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The Stars of David

Eric B. Millman
University of New Orleans, emillman@uno.edu

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The Stars of David

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of
New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Creative Writing
Screenwriting

by

Eric Millman

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ABSTRACT

The Stars of David is based on the true story of a woman whose love of baseball stood above all. Set in the midst of the Great Depression, Jackie Austin, disgusted by the chauvinistic expectations of her impoverished father, sets off on her own to play for whatever team that will have her. That team proves to be the barnstorming House of David Baseball Club, an ascetic religious commune struggling to regain past glory after a decade of tragedy and shame. Outsiders and freaks to the rest of the world, these new "Stars" of David must learn to work together on the field in order to prosper in life. Can they survive in the staunchly traditional, prejudiced world of Depression-era Major League Baseball? Or will they, too, be whitewashed by time?

Baseball, Great Depression, American Populism, Civil Rights in Popular Culture

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

The once-glamorous theater is now shabby, its velveteen walls covered in dust.

The seats are packed with down-on-their luck FOLKS in old, worn-out suits and Sunday dresses.

JACKIE AUSTIN, nineteen and beautiful, with close-cropped blonde hair hid under an old baseball cap, sits in the back row next to her father, HARVEY, her glove in her lap.

JACKIE

I don't see why we have to waste what little we have on such filth!

A prim OLD MAN turns and SHUSHES her.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

(to Old Man)

Oh, shush yourself.

Recent years have aged Harvey into a frail, haggard shell of a man, but he wears an old, finely tailored three-piece suit with pride.

HARVEY AUSTIN

Jackie, we're supporting your mother. Is that so bad?

To Jackie's left, CHET, 25, sits low in his seat, unshaven and in a bad way. He picks up a penny from the floor.

JACKIE

She doesn't even know who we are. Don't be so naive, father.

The old man SHUSHES again.

HARVEY AUSTIN

Of course she knows.

(whispering)

It's just a movie.

JACKIE

Please. Movies are for fools who, from the protection of a crowd, project their pathetic dreams onto fake people built for profit by a bunch of clueless Hollywood

gluttons! Movies are for suckers who don't have the conviction to do things for themselves.

Chet sits up, inspired by her speech.

HARVEY AUSTIN

So?

JACKIE

So, without your principles, you're nothing.

The Old Man, though, turns again.

OLD MAN

Must you really pontificate so loudly?

JACKIE

Oh, mind your business or I'll crack you one over the head, old man.

The Man turns back, offended. The lights dim, the curtain rises.

Theme MUSIC announces the graphic onscreen: 'VITAREEL NEWS CORPORATION PRESENTS...This Week in The World!'

ANGLE ON: BLACK AND WHITE MOVIE SCREEN

EXT. BREADLINES (NEWSREEL FOOTAGE) - DAY

In grainy, silent video, HUNGRY MEN wait in a breadline.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This Week in The World! The great economic depression continues to spread as families struggle to keep food on their plate. Dust storms spread and breadlines grow with no end in clear sight.

INT. CHURCH (NEWSREEL FOOTAGE) - DAY

A MOTHER holds her TINY CHILD close, kneeling at a simple altar, where A PRIEST sprinkles holy water onto her and the BUSINESS MAN next to her.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

With nowhere else to turn, Americans are asking for God to hear their prayers. Not that God!

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD (NEWSREEL FOOTAGE) - DAY

CHILDREN crowd ten-deep around a chain link fence in center field to get a look at the game underway.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Yes, the Church of Baseball, where youngsters everywhere can find heroes and heartbreak at every turn. But in today's economy, where star-filled major league teams struggle to relate and, more importantly, sell seats to the impoverished masses, rag-tag barnstormers of all colors travel the country, playing to sell-out crowds everywhere they go for pennies on the dollar.

A NATIVE AMERICAN waits at bat. His jersey reads "CUYAHOGA RED CHIEFS."

The PITCHER, with "SAN DIEGO STALLIONS" on his chest, sits atop a horse with a matching hat.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And Major League Commissioner Landis has taken notice.

The smartly-dressed, well-groomed KENESAW MOUNTAIN LANDIS watches from behind home plate, taking notes.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Hoping to build a bridge between the two baseball worlds, Commissioner Landis has announced the Inaugural Amateur Invitational, offering the winner big bucks and a shot to represent Los Angeles in the Major Leagues. All comers are welcome, and come they will! Of course, one has to wonder. What happened to the most famous barnstormers of all?

The horse bucks off the pitcher and the ball rolls off the mound.

EXT. HOUSE OF DAVID ENTRANCE (NEWSREEL FOOTAGE) - DAY

Imposing gates spell out "HOUSE OF DAVID" in glistening wrought iron. Hundreds of VISITORS crowd around it.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

For years, the House of David was one of the most recognizable religious communes in America, famous for their baseball abilities as much as an strict religious lifestyle that forbade them from so much as cutting their hair! But a drawn-out investigation found their leader, Benjamin Purnell, guilty of multiple counts of embezzlement and sexual congress with a minor. Oops!

BENJAMIN PURNELL, a tall, severe man with a long white beard and white suit, is led away by POLICE through the crowd.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

After a lengthy trial that left the nation screaming for his head, Mr. Purnell had the last laugh, perishing of syphilis before true justice could be served!

The police car drives away. JOURNALISTS snap photos.

EXT. HOUSE OF DAVID ENTRANCE (NEWSREEL FOOTAGE) - DAY

The gates are now covered by vines, long left unattended.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Years later, one can't help but wonder what became of the once-famous colony of eccentrics, now shut off from the world. Will the allure of the \$10,000 prize and the chance to be "California's team" draw them out of the woodwork? Or have we heard the last of the bearded bombers...?

A BEARDED MAN locks the gate from behind, his face obscured.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

Chet eyes grow wide, like this message was meant for him. He looks at Jackie, back at the screen, and runs out of the theater.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE OF DAVID FUNERAL HOME - DAY

It's a simple, cavernous temple. Ten BEARDED MEN hold hands in a circle around the altar, all dressed in black.

On the altar, a white coffin displays the waxy, preserved body of Benjamin Purnell, dressed in a white suit with a long white beard and mane.

NOAM PURNELL, 20, handsome but skittish and all too earnest, is at the center. He coughs.

NOAM

Mother, are you smoking?!

MARY PURNELL, Noam's mother, 45, a burnt-out ex-beauty, leans against the back wall, smoking, bored as always. She nods.

NOAM (CONT'D)

Father, forgive her. We are hungry. And cold. Three years have passed since your ascension. We have followed your advice, and now we await your return.

They stare at the corpse, waiting for movement. Nothing.

NOAM (CONT'D)

Or a sign. Any sign will do.

(beat)

Please?

The door next to her kicks open. It's Chet, and he's in sales mode. His shirt is buttoned, his hair slicked. A new man.

CHET

Excuse me, is this the House of David?

He sees Benjamin's corpse.

CHET (CONT'D)

Oh, hello...

Mary raises an eyebrow, liking what she sees.

MARY

Well look at that, a gift from the heavens.

CHET
Goddamned right I am. I'm here to save
you all.

Chet nods to Benjamin's corpse.

CHET (CONT'D)
Besides him. When was the last time you
played baseball?

FRANCIS
Been some years, now.

CHET
Perfect. Now's the time for your return.
I'll swing by the my uncle's office and
submit the necessary paperwork.

Noam looks at his father, convinced.

NOAM
Father loved baseball. It's his will!
(to Chet)
Sir, tell us what we need to do.

CHET
Tell you what, I'll put an ad out in the
paper. If we need to, we'll find someone
to slap on a fake beard. That's your
gimmick, right?

NOAM
Our...gimmick?

Impressed, Mary puts her hand on Chet's shoulder.

MARY
What's your name?

CHET
Chet Landis. And yours?

MARY
We can discuss that over drinks.

Without a word, she walks out the door and beckons for him to
follow.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

Jackie rolls her eyes, bored.

ANGLE ON:

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD (FILM) - DAY

MILLIE AUSTIN, 38, Jackie's glamorous, makeup-covered mother, is up to bat. Her jersey, "PINK TULIPS", features a skirt instead of pants.

She looks just like her daughter, plus a few tough years.

FILM ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And it's down to the wire, tie game in the bottom of the ninth of this Lady's World Series brought to you by Tulip Brand Soap.

A FEMALE PITCHER, dainty as can be, tosses the ball inexpertly to Millie, and Millie hits it over the fence.

FILM ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Oh, and Fabulous Millie Austin gives it a ride, back, way back, and it's outta here!

Millie blows a kiss to the camera and trots around the bases. Her buxom TEAMMATES mob the field. Music SWELLS.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

In the theater, Jackie stands, annoyed as onscreen, Millie embraces a SOLDIER while her team celebrates around her.

MILLIE AUSTIN (O.S.)

I knew I could do it, because I kept you in my heart, Joe!

JACKIE

Ugh, God.

The Old Man SHUSHES.

HARVEY AUSTIN

(whispering)

What?

JOE (O.S.)

With you smelling "fresh as a Tulip," I wouldn't dare think of anyone else...

JACKIE
I can't watch this filth anymore.

HARVEY AUSTIN
Jackie!

She leaves.

INT. AUSTIN'S DRUG STORE - NIGHT

The once-upscale shop is now packed up, all shelves and counters covered in dusty sheets.

Newspaper clippings of baseball stars cover the side wall where Jackie throws a baseball, hitting the same spot every time.

JACKIE
She'll do anything for a buck. I mean, that wasn't a film so much as an advertisement for soap. And marriage.

Harvey prepares a cot behind the front counter.

HARVEY AUSTIN
And what's so wrong with marriage?

JACKIE
Some good it did you. I mean, who needs love, anyway? All I need is a pitcher's mound and thousands of screaming fans...

HARVEY AUSTIN
Without love, you wouldn't be alive.

Harvey, still in love, takes a framed photo of Millie from the counter. It's signed, "To My Jacke, With Love, Mother."

JACKIE
She can't even take the time to spell her own daughter's name right.

HARVEY AUSTIN
(lost in thought)
She just wasn't meant for a domesticated life.

JACKIE
Why is that okay for her and not for me?!

HARVEY AUSTIN
(snapping out of it)
Times are different, now. Now, a woman
needs a man to take care of her.

She rolls her eyes, scoops up the ball, throws again.

JACKIE
Poor father, how love has rotten your
brain, putting such a lowlife on such a
pedestal.

HARVEY AUSTIN
Don't you talk of your mother that way!
She loves us both. You just have to have
more faith in others.

JACKIE
Yeah, yeah. I'm going to bed.

She walks around to the other side of the L-shaped counter to
her own cot, crawls under the covers.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chet and Mary lie, post-coital, on satin sheets in a lavish room
straight out of the Victorian Age. Chet is disturbed.

MARY
You know, before all this Jesus junk, I
used to be a flapper.

She takes two cigarettes from the bedside table, lights both,
hands him one. He takes it and hurries out of bed.

CHET
Interesting. Yes, well, I should be
going. Wouldn't want to miss that meeting
with the commissioner tomorrow.

MARY
For what, a lousy \$10,000? Spend the
night.

She reaches for him, but he's already out the door.

INT. AUSTIN'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Jackie sleeps in her cot behind the counter.

HARVEY AUSTIN (O.S.)

Jackie. Jackie! I have someone for you
to meet...

She opens an eye, sees Harvey and a bald, ugly man, VERNON,
standing over her. He's dressed tastelessly, but clearly has
money.

JACKIE

Not another one.

HARVEY AUSTIN

Jackie, this is Vernon Marks. He's a
friend of your mother's.

VERNON

Why, she's even prettier than Millie!

JACKIE

God, look at this piece of work. You look
like Barney Google, you know that?

VERNON

I'm not familiar with Mr. Google, but I'll
take it as a compliment.

He offers his hand but she stands up on her own.

VERNON (CONT'D)

Your father thought we might get along.
Maybe you'd like to join me for breakfast?
My treat, of course.

JACKIE

And why --

Her stomach GROWLS for a few seconds. They wait for it to stop.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

-- would I want to, uh, do that?

HARVEY AUSTIN

I thought of our conversation last night,
darling. I think it's about time you
start learning about life.

JACKIE

Not a bad idea.

She looks Vernon up and down, sees the rolled up newspaper in his hand. She grabs it from him.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

May I? Thanks. It's a luxury we don't get too often, these days. So, are you loaded, or what?

She flips through the paper.

VERNON

I do all right, considering the times.
(to Harvey)
She's got quite a personality on her.

HARVEY AUSTIN

Ever since she was a kid. Nothing I can do about it.

VERNON

(whispering)
I can tame her, don't you worry.

JACKIE

(not listening)
Did my father tell you I'm a pitcher? You wouldn't know any clubs in need a pitcher, mister? They used to put ads in the classifieds...

HARVEY AUSTIN

This again.

Vernon takes her arm. She shakes it off.

VERNON

Let's go, sweetheart, time's a wasting.
If you're nice, I'll take you dress shopping.

JACKIE

Oh, why don't you just beat it, eh? I'm not interested.

HARVEY AUSTIN

Jackie!

JACKIE

What? He's old and ugly.

Vernon crosses his arms, losing patience.

HARVEY AUSTIN

Jackie, if you wanna live under this roof,
you gotta make an effort, you hear me?

JACKIE

So I can end up bitter and alone, like
you?

HARVEY AUSTIN

I am not bitter and alone!

JACKIE

Okay, then. I'm going to leave. Then
what will you be?

