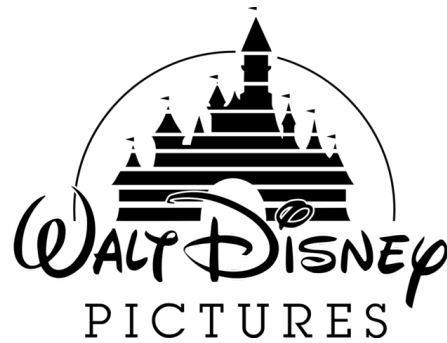


"THE FLUKE"

Written by

Jeffrey Hause & David Hines



Steve White
c/o Warden, White & Associates
8444 Wilshire Blvd. 4th floor
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
(213) 852-1028

Walt Disney Pictures
500 S Buena Vista St.
Burbank, CA 91521
(818) 560-1000

"THE FLUKE"

FADE IN ON:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

It's the seventh game of the World Series, the Chicago Cubs against the Detroit Tigers. The stadium is rocking in anticipation, HARRY CARAY calling the game from the broadcast booth.

HARRY CARAY

... Here we are - top of the ninth, two out, Tigers on second and third. The Cubs lead has been cut to one, and they've called in their ace reliever, Wallace Marsh, to shut the door and nail down the world championship.

On the mound we see WALLACE MARSH. In his mid-thirties, he stares in at the catcher, a look of determination on his face. He doesn't flinch as the fans begin to chant his name.

FANS

Wallace! Wallace! Wallace!

Getting the sign, Wallace straightens up. He glances at the runners before turning his concentration back to the batter.

HARRY CARAY (O.S.)

This is it, seventh game of the World Series on the line - what every boy dreams about. And here's the pitch...

Wallace winds up and delivers...

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

... the ball landing halfway to the plate and rolling to a halt at the batter's feet. The batter is ten-year old KEVIN NORMAN, the star pitcher for the Little League team Wallace manages, who are gathered here to practice. Kevin picks up the ball, firing back to Wallace, who flinches as the ball smacks into his glove. Awakened from his daydream, he shrugs and laughs.

WALLACE

Haven't quite figured out the grip yet...

Kevin rolls his eyes as Wallace delivers another pitch. This one floats in over the plate - Kevin swinging and knocking a long fly off the left field fence, a few feet foul. The LEFT FIELDER is too busy playing airplane (arms outstretched, making motor noises with his mouth) to shag it down.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

You're swinging too soon. You're too far out in front.

KEVIN

Throw it faster. You throw like a girl.

WALLACE

(calls to the dugout)

Okay, next up! And let's hear a little chatter out there!

Kevin frowns, tossing aside his bat in disgust as another kid (SECOND BASEMAN) steps into the batters box. Wallace winds up and delivers... the kid driving the ball over the center field fence. Wallace watches it go, amazed.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

How come you guys don't hit like this during the games?

SECOND BASEMAN

Are you kidding? Those kids throw hard.

WALLACE

(sighs)

Next...

BILLY AARON steps into the box. A small, frail looking boy with an uncertain frown on his face, all the other kids immediately begin to razz him.

KEVIN

Everybody scoot in - Billy's up!

SECOND BASEMAN

We should go sit in the dugout, he's not going to hit anything.

WALLACE

All right, cut the chatter. Are you ready, Billy?

Billy nods tentatively, Wallace floating a ball over the plate. Billy closes his eyes and swings - missing the ball by a mile, his batting helmet slipping down over his eyes. The other kids all laugh. Wallace calls to Billy patiently.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Relax, Billy. You're too tense.
Loosen your grip a little, and just
watch the bat meet the ball.

Wallace pitches, Billy swings - the bat flying out of his hands, Wallace ducking as it narrowly misses his head. The kids laugh even harder.

KEVIN

Relax, coach - watch the bat meet
your head.

This really cracks the kids up, Wallace and Billy exchanging depressed frowns.

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE PARKING LOT - DAY

After practice, Billy walks with Wallace to his car.

WALLACE

Your swing looked a lot better
today. At least the times you held
onto the bat.

BILLY

Sorry about almost killing you. I
was wondering if I could get a ride
home? My mom has to work late
again.

WALLACE

Sure. I have to stop by the card
shop first. Do you mind?

Wallace loads the baseball equipment into the trunk of his car, shuffling a couple dozen unopened boxes of candy bars to fit it in.

BILLY

I guess not. But I think I've had
enough baseball for one day.

Wallace looks to another field, where there's a game in progress.

WALLACE

You can never get too much baseball, Billy. The sting of the ball in your glove... the taste of fresh hot dogs... the smell of freshly mown grass...

BILLY

... The stink of an overflowing outhouse.

WALLACE

(frowns)

Yeah, well they're supposed to pump those out next week. One day you'll learn to love the game as much as I do.

(grins)

In fact, you even remind me of myself when I was your age.

Wallace drops the bat bag, which spills open, bats clattering and rolling everywhere. Billy watches, nodding.

BILLY

That's encouraging.

CUT TO:

INT. WALLACE'S CAR - DAY

Wallace and Billy sit in the front seat, chatting as they head downtown. The back seat is stacked with more unopened boxes of candy bars.

WALLACE

So if you hate baseball so much why did you join Little League?

BILLY

My dad visited for Christmas and he gave me a bat.

WALLACE

And you feel obligated to use it?

