to be the best there ever was...and they want me wearing their uniform while I do it. I just want...

Do you know what that feels like? To have that burden? To be the chosen one? To be expected to come through every single time? I can get a hit ninety-nine out of a hundred times, and do you know what I get asked about after the game? Do you know the immense burden that's been put on me to save the game? To purify the record books?

(Slight pause as they both reflect on his last statement. He rips off his band-aid.)

You know what people think when they see me with you?

(Pause.)

LAUREN

You aren't alone.

However much you want to be, you aren't alone and you never have been.
You don't have to prove anything to him.

(Pause.)

NOAH
Do you think I can do it?

LAUREN
What?

NOAH
Be the best there ever was?

LAUREN
You don't have to.

(Pause.)

NOAH
We can't have kids. That's what the shot was for. We're doing some tests.

LAUREN
The youngest to five hundred home runs. Already over three thousand hits, six hundred steals, nearly two thousand rbi's, four gold gloves. Can you be the best there ever was? You might already be there.

(Lights fade out.)

INTERLUDE

(Lights shift to ANNOUNCER.)

ANNOUNCER

The hits keep coming for The Chosen One. Unfortunately most of them are off the field. Fresh off another playoff disappointment that moved his career postseason average to .128 with zero home runs and one rbi, Johnson has been romantically linked to a young college student. Johnson, who is married, is in the midst of contract negotiations that will most likely make him the highest paid player in the history of the game. Johnson has refused to comment on the situation, perhaps hoping it will deflect criticism of his postseason play. Johnson's mathematician wife could not be reached.

SCENE 5

(Exactly two years ago, FAITH's birthday. NORA, FAITH and Nora's brother ROBERT are in Nora's apartment after a dinner party.)

ROBERT

...you wouldn't do it if some part of you didn't want other people to love you. Why not just paint it and hang it in your house then? By putting it out there you put yourself out there. That's how it works.

NORA

I forgot that you were an art dealer in your spare time.

ROBERT

Not lucrative enough.

FAITH

So that's why you're an agent?

NORA

No, he really loves helping people. If you have a talent you must share it with the world.

ROBERT

That's not what I'm saying. If you're Mark Twain and you write The Sound and The Fury, you have two options—

NORA

To be William Faulkner—

ROBERT

Shut up. You can show it to the world knowing that people are going to critique it, both positively and negatively. Like you know this is a great work so it's probably going to make you famous and everything, but the price of that is putting yourself out there. People can say that they hate it. If you want people to love you then you have to be ready for people to hate you.

FAITH

Or you could pull a Thoreau and move to the woods.

NORA

Is that option two? Suffer in silence? Rid the world of art?

ROBERT

No, option two is keep it in your desk drawer.

NORA

Art isn't an actuarial table. You would have been a hell of an accountant.

ROBERT

But where's the glamour?
Look, if you're confident enough in your abilities you don't need validation from the outside world. If you just wrote War And Peace—

NORA

Do you have any idea who Mark Twain is?

ROBERT

Like I was saying, if you just wrote this masterpiece that is your reward. You don't need validation because you know what you've done.

NORA

So we shouldn't ever do anything in public? A doctor should only practice on himself?

ROBERT

That's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying that once you operate on someone you are opening yourself up. You're taking a risk that this guy might sue you, or he might give you a million dollars.

NORA

That's not why people make art...or surgery or play baseball. They do it because they have to.

ROBERT

That's just silly. 'I have to paint because it's in my blood' blah blah blah. Then paint. That's my whole point. You have to paint because it's in your blood...and then show it to the world so they can tell you how great you are? Is that in your blood too?

NORA

Well vanity is certainly in your blood.

FAITH

I get it. It's a choice is all he's saying. You can't put yourself out there and then be mad when you have to deal with the consequences.

NORA

This coming from someone who makes their living by exploiting other peoples talents in a very public way.

ROBERT

I'm not saying it's right or wrong. I'm just saying you have a choice. You always have a choice. Nothing is random or fated. It's like marriage. You chose to get married—

NORA

Unless you were a woman for the better part of two million years—

ROBERT

So you need to live with the consequences.

NORA

My brother the romantic.

ROBERT

Consequences aren't always bad. You get a life partner. An automatic Valentine's date. But you can't have sex with other people. So there's that trade off. You give up the one to have the other.

(Pause.)

NORA

And he sucked at sports. That's why he became an agent. Because he wasn't good enough to put himself out there. Didn't have to make that choice.

ROBERT

There was a slight talent gap.

NORA

Remember when you were in Little League?

ROBERT

Okay-

NORA

It was the championship game.

ROBERT

Semi-finals.

NORA

And Robert hadn't played all year because he was so bad.

ROBERT

I had a sprained wrist.

NORA

But a couple of the kids on the team were Boy Scouts and they were at some summer camp so the coach had to play Robert even though he was like the worst baseball player in the history of Little League, otherwise they would have forfeited the game.

ROBERT

Could you get on with this story?

NORA

Anyway, Robert comes up in the last inning with the winning run on third base - Noah actually - and by God's good grace he actually gets a hit.

FAITH

Congratulations.

NORA

Everyone was cheering because they thought they had won the game, but Roberto Clemente here ran down the third base line instead of to first and got tagged out like two minutes after the run scored.

FAITH

So?

NORA

So? So he was out and the run didn't count because he didn't get to first base. He blew it. They lost the game.

ROBERT

Well thank you sis, for completely humiliating me.

FAITH

I think it's sweet.

NORA

Wow, if I knew you guys were going to hit it off so well I would have set you up years ago.

FAITH

Too bad I was married to your boyfriend all that time.

NORA

Yeah, too bad.

FAITH

So how come we never met before?

ROBERT

Noah didn't want to mix business and family.

FAITH

Well he certainly missed the boat on that one.

NORA

Robert doesn't really do anything anyway except ride Noah's coattails and steal his money.

ROBERT

Don't pretend like being married to Noah Johnson isn't helping your career. And don't pretend like you didn't know that going in.

NORA

We aren't married yet. And I'm not marrying him to sell paintings.

ROBERT

I'm not saying that you are. It's one of the perks.

NORA

I think I'm going to ask him to sign a pre-nup.

ROBERT

Not to kill the romance, but I think that's a good idea.

NORA

For my protection.

ROBERT

In case he wants your futon?

NORA

I get one game check if we split. I don't want his money.

FAITH

Its actually not that bad.