HARVEY AUSTIN

Jackie! You are the most...block-headed
person I have ever known!

She salutes her father, grabs her glove, and out she goes.

EXT. MLB WEST OFFICES - DAY

A majestic brick building downtown.

Chet walks right past a WORKER, who drills a brass plate next to
the entrance that reads "Landis, Floor 5."

INT. MLB WEST CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The air is full of cigar smoke and CHATTER. Commissioner Landis
sits at the head of a long conference table.

He's flanked by sixteen fat white TEAM OWNERS in slick three-
piece suits.

CONNIE MACK, slender and severe, no cigar in hand, looks as
furious as his handsome contemporary, SAM BREADON.

CONNIE MACK

Dammit, Landis, Philadelphians ain't
showing up to Athletics games no more.

SAM BREADON

Same in St. Louis, only we *got* a team.
Dizzy, Dazzy, Rogers Hornsby, and still,

no one's paying to come.

CONNIE MACK

Poppycock! I'll bet you my good arm that
we end better'n you scourges --

A pale, scrawny journalist, HENDRICKS, takes notes, kneeling in
the corner.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

-- gentlemen, please settle down! We have
standings to decide those matters.

They quiet.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS (CONT'D)

This is a new era. People are struggling.
They no longer relate to the big, flashy
stars. They can't afford your ticket
prices. Know who they can relate to?
These damned barnstormers!

CONNIE MACK

Barnstormers? They're nothing but a lot
of amateurs!

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Precisely. And if we wish to survive, we
need to adjust with the times. As you
know, I've proposed that we unify these
teams by way of a Major League-sponsored
tournament! Double-elimination, winner
gets a cash prize and the chance to play
in the most esteemed league in the world.
What do you say, gents?

SAM BREADON

Hold on, here. What happens if, God
forbid, some negro team ends up winning?
Or lord knows who else?

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Ha! You forget who you're talking to.
There will be no winning team, don't you
worry. That's why I need all of your
help.

He removes a letter from his breast pocket.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS (CONT'D)
I've taken the liberty of drafting a
roster of representative players. Jacob,
we'll need to borrow Ruth and Gomez.

JACOB RUPPERT, Yankees logo on his lapel, chews on his pipe in
thought.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS (CONT'D)
Connie, we'll need Jimmie Foxx at third.
So forth and so on.

SAM BREADON
How do you expect us to convince them to
play together?

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
Money.

CONNIE MACK
Sorry. What about that little thing
called pride? Ain't no pride in rigging a
series.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
"Ain't no" pride in having to sell off
half your team on account of low
attendance, either, my friend.

Connie knows Landis is right.

There's a COMMOTION in the other room. Chet opens the door,
with a SECRETARY trailing behind him.

SECRETARY
Sir, it's a private meeting --

CHET
Uncle Landis!

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
Christ, Chet, for the last time, no! No
more money!
(to the secretary)
Call the police.

Chet pulls his uncle aside.

CHET
(whispering)

No, uncle, I've heard about your new league. I've got a team for you. They're a bunch of freaks. Quite famous.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
Dammit, Chet, it's an "invitational."

CHET
Yes, but they're the most popular team in the history of barnstorming!

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
Fine. Talk to my secretary.

CHET
Of course.

Landis returns to the meeting, his arm around his nephew.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
All right, men. Game one is Saturday. Let's make it happen.

CHET
Thanks, uncle.

Chet stoops to Hendricks on his way out the door.

CHET (CONT'D)
You got my message?

HENDRICKS
Ad's in today's paper.

CHET
I owe you one.

They shake hands. Chet leaves.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREETS - DAY

Walking down the sidewalk, the lone pedestrian, Jackie kicks a rock, grumbles to herself.

JACKIE
Hypocrite.

Jackie sits on the curb, glum. Next to her, a POOR BUSINESSMAN holds a sign: "No Job, No Family. Lord Have Mercy."

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Consider yourself lucky.

She arrives at a small park lit by a trash fire.

EXT. HOOVERVILLE PARK - NIGHT

Jackie approaches the fire, looking around, sees no one.

JACKIE
Wouldja look at this? A fine night and a
warm fire. What else does a girl need?

A BUM emerges from behind a tree, suspicious.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Whoa, sir, no need to worry, I ain't the
police.

HOBO
We was just hunting. You hungry?

He's holds a stick with a sewer rats skewered on it.

JACKIE
We? Who else is here?

HOBO
Me and Frank. You want?

He looks to his left. There's no one there. Jackie backs away
to a bench covered in newspapers.

JACKIE
No, no thank you. I'll just have a seat.
Been walking a while.

He shrugs, takes a CRUNCHY bite.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Anyone sleeping here?

BUM
Oh, please, go ahead. People's gotta
stick together.

She pulls the newspapers closer. Something catches her eye.

LOS ANGELES BUGLE, CLASSIFIEDS

A picture of a BALLPLAYER with a question mark over its face:
"WANTED: BASEBALLER. TRYOUTS MARCH 3rd, noon, 7 Shiloh Road.
ALL WELCOME."

JACKIE

Whoa.

HOBO

What's that, miss?

The man turns, rat blood all over his beard.

JACKIE

Nothing. Nothing. Sir, Frank, great to
meet you. Both. I'll take my leave.

She leaves.

EXT. SHILOH FIELD - DAY

Twenty PLAYERS stand behind the pitcher's mound, looking fit and
ready to play.

In the back is SLIMEHEAD BURKE, African-American, burly but well
past his prime. He's been worn out by the world.

Francis, in his too-small jersey, stands up front with Noam.
The rest of the team is down the first-base line playing
"catch." More drops than catches, however.

FRANCIS

What do you think of the turnout, Brother
Noam?

NOAM

They seem like very nice people.

FRANCIS

Would you like to address them?

He blushes, shakes his head.

NOAM

Oh, I couldn't.

FRANCIS

Very well.

Francis steps forward, preaches away.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Brothers, welcome to Shiloh Field at the House of David. If you're not familiar with us, we were once known quite inaccurately as the "Quaker Yankees", the best team west of the Rockies. First team to play under lights. Honus Wagner, Sam Crawford, and William H. Taft all wanted to play for us and one point. And now you gentlemen just may receive that honor.

A thick-necked GUY with a catcher's glove raises his hand.

CATCHER GUY

What's the deal with the beards?

FRANCIS

Brother Noam, care to respond?

NOAM

Uh, yes. Okay. We are part of the Visitation Movement in accordance with the Book of Revelation, Chapter Ten, Verse Seven. As such, we live an ascetic life, one where vice has no place. This means no alcohol, tobacco, premarital relations, or image-based delusions. To groom one's hair is to commit to a life of vanity.

The newcomers are aghast.

CATCHER GUY

You just say "no booze"?

NOAM

In a transcendent life, alcohol is not necessary.

One by one, the new players leave. Except for Slimehead.

NOAM (CONT'D)

Where are you going? Wait! Aw, shucks.

The newcomers hustle after a public bus that pulls up in the parking lot behind the backstop.

EXT. SHILOH FIELD, PARKING LOT - DAY

Jackie emerges from the dust.

EXT. SHILOH FIELD - DAY

Noam shrugs.

NOAM

What now?

FRANCIS

Perhaps we run practice as usual?

NOAM

Okay. How?

FRANCIS

(to the team)

Brothers! Come, let us join together on
the infield. Take your old positions.
Eggs, you take second.

"EGGS" HARRISON, naive and clumsy, complies.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

George, you're at third.

A hulking man, GEORGE ANDERSON, 35, takes his spot.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Amos, shortstop.

AMOS EDWARDS, 30 and small, goes. Francis points to Slimehead.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

You. Can you play left?

SLIMEHEAD

I can play anywhere.

FRANCIS

(to Noam)

Can you catch?

NOAM

My father was a catcher.

FRANCIS

I know.

NOAM

I'll try.

FRANCIS

Hand me that bat.

Noam grabs a bat off the ground. Francis grabs a ball.

Jackie watches from behind the backstop.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Your father invented what he called "The Pepper Game." It requires the utmost collaboration and concentration. Watch.

He flips the ball behind his back, swings and misses.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

The fans, they love it. George, coming at you!

He tries again, hits a weak grounder to third. George scoops it up, flips it behind his back to Amos.

Amos catches it between his legs, rolls it down his arm, flips it to Eggs. It hits Eggs in the chest.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Good try, brother. Keep it going.

Eggs picks up the ball, throws it home. Francis swings but the bat slips out of his hands.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Whoops. Almost had it.

Noam retrieves the ball, hands it to Francis, who swings and misses again.

JACKIE

Oh, I can't watch this anymore.

She runs onto the field, takes the bat from Francis, who tries not to touch her, mortified.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

(to Francis)

Go take first.

Francis doesn't move.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

(to Noam)

Gimme the ball.

He drops it and recoils. She grabs it, points to George.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
(to George)
Play's to first base.

She hits a sharp grounder to George. He doesn't move.

Jackie throws down the bat.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
What the hell is going on?

Slimehead walks up next to her. The team stares at them.

SLIMEHEAD
(whispering)
They're "religious..."

Chet walks onto the field, counting a bit of money. He looks up and sees the awkward standoff.

CHET
Whoa. Something wrong?

FRANCIS
Our sensibilities are offended by her presence, sir.

JACKIE
Pardon?

FRANCIS
It is in direct conflict with our beliefs to cavort with the opposite sex.

CHET
Well no one's asking you to make whoopee with her. Darling, welcome to the team.

FRANCIS
Brother Noam, what do you think?

Noam looks her up and down, blushing.

JACKIE
Just wait 'til you see me pitch.

CHET

Alright, let's see it.

Jackie grabs a ball, walks to the mound, throws a hard strike straight to the backstop, right down the middle with good movement.

CHET (CONT'D)

Good enough for me.

FRANCIS

But --

CHET

-- good. We're signed up to play downtown in two days, so get ready.

He nods at Slimehead.

CHET (CONT'D)

And who are you?

SLIMEHEAD

Slimehead Burke, sir. I used to play for Satchel's All-Stars, a few other barnstormers over the years. Figure I'll stay here 'til someone asks me to come or tells me to leave. That's my motto.

CHET

Well, go ahead.

Slimehead grabs a bat, rolls the ball back to Jackie.

JACKIE

I'm gonna go easy on you, alright?

SLIMEHEAD

Whatever you say, miss.

She winds up, throws a curve ball that dives low and away.

He crushes it to right field, just in front of the fence.

JACKIE

He can swing it.

NOAM

Yep.

CHET

And just so we're clear, you all see that he's a Negro, right? And we're okay with that?

They look at him, offended.

CHET (CONT'D)

Okay, just checking. Your team.

Jackie looks at the ball in the outfield, annoyed.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE DINING AREA - NIGHT

Between the trees, next to a rusted old farm truck, are two communal tables lit by lantern light.

The men sit at one, but for Slimehead alone at the other. Jackie's elsewhere.

Noam introduces Chet to each player, who nods upon hearing his name.

NOAM

I'm gonna play catcher. You know Francis, he's at first, he's been our clergyman. Doc's in center, he was conductor for our orchestra. 'Eggs' is at second, he would tend to the aviary when we still had birds. Amos is at short, George at third, they tend to the grove, and of course Junior's in right. He and his father, Barney, they're the resident mechanics. And then the new man is in left. That okay with you, sir?

SLIMEHEAD

Anywhere, so long as you're paying cash.

NOAM

(smiling)

Great. So who do you think'll be the biggest star?

Chet blinks. Everyone has long brown hair and a beard.

CHET

If I could tell one from the other I'd tell you.

NOAM

Well, that's the point, you see. Father encouraged togetherness above all, and uniformity breeds togetherness.

FRANCIS

He never really even learned our names.

CHET

Well, that won't do.

Jackie arrives, with a bowl of soup in hand, sits next to Slimehead. Slimehead looks up and smiles.

JACKIE

They make you sit alone?

SLIMEHEAD

No, I guess I'm just used to it. Prefer it, really.

JACKIE

Same.

Jackie turns around, nods to Noam. She slaps a stack of bills on the table in front of him.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Your mother wanted me to give you this for the road.

(to Noam)

She's a very generous woman.

CHET

That's a word for it.

Noam blushes, looks away.

JACKIE

(to Slimehead)

My catcher can't even look me in the eyes.

SLIMEHEAD

They seem pretty devoted.

Chet takes out a map, shows it to the guys.

CHET

(to Jackie)

C'mere. Look at this.

Jackie and Slimehead comply.

CHET (CONT'D)

My uncle's tournament is double-elimination. That means if you lose twice, you're done. Understood?

NOAM

Okay.

CHET

One game per day. I'll have the schedule on me. The championship is at that new Exposition Park in the city.

(to Barney)

How's the bus look?

BARNEY

Working on it, sir.

Noam looks Jackie up and down. She sees him and he looks away.

NOAM

(stammering)

And how is she going to get around?

CHET

You're telling me you can't ride in the same automobile? Jesus Christ.

He looks at the farm truck.

CHET (CONT'D)

We'll figure something out.

INT. JACKIE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Jackie sits on the bare cot.

JACKIE

Just tell me this, am I going to wake up with a hatchet to the face? Are you psychotic?

Noam shrugs, avoiding eye contact. He lights a candle with the lantern in his hand, hands it to her.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

So you can't talk to a woman? Or are you

really just shy?

Noam shrugs, shakes out her blanket.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

This is great. Well, so you know, I throw a fastball, curve, and a drop ball.

NOAM

(excited)

Drop ball? Like Dazzy Vance?