Billy grins, giving Wallace a sidelong glance.

BILLY

Not as much as my mom. She felt obligated to use it on my dad when he snuck into her room Christmas Eve.

WALLACE

(laughs)

So what would you rather be doing
than whizzing bats past my head?

BILLY

I like to draw.

WALLACE

Why won't your mom let you draw,
then?

BILLY

She did. Until she saw the drawing
I did of her and dad Christmas Eve.

Wallace laughs again. They stop at a light next to a large
diesel truck. Billy looks to Wallace pointedly.

BILLY (CONT.) (CONT'D)

Why aren't you married, Wallace?

Wallace leans back, giving a world-weary sigh.

WALLACE

I'm a lone wolf, Billy. I have
dreams and ambitions. I can't be
tied down to a wife and kids. I'm a
man on the move, I can't have
anything cloud my vision.

The light changes to green, the diesel truck shifting gears.
The exhaust pipe, angled directly into Wallace's open window,
sprays the inside of the car with thick black smoke.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP - DAY

Wallace's car pulls up, smoke still wafting out the windows.
It parks in front of a small shop, a sign identifying it as
'BASEBALL CARDS AND STUFF'. Wallace and Billy climb out of
the car, coughing.

INT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP

Wallace and Billy enter the shop, which is decorated like a
shrine to the Chicago Cubs. Sitting quietly behind the
counter is CLINTON RUSSELL, Wallace's lazy employee, reading
a copy of 'Penthouse'. Wallace looks around the vacant store,
frustrated.

WALLACE

How much did we make today,
Clinton?

CLINTON

I made minimum wage - you made
considerably less.

WALLACE

Did the shipment come in?

Clinton nods distractedly.

CLINTON

Yeah. I didn't get around to
unpacking it...

(studies magazine at odd
angle)

... I've been too busy.

Shaking his head, Wallace steps to a pile of boxes, cracking one open. He pulls out a poster, unrolling it to reveal an action photo of Ken Davis, the Cubs' slugging outfielder, taking a mighty cut. Wallace grins, admiring the photo.

WALLACE

Ken Davis. This guy is what
baseball's all about, Billy. He's
decent, hardworking, self-
sacrificing...

CLINTON

... Overpaid, overrated, overweight
and over-the-hill.

Wallace ignores Clinton, hanging the poster on the wall.

WALLACE

I always wanted to be a pro
ballplayer, but this is the closest
I could get. You know, sometimes
late at night I still dream I could
pitch for the Cubs. I think if I
could do that I might give
anything...

He turns wistfully - only to find Billy and Clinton not listening, absorbed in the copy of 'Penthouse'. Wallace gently steers Billy away.

BILLY

I only read it for the cartoons!

WALLACE

Do you have to read that stuff in here?

CLINTON

It's informative. You learn how to treat women, what they like, certain personality disorders...

BILLY

Wallace doesn't like women. They cloud his vision.

CLINTON

More like they fog up his glasses.

Billy turns to Wallace eagerly.

BILLY

Maybe you should go out with my mom, Wallace. She likes baseball, too. She's five-eight, 125 pounds, bats right, throws right...

CLINTON

(leering)

Is she a switch-hitter?

Wallace and Billy turn, giving Clinton a scornful look.

WALLACE

All you ever think about is one thing.

(to Billy)

So - does your mom like the Cubs?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WALLACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wallace steps into his apartment and turns on the light. It doesn't look much different than the store - interior decoration by Major League Baseball. He carries several newspapers, turning on the TV to ESPN SportsCenter and pressing the button on his answering machine. He takes a seat as the machine plays his messages.

WALLACE'S MOM (ON MACHINE)

Wallace, this is your mother. Just calling to let you know I'm still alive.

Wallace pulls the sports section out of each newspaper, throwing the rest in the trash. He grimaces at the headline 'CUBS' SLUMP CONTINUES', tossing the paper aside in disgust. The machine beeps, another message playing.

WALLACE'S MOM (ON MACHINE) (CONT'D)

It's your mother again. Don't bother to call back. I'm sure you're busy.

The machine beeps and continues as Wallace steps into the kitchen, taking a kiddie frozen dinner from the freezer and popping it into the microwave.

WALLACE'S DAD (ON MACHINE)

Wallace - this is your father. What did you say to your mother? She's awfully upset... call me at work tomorrow.

Wallace sighs, giving the machine a tired look. It beeps and continues as he begins to cut a couple of baseball cards off the back of the frozen dinner box.

SECRETARY (ON MACHINE)

Mr. Marsh? This is Mrs. Carlson from Little League. I'm pleased to inform you that your team has sold more candy than any other in our candy drive, and has won the opportunity to run fielding drills at Wrigley Field before the Cubs game this Friday night. Call me for the details. And congratulations.

Wallace jumps up excitedly, pumping his fist like Kirk Gibson after a home run.

WALLACE

Yes! I knew we could do it! 750 boxes of candy! This'll be such a treat for the kids.

Wallace steps to the hall closet, opening the door to reveal it stocked to the ceiling with unopened boxes of candy. Wallace breaks one open, treating himself to a victory candy bar.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

My Little League team taking infield practice at Wrigley Field!
(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Everyone's going to be so
impressed...