ROBERT

I'm pretty happy with it too.

NORA

Ha, ha, ha. I'm perfectly happy living my life the way it is. I'm not marrying him to get a big house or a car with four working doors or to sell paintings. Like you should talk. You get ten percent because he's great. You don't do shit and you get his money.

ROBERT

I'm a trustbuster. I'm looking out for the little guy. I'm a modern day Teddy Roosevelt.

NORA

Oh yeah, you're a real man of the people.

FAITH

Somebody's got to look out for him.

ROBERT

Lord knows he won't do it.

FAITH

I've known him for ten years, shared my most intimate moments with him and I couldn't tell you anything about that man.

ROBERT

You think you know everything about him because you see him in the news and in the papers, but what do we really know about him?

FAITH

I certainly don't know him.

ROBERT

I've known him for twenty-five years and I don't know a thing about him.

NORA

He just doesn't let people in. He's afraid. His father fucked him up.

ROBERT

Sounds like a great husband.

FAITH

Doesn't he?

NORA

I'm just saying that it must be hard to be him.

ROBERT

It must be real tough making millions of dollars, playing a game for a living and having women throw themselves at you.

NORA

It is if they are throwing themselves at what they think you are. It's very demoralizing.

ROBERT

Well I wouldn't mind being demoralized a little more often.

NORA

Sounds like a great husband.

ROBERT

Doesn't he?

You know, I thought this would be weird, but it's not. Is that weird?

FAITH

Do you think it's true?

ROBERT

What?

NORA

The paper.

ROBERT

They're just trying to dig up dirt. They think everybody is using.

NORA

Do you know?

ROBERT

I make it a point to stay out of the clubhouse. We don't talk about baseball.

FAITH

What do you talk about?

ROBERT

Somebody has got it out for Noah. First that story about the girl and now this? What proof have they got? People think they can just say whatever they want about the guy because he's famous. I don't believe anything in the papers.

You want me to ask him?

He'll hate me, maybe even fire me for it, but he'll tell me the truth.

Always does.

(Pause. FAITH and ROBERT share a look. She is about to ask him about 'the girl' but decides not to.)

NORA

No. I don't want you checking up on him.

(Pause.)

ROBERT

I was just trying to change the game. A revolutionary. Who says you have to run to first base?

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 6

(Present. NOAH is at a local bar. It is virtually empty. He is sipping a glass of water and reading a newspaper. The BARKEEP, a fifty-year old African-American is checking him out. The actor playing FATHER should play BARKEEP.)

BARKEEP

You need some more water?

NOAH

I'm fine.

BARKEEP

Are you...?

NOAH

No.

BARKEEP

Because you really look like him. And the paper said you'd be up here today.

NOAH

He'd be up here today. I'll let you know if I see him.

BARKEEP

Don't lie to me man. About two brothers a year come up here, and you're gonna tell me that one of the two shows up on the very same day that Mr. May is supposed to be comin' up here, and he looks just like him, but he's not him? That's one mother-fucker of a coincidence if you ask me.

NOAH

You're gonna say that to my face?

BARKEEP

No man, it's an adjective. Like, man, this economy is a mother-fucker. Hold on, that ain't right. Oh, like, hey, why you such a mother-

NOAH

Mr. May.

BARKEEP

Oh. That one. So you him then?

NOAH

Yeah.

BARKEEP

I knew it. When you walked in here I said that's Noah Johnson. What-you-doin' here man?

NOAH

My ex-wife just crashed my anniversary.

BARKEEP

What?

NOAH

Nothing. It's complicated.
I don't know squat about camping.

BARKEEP

Personally, I don't get camping. Why the hell you wanna sleep on the ground? And whiz outside and eat out of a cooler and be dirty and cold all the time? Sometimes I just don't get white people.

(Pause.)

I had \$500 on that game.

NOAH

Sorry.

BARKEEP

It's all business to me baby. I'm from Baltimore, couldn't care less about you guys.

NOAH

No kidding?

BARKEEP

Who would lie about bein' from Baltimore?

NOAH

Me too.

BARKEEP

No kidding?

NOAH

Yeah.

BARKEEP

What are the odds of the only two black Noah Johnsons both bein' from Baltimore?

NOAH

500 to 1?

BARKEEP

\$500 might not matter to you but that's a helluva lotta money to me.

(NOAH pulls out his wallet, counts out \$500 and hands it to the Barkeep.)

Shit man, why you bring that much cash to go campin'? You think you can buy some deer or some shit?

NOAH

You say Mr. May one more time and I'm taking it back.

(Pause.)

BARKEEP

Maybe I'm your daddy. Your mamma loved me so much that she gave you my name.

NOAH

I doubt it.

BARKEEP

You never know. Some crazy shit happens.

NOAH

I know.

(Pause.)

Hit .326 with 48 home runs and 141 rbi's and all anybody remembers is the error.

BARKEEP

And the three strikeouts.

NOAH

I hit a game winning double in Game 6 but nobody remembers. If I don't get that hit Game 7 doesn't even happen.

BARKEEP

That's why people remember. Shit, you a future mother-fucking Hall of Famer - see that's what I was sayin' about mother-fucker.

NOAH

I get it.

BARKEEP

You ain't supposed to mess up.

NOAH

Nobody's perfect.

BARKEEP

You supposed to be. The Chosen One. Got ninety four million reasons to be.

NOAH

And I suppose you're perfect.

BARKEEP

Hell no. Why do you think I'm even here? My dumbass got caught robbing a gas station. Shit, that place didn't even have any cash. Debit cards is ruinin' things for people like me, ain't nobody got cash on them anymore. Well aside from your dumbass carryin' around five c's. Mother-fucker. What I'm sayin' is, if you're perfect ass messes up then what chance do I got?

NOAH

It's a lot harder than people think.

BARKEEP

Then quit. Nobody's forcing you to play.

NOAH

I can think of ninety four million reasons.

BARKEEP

You sign that shit and people think they gotta right to you. Like they own your ass. You don't get paid that kinda money to let a ground ball go through your legs man. I ain't sayin' it's right, but that's how it is. Don't go complainin' to me man. You make more in one game than I make in ten years, so you ain't gettin' no woe is me shit from me.

NOAH

I get it. I just want to play.

BARKEEP

So play at the Y and work at a bank.

NOAH

Maybe I will. I'm thirty four anyway, thirty five by next season. Probably only got one or two years left.