JACKIE

Oh, look who's talking all of a sudden!

Noam covers his mouth and hangs his head in shame.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, he was my neighbor as a kid.

NOAM

You know Dazzy Vance.

JACKIE

Not only do I know him, he taught me everything he knows. Now I'm better than him.

NOAM

Oh goodness, me.

He catches himself, and gets back to his more sober self.

NOAM (CONT'D)

It's past curfew. Time for sleep.

JACKIE

A shame I weren't a wealthier gal, I'd have a bottle of fine cherry brandy on me right now.

He hesitates in the doorway at this. Nods awkwardly, leaves.

She laughs to herself, gets into bed.

EXT. SHILOH FIELD, PARKING LOT - DAY

The team loads up the team bus, a once-glorious bus with "House of David Baseball Club" painted on the side.

Chet and Jackie look at the thing.

CHET

Hmm. I don't like it. Wordy. I think they should be 'Stars of David'. What do you think?

JACKIE

Make's 'em sound like a bunch of Jews. What does it matter, anyway?

CHET

It's about image. Creating an image.

JACKIE

Well, you aren't going to get your money as long as we win.

CHET

Hey, think longer-term, in case you don't. Have an open mind. Worst case, a little publicity hurt no one. But I think my uncle has something special in store for us. A little boost.

He winks at her.

INT. FARM TRUCK - DAY

Jackie sits behind the wheel on the car's rough wooden bench. Chet opens the driver's door.

Outside, the team loads up their bus.

CHET

What are you doing? Move over.

JACKIE

I'll drive.

CHET

Don't be a fool. Move over.

She turns the key, taunting him with a smile. The car PUTTERS to a pathetic start.

JACKIE

Train's a leavin'!

CHET

Dammit.

JACKIE

Look at you, all pathetic.

He hangs his head and goes to the passenger side.

INT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

They're on the road, feeling every bump, making a racket.

JACKIE

(inaudible)

Ugh! This is terrible!

CHET

(inaudible)

What?

Jackie shakes her head. They hit a pothole and his head hits the roof. She laughs.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, PARKING LOT - DAY

A beautiful, sunny day. The lot is populated with just a few automobiles, all expensive. Dapper-looking FANS trickle toward the stadium.

Next to the bus, Noam hands out old woolen jerseys to his team. Francis pulls his on and it's far too small.

NOAM

I'm glad we still had these.

FRANCIS

Still fits.

JACKIE

Almost.

Barney closes the door of the bus and they all head toward the stadium. It's awe-inspiring to Noam and the bearded men.

INT. WASHINGTON PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

At the visitor dugout, Jackie and Noam stand on the top step,

looking across the field incredulously.

INT. WASHINGTON PARK, HOME DUGOUT - DAY

A dugout of all-stars. BABE RUTH, LEFTY GOMEZ, JIMMIE FOXX, and more, all in their respective jerseys (Yankees, Athletics, et al). Babe wears a mink over his.

Babe Ruth, at the end of his career but still commanding of presence, slouches on the bench, hungover next to the mischievous Lefty Gomez, who sips from a flask.

INT./EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Jackie's now on the bench, distraught.

JACKIE

They've the best hitters in the major leagues *and* the best pitcher.

NOAM

(quietly)

Together, we can take 'em.

JACKIE

Well, of course. That is, I'm the best there is. Just that they're also good.

FRANCIS

(to Noam)

I'll pitch.

JACKIE

No, I'll be fine, I'm just --

NOAM

-- I support you, Brother Francis.

FRANCIS

Thank you, Brother Noam.

Jackie's furious, but they ignore her.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the inaugural game of the Major League Baseball Amateur Invitational Championship!

Lackluster applause from the sparse CROWD.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, CROWD - DAY

Commissioner Landis sits behind the home dugout, chewing on a cigar. Chet, sitting behind him, taps on his shoulder.

CHET

Not a bad turnout, eh, uncle? Check out this gal pitcher we got. She's gonna be a star. A knockout.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Good. Did you pay your entry fee to my secretary?

CHET

Yes, the lady running this whole operation, she's loaded --

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

-- keep yammering and it increases more.

Chet quiets, hangs his head.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, FIELD - DAY

The House of David takes their positions.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

Now batting, second baseman, Frankie Frisch!

A few claps for FRISCH, the thick-browed Cardinals speedster who waves, expecting a bigger reaction from the crowd.

Francis gets on the mound, with Jackie at first looking bored. He winds up and lobs the ball in with a huge arc.

INT./EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, HOME DUGOUT - DAY

Babe and Lefty Gomez watch the warm up pitches, chuckling.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, FIELD - DAY

Frisch digs in, smirk on his face.

Francis gets on the mound, winds up, lobs it in. Frisch rips it up the middle, nearly taking Francis' head with it.

Doc hurries over to get it but slips, and the ball rolls past.

Junior recovers it from right and throws a laser to home, but it's too late: Frisch has an inside the park home run.

Jackie rolls her eyes.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, CROWD - DAY

Landis furrows his brow.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
What the hell is this crap?

SCOREBOARD: 1-0, MLB.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK - DAY

KIKI CUYLER, the Cub righty, stomps out a cigarette and comes to the plate.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)
Now batting, outfielder, Kiki Cuyler.

On Francis' first pitch, a grounder right to Eggs. It goes right between his legs.

Frisch jogs home. The crowd LAUGHS. Jackie hangs her head.

SCOREBOARD: 2-0, MLB.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Now batting, first baseman...Babe Ruth!

The crowd wakes up for him, BOOING in earnest.

INT. WASHINGTON PARK, HOME DUGOUT - DAY

Babe takes off his coat, has a swig from Gomez' flask, and walks up to the plate. He sees Jackie at first and winks at her.

Francis winds up, pitches, and pulls a liner down first. Jackie dives and makes a great catch, touching first for a double play, to the shock of the crowd.

1B UMPIRE

Out!

She dusts herself off and winks back at Babe.

BABE RUTH

Looking good, kid. Real good.

JACKIE

What's the matter, you too lazy or too old to play in the outfield?

BABE RUTH

Hey, now. No need to get mean. I'd like to be your friend.

JACKIE

I'm sure you would, old man.

BABE RUTH

Aw. I'm not that old.

Babe hangs his head and heads back to the dugout.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

...third baseman, Jimmie Foxx!

Francis throws one that bounces in front of the plate. Noam blocks it and keeps the runner from advancing.

On the next pitch, a grounder to second. Jackie ranges beyond her position, cuts it off, and takes it back to first in time. Third out.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, CROWD - DAY

Commissioner Landis flirts with a YOUNGER WOMAN next to him. Chet taps him on the shoulder.

CHET

That was good, right?

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Chet, please.

Landis continues to ignore the game.

INT. WASHINGTON PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Jackie dusts off her jersey, but she's restless.

JACKIE

They don't read off our names? And why's he get to lead off?

SLIMEHEAD

Hey, the world isn't just. You should learn that sooner than later.

JACKIE

(to Noam)

Why's he get to hit first?

NOAM

We're hitting in order of seniority today.

JACKIE

Oh, Jesus.

FUTILITY SEQUENCE:

-Doc hits a grounder up the middle, but Frisch makes a great backhanded play.

-The Phillies' CHUCK KLIEN hits a home run to right.

-Eggs swings and the bat slips from his hands and into the crowd. The umpire gestures "strike three."

-The Braves' WALLY BERGER hits a home run to left. Jackie yawns as he trots past.

INT. WASHINGTON PARK, HOME DUGOUT - DAY

The all-stars play cards in the dugout, oblivious to the game.

INT. WASHINGTON PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Barney is the only one standing, cheering.

BARNEY

Let's go, Junior!

The others are demoralized.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK - DAY

SCOREBOARD: 9-0, MLB, EIGHTH INNING, ONE OUT

Junior is at bat. Lefty Gomez sends a curve ball and the kid misses by a foot, spinning in place. The umpire holds up one finger.

Jackie comes to the plate and looks around. Most of the crowd has gone.

JACKIE
(to Gomez)
Come after me.

LEFTY GOMEZ
Sounds like a fun little Saturday, but I'm
a married gentleman.

He goes into the windup, throws a pitch intentionally out of the zone.

Another in the same spot.

Another. She grumbles.

And ball four.

UMPIRE
Take your base, missy.

She tosses her bat aside, jogs to first, ready to hurt someone.

BABE RUTH
Still looking good out there, kid.

JACKIE
Yeah? How would you know?

He checks out her rear.

BABE RUTH
I have an eye for these things.

Jackie grinds her teeth.

Slimehead comes to the plate. Some BOOS from the crowd.

Gomez sets in the stretch. On the first pitch, Jackie steals.

UMPIRE
Strike!

The throw from the catcher, MICKEY COCHRANE, is late, and Jackie's slide flips over the shortstop, LUKE APPLING.

APPLING
Hey, take it easy!

JACKIE
You take it easy!

She wipes blood on her jersey from a scrape on her hand, gets up and takes her lead.

Gomez sets, looks at Jackie, pitches. Slimehead hits one deep to center, but Berger catches it at the wall for the third out.

Jackie jogs off the field and crosses paths with Babe.

BABE RUTH
Hey, tone down your game, missy. You're liable to hurt somebody.

JACKIE
Yeah, yeah.

She pats Slimehead on the back and they head into the dugout.

INT. WASHINGTON PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Jackie looks across the field and sees Babe, who has his mink back on, laughing with the guys.

Determined, she walks to Noam, who puts on his catcher's gear while Barney reads from a prayer book.

JACKIE
Let me pitch this last inning.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)
Now batting, second baseman, Frankie Frisch!

Noam looks to Francis, unsure of how to answer. The home plate umpire looks into the dugout, wondering what's wrong.

FRANCIS
(to Noam)
Brother Noam, did you hear? Our sister wishes to pitch.

NOAM

And what do you think? Have you tired of pitching?

JACKIE

Oh, we'll be here forever.

She jogs out of the dugout and onto the mound. Noam and Francis look at one another, unsure of what to do.

INT. WASHINGTON PARK - DAY

Jackie's on the mound, jersey covered in dirt and blood. Intense.

Frisch comes up to the plate, unsure of what to expect.

Jackie goes into the windup and Frisch squares to bunt.

The pitch is up at Frisch's ear, and he dives away, a near miss. The crowd OOHS. Jackie spits, staring Frisch down.

JACKIE

Get back in there.

He does, suddenly scared. Noam goes to say something, stops.

The next pitch is a nasty curve, and Frisch hits a weak grounder in front of the plate.

Jackie fires it to first harder than is necessary, and Francis holds his glove hand in pain. The crowd is silent.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

Uh. Now batting, Kiki Cuyler.

Kiki stands in. Jackie goes to the windup, throws a high fastball and he swings through it.

Jackie smiles. The second pitch, her "drop-ball", dives just under his swing, a freakish pitch. The crowd GASPS.

KIKI CUYLER

What was that?

Noam shrugs.

She goes into the windup, sends a curve ball. He pops it straight up, right into Noam's glove.

Kiki walks past Babe, mumbling to himself. Babe's amused.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)
Now batting...Babe Ruth!

He winks at her again. This pisses her off more.

BABE RUTH
(to Noam)
Hey Moses, what's the matter with this kid? She got a screw loose?

NOAM
I'm not sure.
(beat)
I'm a big fan, sir.

BABE RUTH
Course you are!

Babe settles in. Jackie goes into the windup, sends a fastball low and in. Babe swings through it.

Babe laughs at himself, takes a minute. Jackie is on the mound, waiting. The minute Babe's in the box, she winds up.

It's another fastball, right down the middle. He swings with a great WHOOSH and comes up empty.

Her third offering is a fastball in the dirt. Again, Babe swings and misses for strike three. The crowd is stunned silent.

Jackie casually walks off the field. No big deal.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, CROWD - DAY

Commissioner Landis raises an eyebrow in surprise.

INT. FARM TRUCK - NIGHT

Jackie drives on, stone-faced. The bus follows. Chet's giddy.

CHET
You struck out Babe Ruth! Even I've heard of him!

JACKIE

Yep.

CHET

Oh, Uncle was red in the face! He actually looked me in the eyes when he talked to me! Oh, we're going to make a fortune.

JACKIE

Sure, sure. Just be careful with all that money? I've seen what it does.

CHET

Why do you say that?

JACKIE

My father had money. Then he didn't. Now he's a total mess.

CHET

Well, that's not money's fault. And we're not just talking money, but fame, too!

JACKIE

Even worse! My mother's famous --

CHET

-- your mother is Marvelous Millie Austin. How did I not realize this?!

JACKIE

Yeah, but she's...

CHET

She's what? Poor?

JACKIE

No.

CHET

Unhappy?

JACKIE

No, I don't think so.

CHET

So what's the problem? Why is she allowed to use her talents to make her life easier and you can't? I don't understand.

She shrugs.

There's a sign for the 'HIGHWAY MOTEL' up ahead. She nods at it.

JACKIE

How much money we got?

CHET

Lots. The old lady is loaded. Turns out she inherited it from her husband and never shared it with anyone!

(quietly)

Except me. But God knows I earned it.

They park the car and get out.

EXT. HIGHWAY MOTEL - DAY

The bus pulls up. All is shrouded in dust, dead farmland everywhere. The motel is dark and gloomy.

She holds out her hand.

JACKIE

Money, please.

CHET

I thought you don't care about money?

JACKIE

This isn't about money, it's about not sharing the room with a strange man.

He holds a ten and is captivated by its power. She snatches it from his hand.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Goodnight!