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

Wallace's team in action: A ball rolls through the shortstop's legs... confused outfielders let balls drop between them... the dazed Second Baseman is attended to in the infield by a DOCTOR. Wallace stands in the dugout, arms crossed, as a couple of fathers stand behind him. They are led by ED NORMAN, Kevin's large, intense father, who speaks through the chain-link fence.

ED

(sincerely)

The team's playing a lot better
this week, Wallace.

WALLACE

Kevin's pitching a great game.

FATHER #1

19 - 19. We might actually win one.
And against the defending champs!
(giggles)
That'll really piss off their
parents!

The fathers perk up at the crack of the bat, watching the arc of the ball. As it comes down they grimace and groan, the Doctor running past them onto the field.

FATHER #2

Serves you right, Sammy - get your
finger out of your nose and use two
hands!

Wallace turns to the fathers, irritated.

WALLACE

No offense, guys, but what are you
doing down here? Shouldn't you be
in the stands with the other
parents?

ED

We like to be close to the kids. We
like to give them our support. And
we like to look up the womens'
dresses from this angle.

Wallace turns, looking into the stands and shaking his head.

WALLACE

You guys are worse than the kids.

FATHER #2

Where do you think they learned it from? Incoming - three o'clock.

The men turn to see KATHY AARON approaching. Billy's mother, Kathy is in her early thirties, and very attractive. The fathers all smile, sucking in their guts as she walks by. Even Wallace perks up, interested. She smiles as she passes.

KATHY

Sorry, guys - I wore pants today.

Kathy takes a seat in the stands, the fathers all exhaling as they let their stomachs out again.

WALLACE

Who is that?

ED

Kathy Aaron, Billy's mom. I saw her at tryouts last spring. Lace panties.

The other fathers groan appreciatively.

WALLACE

Divorce has turned Little League games into the singles bars of the 90's.

The UMPIRE's voice booms out.

UMPIRE (O.S.)

Stee-riike three!

The fans applaud as the kids come off the field, gathering in the dugout. Wallace claps his hands, speaking enthusiastically.

WALLACE

Okay - last ups, tie game. Let's bear down and score a run, guys.

EXT. HOME PLATE

The Second Baseman stands in the batters box, swinging and missing the ball by a mile - as does the catcher, the ball smacking the Umpire in the face mask.

UMPIRE
Ow! Strike three!

EXT. HOME PLATE - A MINUTE LATER

Another kid swings wildly, losing his balance and spinning around - whacking the Umpire in the back with the bat.

UMPIRE
Ow! Strike three! Goddammit...

EXT. HOME PLATE - A MINUTE LATER

Kevin Norman steps to the plate, taking his place in the box confidently. The fathers call out from behind the fence.

ED
Hit it out, son - pull it down the line. If we win, that new stereo is yours!

Kevin swings at the first pitch, missing badly - trying too hard. The Umpire, now standing behind the backstop while the Doctor tends to him, calls out.

UMPIRE
Stee-rike one!

The fathers go crazy, Wallace frowning.

ED
Come on, Kevin. Pull it outta here and I'll buy you a mini-bike. You can use your college savings for anything you want.

FATHER #3
You can spend Sammy's college money, too!

Kevin connects with the next pitch, driving a long fly to center. The fans rise hopefully, watching with disappointment as the center fielder camps under the ball, catching it for the third out. The opposing fans go wild, Kevin throwing his helmet as he comes back into the dugout. Ed looks to him scornfully.

ED
I said to pull it. You're grounded, pal.

Able to take no more, Wallace shoos the fathers away.

WALLACE

Okay, that's it. Back in the stands, let's go. These kids are wound up enough without your support and understanding.

The fathers retreat to the stands, grumbling. Wallace notices Kathy Aaron sitting in the bleachers. Getting an idea, he steps into the dugout.

INT. LITTLE LEAGUE DUGOUT

Wallace moves to the far end of the dugout, where Billy sits, drawing on the wall with a pencil stub.

WALLACE

Billy, right field.

BILLY

No thanks. I don't want to play.

WALLACE

(sitting)

Come on - we need you. Your mom's even here to see you play.

Scared, Billy looks up at Wallace, speaking discreetly.

BILLY

Wallace... I stink. What if someone hits it to me?

WALLACE

Try to catch it. Don't worry so much.

Scowling, Billy grabs his mitt and trudges out of the dugout, Wallace grinning and slapping him on the back.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE BLEACHERS

Billy steps out of the dugout, glancing up at his mother in the stands. She waves, smiling proudly as he trots to his position in right field. The fathers see Billy heading onto the field, gasping in disbelief.

ED

Billy Aaron? What's Wallace trying to do, throw the game? He can't put that little dork on the field!

FATHER #2

You're kidding! It's a tie game and he inserts the biggest spaz on the team!

They turn to see Kathy glaring at them. Smiling sweetly, they call out enthusiastically.

ED

Go, Billy!

FATHER #2

Make us proud!

EXT. DUGOUT

Wallace paces in front of the dugout, cheering on his team.

WALLACE

Okay, let's hold them! Keep your heads in the game!

(under his breath)

Pretend your fathers are dead...

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD

Kevin Norman stares in from the mound, delivering his first pitch - the batter hitting a long fly ball to right field. Moaning miserably, Billy backs up... the ball carries... Billy continues back... the ball reaches the top of its arc... Billy reaches the warning track, blindly sticking up his mitt... the ball klonking off Billy's head, flying up into the air - and over the fence for a game winning homer.