(Pause.)

BARKEEP

Seein' as how you givin' up your career, how about a real drink?

NOAH

Water's fine.

BARKEEP

I actually had \$500 on the other team.

NOAH

So you won?

BARKEEP

Yeah. I feel kinda bad about takin' your money.

NOAH

It's for the water then.

BARKEEP

Here—

(He takes Noah's water and comes back with a bottle of water.)

I can't let you pay \$500 for tap water.

NOAH

Thanks.

BARKEEP

You on a diet or somethin'?

NOAH

No.

BARKEEP

You are lookin' a little slimmer lately.

NOAH

What's that supposed to mean?

BARKEEP

Nothin'. You know, people say shit.

NOAH

Like what?

BARKEEP

You know like what.

NOAH

Well it isn't true.

BARKEEP

Personally I don't care man. Steroids don't help you hit a ball.

NOAH

Just hit it farther.

BARKEEP

Listen, as your father I gotta tell you that that shit ain't good for you. Shrink your balls. But you do what you gotta do.

NOAH

Thanks dad.

(Pause.)

BARKEEP

So what was she like?

NOAH

Excuse me?

BARKEEP

The girl.

NOAH

You think you know everything about me. Think you've got some sort of right to talk to me like we're old friends and I only know your name.

BARKEEP

My mother nearly had a heart attack the day that story broke. Shit. She hears Noah Johnson is suspected of having an affair with a seventeen year old white girl and she nearly died. It took me three weeks to convince her that I wasn't you. Shit, it's just luck we aren't on opposite sides of this bar. Man, I ain't never met a brother named Noah in all my life and then your ass gotta go and do that shit.

NOAH

I didn't do anything.

BARKEEP

Personally I don't care. I woulda done the same thing. Had a few women at the same time in my prime. It ain't worth the schedulin'. Need a mother-fucking secretary to keep that shit straight.

NOAH

I didn't do anything.

BARKEEP

You don't have to tell me. But as your father—

NOAH

You're not my father.

BARKEEP

Could be.

NOAH

You're not.

BARKEEP

Maybe.

NOAH

You're not my father. You're a fucking loser ex-con.

BARKEEP

So was your father.

NOAH

I thought you were my father.

BARKEEP

We'll there you have it. Proof.

NOAH

My father's probably dead.

BARKEEP

Probably?

NOAH

He hasn't exactly stayed in touch.

BARKEEP

Have you?

NOAH

I barely know what he looks like.

BARKEEP

You like the most famous man in the world and you don't think that would help you find him?

NOAH

I don't think he wants to be found.

BARKEEP

Maybe just got too much pride to ask.

NOAH

He doesn't care.

BARKEEP

Sure he does.

NOAH

I don't care about any of it. Just thought it was a way to get close to him. He used to play. Thought if he heard about me he'd come back. That he'd want to see me. Want to see me play.

I'd have given it up years ago, give it up tomorrow.

BARKEEP

Man, you a whiney mother-fucker. No wonder he ain't stick around.

(NOAH gets up and grabs the BARKEEP by the shirt. The BARKEEP grabs a baseball bat from behind the counter. NOAH almost effortlessly takes the bat from him. He holds it as though he is going to hit the BARKEEP for a moment before shoving him to the ground.)

BARKEEP

Man you mother-fucking crazy.

NOAH

Keep the change dad.

BARKEEP

Get the fuck out my bar. Mr. May.

(NOAH exits with the bat.)

INTERLUDE

(Lights half rise on FATHER, who can simply step out from the bar, remove whatever costume he had on and become FATHER.)

FATHER

I was 47 years old, livin' with this girl I knew from a long way back when I saw his mother. I hadn't picked up a baseball in nearly twenty years. I was goin' door to door to raise money for my church, sellin' encyclopedias. Figure folks was lookin' for answers and they could chose Jesus or the Britannica. I only sold one encyclopedia and no Jesus when for some reason I found myself in a pickup game with a bunch of neighborhood kids. I was probably tryin' to sell them drugs for all I remember and I got caught up in the game. There was this one real scrawny lookin' kid. Thought it was the Pork Chop when I first saw him. Kid could hit too. After the game we got to talkin' you know, I ain't got nowhere to be, and he invites me over to his house for dinner. I ain't had a home cooked meal in a long time so I said yes. Maybe sell some encyclopedias while I'm at it.

His father was givin' me the business, wasn't more than a year or two older than me so he didn't really scare me or anything, but you know how things go. I asked him if he knew who Hank Aaron was. Now this was 1976, so everybody knew. I was just givin' the guy a hard time back, show 'em I wasn't a push over. July 20, 1976 as a matter of fact. PC hit number 755 that day, the last he'd ever hit. The gold standard as far as I'm concerned. I ain't makin' this shit up, it's true, I've been touched by greatness. So I say to him that I taught Mr. Henry how to hit. He ain't believe me but he gave me a big ol' smile. And you could see it in his teeth that he knew I was tellin' the truth.

She was makin', you guessed it, pork chops. Now I never really had a taste for 'em, but these was the best I ever had.

Chasin' the dream. That's what it's all about.

SCENE 7

(Scene shifts to ten years earlier, a bookstore in Chicago. FAITH is seated with several applied mathematics books scattered about her. NOAH is browsing.)

NOAH

Recommend anything?

(She doesn't respond.)

Some light summer reading.

(She doesn't respond.)

Differential equations, applied mathematics. Or maybe some Judy Bloom.

FAITH

Excuse me?

NOAH

Some Judy Bloom.

Superfudge.

Are You There God? It's me Margret.

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing.

I can do this all day.

FAITH

The children's books are downstairs.

NOAH

I'd say she's more young adult.

FAITH

They're both downstairs.

NOAH

(Picking up one of her books.)

Oh, Logan's Applied Mathematics. Sort of basic, but you've got to have a foundation.

FAITH

You've read this?

NOAH

Once or twice. In airports mostly.

FAITH

In airports?

NOAH

Sure. Helps keep my mind off the flight.

FAITH

Either that or Freckle Juice.

NOAH

Well sure, Freckle Juice is the best, I really like the big print - easy on the eyes - but it's no applied mathematics.

FAITH

Are you making fun of me?

NOAH

Flirting with you.

FAITH

Is that what you call it?

NOAH

Most people call it Noah.

FAITH

Faith.

NOAH

Nice to meet you. I don't think I've ever met a mathematician before.