CHET

Next thing you know, it'll be hundreds!

She hurries to the front desk just as Noam arrives.

NOAM

Wow. She's really something.

Noam just watches her go.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The room is just as gloomy inside, and a broken window has dust all over the simple furnishings. The sun is just rising.

Jackie sleeps on a simple cot. There's a KNOCK at the door. Jackie GROANS.

CHET (O.S.)
Jackie, it's me.

JACKIE
Go away!

CHET
I've got good news!

She sighs and opens the door an inch.

JACKIE
Say it or hand it over.

Through the crack, he hands a newspaper.

HEADLINE: "BABE RUTH STRUCK OUT BY ATTRACTIVE GAL!"

There's a picture of Jackie smiling in her jersey.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
What kind of headline is this?

CHET
I thought you'd be happy. They're going wild about you.

JACKIE
(reading)
"It might be fun in a league full of midgets, amputees, and Negroes, but to be clear, women are too fragile and too emotional to play in the big leagues and they won't so long as I'm commissioner."

She crumples up the paper.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Some guy, that uncle of yours.

CHET
He can be old-fashioned.

JACKIE

That's one word.

CHET

Well, I'm going to go have breakfast now.
We leave in thirty minutes.

He closes the door. She throws the paper into a tin trashcan.

EXT. COUNTY STADIUM, PARKING LOT - DAY

The parking lot of the smaller, wooden stadium out among the corn fields is filled with farm trucks. There's a buzz in the air.

When Jackie pulls up, about five filthy, hungry FARMER'S KIDS crowd around. She gets out of the car.

FARMER KID #1

Miss, is it true you struck out Babe Ruth?

JACKIE

Sure is.

FARMER KID #1

Wow!

FARMER KID #2

Isn't he old?

FARMER KID #1

That's true.

JACKIE

Oh, get outta here, you rascals! Babe
Ruth is Babe Ruth.

She grabs her glove from the car, pulls on her dirty jersey, and heads toward the stadium.

EXT. COUNTY STADIUM - DAY

The scene here is much different. The stadium is rudimentary and much smaller. Fans sit on hay bales beyond the outfield wall, but the bales are at capacity.

Jackie's throws some warm up pitches on the mound. On the last, Noam walks toward her. Francis keeps watch, suspicious.

Noam loses his daring, and just tosses the ball back to her.

EXT. COUNTY STADIUM, CROWD - DAY

Chet stands in the seat behind the team's dugout. A man in a "DUST DEVILS" jersey approaches, chaw in his lip.

D.D. MANAGER
You the manager of this here squad?

CHET
Of sorts, sure. Why?

D.D. MANAGER
I'm the manager of ours.

The man nods to Jackie.

D.D. MANAGER (CONT'D)
That woman there, she available for sale?

CHET
For sale? As a human?

D.D. MANAGER
It's a simple question, son. We're a ball club, not a slave auction.

CHET
Well, she's not.

D.D. MANAGER
Dang it.

The manager snaps his fingers in disappointment.

EXT. COUNTY STADIUM - DAY

Jackie's on the mound against a corn-fed farm boy HITTER. She throws a curve ball in the dirt.

UMPIRE
Strike three!

Jackie walks off the field, her team just behind.

INT./EXT. COUNTY STADIUM, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Noam stands at the top step of the dugout, taking off his shin guards.

JACKIE
(to Noam)
I prefer this lineup.

Jackie grabs a bat, heads up to the plate.

EXT. COUNTY STADIUM - DAY

She steps in to face the nervous, LANKY PITCHER. His first pitch is outside.

So is the second.

JACKIE
What's so bad that everyone's afraid to pitch to a woman?

LANKY PITCHER
Don't wanna hit ya, miss.

JACKIE
Oh, for Christ's sake. You wouldn't hurt me if you did, with that noodle arm. This is baseball! Be a pitcher!

He grimaces at this, gets serious. Grunts with the pitch, which is right down the middle.

Jackie hits it back at him and he has to dive out of the way. She rounds first, smiles.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
I said a pitcher!

Noam comes up to bat with more confidence than usual.

As the pitcher winds up, he squares to bunt.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Don't bunt. Swing away!

Before the pitch comes, Noam pulls the bat back.

NOAM
I was going to put you into scoring position!

JACKIE

And who's gonna score me, George?!

George, standing on deck, scowls.

UMPIRE

(to Noam)

Hey, whiskers, let's play some ball.

Noam steps in. The pitcher brings an outside fastball and he hits a ground ball that sees its way through first and second.

Jackie advances to third.

From the dugout, the manager winks. She shivers in disgust.

Slimehead comes to the plate and the pitcher gets into the stretch. Jackie comes down the line, clapping.

She goes on the pitch. Surprised, Slimehead has to jump out of the way of her slide.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Safe!

The crowd BOOS. She hops to her feet, punches the air.

SLIMEHEAD

At least give me some warning. I coulda killed you!

She smiles, jogs off the field.

He gets in the box, and on the first pitch, he hits a deep, would-have-been-a-sacrifice, fly.

STRIKEOUT SEQUENCE

-Boom, boom, boom: three fastballs crack in Noam's glove.

UMPIRE

Strike three.

-Boom, boom, boom. Again. And again. A swinging strike.

UMPIRE (O.S.)

You're out! You're out!

SCOREBOARD: 1-0, FOURTH INNING.

The House of David has three hits. None for the Devils.

EXT. COUNTY STADIUM - DAY

Noam's at the plate. He takes a fastball down the middle.

UMPIRE

Strike.

A curve ball headed toward him. He jumps out of the way, scared, and it crosses over the plate.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Strike two!

JACKIE (O.S.)

Come on, where are your guts? Come on!

Noam looks into the dugout, tightens his grip, steps in.

It's a fastball and he half-swings, sending a weak grounder to third. He's out easily.

Jackie comes up, and on the first pitch, hits a blooper over first base. She hustles into second before the FIELDER can react.

The washed-up SHORTSTOP takes the throw, gives her a look.

D.D. SHORTSTOP

Take it easy, toots, you're making the rest of us look bad.

She dusts herself off, shrugs.

Slimehead comes to the plate. On the first pitch, he hits a deep fly ball to right.

She leaves before it lands, but the RIGHT FIELDER catches it, throws to second. The umpire motions her out for not tagging up. Slimehead throws his bat down.

EXT. COUNTY STADIUM - DAY

SCOREBOARD: H.O.D. 2-0, 9TH INNING.

Still no hits for the Dust Devils.

Jackie's on the mound. She throws a drop ball and the batter swings through it.

UMPIRE
Strike three.

George yawns over at third. A ladybug has landed on Eggs' throwing hand, and he watches it, not the game.

Her first curve ball is in the dirt and the BATTER swings at it.

A fastball, high. Swing-and-a-miss. Jackie shakes out her arm.

A curve ball. The batter watches it break over the plate.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
(bored)
Strike three.

The crowd CHEERS. They're now on her side.

The next batter, the shortstop, steps in, eager.

On the first pitch, he lays down a bunt.

Jackie goes to field it, but George hustles in, takes it from her, and throws late.

JACKIE
Hey!

1B UMPIRE
Safe!

JACKIE
(angry)
Laying down a bunt. Cowardice.

The shortstop smiles.

Jackie gets into the stretch. The shortstop gets a lead. Jackie steps off the mound and side-arms it over there. Francis tags him out.

1B UMPIRE
You're out! And that's a ballgame!

The crowd rushes the field, wanting to talk to Jackie. Chet puts his arm around her.

CHET
They love you!

She smiles at the shortstop, who walks off the field.

EXT. COUNTY STADIUM, PARKING LOT - DAY

Jackie poses for a photo with a sign that says "one hit, 23 strikeouts!"

FADE TO:

HEADLINE: STAR OF DAVID!

The picture is at the top of the sports section.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET CORNER - DAY

A NEWSBOY sells these papers at a busy intersection, and BUSINESSMEN line up to buy them.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The room is bigger, brighter, cleaner than the last. An actual bed, a simple lamp, wood floors.

Jackie sits on the bed, reading the newspaper, smiling. There's a KNOCK at the door.

NOAM (O.S.)
(whispering)
Sister Jackie. It's Noam.

JACKIE
Go away...

He KNOCKS again. She opens the door. Noam stands there with a bat in hand.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
If you were going to murder me, you should do it with something you know how to use.

NOAM
(whispering)
No, that's why I'm here. I was hoping you

could teach me.
(beat)
I'm not going to murder you.

JACKIE
What's in it for me?

NOAM
Well, it'll help the team. You want to win, don't you?

JACKIE
Oh, we're fine. All we need is one, two runs, anyway. Look, you're doing a fine job catching. No need to get all fancy.

NOAM
Really? But what if --

JACKIE
-- game tomorrow. Time for bed!

She smiles. He does not. She closes the door on him.

JACKIE'S FAME SEQUENCE

-She strikes out a SLUGGER who's the size of a football lineman. He breaks his bat over his knee and the crowd ROARS.

-The stands are packed. Jackie throws to a ONE-ARMED HITTER, who hits a liner back. She catches it with her bare hand. The crowd CHEERS more. She starts to crack a smile.

-Jackie drives through town, and the TOWNSPEOPLE run after the car, waving.

INT. CALIFORNIA INN - NIGHT

A linoleum-and-chrome roadside diner, dark and quiet. A sad, YOUNG FAMILY eats in the corner.

They perk up when the team enters. The bald, SAD FATHER approaches.

SAD FATHER
You're Jackie Austin.

JACKIE
I know.

SAD FATHER

I'm quite the fan of yours.

JACKIE

Thank you.

SAD MOTHER

Yancey, come back to dinner.

The team crams into a booth by the door. Jackie, Chet, and Slimehead sit between it and the family.

They each look over the menu.

CHET

(to Slimehead)

She's really famous.

Jackie rubs her shoulder.

A surly, greasy COOK takes the order from the first table.

SLIMEHEAD

Sore, huh?

JACKIE

I'm alright.

CHET

She should be feeling pretty good! She's gonna be a star. Hell, she is a star!

SLIMEHEAD

I barnstormed with Grover Cleveland Alexander when I was a kid, you know that? Yeah, at age thirty-eight he threw near two-hundred-forty innings. Had sixty-three strikeouts. That was for the a last-place Cubs with a shortstop by the name of Rabbit who moved like a turtle. If Grover could trust his defense, you can, too.

JACKIE

Oh?

SLIMEHEAD

I'm just saying, you start facing better teams, who knows how you'll do?

JACKIE

Says the fellow whose only skill is a fly
out to left.

The cook approaches Jackie.

WAITRESS

Excuse me, he can't be in here.

CHET

Pardon?

JACKIE

Good, let him leave.

SLIMEHEAD

I'm leaving.

Slimehead knows the drill. He walks out.

Noam watches this, helpless. He wants to say something, but
does not.

COOK

Take your order?

CHET

What they get?

COOK

Porridge. Water.

JACKIE

They're so strange.

CHET

We'll have two burgers, two beers.

The cook nods and departs.

Chet takes out a schedule, shows it to Jackie.

The cook brings two bowls of porridge. Noam takes one and heads
outside with it.

CHET (CONT'D)

We have one game a day for the next two
days. If we lose once, as you know, we're
out, but if we win them, we're in the
championship.

JACKIE

Figured there'd be more teams.

CHET

I guess my uncle's not as good at planning
as one would think.

She stretches her sore arm, grimacing.

CHET (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

JACKIE

Nothing. No problem.

CHET

I called the missus. Mary, you know?
Asked her to send us some more money since
we're not really taking in quite yet. She
said people are coming by looking for you,
and since they're in the middle of
nowhere, they have to spend the night.
It's like a friggin' hotel and she's
tickled.

JACKIE

I thought they're supposed to lead a
simple life and all of that?

CHET

Well, as far as these folks on the team
know, they're still as poor as death.
Who's paying for their food? Well, they
don't think about that, do they?

The cook brings the beer.

CHET (CONT'D)

To your success.

He clinks his bottle against hers.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

One of Los Angeles' most elegant restaurants. White
tablecloths, red velvet on the walls, crystal chandeliers.

Landis sits across from Hendricks, sipping a glass of wine,
newspaper in hand.

LOS ANGELES BUGLE, SPORTS PAGE

"GIRL PITCHER STRIKES OUT FIFTEEN"

Jackie's picture is underneath.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

I'll be damned. That kid's doing alright.

HENDRICKS

They seem to be selling out every game.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

See, why do they want to see her and not, say, Heinie Manush?

HENDRICKS

She's good, sir.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Heinie hit .336 last year.

HENDRICKS

Well, she's better-looking than Heinie Manush.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Dammit, I shouldn't have said "no women as long as I'm commissioner." Now what?

HENDRICKS

I can print a retraction, sir.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

No, no. Just is just. We'll just have to make sure there's no demand for her in the big leagues. You can help with that, right?

HENDRICKS

I think so.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

We can take precautions.

HENDRICKS

Yeah.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Good.

(to the restaurant)
Waiter! More wine!

He snaps his fingers and the waiter hurries over with a bottle.

EXT. CALIFORNIA INN, PARKING LOT - DAY

There is a whitewashed farmhouse around the back of the diner on this dusty farmland. The team cars are parked out front.

Oil leaks from under the farm truck.

INT. TEAM BUS - DAY

The players sleep in their seats. Noam is the first to wake in the morning sunlight.

He looks out and sees Chet dressed and walking toward the truck. Noam hops out and waves.