EXT. BLEACHERS

The parents sit, stunned, as the opposing team's fans go wild. Ed and the fathers look to one another grimly. Concerned, Kathy stands, looking to where Billy lies in right field.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD

Wallace hurries to Billy's side, helping him to his feet. The rest of the team gather around.

WALLACE

Billy! Are you okay? Is your head all right? Do you know where you are?

Billy looks at the hostile expressions of his teammates.

BILLY

Hell?

Wallace gives Billy a sad smile as we...

CUT TO:

INT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is filled with rowdy, unhappy Little Leaguers and their parents, gathered here after the tough loss. Wallace wades through the crowd, holding two pizzas over his head as the kids rush him.

WALLACE

Okay, okay - take it easy. There's enough for everyone. Hey, you - you're not on our team! Back away quickly and you won't get hurt.

Setting the pizzas on a table, Wallace looks across the room to where Billy sits alone, holding a baggie of ice against his head. Wrestling a piece of pizza away from a ravenous kid, Wallace heads over to Billy.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Here ya go - pepperoni and mushroom. They don't have aspirin as a topping. How's your head?

BILLY

Fine. I wish the ball had hit me harder, then maybe I wouldn't be able to remember what happened.

WALLACE

Don't worry. Everyone else has already forgotten it.

Kevin Norman walks past, calling to Billy.

KEVIN

Hey - way to blow the game, bonehead!

WALLACE

Almost everyone.

They both brighten as Kathy steps up, setting a pitcher of soda on the table.

KATHY

It's like trying to cross a river full of piranhas out there. Hi, I'm Kathy - Billy's mom.

WALLACE

Hi, I'm Wallace. I know it looked bad out there, but Billy's made a lot of progress. A month ago he would've run away from that ball instead of getting underneath it.

BILLY

That's progress?

Wallace and Kathy laugh, even Billy cracking a smile.

WALLACE

It's progress because you made the effort, Billy. That's all you can ever do. We never know what the results are gonna be with anything. All you can ever do is try your best.

(stops, grinning)

Man, I'm starting to sound like my Little League coach.

BILLY

You played Little League?

WALLACE

Oh yeah. I was the worst. When they gave us our first jock straps, I thought you were supposed to wear it on your face to keep dirt out of your mouth while sliding.

Billy and Kathy laugh, Kathy impressed by Wallace's ability to make her son forget his troubles.

KATHY

That's a pretty sad story.

WALLACE

Stick around, I've got a million of 'em.

They exchange smiles, a spark passing between them. A spark that is not lost on Billy. They turn as across the restaurant chairs crash and glass breaks, kids chanting 'Fight! Fight!'.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Great...

KATHY

How can you handle these children
all day?

WALLACE

Just part of being a coach.

Wallace hurries to break up the fight - separating Fathers #1
and #2, who push and wrestle as the kids cheer them on.

FATHER #1

My kid can too hit a curve ball!

FATHER #2

Yeah? Watch me hit a screwball!

They lunge at one another, Wallace keeping them apart.

WALLACE

All right, cut it out, guys. You're
setting a bad example for the boys.

ED

Yeah - you fight like sissies.

WALLACE

Here...
(pulls candy bars from
pocket)
... have a candy bar.

The fathers calm down, each taking a candy bar. Ed looks to
Wallace seriously.

ED

You know, Wallace, the other
parents and I are concerned that
you might be in over your head. We
thought you might need some help
coaching.

WALLACE

Gosh, Ed - who do you think I could
get to do that?

ED

We're 0 and 3 already. What we need
is a little discipline to turn this
team around. It's been my
experience that kids respond better
when you crack the whip. That's
where I can help.

WALLACE

Look, I appreciate the offer,
but...

Ed slings a beefy arm around Wallace's shoulders.

ED

Think about it, Wallace. We came
this close to beating the defending
champions today. Kevin threw a 26-
hitter - you can't waste pitching
like that.

(pointedly)

And I'm sure the team sponsor feels
the same as I do...

Getting the message, Wallace nods, giving in.

WALLACE

Okay, fine. If you'd like to help
out, Ed, I could use an assistant.

ED

Great.

(turns to others)

Practice tomorrow at 3:00.

WALLACE

Wait a minute. Tomorrow's bad for
me.

ED

Oh, I'm sorry, Wallace...

(turns)

... See you all tomorrow at 3:00.

WALLACE

Wait a second - tomorrow at 3:00 is
no good for anybody...

(speaks up)

... I was hoping to make this
announcement under saner
circumstances, but... we won the
candy drive. We get to go to
Wrigley Field to meet the Cubs.

The kids and parents cheer - hats, mitts, beer, soda and
pizza flying everywhere. Even Ed slaps Wallace good-naturedly
on the back, nearly sending him sprawling.

ED

Nice job, buddy. What all do the
kids get to do at Wrigley?

WALLACE

They get to meet the Cubs, tour the locker room, and best of all - they get to run fielding drills before the game!

There is a collective gasp as the restaurant goes silent.

FATHER #2

They can't run fielding drills - they're even worse than the Cubs.

FATHER #1

What if people I know are there? I'll be a laughing stock.

Wallace shakes his head, amazed.

WALLACE

How about if they all wear fake noses and glasses? We're not doing this to impress anyone. It's for fun.