FAITH

We don't mix well.

NOAH

I always liked math. Kind of a way to explore, expand and understand things.

FAITH

Explain.

NOAH

I kind of only have that one line for math.

FAITH

No. Explore, expand, explain. Keeps your ex-theme going.

NOAH

Let's leave my ex's out of this.

FAITH

Fancy yourself quite the Don Juan? Is there a long line of jilted women outside your window every night?

NOAH

Not exactly.

FAITH

I bet.

NOAH

Understand changes things up. It's unexpected.

FAITH

Oh really?

NOAH

Sure. Keep you on your toes.

FAITH

Nothing's unexpected.

NOAH

That's a mathematician for you.

FAITH

The whole point is to show what might seem arbitrary is actually necessary.

NOAH

So me running into you here wasn't just chance?

FAITH

I've been the only person up here for weeks. So I'd say it was hardly chance.

NOAH

You know you can buy the books and take them home.

FAITH

I get too distracted at home.

NOAH

Roommates throw too many logarithm parties?

FAITH

Something like that. I'm writing my dissertation.

NOAH

I went to one year of community college.

FAITH

Ohh, you sure now how to impress a lady.

NOAH

What's your dissertation about?

FAITH

Zebras.

NOAH

Is that some kind of joke?

FAITH

No. I'm studying how they move.

NOAH

I'm sorry, I'm sure you get this all the time, but what do zebras have to do with math?

FAITH

You said it yourself, everything is math. Life's numbers.

NOAH

Speaking of which...

FAITH

I'm not giving you my phone number.

NOAH

Why not?

FAITH

Because I'm not finished yet.

NOAH

So it's finishing you're after.

FAITH

Don't be crude.
But yes.

NOAH

That shouldn't be a problem. So the zebras do geometry at night or something?

FAITH

I'm interested in how quadrupeds move. Different speeds of walking or running result in different sequences of hooves hitting the ground. Which sequence can occur, and what is the relation between the sequence and the speed.

NOAH

That sounds really...interesting.

FAITH

Shut up, it is.
There's an equation to explain everything.

NOAH

Even love?

FAITH

Even love.

NOAH

How romantic.

FAITH

Even romance.

NOAH

So what's your equation?

FAITH

Wow, did you really think that line was gonna work?

NOAH

So you're going to crack the zebra walking code that's been plaguing mankind for centuries.

FAITH

The data can be applied to a broader context. So I can take the data and study how all quadrupeds move, and then eventually how bipeds move.

NOAH

So you can make me run faster?

FAITH

I can help you understand how to run faster.

NOAH

That would be helpful actually.

FAITH

Lots of angry husbands and fathers chasing you?

NOAH

Not exactly.

FAITH

I'm still in the really early stages. And I'll probably never get past the zebras.

NOAH

That's more than most people.

FAITH

Yeah, most people just like the black and white stripes.

NOAH

It is kind of funny.

FAITH

I guess.

NOAH

But definitely not random.

FAITH

How could it be?

NOAH

Would you like to get something to eat?

FAITH

I've got to study.

NOAH

C'mon. Bring the books with you.

FAITH

Um. Well, the thing is...

NOAH

I'll buy them.

FAITH

I can't let you do that. They're really expensive.

NOAH

They have these places called libraries—

FAITH

I can't focus there.

NOAH

C'mon. It'd be my pleasure.

FAITH

What are you some sort of drug dealer?

NOAH

Prejudice much?

FAITH

No.

NOAH

I'm a baseball player.

FAITH

Yeah, but what do you do for money?

NOAH

I play baseball.

FAITH

Seriously, what do you do for a living?

NOAH

The woman who studies zebras is questioning somebody else's livelihood?

FAITH

I'm not twelve. You're not a baseball player.

NOAH

I just got called up this week as a matter of fact.

FAITH

How convenient for you.

NOAH

Finally going to bring a World Series to this team. Be the best there ever was. The Chosen One, that's what they call me.

FAITH

Modest much?

NOAH

I don't see a problem with having high expectations.

FAITH

You will.

NOAH

I'm the third player in major league history to homer in his first two at bats.

FAITH

Good for you. What about the third?

NOAH

I struck out.

FAITH

Baseball's kind of boring if you ask me.

NOAH

Says the zebra mathematician.

FAITH

I'll take the zebras any day.

NOAH

C'mon, let me take you out.

FAITH

Fine. I've never been to dinner with Jesus. I'll let you buy my books since you're such a hot shot. Give me your number and maybe I'll call you.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 8

(Present. NOAH is back at the campsite. NOAH is tossing hotel key cards (stack of 20 wrapped in rubber bands) into the air and hitting them with the baseball bat. Every single swing he perfectly squares up his target. A tent should be set up in the background. FATHER enters, but it should be as though he was always there waiting. He collects a few of the batted 'balls' and stands near NOAH. Without a grand acknowledgement, the two begin playing soft-toss, with FATHER tossing 'balls' and NOAH hitting them.)

FATHER

(After several moments of soft toss, NOAH's demeanor changes and he 'steps into the batter's box.' FATHER narrates the following as though he's a play by play announcer.)

Game 7, bottom of the ninth. Chicago's down to their last out, down three-to-two. Tying run on third, the winning run on second. Johnson strides to the plate. Chicago's last and best hope. Philadelphia took the lead in the top of the inning on his error so you know he wants to come through here. A trip to the World Series hangs in the balance. A goat or a hero. It all rests on this at-bat. The best player in the game - some say the best player God's put on this Earth with a chance to send his team to the World Series. He digs in. Gutierrez takes his sign - boy that's one nasty man. Best slider in the game. The wind up and the pitch-

(FATHER tosses one and lets it hit the ground.)

Strike one! A ninety-seven mile per hour fastball on the inside corner. Philadelphia is two strikes away from the pennant. You can feel the tension in the stadium. The pressure builds with each passing moment, the hopes and dreams of a city hang in the balance.

(FATHER tosses one and lets it hit the ground.)

Strike two! Johnson didn't like that call. Thought it was low and outside. But now's not the time to be worrying about balls and strikes. Just one strike separates Philadelphia from the pennant. All of Chicago's hopes rest on Johnson's shoulders.