CHET
We slept in!

NOAM
Good morning, Brother Chet. Did you, uh, sleep well, at least?

CHET
Sure, sure.

Jackie comes from the same guest room. Noam gulps, jealous.

NOAM
You had enough room, uh, sharing the bed?

CHET
That's none of your business.

Jackie rolls her eyes.

JACKIE
We ready, or what?

She turns the crank of the bus and it fires up. She does the same of the truck, but it does not. She tries again.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Great.

CHET
Did you activate the thing?

JACKIE
The choke? Yes.

CHET
Oh, I don't know.

Noam hops onto the bus.

NOAM
Brother Barney? Would you come here,
please?

CUT TO:

INT. TEAM BUS - DAY

They all drive together. Jackie sits in the front passenger-side seat, flanked by Chet behind her and Slimehead next to her.

FRANCIS
Brother Francis, have you spoken with your
mother recently?

NOAM
I have not.

FRANCIS
I might wonder what she would think of the
present situation.

NOAM
I'm not sure.

FRANCIS
Because it might bother me some.

JACKIE
A pity about the truck. It'd have been
nice if we could have fixed it, hm?

Francis scowls at Noam. It's silent and awkward. She clears her throat.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Slimehead, did you have a nice walk the
other night? Why do they call you

Slimehead, anyway?

SLIMEHEAD

Some potbellied redneck put a fastball in my ear. They said I had a skull like a Slimehead's because I survived.

JACKIE

Oh, the fish. Right. Well, I'm sorry about the segregation. That it exists, I mean to say.

More awkward silence.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

How long until we're there again?

Chet smiles to himself and they keep on driving.

EXT. PERIWINKLE FIELD - DAY

The field is bigger than the last, holding about five thousand, and it's FULL.

The opposing team, the PERIWINKLE BLUES, are all LITTLE PEOPLE. They stand in the dugout, waiting, serious as can be.

INT. PERIWINKLE FIELD, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Jackie grabs her glove, looks at the opposing dugout.

JACKIE

Is this all a joke? How much did we pay to play in this tournament?

CHET

Don't judge them on their look.

JACKIE

I didn't know they made bats that size.

Jackie jogs out onto the field, her teammates behind her.

She throws a few warm up pitches to Noam, shakes out her arm.

The lea doff HITTER comes up, as tall as Noam is in his squat.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

(to herself)
Alright, this will be interesting.

She winds up, pitches, and the batter puts a drag bunt down the first-base line. Jackie cuts off Noam to field it herself, but it's too late to throw. Safe.

Jackie gets into the stretch. As soon as she commits to the plate, the runner goes, and the SECOND BATTER hits a grounder between first and second. The lead runner advances to third.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
What the hell?

Back on the mound, all business, the THIRD BATTER is in the box. She sends her drop-ball. He hits a pop fly to left and the runner tags up from third to score.

SCOREBOARD: 1-0, BLUES, FIRST INNING.

CUT TO:

SCOREBOARD: 1-0, BLUES, NINTH INNING, NO OUTS.

Junior is on first. Doc Tally is at the plate.

Jackie paces in the dugout. Her team watches, bemused.

JACKIE
(to Noam)
Okay, grab your bat. Let me see your stance.

Noam gets his bat.

EXT. PERIWINKLE FIELD - DAY

Noam walks onto the on-deck circle. Doc watches a big, slow curve ball cross the plate.

UMPIRE
Strike one!

Doc hits the second pitch, a loopy screwball, off the end of his bat and it spins down the third-base line. The PITCHER throws it over the first baseman's head and Junior comes around to score.

Doc advances to second.

Noam's turn. He comes to the plate holding the bat gently in his hands.

JACKIE (O.S.)

Be tough!

He grips the bat harder, stands upright. The first pitch is a curve in the dirt. He takes it, and Doc advances to third.

Noam gets back in there. He squares to bunt. Another curve, inside, and he pulls back in time.

JACKIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Swing the bat!

UMPIRE

Ball two.

The third pitch, a high fastball. The pitcher shakes out his arm.

The fourth pitch, another fastball. In the dirt.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Take your base.

Man on first and third.

INT. PERIWINKLE FIELD, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Jackie's got her bat in hand. Slimehead gives her a look.

JACKIE

I'm just trying to boost his confidence.
What?

SLIMEHEAD

Do you want to win?

JACKIE

Sure.

SLIMEHEAD

You don't need to hit it out, here. Be smart.

JACKIE

Yeah, yeah.

She heads up the steps and waves to the crowd.

On the first pitch, Jackie swings as hard as she can and whiffs on a knuckle ball inches outside.

On the second, she swings hard and early on a curve.

She looks into the dugout. Slimehead shakes his head.

The third pitch is a curve in the dirt. It gets between the CATCHER's legs and rolls to the backstop.

Doc slides just in the nick of time.

SCOREBOARD: 2-1, H.O.D. WIN!

The H.O.D. run onto the field and celebrate together by calmly shaking hands. Jackie walks off the field alone.

EXT. PERIWINKLE FIELD, PARKING LOT - DAY

The team loads up the bus. Jackie stands off on her own, eating a hot dog. Hendricks stands next to her with a notepad. Chet looks on.

HENDRICKS

Your teammates tell me you're vain and egotistical. Any defense to that?

JACKIE

What? No, we just have a different approach to winning, that's all.

HENDRICKS

To that, some people have complained that you play too hard, that your kind of baseball takes all the fun out of it, that you're compensating for something. What do you say to them?

JACKIE

Who's to say whether or not I'm having fun? I have fun when I win.

HENDRICKS

Would you enjoy playing in the big leagues?

JACKIE
Enjoy? It's my dream.

HENDRICKS
Hmm.

He writes something down.

HENDRICKS (CONT'D)
Well, I think I have all I need here. I
thank you for your time. How about a
picture?

JACKIE
With the team?

HENDRICKS
No, just you alone is fine.

She takes her glove and poses. He snaps a shot.

HENDRICKS (CONT'D)
Thank you! I hope we'll be seeing you in
Los Angeles next week...good luck!

JACKIE
Thank you.

Hendricks whispers something to Hendricks, who then gets in his
shiny Model T.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
What?

CHET
Nothing.

NOAM
Well, where to next, sir?

CHET
Hendricks tells me we're set to play at
home. They want to show off what you've
got.

NOAM
Really?! I'll tell the others!

He runs onto the bus, giddy.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE DINING AREA - NIGHT

The team sits together at the long wooden table. Barney stirs a pot over a fire.

CHET

Okay, if we win tomorrow, we're back to the city for the playoff. Looks like that other team with what's-his-name --

JACKIE

-- Babe Ruth?

CHET

Is still in it. I don't about the others.

MARY (O.S.)

Darlings! Did you sneak in without telling me?

Mary is dressed for a flapper party, with pearls and a skirt.

NOAM

Mother, what are you wearing?!

MARY

I found it in the closet from before your father. Too old?

Noam covers his eyes and the other men look away.

MARY (CONT'D)

Hello, Chet. You look as delicious as I remember.

CHET

Hello, Ms. Mary.

MARY

Please, join me for dinner in the main house. You too, Jackie.

Confused, Jackie stands. Chet does not. Jackie tugs his sleeve and they follow Mary back toward the house.

Barney grabs a stack of bowls and ladles out the porridge to each man.

BARNEY

Have at thy porridge, gentlemen, please.

While it's hot.

Noam looks up at the house.

INT. SHILOH HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The ornate, aging Edwardian manor is detailed in dark wood and floral wallpaper.

Mary and Chet stand around the bookcase with ten WEALTHY MEN, laughing, flirting with Jackie with their eyes. The men smoke cigars, the women sip champagne.

Jackie sits alone on a couch next to the bar, smoking a cigar and rubbing her shoulder.

Chet chats up a DAPPER GENTLEMAN, to Mary's jealousy. She walks over to Jackie.

MARY

I don't know how you manage to deal with all of those boring, bearded lunatics.

JACKIE

Like your son, for example?

MARY

All of them. You know why they're here? They never had the courage to think for themselves. They lust after someone telling them what to do. That's why this place was so successful.

JACKIE

Hmm. So you're saying you never believed in any of this?

Mary pours Jackie a glass of champagne.

MARY

Oh, honey, lord, no. I'm a heathen, through and through. Did I tell you I once was a dancer? Never did pay the bills, though. So I married up.

Jackie downs the champagne and grimaces.

JACKIE

I can tell.

MARY

I know you're a very proud, "independent" woman, but listen to my advice. Make it easy on yourself.

She points to the men, who smile at them from across the room.

MARY (CONT'D)

Jackie, look at these men. All old money, and they came all the way out here just to meet you. Socialize! Find a rich husband and you, too, can one day have all this!

JACKIE

I'd rather not, if it's all the same.

MARY

You'd rather not what?

JACKIE

I didn't ask them to come.

MARY

You didn't ask them...? Ugh, you are the most block-headed person I have ever known!

This sounds familiar. She perks up, smiles.

JACKIE

I've heard that before. Excuse me.

The wealthy guests watch her leave, shocked.

EXT. SHILOH FIELD - NIGHT

Under the lights, Noam takes a ball from a bag, places it on a handmade wooden tee and takes his anger out on it. He hits the ball straight into the air.

JACKIE

Wow. I've never seen one of those before.

She looks at the tee from behind the backstop.

NOAM

My father invented it. Benjamin Walker Purnell. A great man.

He gets another ball, swings, pops it up just past second.

JACKIE

I thought he stole everyone's money, had relations with everyone's daughter, all of that? You're dropping your shoulder.

He repeats, and pops it up again. She goes onto the field and comes up from behind him. He jumps when she touches him.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Relax. Just swing as normal.

She gets a ball and does the same, only now she holds his shoulders level. He hits a line drive up the middle.

NOAM

My father swore to me that he did none of the accused.

JACKIE

And you believed him? I mean, he was sent to jail, and your mom has all of this money now --

NOAM

-- we are taught to maintain absolute faith in our fellow man.

Noam, avoiding eye contact, gets another ball and swings.

JACKIE

Maybe some people don't deserve your faith.

NOAM

Maybe it's not for them I maintain it.

Jackie grabs the bag of balls, moves the tee, and takes the mound. She lobs batting practice for him.

JACKIE

Try going to right field on the outside pitch.

She throws it soft and outside, holds her arm.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Now inside. Pull that to left.

She recoils in pain on this throw, and it hits him in the mouth, knocking him to the ground. She runs to help him up.

NOAM
I'm fine, I'm fine.

He wipes his bloody lip off on his sleeve and looks up at her.

NOAM (CONT'D)
Sister Jackie...Jackie...have you ever
kissed anyone before?

She drops him.

JACKIE
Oh, God.

NOAM
Have you?

JACKIE
That's a personal question, there, Noam.

NOAM
(excited)
You haven't!

JACKIE
It's not that I haven't so much as I don't
need to.

NOAM
See, all this time, I thought you were
having relations with Brother Chet. You
aren't, are you?

JACKIE
Ugh, lord, no.

He helps himself up, grabs his bat.

NOAM
Do you think you'd ever consider it? Not
with Chet, I mean, but...with me?

JACKIE
It's time for bed, Noam. This got a lot
less about your swing mechanics than I'd
like. So I'm going to say goodnight.

NOAM

Wait, can we talk...?

She grabs her glove and leaves.

EXT. SHILOH FIELD - DAY

The stadium is packed with WEALTHY MEN. Franklin sits behind home plate.

INT. SHILOH FIELD, HOME DUGOUT

Jackie stretches her shoulder and looks into the opposing dugout from the mound. Noam waits in the crouch.

NOAM

Don't you want to warm up?

JACKIE

No, let's get to it.

They're playing the CALIFORNIA BLACK-CAPS, a very serious, talented Negro League team. The LEADOFF hitter smiles at Jackie and gets in the box.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Smiling at me. Why don't you have a taste of this?

She winds up and tries to throw some "chin music", but the ball sails to the backstop at half her normal velocity. She shakes out her arm. The batter laughs.

LEADOFF HITTER

Hey, relax.

JACKIE

Yeah, yeah. C'mon, Jackie.

Her second pitch, slow and over the plate, is crushed to left...but Slimehead chases it down for a great catch at the wall.

Her next pitch is a hard liner to third. George knocks it down with his chest and throws the runner out in time. Noam walks toward the mound.

NOAM

You okay?

JACKIE

Yep.

JACKIE NEEDS HELP SEQUENCE

-Her weak fastball is lined back at the middle for a hit.

-Amos snags a grounder in the hole, flips it to Eggs for a double play.

-A BRUISER hits a home run to dead center. Jackie hangs her head, holds her arm.

-Noam hits an opposite-field line drive off the wall for a double, scoring Doc.

SCOREBOARD: 3-1, BLACK-CAPS, 7TH INNING.

INT. SHILOH FIELD, HOME DUGOUT - DAY

Everyone is crowded around Jackie, but for Francis, who sleeps on the bench.

NOAM

It's okay, Miss Jackie.

JACKIE

I've thrown too darn much.

SLIMEHEAD

What'd I tell you? You got a team behind you. Teams stick together.

JACKIE

I can't lift my darn arm.

They look to the snoring Francis.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

He's gonna be no better. I'll go out there.

JUNIOR

What about me? I can try.

JACKIE

You?

BARNEY
(to Noam)
You seen his arm. Give him a shot.

JACKIE
Come on. Now's not the time...

NOAM
Let's do it. You can give him some tips
like you gave me. That okay, Junior?

JUNIOR
Sure!