ED

Fun? Now instead of being laughed at by forty parents at Little League it'll be 40,000 at Wrigley Field.

WALLACE

What do you guys want me to do, cancel so none of you have to go through the trauma?
(to kids)
What do you think, guys?

There is a moment of silence. Then:

KEVIN

Well... if Sammy would keep his fingers out of his nose...

SAMMY

Oh yeah? Well I didn't miss two easy pop-ups to the mound today, Kevin.

SECOND BASEMAN

Just don't hit anything to Billy. If he fields any more balls with his head we should trade him to a soccer team.

The kids all start fighting and yelling, Wallace once again jumping in the middle of it.

WALLACE

Stop it! You're acting like parents!

The kids stop quarrelling, quieting down as Wallace speaks.

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

That's better. I think it's time we started acting more like a team, here. You don't see the pros acting like this - complaining, moping around. If we're going to meet them, I think we should try to be more like them...

CUT TO:

INT. CUBS' LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Two Chicago Cubs players grapple with one another, the other players gathered around chanting 'Fight! Fight!'. The MANAGER steps between them, trying to calm everyone down.

MANAGER

All right - break it up!

FIGHTING PLAYER

I can too hit a curve ball!

MANAGER

Save it for the other team, you idiots! Listen up - everybody sit down, we've got to talk.

The players all sit, grumbling as the Manager continues.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

I think it's time we started acting more like a team, here. We've got a bunch of Little Leaguers visiting today...

The players all groan, but the Manager persists, louder.

MANAGER (CONT.) (CONT'D)

... so I don't want any fighting or bitching. It's bad for our image. And besides, you guys fight like sissies.

The players gripe some more as KEN DAVIS stands. Wallace's idol, Ken is the team's star player and clubhouse leader. He addresses them with an air of authority.

KEN

I have a few other things to keep in mind before the kids get here. Some of you guys haven't been around children much, so you don't know how to act.

(counts off on fingers)

First - make sure your valuables are locked away, preferably someplace high. Second - no free autographs! It might set a precedent that could damage the earning power of every player here. And third - never underestimate them. Kids can be sneaky when they want to be.

Ken steps down as the Manager stands again.

MANAGER

I'd just like to say one more thing. Last place. It's the middle of May and we're seven-and-a-half games out. I'm already getting letters calling me a fat tub of crap - those don't usually start until the All-Star break! We need to take our destiny into our own hands. To concentrate...

Standing next to a large, Nautilus-like arm massager, the Manager pounds on it for emphasis.

MANAGER (CONT.) (CONT'D)

... to be aggressive... to compete... to focus ourselves...

The players begin to file out. They've heard this before, chanting along with the Manager as he recites his speech.

MANAGER (CONT.) (CONT'D)

... to accept the challenge... to show pride and dignity...

The players are gone, the Manager continuing to pound the arm massager, which buzzes and moans as he hits it harder.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

We need a miracle! Baseball history is full of miracles.

(MORE)

MANAGER (CONT'D)

They happen on the field every day.
But my team hasn't had one stinking
miracle in years!

He hits the arm massager with all his might as he leaves.
Behind him the arm massager clicks and buzzes, sounding
seriously defective.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - FOUL AREA - NIGHT

Wallace, Ed Norman and the Little Leaguers step onto the
field, looking around in amazement as the ANNOUNCER speaks
over the p.a. system.

ANNOUNCER

... And now, as a special treat,
the Screaming Weasels of the
Chicago-American Little League will
run a series of fielding drills for
your entertainment.

There is a smattering of applause as the kids run onto the
field. Wallace grabs a bat, calling out encouragingly.

WALLACE

Okay, everybody - just like in
practice, except don't get hurt.

Ed stops Wallace, taking the bat from his hand.

ED

Why don't you let me handle this,
Wallace? You can't even hit the
ball to the outfield.

WALLACE

But I'm the manager...

ED

So manage. I'll hit.

Ed steps to home plate. Humiliated, Wallace looks into the
stands, where Kathy and the other parents sit nervously in
anticipation of the carnage to follow. Kathy waves
cheerfully, Wallace returning it half-heartedly. Feeling out
of place, he moves off the field.

Ed tosses a ball into the air, lining a hard shot down the
third base line. Terrified, the THIRD BASEMAN dives out of
the way. There is some laughter from the fans, the Little
League parents shifting uneasily in their seats.

INT. CUBS' LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Bored, Wallace strolls into the Cubs' darkened locker room. Realizing where he is, he wanders around, dazed.

WALLACE
Wow! The Cubs' actual locker
room...

He looks through lockers, running his fingers over uniforms, inspecting things - living a dream.

WALLACE (CONT'D)
Wow. An actual cap.

He tries it on.

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)
I'm wearing an actual cap.
(picks up a bat)
An actual bat...

He swings it.

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)
I'm swinging an actual bat...
(steps in a jockstrap)
An actual jockstrap...

He tries to kick it away.

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)
My foot is caught in an actual
jockstrap...

He pries it off his foot with the bat, walking away gingerly.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - BLEACHERS

The fans are now lazily booing the Little Leaguers. Kathy winces as the other parents hide their faces in shame.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

On the field, Ed hits a high, terrifying pop-up. The infielders gather underneath it. Then, as it begins its descent, they bolt out of the way, the ball landing untouched on the grass.