He steps out of the box. Readjusts his gloves. Taps his helmet. What must be going through the young man's mind at this moment? The ground ball that went through his legs, the strikeouts earlier in the game - years of postseason struggles. He can erase them all right here. Come through now and all is forgiven - all is forgotten. The entire season boils down to this. 0-2 count, the game's most dominant closer on the mound. He steps back into the box. Takes a few cuts. Gutierrez has his sign. The wind up and the pitch-

(He tosses one and hits it perfectly square, sending it flying.)

Johnson swings—and sends a deep drive to left center field. Turner is on his horse trying to track it down. Back, back oh my God - Chicago wins the pennant! Chicago wins the pennant! Down 0-2 Johnson comes through with the biggest hit of his life. The Chosen One!

(NOAH has begun to run around the bases, basking in the imaginary hysteria of the stadium.)

He's done it! He's done it! Chicago's into the World Series on the back of the game's greatest hitter.

(As he gets to second base we see a pair of headlights and hear a car pull in, park and then a door close. He gets to third base when FAITH enters. During NOAH's run around the bases FATHER exits.)

FAITH

So this is where your site was.

NOAH

His wife's down on the field.

FAITH

Your wife wants to know where you are.

NOAH

I'm rounding third.

FAITH

What?

NOAH

Nothing. Just messing around. Wanted to see if I could get that fire started.

FAITH

You've got no kindling.

NOAH

Don't I know it.

FAITH

(Picking up a key card.)

What's this?

NOAH

Keys to free sex.

Women give them to me whenever we travel. This is from one trip to Pittsburgh. I usually get triple this when we got out west.

I keep them for batting practice. Put a rubber band around twenty of them. Closest thing I can find to simulating a slider.

FAITH

(Noticing the amount of keys.)

I hope you're using protection.

NOAH

I can't live up to what they want me to be.

FAITH

So you just go back to your room and do crosswords? You're such a bad liar.

NOAH

I usually go back and watch west coast games. Or porn.

FAITH

I'm sorry for crashing your party.

NOAH

Anniversary.

FAITH

Can we just call it a party?
I kind of flipped out.
Robert's having an affair?

NOAH

Robert?

FAITH

I know.

NOAH

Are you sure?

FAITH

Yes.

NOAH

You saw him having sex with another woman?

FAITH

No.

NOAH

So then you can't be sure.

FAITH

I don't need to observe something to know it's true.

NOAH

Doesn't that kind of go against your whole world view?

FAITH

It doesn't matter now. I was denied tenure - 'not a significant original contribution to the field.' Some birthday.

NOAH

(He tosses her the bat.)

You want to bash something? It's a good release.

FAITH

I'm a grown woman.

NOAH

Sometimes it's good to forget that.

(He drags the tent over.)

Hit it.

FAITH

I'm not hitting a tent.

NOAH

Just try it. I got it on sale.

FAITH

Let me hit your keys.

NOAH

You can't take out aggression on something that small.
C'mon, knock the hell out of it.

(She takes the bat and steps toward the tent.)

NOAH

Okay, so just focus on your target and let it rip.

(FAITH takes the bat and essentially taps the tent with it.)

NOAH

That's it?

FAITH

This is dumb.

NOAH

You've got to give it a chance. C'mon, channel your anger and then let it explode. Try again.

(She does so. She hits it a little harder, but still a rather pathetic effort.)

NOAH

A little better.

FAITH

How long are we going to do this?

NOAH

Just picture your husband with the other woman.

(Pause. FAITH looks NOAH square in the eye. Pause. She then lets loose on the tent beating it for a minute or two until she simply falls over from exhaustion. While she is hitting the tent she lets out grunts and short bursts of anger - 'You stupid fuck!' 'How could you!' 'I trusted you.' It becomes apparent to NOAH that she is directing her anger at him and not at her husband.)

FAITH

(From the ground.)

You were right. That did feel good.

NOAH

(Helping her up.)

I told you.

(Short pause.)

It's probably just a misunderstanding.

FAITH

I've heard that one before.

NOAH

Believe what you want. The truth is the truth.

FAITH

The truth is in the eye of the beholder.

NOAH

Then I just won the pennant.

FAITH

Congratulations.

NOAH

Thanks.

FAITH

You want me to call a press conference?

NOAH

They'll find out.

They always do. FAITH

I'm sorry. NOAH

For what? FAITH

For putting you through that. NOAH

Not for cheating though? FAITH

I told you from the beginning that our life was going to be public. It's part of the gig. NOAH

Part of being The Chosen One? FAITH

Mr. May. NOAH

Why won't you just admit it? FAITH

Because I didn't do anything. NOAH

Then deny it. FAITH

I have. NOAH

You just let it float out there. The second somebody mentions steroids you're out giving blood every other day. FAITH

That's the game. NOAH

You've always picked the game. FAITH

NOAH

It was never between you and baseball.

(Pause.)

NOAH

You ever so good at something that you don't know that you're so good at it? It's so natural to you that you don't really understand what the big deal is?

FAITH

Yes.

NOAH

Of course you do. You didn't pick math over me, you couldn't. It was just a part of you. I picked you and math because the two go together.

FAITH

Can you believe that I never learned how to swing a bat. Baseball's defined my life and I don't know how to swing a bat.

NOAH

You did pretty good just now.

FAITH

It should have been me helping you all this time. Not her.

(Very long pause. NOAH picks up the bat and swings it a few times. Eventually he hands it to FAITH.)

NOAH

Take your stance.

(FAITH stands with her feet together, the bat on her shoulder. She is holding the bat with a cross-handed grip.)

NOAH

Switch your hands.

(He has a moment where history seems to wash over him.)

Spread your feet, a little wider than your shoulders. Unlock your knees and turn sideways so that your hips are pointing at home plate.

(She does so.)

NOAH

Good. You need a strong foundation. It all starts with your base.

(In his father's voice.)

If your base is solid you'll be solid.

(Normal.)

Hitting is all about balance. That's what people don't get. They think pitchers just try to blow you away but they are really trying to get you off balance. You have no power, no control if you don't have balance.

FAITH

I feel like Daniel-san.

NOAH

Don't worry, you'll be painting my fence tomorrow.

FAITH

Good.

NOAH

When the pitcher releases the ball you just want to pick up your front foot and put it down.

(She does so, taking a very long stride.)

NOAH

No stride. You're changing your eye level, shifting your weight and losing your center. Think of your zebras - steady movement - it's all about balance.

(She takes a moment as if her research was from another lifetime. She tries again.)

NOAH

Good. Now, think of the plate as an inversion of the field. If it's on the inside third you want to pull the ball-

FAITH

That has zero meaning to me.