BARNEY
Easy, now, Junior.

Junior looks Jackie over, excited beyond belief.

EXT. SHILOH FIELD - DAY

SCOREBOARD: 3-2, BLACK-CAPS, 9TH INNING, TWO OUTS.

Junior's in the stretch, man on first. He looks at Jackie in the dugout and smiles, whips a fastball over the plate harder than Jackie ever could.

UMPIRE
Strike three!

The BATTER doesn't even get the bat off his shoulders. The H.O.D. jogs off the field.

INT./EXT. SHILOH FIELD, HOME DUGOUT - DAY

Chet looks on, pleased.

CHET
(to Jackie)
If I knew he could throw like that...

JACKIE
He couldn't, before.

The team arrives in the dugout, patting Junior on the shoulder. Jackie's the only one not smiling.

NOAM

(to Jackie)

I told the others some of what you told me. Let's see what else your brilliant advice does!

Eggs waves, grabs his bat and heads up to the plate.

Jackie watches in disbelief as Eggs hits the first pitch past the third baseman and down the line. He slides into second.

EXT. SHILOH FIELD - DAY

Noam follows, and takes the first pitch.

UMPIRE

Strike!

The second pitch is outside, and Noam goes with it, up and over the right field fence for a home run. The crowd ROARS.

SCOREBOARD: 3-2, H.O.D. GAME OVER.

The team mobs Noam. Jackie sneaks out of the dugout.

INT. MLB WEST COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE - DAY

A finely appointed room of leather and wood. Signed baseballs and jerseys. Pictures of TY COBB, HONUS WAGNER, ROGERS HORNSBY.

Landis talks on the phone, head in hand. A letter sits on his desk. Hendricks listens in.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Yes, I know. Charles, don't worry, everything is fine. I will see you tomorrow. Okay. So long.

He slams the phone down and holds up the piece of paper.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS (CONT'D)

What the hell-on-earth is this?

HENDRICKS

What?

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

(reading)

"With the arm of Walter Johnson and the wholesome looks of Barbara Stanwyck, Ms. Austin is liable to wield twice the star power of even her marvelous mother." We want the crowds to fear her, not to fall in love with her.

HENDRICKS

I tried. But there's something about that girl. I couldn't lie.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Do you realize the trouble I'm in? My owners think they're about to share the league with a woman, a negro, and a pack of dirty-faced Jews.

HENDRICKS

Uh, actually, sir, they're not Jewish.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Whatever the hell they are! You're fired, kid. Be gone before I get angry.

HENDRICKS

But I --

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Go!

Landis throws an autographed ball at him and Hendricks runs out.

INT. TEAM BUS - NIGHT

They drive on the highway, passing a sign that reads "LOS ANGELES, 20 Miles."

The mood is lighthearted at the back of the bus. Junior laughs with Slimehead and the others. Even Francis smiles.

Chet sits up front next to Jackie, reading the paper.

Barney looks at Jackie through the rear view mirror.

BARNEY

Miss, whatever you said to my boy, you sure got some kind of talent 'cuz it worked.

JACKIE

I just know my mechanics, is all.

BARNEY

Sure is nice having a young lady around, though. It used to fly, back in the old days.

(whispering)

I think Master Benjamin was enjoying himself a bit too much and it was just a collective decision.

JACKIE

You're saying you collectively booted your wives and daughters from the commune?

BARNEY

Sure, for their protection.

(whispering)

Don't tell 'em I told ya.

JACKIE

Jesus.

CHET

Uh-oh.

Chet taps her on the shoulder, offers her the newspaper. She looks it over.

JACKIE

Oh, no.

NOAM

What's the matter?

CHET

Don't show them.

NOAM

Don't show us what?

Jackie holds out the newspaper.

JACKIE

Just know that I didn't say any of this.

NEWSPAPER: "CRUEL PITCHER: 'I'M TRAPPED ON A TEAM OF FREAKS AND THE DUMB FANS KEEP ON CHEERING FOR ME!'"

Jackie's picture from the interview is underneath.

Slimehead grabs the paper, scans it.

SLIMEHEAD

You called me a black gorilla?

JACKIE

No. That's what I'm trying to tell you.

Noam grabs the paper.

NOAM

You called my father a thief and a deviant? You never even met my father.

JACKIE

Stop it. This is obviously a setup. I don't even talk like that.

NOAM

Brother Barney, pull over at the next town. Miss Jackie will be leaving us.

CHET

What?

JACKIE

Oh, now that I taught you how to play baseball, you throw me aside?

NOAM

It's not about that.

JACKIE

Sure it's not. Pull over, Barney. You don't get to be tough with me all of a sudden. I'll leave when I wanna.

BARNEY

I'll wait for the next town.

JACKIE

Right here is fine. I'll hitch.

Barney pulls the bus over, opens the door.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Goodbye everyone, and thanks.

She hops off, sticks her thumb out for the oncoming traffic.

SLIMEHEAD

Oh, let her go. Let her feel oppressed.

Barney drives on and everyone watches her disappear.

EXT. AUSTIN'S DRUG STORE - NIGHT

A FARMER's truck stops in front of the shop and Jackie hops out.

JACKIE

Thank you.

FARMER

Good luck out there.

She looks up at her father's store. The front window is broken and she walks through it.

INT. AUSTIN'S DRUG STORE - NIGHT

The place looks burglarized, boxes and scattered papers all over.

JACKIE

Father? You okay?

HARVEY AUSTIN (O.S.)

(crying)

Jackie...help...

Jackie steps over the mess, sees her father behind the counter, surrounded by empty bottles.

JACKIE

Oh, God. You drank the laudanum!

HARVEY AUSTIN

(slurring)

Not at once.

A stack of boxes has fallen on Harvey, and Jackie helps him out of the mess.

HARVEY AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Where were you?

JACKIE
Playing baseball.

HARVEY AUSTIN
I knew it. Lusting after fame, just like
your mother, everyone else be damned.

JACKIE
That's not exactly true. And you
encouraged me to leave!

HARVEY AUSTIN
And I don't regret it!
(crying)
Oh, I'm glad you're back. I'm so lonely.

Jackie cleans up the bottles.

JACKIE
Pick yourself up, man. What happened?

HARVEY AUSTIN
She came by, your mother.

JACKIE
She did? Here?

HARVEY AUSTIN
She was looking for you. I told her to go
to hell! She didn't take it well.

JACKIE
How was she?

HARVEY AUSTIN
Beautiful as ever.

JACKIE
Where'd she go?

HARVEY AUSTIN
"To the stadium." To hell with baseball!

He wanders off, mumbling to himself.

JACKIE
Pop, I'll be back.

Jackie heads out the door. She comes back, grabs a half-full
bottle of the opiate.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK - DAY

Jackie arrives via public bus at the new, rose-lined park. The place is packed with FANS.

Jackie, stretching her arm in pain, puts a drop of laudanum on her tongue and grows a bit wobbly.

A LITTLE GIRL on DADDY'S shoulders wears a Yankees hat.

Up ahead, a banner is strung over the street flashing the name of the game: "The Major League Baseball Amateur Invitational Championship!"

She holds her head, shaking out her arm

JACKIE

My God.

Jackie is greeted by a heavily make-upped USHER.

USHER

I know you. Aren't you a little late?

JACKIE

(slurring)

No. I'm just looking for Millie Austin.

CHECK-IN GIRL

Who?

JACKIE

What do you mean, who? Out of my way.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS (O.S.)

Beautiful, isn't it? I've long thought Los Angeles to be the perfect home for Major League Baseball. And here we are, so close to making that a reality. Hopefully you Westerners will be a bit more hospitable than some of the small town folks.

She heads to a big scrum of PRESS and FANS facing a stage.

EXT. MEDIA SCRUM - DAY

Commissioner Landis sits with Babe Ruth on a small platform flanked by potted trees.

Jackie spots Millie waiting behind one of the trees.

JACKIE
(to herself)
Oh my God. It's her.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
Now, ladies and gentlemen, I just wanted to acknowledge the presence of one of our great fictional baseball heroes, and a decent athlete in her own right, Miss Marvelous Millie Austin!

APPLAUSE. Millie waves and joins the two, an arrogant smile masking the bags under her eyes. The crowd hangs on their every word.

BABE RUTH
Looking better each time I see her.

JOURNALIST #1
You two know one another?

MILLIE AUSTIN
Babe was a consultant on my latest picture. Turns out I had more to teach him than he to me.

BABE RUTH
Can't deny it. Or complain.

Babe winks and the crowd LAUGHS.

JOURNALIST #1
And yet, Mr. Ruth, you once said Ms. Austin should "mind the dishes and leave the ball-playin' for the big boys." Care to comment on that?

BABE RUTH
Oh, no, you're mistaken. See, that was in reference to Millie's young daughter.

MILLIE AUSTIN
You all know my daughter, right? She's the one who merely embarrassed the Babe here on three fastballs.

The crowd laughs.

BABE RUTH

Hey, now, I was being generous. A favor to my old friend.

MILLIE AUSTIN

Oh, you didn't know she was my daughter. You're just getting old and she's good. And of course she is. She's got my genes.

Jackie perks up at this.

JOURNALIST #1

Did you teach your her how to pitch like that?

MILLIE AUSTIN

(smiling)

Oh, darling, I'm a golfer. I'm an actor. A singer. Heck, I'm ten things before I'm a baseball er. Though I'd like to think I had something to do with it.

JACKIE (O.S.)

Not true.

Everyone turns to see Jackie.

MILLIE AUSTIN

Jackie! My daughter, ladies and gentlemen. Isn't she beautiful?

JACKIE

Be honest with them. You hardly even write.

MILLIE AUSTIN

Oh, darling, that's not true. I never write.

The journalists LAUGH uncomfortably.

BABE RUTH

Well, you're both look like stars in my book, and you're welcome to join my team any time.

JACKIE

Oh, mind your business, tubby.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Well, there's that famous temper we've
been reading about.

Millie hops off the stage, takes Jackie aside. PHOTOGRAPHERS
snap away.

JACKIE

You too. You can stuff it. None of that
from the papers was true!

MILLIE AUSTIN

Come on, Jackie, let's cool down with a
walk.

They walk down a narrow pathway toward the huge, beautiful
stadium up ahead.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARKING LOT - DAY

They walk together, and Millie struggles for words.

MILLIE AUSTIN

I...your father...

JACKIE

It's okay. I understand. I was a mistake
and you don't love me but now you want to
use my fame to further your own career.

MILLIE AUSTIN

Oh, don't put it that way. It's not so
simple. And my career is fine.

JACKIE

Isn't it simple, though?

MILLIE AUSTIN

No. I'm just saying, there is a lot of
pressure. I had certain goals, and...

Mary, dressed in a garish sun dress, parasol in hand, stops
Jackie.

MARY

Jackie, where have you been?

JACKIE

Away.

MARY

You must talk to Noam. He's just a mess.

JACKIE

Since when do you care about him? Look, don't blame me. I'm just drifting.

MARY

Yes, but I --

She sees Millie.

MARY (CONT'D)

-- goodness, me, are you two sisters?

MILLIE AUSTIN

Oh, stop it, you sweet thing. I'm Jackie's mother!

Mary stops in her tracks, distracted from the matter at hand.

MARY

You don't say! How do you ever keep your skin so young and natural-looking?

MILLIE AUSTIN

Diet and exercise. I don't believe in supplements or cosmetics, which is funny because I used to live in a drug store...

Jackie slips away, shaking her head.

EXT. EXPOSITION FIELD, BLEACHERS - DAY

Jackie watches the House of David play catch in the outfield. The bleachers are filling out.

She puts another drop of laudanum on her tongue and sits back in her chair.

A SCOUT sits next to Jackie with binoculars around his neck, notepad on his lap. He has a credential on his shirt: "R. Owens, New York Yankees."

JACKIE

Up in the cheap seats, eh, scout?

SCOUT

Just keeping a low profile.

JACKIE

Yeah, yeah. Me too.

SCOUT

Aren't you, uh, supposed to be playing in this game?

JACKIE

I'm utterly retired.

He writes something in his notebook, confused.

INT. EXPOSITION PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

The opposing GENERALS stand along first, hands over their hearts. The H.O.D. remain on the bench, apart from Slimehead.

A tinny P.A. system BUZZES on.

PA ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Major League Baseball Amateur Invitational Playoffs between the Western Generals and the House of David Baseball Club!

At the mention of the H.O.D., the team jogs out to their positions and the crowd goes WILD.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, BLEACHERS - LATER

The game is underway, with the H.O.D. on the field first. Junior stretches on the mound.

Francis barks something at him from first base.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

On the mound for the House of David, Junior Dalager!

The scout writes down a note.

JACKIE

(to scout)

Good velocity, poor movement. Fastball is heavy on righties. If he doesn't involve his lower half, he leaves the ball up.

SCOUT

Thanks, I got it.

On the first pitch, a fastball. The umpire motions "strike."
Jackie, feeling the drops, dozes off.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, BLEACHERS - DAY

SCOREBOARDS: 3-0, H.O.D., ninth inning.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

Now batting, left fielder, Noam Purnell.

Jackie rubs her eyes, blinks. The scoreboard comes into focus.

JACKIE

Did I just sleep through that entire game?

Noam comes to the plate, bases loaded. The crowd CHEERS.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Why are you cheering him?

MEAN FAN

Oh, I don't know. I like him.

MEAN WIFE

He's not flashy. I relate to him.

Just then, a baseball from off of Noam's bat heads their way.
The lady catches it and cheers.