ED
Come on, catch the goddamn ball!

Kevin Norman picks up the ball, turning to his father, who chides him.

ED (CONT'D)

Well, Kevin, since you can't catch the ball, why don't you try pitching it?

Kevin turns to the Third Baseman, who shields his face from Ed with his mitt.

THIRD BASEMAN

I'll give you five bucks if you bean him.

INT. CUBS' LOCKER ROOM

Still roaming around the room, Wallace steps to the arm massager. It buzzes and hisses faintly.

WALLACE

Cool. An...
(reads label)
... arm massager.

Climbing onto the machine, he sticks his arm inside, hitting the power switch with his free hand. The machine seems to short out, sparks flying as the massager goes haywire. It twists his arm at ultra-high speed, Wallace screaming in pain and fear.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Ow! Somebody help me! Help!

Hooking the electrical cord with his toe, Wallace manages to yank out the plug, the machine slowing and finally stopping. Relieved, he pulls his arm out of the machine, rubbing it gingerly. He looks up as Billy races into the locker room.

BILLY

Wallace? We need you!

INT. DUGOUT

Ed Norman lies on the bench, surrounded by the Cubs and Little Leaguers as the team TRAINER applies ice to his forehead. Ed moans in pain as the Third Baseman slips a grinning Kevin five bucks. Everyone else seems depressed.

LITTLE LEAGUER #1

That was embarrassing...

CUB PLAYER #1
Try going through it every day.

CUB PLAYER #2
Yeah - they didn't throw stuff at
you...

Wallace and Billy step into the dugout, the Cubs' MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE hurrying forward.

MEDIA REP
Are you the manager of this team?

WALLACE
Yes...

MEDIA REP
Good. Since Mr. Norman is
unavailable, we need you to throw
out the first pitch. This is our
catcher, Bip Anderson.

BIP ANDERSON, the Cubs' veteran catcher steps up. He shakes Wallace's hand as they head onto the field.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - PITCHERS MOUND

Stepping to the mound, Bip hands Wallace the ball, giving him a reassuring pat on the back. Wallace is still rubbing his arm.

WALLACE
I don't know how good this'll be -
I think I hurt my arm.

BIP
Just heave it, I'll catch it.

Bip takes his place behind home plate as the p.a. Announcer speaks.

ANNOUNCER
... And now, throwing out the
ceremonial first pitch of the night
is Screaming Weasels manager
Wallace Marsh.

Wallace shrinks a little at the heckling from the crowd.

INT. DUGOUT

The Little Leaguers stand on the dugout steps, cringing in anticipation. Billy crosses his fingers hopefully.

EXT. BLEACHERS

Kathy and the other parents can barely bring themselves to watch.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

Shrugging, Wallace begins his clumsy wind-up. He follows through, firing the ball to the plate, scorching the air. It rips the catchers mitt off Bip's hand, sending it to the backstop. Behind the backstop the man testing the radar gun clocks Wallace's pitch at 120 m.p.h.

RADAR MAN

Jesus!

BIP

Jesus!

WALLACE

Jesus!

INT. DUGOUT

The Cubs players gape, slack-jawed, while the Little Leaguers cheer. The Manager stares, mouth open, his tobacco chew dropping into a player's Gatorade cup. Dumbfounded, the player takes a drink and doesn't notice.

EXT. BLEACHERS

Kathy stands, applauding, while the parents and other fans around her stare at the field in disbelief.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

The crowd finally begins to cheer as Wallace steps off the mound, in shock himself. He doesn't know what to make of what just happened. Bip retrieves his mitt and catches up with Wallace on his way back to the dugout.

BIP
 (excited)
 You've really got an arm there.
 Have you ever pitched before?

WALLACE
 (numbly)
 In Little League once. I threw the
 ball over the backstop.

Bip laughs, slapping Wallace hard on the back.

BIP
 Good thing you didn't today - you
 might've popped the blimp!

Numb, Wallace steps into the dugout, where he is swarmed by
 the Little Leaguers, who cheer wildly.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - BLEACHERS - NIGHT

Wallace, still surrounded by the Little Leaguers, makes his
 way down the aisle to where the parents sit. The kids are
 excited, still chattering away as he takes a seat.

SECOND BASEMAN
 Hey Wallace, how come you never
 threw like that in practice?

KEVIN
 We always thought you threw like a
 girl.

LEFT FIELDER
 Yeah - a weak girl.

Wallace, still stunned himself, rubs his arm.

WALLACE
 Thanks, guys - but enough hero
 worship already...

A FAN carrying a tray of nachos passes by, calling to
 Wallace.

FAN WITH NACHOS
 Nice throw, man. We could use you
 on the pitching staff.

Another FAN steps up.

FAN WITH BEERS

Yeah, no doubt. You ever pitch professionally?

Confused by the sudden attention, Wallace doesn't know how to respond. A PEANUT VENDOR makes his way down the aisle.

PEANUT VENDOR

Peanuts! Peanuts here!

WALLACE

(flags him down)

I'll take one.

Another man calls out at the far end of the aisle.

HUNGRY FAN

Me, too.

The Peanut Vendor hands Wallace a bag of peanuts, dropping another on the ground. Wallace picks it up.

WALLACE

I've got it.