NOAH

(Pointing to left field.)

That way.

Middle third take it to center. Outer third take it the other way. Balance.

FAITH

Wait, balance is important?

NOAH

Very funny.

(He gets behind her and helps her during this section. It is not a sexual advance. That doesn't mean there cannot be sexual tension or moments within, but his initial intention is not sexual.)

Once you decide to swing, push off your back foot and shift your weight at the same time that you start your swing so that all of your force is moving at the same time. Keep your head steady and drive through the ball. Power comes from the hips and wrists - you don't have to swing hard. Swing fast.

FAITH

(She does so. It's actually a pretty decent swing.)

And why is this game hard?

NOAH

It's not for some of us.

FAITH

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.

(Pause.)

I can't even remember why I said no. I didn't want to be away all summer. Isn't that silly? I sent her to you.

(Pause.)

Noah and Nora is disgustingly cute. You know that right?

NOAH

Yeah.

(Pause.)

FAITH

Would it have mattered?

NOAH

No.

(Pause.)

FAITH

I mean, like, really disgusting.

NOAH

I never meant for anything bad to happen to you.

FAITH

That doesn't really matter. You didn't do anything to stop it. Actually you kind of brought it on since you can't keep it in your pants.

NOAH

I'm not playing this game.

FAITH

Yes you are. You owe it to me.

NOAH

I don't owe you anything. I didn't do anything. It was your choice not to help.

FAITH

It doesn't matter. Truth is not the truth. Everyone thinks you did it so you might as well have done it.

NOAH

That's a real nice outlook. Good thing you can't have kids.

(Very long pause. NOAH is aware that he's cut FAITH very deeply.)

NOAH

I'm sorry. I'm just really tired and it's late and—

FAITH

I saw your face when the doctor told me. It was just a split second, but I saw your face.

(NOAH begins to talk but stops. He lets FAITH work her way through.)

So it doesn't really matter to me. I mean, of course it matters. That was the end for me, not the affair, or the

tabloids, or the rumors, or the phone calls or the comments or the constant barrage of insinuations and innuendos. You cost me my job, my reputation, my happiness. But it was your face.

The one thing they're right about - You never come through when it matters most.

NOAH

I'm not allowed a reaction? I did everything you ever wanted, everything you ever asked. I supported you one-hundred percent.

FAITH

It breaks my heart to see you with Nicholas. Do you know what it's like to see your family but not be a part of it? I couldn't look at you after that.

NOAH

So I'm not supposed to live my life? I didn't ask for you to marry my brother-in-law. I'm not trying to rub it in.

FAITH

Please. I probably like Nora more than you do. Don't bring her into this. And don't ruin what you've got. That's your problem. You always want something more.

NOAH

I was happy the way things were.

FAITH

No you weren't. You've got that stupid game ingrained into you. You think you can make a change and everything will be perfect. Adjust your stance, change the pitcher, change the manager and everything is perfect. I get it, change can be intoxicating - I voted for Obama. People upgrade their house, change jobs and replace their spouses, because change is always for the better, right? It's the great plague of modern life to believe it will improve, that happiness is just around the corner. We all deserve something shiny, new and exciting. It's never enough for you. You're trying to be something for him and he doesn't care. It's not enough to be 'the chosen one.' You have to be more than that. So he'll notice. And that's why you never will be.

NOAH

Faith—

FAITH

I'm sorry that I couldn't be what you wanted me to be. And I'm sorry that you weren't what I wanted you to be.

NOAH

I'm quitting.

FAITH

A little late for that.

NOAH

I can't see.

FAITH

You're blind? That would explain a lot.

NOAH

For a baseball player. My retina is partially detached.

FAITH

So they fix it.

NOAH

I've already got 20/30 vision in my left eye. I'm thirty-four. I've got floaters. I get one at the wrong time... Same thing happened to my dad. Can't get away from him. Funny. How something so small, something I have absolutely no control over can derail everything.

FAITH

Yeah. Funny.

(There is a pause. She picks up the bat and tosses it to him. They lock eyes for a moment and then he exits. She waits for a moment, straightens out the tent and then goes inside.)

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 9

(Two weeks ago, clubhouse. It is a few hours after the final game of the season. LAUREN is seated outside of Noah's locker reading through her notes. After a few moments NOAH enters fresh from speaking to the press - we should hear the hum of the crowd and shouted questions as he enters.)

NOAH

What are you still doing here?

LAUREN

I'm sorry.

(Pause. NOAH goes to his locker and begins clearing it out and continues through the scene.)

LAUREN

Why don't you do that tomorrow?

NOAH

I don't want to.

LAUREN

I can take care of that for you.

NOAH

I can do it myself.

(Referring to the plastic cover over his locker.)

I guess we won't be needing this.

(Throwing a pair of goggles that he would have worn during a postgame celebration.)

Or these.

You think they would have cleared this stuff out of here.

LAUREN

Nobody blames you.

(Pause. He chuckles to himself. Pause. He begins laughing hysterically.)

NOAH

Nobody blames me? Nobody blames me?
People blame me for everything. Your wife left you, must be
my fault. You hate your job, fuckin' Johnson. Nobody blames
me? I just answered questions for forty minutes about why a
ground ball took a bad hop. 'Why didn't you come through?'
(Slight pause.)
They act like I don't want to. As if it's my grand plan to
fuck up. As if they could do any better.

(Pause.)

LAUREN

I wish you'd let me help you.

NOAH

I don't need your help. Fuck, how many different ways do I
need to say it?

LAUREN

I've been predicting the pitches you'll face this season.
And do you know how I did?
Ninety-four percent accuracy. Nearly every single pitch you
saw I knew it was coming before the pitcher knew he was
going to throw it. Why won't you listen to me? What have I
been doing all this time? I've got years of notes, why
won't you use them?

NOAH

Why don't you just stop?

LAUREN

Math—

NOAH

I don't care about math. Please don't preach to me about
math.

LAUREN

It helps you explore, expand and explain—

NOAH

Understand.

LAUREN

What?

NOAH

You can't prepare for everything. You can't predict everything. There's not an equation for everything. You can't tell me that in a tie game with the pennant on the line that a routine ground ball is going to take a funny hop. Of all the times for it to have a weird spin, for all the times I've taken ground balls.

LAUREN

But you can.
It's probability.
You'd be unstoppable.