The H.O.D. walk onto the field and celebrate in their usual
sober way.

The scout makes a note.

SCOREBOARD: 4-3, H.O.D. wins.

PA ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Please remain in your seat as the House of
David take on the victor of Game 2.

JACKIE

(to scout)

How'd they look?

SCOUT

Until then, I was ready to fall asleep,
too. But that last one, he catches a good
game.

JACKIE

You gonna sign him?

SCOUT

We shall see. Gotta get a better look.
Too bad you aren't playing. Thought you
could've been something.

He leaves. Jackie drags herself out of the seat and goes toward
the exit, too.

EXT. EXPO DRIVE - DAY

Jackie drags her feet through the crowd in the grassy area
between the stadiums. People point at her.

Someone taps her on the shoulder. It's Hendricks and he looks
like he hasn't slept in a while, unshaven and sad.

HENDRICKS

I found you.

JACKIE

Yes?

HENDRICKS

Remember me? I used to work at the paper.

JACKIE

Oh. Yeah.

HENDRICKS

I wanted to let you know that I did not
write that article. It was Landis. He
wants to take you down.

JACKIE

Oh?

HENDRICKS

I tried to write an honest story about
you, next thing I know, he calls me into
his office. Got fired for doing my job!

JACKIE

Sorry.

BOOS from the field over. Jackie looks through the a gap in the outfield wall to see the "Dream Team" take their spots.

She lays on a park bench, closes her eyes. Hendricks sits next to her.

HENDRICKS (O.S.)

I have a joke. So this thirteen-year-old's workin' in a denim factory, and the kid next to him says, 'hey, Happy New Year...'

Jackie sighs.

HENDRICKS

So the thirteen-year old turns to his friend, says, "man, New Year's passed two weeks ago!"

Jackie looks over to the other field at the BOO of that crowd.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD 2 - DAY

Babe circles the bases, having just hit a home run.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXPO DRIVE - DAY

Hendricks continues. Jackie cups her ears.

HENDRICKS

'cuz they don't have calendars or clocks in there...so anyways, the friend takes a deep breath, opens his mouth to respond, but no words are comin' out...

JACKIE

Ughhhh, when will it end?

HENDRICKS

Turns out, his right arm's stuck in the power loom...anywho, he has to get it

amputated, and an infection spreads, the boy dies two days later. Not twelve years old. His last words? "I wish I knew my parents."

Jackie blinks. Waits for the punchline.

HENDRICKS (CONT'D)
That's it. That's the story.

JACKIE
Story? You said "joke."

HENDRICKS
Did I?

She walks off, shaking her head.

JACKIE
(to herself)
Journalist doesn't even know how to tell a simple story.

The H.O.D. carries their gear out toward field two.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Hey! Wait!

She jogs up to the team. Junior stands in his way.

JUNIOR
Miss Austin, you saw me pitch? I'm getting better --

JACKIE
-- yeah yeah yeah.
(to Hendricks)
Tell 'em.

HENDRICKS
The joke?

JACKIE
No, about the article.

HENDRICKS
Oh. Commissioner Landis fabricated the whole thing. He's scared you'll win and he'll have to honor the deal.

SLIMEHEAD

So you didn't say any of those things.

JACKIE

No! I think he's scared we'll win.

HENDRICKS

That's what I said.

NOAM

To be honest with you, I wasn't that mad.
I was just trying to act, you know...
Stronger. You didn't need to leave.

JACKIE

Something to think about.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS (O.S.)

Jackie!

Landis has his arm around her before she can react.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Care to join me for lunch?

Her stomach rumbles.

JACKIE

I wanted to watch this game.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

I'll spoil it for you. The Aces win.

JACKIE

Who are the Aces?

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

That's what I'm calling the team. The
California Aces.

He looks at Slimehead.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS (CONT'D)

As opposed to the Spades.

(beat)

Come on, my treat. I'll be nice, I
promise.

SLIMEHEAD

Go on, Jackie. Teach him a thing or two

about manners.

Head hung, she follows him to a nice spot across the street.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - DAY

At the next table over, CLARK GABLE, BUSTER KEATON, SPENCER TRACY, ROY MILAND, and BORIS KARLOFF smoke cigars.

They all turn and wave to Jackie and Landis.

CLARK GABLE

Hiya, Commish. Jackie! We love what you've been doing out there. A true star.

JACKIE

Hi Mr. Gable, boys. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Hello, men.

CLARK GABLE

Say, me 'n the boys were thinking maybe we could play a game, raise some money for some of the struggling families out there. Call ourselves the "Hollywood Stars."

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Sounds good, men. We'll talk later.

(to Jackie)

Friends of mine. Come along.

The Maître d' guides them to their table in the back, where Millie waits.

A tuxedoed WAITER stands at attention.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS (CONT'D)

(to Jackie)

Have a seat.

JACKIE

Hello, mother.

MILLIE AUSTIN

Jackie, I'm glad you came.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

(to waiter)

One porterhouse, rare, and a glass of Claret. For the ladies, two grapefruit juices and a Niçoise salad.

JACKIE
Actually, I'd like...

The waiter leaves.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
(to Jackie)
I'd like to read you something.

Landis pulls out a newspaper clipping, puts on glasses.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS (CONT'D)
From the Bugle. "The Aces highlight the major disconnect of the Major Leagues by collecting a roster of can't-lose, wealthy stars at a time when fans hunger for the Everyman." Would you say that's true?

JACKIE
I don't know.

MILLIE AUSTIN
I'll say. That's why they go to my pictures. We try to cast me against the sorriest-looking fella...

Jackie shoots her a look, unimpressed.

MILLIE AUSTIN (CONT'D)
...sorry. But it's true.

Landis lights a cigar.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
Do you still dream of the big leagues, Jackie?

JACKIE
Sure. Of course. Why?

The WAITER arrives with the wine and the juice. Both reach for the wine, but Landis gets it.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS
I was thinking we could find a compromise. As you surely know, I'm concerned that

the, uh, House of David will win, and that the public will expect me to reward that team with the prize.

JACKIE

So? Don't you need to increase attendance? We're popular. Give the fans what they want.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

(chuckling)

What, were it that simple. No, the league maintains a delicate balance, one of trust and honor, so forth and so on. Just help us make sure that they don't win so I don't have to answer to the owners, okay? If you do, we'll disguise you and sneak you onto some lucky squad disguised as an Indian.

JACKIE

Can I get that in writing?

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

No.

JACKIE

You really are a coward.

MILLIE AUSTIN

Do it, Jackie. It's decent money.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Listen to your mother. You'll help?

The waiter arrives with the salad. Jackie stands.

JACKIE

I will think about it.

(to Millie)

Mother, you never disappoint. I hope you both enjoy the game. Good day.

She leaves.

INT. EXPOSITION PARK - DAY

From the stands, Jackie watches Slimehead and Noam stretch while Chet paces back and forth.

JACKIE
Anyone order a pitcher?

NOAM
You made it back!

Chet smiles, but is still concerned.

JACKIE
Yeah, what'd you think he'd do?

SLIMEHEAD
More I was hoping you'd do something to
him.

She hops onto the field. She pats Chet on the shoulder.

JACKIE
I knew he was a snake. Really, he's just
a coward. Hear that, Chet?

Chet's distracted.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Chet.

CHET
Hmm?

JACKIE
Never mind.
(to Junior)
How's the pitcher feeling?

Junior stretches out his arm.

JUNIOR
I could go a couple innings.

NOAM
(to Jackie)
How are you feeling?

JACKIE
I'm medicated. I'll be okay.

She stretches her arm, does a squat.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD - DAY

Jackie looks at a full crowd. Landis sits front and center.

NOAM

Anxious? I mean, don't you want to play?

JACKIE

I don't trust myself.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

On the mound for the Aces, Lefty Gomez!

Mild cheers for the star southpaw, who waves sarcastically.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Leading off for House of David, Noam Purnell.

Noam heads up the steps to great CHEERS.

SLIMEHEAD

Times really have changed.

JACKIE

Good luck. Hope he doesn't throw at you.

DOC

Thanks.

He nods, grabs his bat.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD - DAY

The ball gets thrown around the infield. Jimmie Foxx walks it back to the mound.

JIMMIE FOXX

Ugh, I wish I were at my ranch with the wife.

LEFTY GOMEZ

Yeah, let's get this over with.

Gomez gets the ball, the men take their positions, and he goes into the windup. The first pitch is outside by a foot.

UMPIRE

Strike!

Noam looks back at the umpire. Strange.

INT. EXPOSITION PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Jackie shakes her head at the call.

JACKIE

(to Chet)

Your uncle paid off the umpires, didn't he?

Chet shrugs.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD - DAY

The next pitch, a curve ball in the dirt. Noam twitches, but doesn't move his hands.

UMPIRE

That's a swing. Strike two!

Gomez grimaces, disagreeing with the call.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, CROWD - DAY

Sitting next to Millie and the scout behind the Aces' dugout, Landis smiles, pleased with himself.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD - DAY

On the third pitch, Noam hits a high chopper to third. Jimmie charges at half-energy, flips the ball to first three steps too late.

1B UMPIRE

You're out.

NOAM

Oh. Really?

1B UMPIRE

Yes.

The crowd BOOS. Noam jogs off. Babe and Gomez shrug at one another.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

Now batting, shortstop, Amos Edwards!

Amos steps up to the plate. Gomez, with a smirk on his face, pitches a ball way above Amos' head.

UMPIRE

Strike!

The next pitch bounces a foot in front of the plate. The umpire looks over at Landis in the stands, who nods.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Strike two.

On the third pitch, a foot outside again, Amos swings in futility.

INT. EXPOSITION PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Jackie shakes her head.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

Batting third, Slimehead Burke!

SLIMEHEAD

This'll be fun.

JACKIE

What the hell's he need anything else if these umpires are gonna call this game?

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Slimehead's at the plate. The first pitch is a fastball up in the zone. Slimehead swings and can't reach it. Gomez chuckles.

The second pitch is out of the zone again. Slimehead swings but can't reach it.

UMPIRE

Strike two.

The third pitch bounces in front of the plate. Off of the bounce, however, Slimehead crushes it over the left field for a home run. The crowd CHEERS.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Foul ball!

SLIMEHEAD

Oh, you're kidding me.

Slimehead gets back in the box. Gomez throws another one out of the zone. Slimehead swings intentionally early and walks off, glaring at the umpire.

The Aces jog off the field.

The angry fans throw trash onto the field at the umpire. He's hit in the leg by a beer bottle and looks to Landis for help.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, CROWD

Landis looks around, unsure of what to do. The scout closes his notebook and sighs.

SCOUT

I might as well leave at this rate, huh?

MILLIE AUSTIN

Yeah, come on, Ken, this is dreadfully boring.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Oh, alright.

He nods at the umpire, despite himself.

INT. EXPOSITION PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT

Slimehead goes into the dugout, shaking his head.

JACKIE

Seems rigged.

SLIMEHEAD

What else is new?

JACKIE

(to Junior)

Good luck out there. Don't be intimidated. They're just human.

Junior nods. He jogs out.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD - DAY

Junior looks at the mean-looking Frankie Frisch and gulps. He looks into the dugout and sees the Aces laughing at him.

BABE RUTH

Don't be a wet blanket, kid! Serve it up!

Junior nods, gets on the mound. His first pitch, a fastball, is sent right back up the middle.

This time, Doc's there to at least throw it back in.

BABE RUTH (O.S.)

Almost lost you on that one!

Junior gets the ball back from Amos. His face is white. His hand shakes.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

Now batting, Kiki Cuyler.

Junior gets on in the stretch to face Cuyler, takes a breath.

KIKI CUYLER

(to Noam)

He gonna be okay?

NOAM

Hope so.

On the first pitch, Kiki hits a grounder to second. Eggs flips it to Amos, Amos throws to Francis at first. Double play.

Junior sighs a breath of relief.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

Now batting, Babe Ruth!

Babe struts to the plate with all the confidence in the world.

BABE RUTH

(to Noam)

Whaddya want, left field? Right? How about I go opposite for ya?

Sure enough, on the first pitch, Babe launches one over the left field fence. He tips his cap to Noam and circles the bases.

JUNIOR'S DEMISE SEQUENCE

-Jimmie Foxx hits a home run.

-Wally Berger hits a double off the right field wall. Jackie fields it and lobs it in.

-Pepper Martin hits one to the wall, but Doc catches it.

SCOREBOARD: 2-0, ACES, SECOND INNING.

INT. EXPOSITION PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Junior hyperventilates on the bench. Noam pats him on the shoulder.

NOAM

They're just getting lucky, Junior. Don't be so hard on yourself.

Noam looks to Jackie for help. Chet's beside himself.

NOAM (CONT'D)

What should we do? It's hopeless.

CHET

I need this money, folks. You have no idea of how badly I need this money.

JACKIE

You were betting against the squad comprised of some of the greatest talent in baseball history?

CHET

I thought uncle would go easy on me. Aw, Jackie, what's the big idea? Why don't you just pitch already?

JACKIE

Yeah, yeah. That okay with you, Junior?

Junior nods, still in shock.

NOAM

Do we have any chance?

JACKIE

Just keep playing how you normally do. Slow and boring.

Eggs nods, grabs his bat.

On the field, Doc puts down a bunt and hustles out a single.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD - DAY

Doc takes his lead. Eggs nods his way, and Doc nods back.

On the first pitch, Doc goes: a hit-and-run. Amos hits a soft grounder past second, and Doc advances to third.