Wallace lobes the bag of peanuts to the man at the end of the aisle - the bag zinging through the air, smacking the startled man in the forehead and exploding, peanuts flying everywhere. The Little Leaguers cheer happily as the man is knocked back into his seat, stunned.

BILLY

Cool!

Wallace grimaces, calling to the man, embarrassed.

WALLACE

Sorry...

Billy watches Wallace excitedly. Getting an idea, he runs down the steps to where Kathy sits next to Ed Norman. Bandage on his head, Ed mutters incoherently as he tries to eat a plate of nachos.

ED

Don't worry about me, Kathy, I'm perfectly fine. You know me, Mr. Hardhead. Ha ha - have I told you how attracted you are to me?

Ed winks at Kathy as he tries to eat a nacho, the chip and cheese sticking to his cheek. Kathy smiles politely, glancing around for help.

KATHY

I didn't know that. Did the doctors say you should be up and around?

Billy rushes up.

BILLY

Hey, mom - did you see Wallace's throw?

KATHY

Yes. How'd they do that, some special kind of ball or something?

BILLY

No, he really did it. He wanted me to tell you that he needs to talk to you about me. Something about Little League.

KATHY

What did you do now?
(sighs worriedly)
Tell him any time is fine.

Grinning, Billy rushes back up the steps toward Wallace. Trying to be suave, Ed turns to Kathy, chips, cheese and jalepenos stuck all over his face.

ED

So, mind if I call me sometime?

Kathy rolls her eyes.

EXT. WALLACE

sits in his seat, trying to eat his peanuts. Holding one between the thumb and index finger of his right hand, he squeezes - POOF! - the shell turning to dust. His face and hair are covered in a thin layer of peanut dust.

BILLY

Wallace! Hey, Wallace...

Wallace turns to Billy, distracted.

WALLACE

I think there's something wrong with these peanuts...

Billy looks at him seriously.

BILLY

My mom says she wants to talk to
you about me. Something about
Little League.

WALLACE

What did you do now?
(sighs)
Tell her any time is fine.

BILLY

She said tonight.

Wallace thinks a moment.

WALLACE

Sure. If you don't mind coming with
me. There's someplace I have to
go...

He pops another peanut to dust as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Wallace stands in the pitching booth at a local carnival,
where pitches are timed with a radar gun. Kathy and Billy
stand behind him as he winds up and throws, the ball whizzing
through the air, thudding hard against the back wall. They
all look up at the radar gun, which registers 127 m.p.h. The
PITCHING BARKER grudgingly hands Wallace a large teddy bear.

PITCHING BARKER

Something's got to be wrong with
the machine...

Wallace hands the stuffed bear to Kathy, who places it on a
pile of a half-dozen identical bears. The Pitching Barker
tosses a ball to Billy.

PITCHING BARKER (CONT'D)

Here, kid - you try it.

Billy winds up and throws - the ball hitting the ground ten
feet shy of the target and rolling to the back wall. The
radar gun reads 3 m.p.h. The barker shrugs.

PITCHING BARKER (CONT'D)

Naw, that seems about right.

(to Wallace)

You ever pitch professionally?

Wallace just shakes his head, gathering up the stuffed toys as he, Kathy and Billy move off down the midway. Wallace flexes his arm.

WALLACE

This is so weird. My arm's never felt this strong before.

KATHY

Good thing - we're gonna need a strong arm if you win any more animals.

Reaching into his pocket, Wallace removes a handful of change, giving it to Billy.

WALLACE

Here, Billy. Why don't you try a few of the games? Just don't touch any of the carneys.

BILLY

Okay. Thanks, Wallace.

Billy runs off to the ring toss booth as Wallace and Kathy exchange uneasy looks. Each thinking the other has something important to say.

WALLACE

Uh, I thought it might be better if we talked without Billy.

KATHY

Yeah, all right.

An uncomfortable pause. Each waiting for the other to speak.

KATHY (CONT'D)

So you wanted to talk to me about Billy's Little League? You're not going to kick him off the team are you? I know he's not a very good player...

Wallace frowns, confused.

WALLACE

Wait... what? I'm not going to kick him off the team. I thought you wanted to talk to me. Billy said...

Kathy nods, a knowing grin on her face.

KATHY

Billy said, huh? He said I wanted to talk to you?

WALLACE

(smiles)

Uh-huh. I think we've been duped.

They turn to where Billy stands at the ring toss booth. He aims the wooden ring at the line of soda bottles... concentrates... and throws - the ring landing around the barker's neck. Kathy looks back to Wallace, who seems preoccupied with his arm. He stretches it, bends it, twists it as they speak.

KATHY

You should be flattered. Ever since his dad and I divorced, Billy's been pretty lonely. Ten year old boys don't much like hanging out with their mothers.

WALLACE

It's okay, I still don't. I like Billy, I think he's a great kid. Not such a hot baseball player, but a good kid.

KATHY

I know he's not very good at baseball, but I think it's good for him to get out. He's such a loner, he doesn't make friends very easily.

Billy hurries to the dart toss booth, where players throw darts at balloon covered targets.

WALLACE

He told me he likes to draw. I'd like to see his work sometime. Maybe I'll commission a portrait - you know, me, a crown, a throne. Something modest.

Kathy pauses, looking at Wallace in amazement. He looks up from his arm, puzzled.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

What, is he expensive? How about me, a bull and black velvet?