NOAH

I don't want to cheat.

LAUREN

Using your brain isn't cheating.

NOAH

Using yours is. The game's not about math.

LAUREN

Yes it is.

NOAH

I don't want your help anymore. I just want to play.

LAUREN

Why do you refuse to let anyone in? Why must there be a wall between you and everyone else?

NOAH

Because everyone wants to get in. Everyone wants a piece of me.

(Pause.)

NOAH

Do you know why I'm so fast?

LAUREN

Genetics.
The probability of two athletic people having an athletic son is pretty high.

NOAH

He came to see me play in high school once. Worst game I ever played. You know what he told me after the game? That it was up to me. Nobody was going to be able to do it for me. Tells me if I ain't the best what's the point of playin'. How do you like that? Shows up out of nowhere and drops that on me. The only other time I hear from him is through the news when he's telling some lie trying to make a quick buck off of me.

LAUREN

He's wrong.

NOAH

Rabbits. That's why I'm fast. I used to visit my grandmother in Florida every summer. Spent seventh and eighth grade down there too because my mom couldn't afford to have me. And me and some of the other kids used to go out every morning and chase rabbits. There weren't any jobs, let alone for a kid, so all we could really do was chase rabbits. Get three bucks a rabbit, get forty-fifty rabbits, not a bad days work. Running in the muck, the soil that's down there, it's not like a baseball field. You have divots all over the ground that you have to maneuver through while you're running, deep sticky muck. Makes you quick, makes you strong, makes you trust your instincts. That's why I'm fast. You tell me what that has to do with your little book.

(Pause.)

LAUREN

I'm moving.

NOAH

I hope you've run that decision through your equations.

LAUREN

I'm moving to Portland.

NOAH

Portland?

LAUREN

I've been offered a job with Nike. They read my article from a few years back and of course the book about the work

we've been doing. I guess more than forty people read it in that obscure little journal.

NOAH

What about Faith?

LAUREN

What about her? I did all the research, all the analysis, all the work. She introduced us. I don't think that qualifies her as a co-author. She's embarrassing herself trying to take credit. How many times did she come to a game? I let them put her on the article so it could get published. The book's all mine. She didn't do anything for the book.

NOAH

Congrats, Stats.

LAUREN

I'll stay.

(NOAH takes his stuff and begins to exit.)

NOAH

I just want to chase rabbits.

(He exits. Lights fade out.)

INTERLUDE

(Lights shift to the ANNOUNCER.)

ANNOUNCER

After committing the go ahead error and striking out three times in the Game 7 debacle that sealed his legacy as the greatest regular season player in baseball history, reports are leaking out of Chicago that Johnson might be walking away from the game. Sources speculate that Johnson's drug and romantic scandals might be playing into The Chosen One's decision. A three time regular season MVP, Johnson currently sits third on the all time home run list, but will forever be known for his struggles in the postseason. Neither Johnson nor his agent were available for comment.

SCENE 10

(Present. The parking lot of the hotel. NOAH has just arrived from the campsite. ROBERT is waiting for him.)

NOAH
You're wife's camping.

ROBERT
I'm so sorry.

NOAH
I don't care.

ROBERT
I didn't mean to hurt her. I have the bracelet.

NOAH
What bracelet?

ROBERT
The one she found. That she thinks I got for another woman.

NOAH
Then go give it to her. I'm exhausted.

ROBERT
Listen—

NOAH
Why didn't you go inside?

ROBERT
Nora would've jumped all over me. I figured it was safer to wait out here for you.

NOAH
She's at North Nicolet Bay, site 601.

ROBERT
Is she mad?

NOAH
What do you think?

ROBERT

Fuck.

NOAH

Since you got me that no-trade clause I'm going to give you some advice.

ROBERT

The no-trade clause? The ninety-four million didn't do it for you?

NOAH

Let me see that?

ROBERT

What?

NOAH

The bracelet.

ROBERT

Why?

NOAH

You ruined my anniversary. Hand it over.

ROBERT

You can't give that to Nora-

NOAH

Shut up.

(He takes the bracelet. He looks at it and then tosses it back to Robert.)

Mother-fucker.

ROBERT

I know. I dropped a lot of money on this. Not exactly the reaction I was going for.

NOAH

Were you ever going to tell me?

ROBERT

I didn't think you were interested in your ex-wife's presents.

NOAH

Do it now.

ROBERT

I don't know what you're talking about.

NOAH

Don't be an asshole. Be a man.

ROBERT

I don't know what you're talking-

NOAH

You just let me take the fall. You let her think that.

ROBERT

I didn't do anything.

NOAH

You gave it to her.

ROBERT

I've still got it.

NOAH

Cut the crap Robert. I know. I KNOW.

(Pause.)

NOAH

Were you ever going to tell me? Or are you happy stealing my money?

ROBERT

What about that no-trade clause?

NOAH

You ruined my reputation. You ruined my marriage.

ROBERT

She was just using me to get to you.

NOAH

Of course she was. Do you think women lust after agents? Christ Robert.

ROBERT

I broke it off.

NOAH

She's leaving town.

ROBERT

It's over.

NOAH

How noble.

ROBERT

I di-

NOAH

Do you know what I've had to go through for the past five years because of you? Do you know what people have been saying about me? Do you know what Faith thinks of me? I was the best there ever was and you ruined that for me because you wanted to fuck some college girl? And you were too stupid that you couldn't just fuck her but you had to buy her a present to convince yourself that you're not some pedophile.

ROBERT

I'm not a pedo-

NOAH

How could you do this to me?

ROBERT

Do you really think anyone would have believed me? Oh, no I'm sorry it isn't the big famous athlete that's having the affair it's his agent? You think that would have held water? You would have looked like a fool.

NOAH

You're fired.

ROBERT

Come through in the clutch and it's all forgiven. You catch that grounder and nobody remembers.

(Pause. NOAH punches ROBERT in the face, causing him to fall to the ground.)

NOAH

She's at North Nicolet Bay, site 601.
You should go get her.
Tell her that you love her.
Show her the bracelet and then toss it in the fire. Watch
the sun come up together.

ROBERT

I'm going to tell her.

NOAH

Don't. Don't you do that to her. Tell her that you love her
and then stop being a fucking asshole.

(He walks inside.)

(Lights fade out.)

INTERLUDE

FATHER

It's funny what folks remember and what they don't. My boy wins Game 6 but all you remember is Game 7. Half the shit I remember ain't never happened. What's that they say? Everything I say is true, and some of it actually happened.