Babe Ruth takes the throw in from right, actually yawns.

PA ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Catcher, Noam Purnell.

CHEERS from the crowd.

On the first pitch, Noam hits a fly ball to left. Doc tags up and scores.

The scout makes a note. Jackie watches from the dugout.

Slimehead comes to the plate.

The PA SCREECHES, hurting everyone's ears.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)
(garbled)
Now batting, Slimehead Burke.

Slimehead digs in. The first pitch is up at his chin and he falls to the ground. He laughs.

SLIMEHEAD
That's 'cuz I ripped a homer off of you.
I understand. No hard feelings.

Gomez laughs. Gets back onto the rubber. His next pitch is a curve ball that breaks toward Slimehead. He pulls it to left for a single, sending Eggs to third.

SCOREBOARD: 3-2, ACES, 5TH INNING, ONE OUT.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)
(garbled)
Now batting, Jackie Austin!

There is the sound of a hammer HITTING the PA system and it SCREECHES, then goes dead.

Jackie comes up with runners on first and third. She looks at Landis, takes a deep breath, and steps into the box.

On the first pitch, she hits a weak grounder right back to Gomez. Gomez throws to short, and short goes to first. Double play.

INT. EXPOSITION PARK, HOME DUGOUT - DAY

Jackie jogs back to the dugout, where she's stopped by Noam.

NOAM
Get 'em on the mound.

JACKIE
Yeah.

She smiles, grabs her glove.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD - DAY

Jackie looks around, sees her mother in the front row, waving. Landis is next to her.

She sends a weak fastball. The pitch is right down the middle and slow. Luke Appling whiffs hard.

On the second similar pitch, he hits a line drive in the left field gap for a double.

Jackie shakes out her arm. Mickey Cochrane, the hulking catcher, comes up.

Jackie sends another weak one. Cochrane pulls it over the right field fence, jogs around the bases.

Jackie looks into the stands, waves to Landis.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, CROWD - DAY

Landis waves back. The crowd MURMURS, confused.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD - DAY

Noam jogs to the mound.

NOAM
What's going on?

JACKIE
Nothing. I'm fine.

NOAM
You don't seem fine.

JACKIE
Nope. I am.

Noam jogs back. CHICK HAFEY, the bespectacled Red, comes to bat. Jackie lobs another in there and he hits a line drive, but it's caught by Slimehead.

Lefty Gomez comes up, swings at the first pitch and it goes straight into the air, caught by Noam.

Frisch comes up, gets the same pitch. He hits a grounder that George scoops. He throws out Frankie just in the nick of time.

Jackie kicks the dirt, frustrated, and walks off the field.

SCOREBOARD: 5-2, ACES, EIGHTH INNING.

INT. EXPOSITION PARK, VISITOR DUGOUT - DAY

Noam stops Jackie at the top step as she heads out. Holding her arm.

NOAM
Jackie, it's okay. Relax. The hits are just falling in.

JACKIE
Yeah. I'm just a little sore.

NOAM
And they're pretty good.

Amos comes up to the plate. Jackie has one last drop of her medicine, shakes out her whole body.

JACKIE
Let's go!

Amos hits a grounder up the middle for a single.

Noam grabs his bat, heads out there.

CHET

Well?

Jackie shakes out her arm.

JACKIE

Well, what?

CHET

Not looking too good, huh?

JACKIE

Mind your own business.

A few CHEERS for him this time.

CHET

He really idolizes you.

JACKIE

Don't worry about it.

Noam hits a blooper over first and hustles into second for a double. Amos is at third.

CHET

Didn't take you for a game-thrower.

JACKIE

Look at Babe Ruth over there. Went from pitcher to right field for good enough reasons. It's spring, though, and he's getting paid. His body's old. Is it worth fighting against something unmovable like time, running around in right? Or should he just take it easy, treat himself well, camp out at first?

SLIMEHEAD

You ain't making any sense.

Slimehead walks to the plate. He hits the first pitch up the middle. Amos scores.

Her mother yawns in the front row. Jackie goes up to bat.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, FIELD - DAY

Gomez looks tired, shakes out his arm.

COCHRANE
(to Jackie)
You guys are crafty. Pests, even.

JACKIE
Yeah.

The first pitch, a screw ball, and Jackie whiffs hard.

COCHRANE
Blew your arm out, huh? A shame.

She steps out of the box, takes a breath. Babe Ruth yawns at first.

Jackie locks eyes with Noam. He leads off third.

UMPIRE
Come, now, batter.

Jackie digs in. On a loopy curve ball, she squares to bunt. A safety squeeze down first. Babe has to hustle.

Noam hustles down the line, a play at the plate! The crowd CHEERS and Noam slides...

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Safe!

Jackie pumps her fist.

BABE RUTH
Biggest stage of your career and you bunt?

JACKIE
Big deal.

BABE RUTH
I hate running.

JACKIE
Obviously.

She pats him on the rear.

PA ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Now batting, George Anderson!

Gomez winds up. The first pitch: a low curve. Ball.

BABE RUTH

Your mother talks about you, you know.
You're better than she was.

JACKIE

She never really played real ball.

BABE RUTH

No, I mean in other ways. I got kids,
too. It's not right, but it's easier to
live your own life.

JACKIE

I'll end up doing the same, I'm sure.

BABE RUTH

Maybe not.

The next pitch, another curve: George hits it over the fence.

JACKIE

George...?!

Jackie trots the bases. Noam is the first at the plate to
congratulate her with a hug.

Jackie catches herself enjoying the moment, heads back to the
dugout.

SCOREBOARD: 6-5, H.O.D., BOTTOM OF THE NINTH INNING.

LOU GEHRIG comes to the plate to CHEERS, looking every bit the
All-American Hero. Jackie's stunned.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Lou Gehrig off the bench?! Where'd he
come from?

LOU GEHRIG

(to Noam)

Look at you all! You must be very proud
to have made it all this way.

NOAM

Yes, sir. Thank you. Nice to meet you.

LOU GEHRIG

Same. Quite an accomplishment. I think

you got a future in baseball.

She sends a drop ball his way, and he immediately hits it off the right field wall for a stand-up double.

Frisch is at the plate. A fastball, slow but not loopy, misses low. She shakes out her arm.

She sends another

And another.

A curve ball. It sticks in the dirt in front of the plate.

UMPIRE

Ball four!

Frisch jogs to first. Noam and the infielders visit her on the mound.

NOAM

This is it. No pressure.

She looks at Commissioner Landis in the stands. He nods. Millie is next to him, bored.

JACKIE

They want me to throw the game.

NOAM

They do?

JACKIE

Truth is, even if we won, they'd figure out a way to bar us from the league anyway.

NOAM

Well, whatever is best for you is best for us.

JACKIE

Yeah? Guys?

FRANCIS

I support Brother Noam.

George and Eggs nod.

NOAM

Sure. I'm not concerned about the prize money or any of that. I think we're all just happy to play.

JACKIE

You're willing to give that up for me? God, you're all inhuman.

FRANCIS

I'd argue that we're actually very human.

Jackie takes the baseball, wipes her feet on the mound. The infielders take their positions.

Kiki Cuyler walks to the plate.

Jackie winds up, sends a weak fastball inside.

UMPIRE

Strike!

Noam calls for a curve. Jackie places it right down the middle and Cuyler misses it.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Strike two!

In the stands, Landis folds his arms, annoyed.

Frisch goes on the next pitch, a fastball in the dirt. Noam can only block it. Lou stays at second.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

One and two...

Cuyler smiles, digs in. Squares early for a bunt.

Jackie throws a drop ball, and Cuyler bunts it right down the third base line. George tries to throw him out, but Kiki beats it. Bases loaded.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Safe!

Jackie stretches out her arm, wipes her brow.

The PA system comes back to life with a SHRIEK. Jackie comes to attention.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, with the bases
loaded and one out in the bottom of the
ninth...Babe Ruth!

Babe Ruth comes to the plate. He dwarfs Noam in size.

He digs into the dish, kicks dirt onto Noam's cleats.

BABE RUTH

Oh, I'm sorry.

NOAM

Don't mention it.

Frisch gets a lead from third, clapping his hands, trying to get
into Jackie's head.

Noam calls for an outside fastball, and Jackie nods.

She goes from the stretch, sends it as hard as she possibly can,
grunting, pained. Outside.

From his knees, Noam throws the ball to third, picking off
Frisch.

3B UMPIRE

You're out!

FRISCH

Come on!

The crowd CHEERS. Frisch walks off the field in anger.

BABE RUTH

(to Noam)

You got a nice swing, there, kid. I think
you got a future in baseball.

NOAM

Thanks, that's what Mr. Gehrig said. I
owe it all to Miss Jackie.

BABE RUTH

Say, you ain't getting cozy with your her?
Because that's against the rules.

Babe gets back in the box.

NOAM

Rules?

BABE RUTH
(laughing)
I'm joking, of course. I wouldn't blame
you one bit.

Noam gets into the squat. Jackie gets on the mound.

BABE RUTH (CONT'D)
Love her, do you?

Ruth doesn't even look at Jackie when she goes into the windup.
This pisses her off. She throws even harder.

The first pitch is a fastball low and in.

UMPIRE
Strike! One and one.

BABE RUTH
I asked you a simple question. You love
her, or what?

JACKIE
Hey, you playing, or what?

BABE RUTH
Mind you, I'm a happily married man. See,
that's what you gotta do, you gotta lock
'em down.

Jackie, really furious, goes into the windup. The curve ball
heads right at Ruth and breaks over the plate at the last
second.

UMPIRE
Strike two!

BABE RUTH
You know what, ol' Babe can take a hint.
You're not ready to talk about this.
Another time, then.

Jackie goes into the windup, sends a drop ball down the middle.

Babe clips the top of it, hitting a roller back to Jackie. She
tosses it to second, and Amos flings it to first, easily
doubling up the slow Ruth.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)
And the House of David wins!

The crowd CHEERS and the H.O.D. rush the field, celebrating for real. They jump on top of one another and Noam tweaks his back.

Noam takes Jackie in the arms, holds her tight.

NOAM

I'm glad you didn't throw the game.

JACKIE

Yeah. Look at him.

They look at Landis.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARK, CROWD - DAY

Scared and nervous, Landis hurries out.

EXT. EXPO DRIVE - DAY

Jackie and Noam, holding his back, walk toward the team bus with the team. Chet catches up with Mary in tow.

They're surrounded by FANS.

JACKIE

(to Noam)

You okay?

NOAM

Just celebrated too hard.

JACKIE

Here, it'll help.

She puts a drop of medicine on his tongue.

NOAM

Thanks.

CHET

I can't find him.

NOAM

(slurring)

Brother Chet, we won. Be happy.

JACKIE

Well, let's wait to see what they say. I

wouldn't hold it against his uncle to try to wiggle out of this.

SLIMEHEAD

True. As long as I get my money I don't care what he does. I'm about ready for my retirement.

Millie and Harvey arrive, smiling.

MILLIE AUSTIN

Look who I found.

JACKIE

The more I look at the two of you, the more I wonder how that ever happened.

Harvey is filled with pure joy.

HARVEY AUSTIN

Jackie, love is completely blind.

MILLIE AUSTIN

And I was young and desperate.

Harvey hangs his head.

MARY

I understand completely.

The scout pushes his way to Noam.

SCOUT

Hi, I'm Ralph Owens with the New York Yankees. Can I have a word with you, sir?

NOAM

Oh?

The scout pulls Noam to the side.

Jackie looks across the street.

JACKIE

Look who it is!

Landis is cornered in front of the French Restaurant, face red.

JOURNALIST #1

Commissioner Landis! When will the House

of David be joining --

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

I'm afraid I have no answers for you at the moment. Not until I meet with my board.

JOURNALIST #1

What about the prize money?

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

Correct. Same.

HENDRICKS

So you're just running away? What about your promises? Teams paid entry fees.

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

I can answer questions about the game, but...

JOURNALIST #1

How about that Jackie Austin?

COMMISSIONER LANDIS

I'm here to announce that due to lack of physical and emotional toughness, as of today, Jackie Austin is officially and irrevocably barred from major league baseball.

JACKIE

Big deal. I'm retired.

The crowd latches onto this, throwing a million QUESTIONS her way, leaving Landis alone.

EXT. EXPOSITION PARKING LOT - DAY

Jackie waves off the two reporters.

JACKIE

I'm not ready to answer questions.
(to Hendricks)
But thank you.

HENDRICKS

Don't mention it.

CHET

I will handle any further questions you may have, thank you.

They jump on him and leave Jackie alone just as Noam arrives.

JACKIE

What'd the scout say?

NOAM

He wanted me to sign with them. What do you think?

JACKIE

I think you should.

NOAM

What about us?

JACKIE

I don't know what that's supposed to mean.

He takes her hand tenderly. She takes it away.

NOAM

I'd like to take you to lunch.

JACKIE

Ugh, disgusting. You're being assertive.

She looks back at the walkway from whence they came and sees her parents arguing, arms crossed. She smiles.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Alright. Fine.

NOAM

Yes! Okay. Great. Let's go. I feel really, really good right now.

JACKIE

Almost too good.

Noam puts his arm around her and she slaps it away. They walk back toward the restaurant.

FADE TO BLACK

VITA

The author was born in West Hills, California. He obtained a dual Bachelor's degree in Screenwriting and Italian Studies from California State University, Northridge in 2005. He joined the University of New Orleans Creative Writing Workshop to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting, which he completed under the supervision of Henry Griffin.