The Pork Chop played in the Negro Leagues. The Negro Leagues. Had people threatening his life when he broke that record. Them two things ain't unrelated.

Can you imagine The Chosen One playin' in the Negro League? It's funny what some folks remember and what they don't.

SCENE 11

(Later that evening back in the hotel room. The room is empty. NOAH enters carrying the baseball bat from the earlier scene. He tosses the bat onto the bed and takes off his jacket, pants and shirt so that he is in his shorts and undershirt. He lies down on the bed for a moment, but unable to get comfortable he sits up. After another few moments he realizes that NORA isn't there.)

NOAH

Nora?

(No response. After a moment the bathroom door bursts open and NORA comes running out in her pajamas. She is carrying the wedding cake topper and yelling. She jumps on NOAH's back and smashes the cake in his face. She is under the impression that he is a murderer, and not her husband.)

NORA

Get out! Police! Murderer!

NOAH

Nora. Nora! Stop. It's me, Noah.

NORA

What?!?

NOAH

It's me.

(She stops punching and kicking him.)

NORA

Where the hell have you been? I could have been murdered.

NOAH

I was out.

(He picks up some of the cake that fell to the floor as well as any cake he can scrape off his face and smashes it into NORA's face. She retaliates and the two get into a cake fight - smashing, throwing, etc. There is great joy in the fight.)

NORA

Ah! You jerk.

NOAH

You made me. I've been waiting a year to do that. You started it.

NORA

Only 'cause I thought you were going to kill me.

NOAH

Good thing you had some wedding cake to protect yourself with.

NORA

Shut up. The cooler was leaking so I put it in the bathroom. What was I supposed to do?

(The two share a hearty and silly laugh.)

NOAH

I don't know. You scared the crap out of me.

NORA

This cake isn't so bad actually.

NOAH

I didn't really get much into my mouth. Most of it's actually in my ear.

NORA

(Giving him a piece off of her face.)

Here.

NOAH

Mmm. I love you.

NORA

I love you too.

NOAH

I told you a little cake smashing would be fun.

NORA

Well I think I made up for it tonight.

NOAH

I'm sorry my ex-wife ruined our anniversary.

NORA

If you could have just gotten that fire started she would have never found us.

NOAH

Or she would have charged into our tent at three in the morning. And you would have been sans wedding cake. We would have been doomed.

NORA

What time is it?

NOAH

About three in the morning. How long have you been in the bathroom?

NORA

What time did you leave? About fifteen minutes after that.

NOAH

Jesus, what a night.

NORA

And here I am thinking that I'm finally going to get a good night's sleep.

NOAH

I bet Nicholas sleeps through the night.

NORA

Probably. He'll see me and be up all night again.

NOAH

Only cause he loves you.

NORA

Now that the season's over don't think you're getting out of midnight feedings.

NOAH

I don't want to. I just want to be normal.

NORA

'The Normal One.' Gotta nice ring to it.

NOAH

Not too bad.

NORA

And the night wasn't a total wash. I got it.

NOAH

The gallery showing?

NORA

Marilyn called an hour ago. It opens in February. My show.

NOAH

That's great. I'm really proud of you.

NORA

You know what just occurred to me?

NOAH

What?

NORA

That Faith left Chicago around six o'clock.

NOAH

So?

NORA

So how did she know that Robert wasn't going to give her the bracelet later tonight? I mean, don't you usually give gifts at night?

NOAH

I've stopped trying to figure that woman out.

NORA

Good.

NOAH

She's your brother's problem now. You know I still can't believe I agreed to let you set her up with your brother.

NORA

Me either.

NOAH

I thought they'd hate each other, and then she could blame him for her problems instead of me.

NORA

Pretty crappy birthday though. You gotta admit.

NOAH

I'll give her that.

NORA

She still loves you. You know that right?

NOAH

Yes.

Nothing is going to happen, if you're worried about it.

NORA

I'm not.

NOAH

I just want her to be happy. To get her life back together. I want to stop feeling guilty for her life. I'm not the one who made her quit her job. I didn't make her friends ditch her.

NORA

Yes you did.

NOAH

I didn't do anything.

NORA

You're you. That's all you had to do. It's not easy being married to you, you know.

NOAH

I've heard.

NORA
It's hard, is all I'm saying.

NOAH
Do you believe me?

NORA
About what?

NOAH
Lauren.

NORA
I wouldn't have married you if I didn't.

NOAH
This cake really isn't too bad. We should scrape some off
the wall and bring it home for next year.

NORA
Or for Nicholas' christening.

NOAH
Oh yeah.

(Holding up a totally smashed piece of
cake, or even just a lump of frosting.)
Nothing says welcome to the world of Jesus better than
this.

NORA
Welcome to the world of Jesus?

NOAH
I didn't know how else to phrase it. It's been a long
night.

NORA
Then come to bed.

(They embrace and get in bed.)

EPILOGUE

FATHER

Satchel Paige hit me right here (points to his left temple) with a one hundred mile per hour fast ball the first game of the 1953 season. Okay it wasn't Satchel but it makes a better story, sometimes the truth don't matter. The last time I ever played. If you can't be the best there's not much reason for playin', plus I started goin' blind. Spontaneously. Doctor said that pitch knocked something loose in my DNA. I'll just be walkin' down the street and BAM - I can't see. Sometimes it's just a few seconds, sometimes it's a few days. Never know when it's comin', never know when it's goin'.

First time it happened the boy was about two months old. And I had it real bad. I went for an entire year without being able to see on Wednesday. Ain't that somethin'? How that works out? Not one single Wednesday. I lost my job, and then I got into some trouble, legal wise, and I had to split town. Broke my heart to leave 'em, but sometimes you gotta.

I didn't want him to see me that way. Figured I'd come back when I got it all sorted out. It ain't work out that way. One day my sight just didn't come back. And pretty soon after that it was my time. I did see him play though. One game. Don't know why but my eyes were workin' that day. I tell you that boy could play. Told him that he was goin' to be the best to ever play. Had to be. Like a mix of the Pork Chop, Willie Mays and Roberto Clemente all rolled into one. I said to the fella sittin' next to me, I said that boy right there is The Chosen One. He laughed, said, 'that boy who struck out three times?' That's the one, I said. Some folks can't see past they own face, you know.

Just got to see him play that one time.

THE END