KATHY

You're the first guy I've been around who's even willing to acknowledge Billy's existence. Most guys I've been out with couldn't care less, or try to pretend like he doesn't exist. And I'm including my ex-husband in that.

Wallace shrugs, embarrassed.

WALLACE

I don't know... I just worry about him a little, that's all. He's a lot like I was - small, introverted, a little underdeveloped athletically...

Billy prepares to throw a dart at the target. He aims... concentrates... and throws - the dart flying backward out of his hand, a woman screaming in the background.

KATHY

Well, it's nice of you. And Billy really likes you. Thanks for being his friend.

Kathy gives him a little hug, Wallace becoming slightly flustered. He forgets his arm for the first time.

WALLACE

You know, if you ever need any help... or if there's anything I can do - tutoring, bail bonds, engine overhauls - feel free to give me a call.

KATHY

There is something you can do.

WALLACE

I knew I shouldn't have mentioned the engine overhaul...

KATHY

You could take me out some night so we could get to know each other one-on-one.

Wallace smiles, surprised.

WALLACE

I could do that.

They exchange grins, turning to see Billy at the softball toss booth, trying to knock metal milk bottles off a stand. He aims... concentrates... and throws - the barker ducking as the ball loops past his head. Wallace steps up, taking a ball from Billy.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

You're letting go too soon. You've got to release a little later. Watch.

Without thinking, Wallace winds up and lets fly - the ball zinging into the milk bottles, which ricochet off the other bottles, which carom off the walls, dislodging the shelves full of stuffed animals, which fall and bury the barker. Wallace and Billy exchange worried looks, until the barker's hand emerges from beneath the pile, handing Wallace a stuffed toy. He takes it, calling into the pile sheepishly.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Sorry...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WALLACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wallace enters, weighed down with stuffed animals. He drops them on the floor, letting out a deep breath. He tosses his keys down, where they imbed themselves in the coffee table. Wallace looks to his arm in wonder.

WALLACE

Damn! What is going on here?

Noticing the light flashing on his answering machine, he pushes the button, the machine playing his messages.

WALLACE'S MOM (ON MACHINE)

(big sigh)

It's your mother again. Not one of your flashy Chicago friends. Oh well, guess I'll go talk to the mailman, tell him about the son I raised who never calls.

Not paying attention, Wallace grabs a baseball, posing like a pitcher in front of a mirror. He goes into a clumsy wind up as another message plays, the voice of the Cubs Manager coming from the machine.

MANAGER (ON MACHINE)

Wallace Marsh? This is Casey Walker, manager of the Chicago Cubs. Listen, we were all real impressed with the way you threw the ball tonight, so I thought I'd call and see if you'd like to come down to the park for a little tryout tomorrow. Gate three, eleven a.m.

(pause)

Oh, and bring back those team towels you stole from the locker room - we know it was you.

Stunned by the message, Wallace stares at the answering machine in disbelief.

WALLACE

A tryout? With the Cubs? You gotta be kidding!

(stops, concerned)

Wait. This is too weird. It's gotta be a dream. In a minute Miss August 1976 is gonna walk in that door and want to have hot sex, and right when we're in the middle of it my mom'll walk in with a bag of bratwurst.

He pauses a moment, staring at the door in anticipation. When nothing happens, a grin spreads across his face.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I'm going to try out for the Cubs!

Wallace poses before the mirror again. He goes through the stretch, wind-up, and his motion, accidentally letting go of the ball - which smashes through both the mirror and the wall behind it. He hurries to the hole in the wall, calling to his neighbors.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Sorry...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

The ballpark is largely deserted as the Cubs take batting practice. Ken Davis stands behind the batting cage, speaking with STEVIE WHITE. A sports agent, Stevie is an incredibly attractive but businesslike woman - very intimidating.

Several players sit in the dugout, staring at her as they hone their bat handles.

STEVIE

Nike's offered us a deal worth
\$100,000.

KEN

Are they nuts? Don't they know who
I am? How much does Michael Jordan
get?

STEVIE

Michael Jordan isn't a slumping,
big-butted outfielder on a last
place team. I say we take the
offer.

Ken frowns, giving Stevie a hard look.

KEN

Maybe I need a better agent. When
Jordan walks into a restaurant in
this town they stand and cheer.

STEVIE

And when you walk in they guard
their plates.

Ken sidles up close to Stevie, speaking seductively.

KEN

Why don't we go out to dinner
sometime?

STEVIE

I don't date clients. Besides, I
don't think I could afford it.

EXT. WALLACE

steps uncertainly onto the field, swimming in the oversized
uniform he's been given for the tryout. The Cubs players
smirk, fighting back their laughter as he walks past.

CUB PLAYER #3

Is that a player or someone from
the 'Make-A-Wish Foundation'?

Wallace trots to the batting cage, where the Manager stands
with Bip Anderson. Excited and out of shape, Wallace tries to
catch his breath.

MANAGER

You've gotta be kidding. He doesn't even look like he can lift a ball.

BIP

Trust me, he can.

(to Wallace)

You want to take a few warm-up tosses?

Wallace shakes his head nervously.

WALLACE

Naw - let's just get this over with.

MANAGER

Fine. Take the mound, we'll see how you do against major league hitters.

Wallace nods, jogging toward the mound. The Manager turns to Bip, smirking.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

You want to take a few swings, Bip?

BIP

I'll wait and see how wild he is...

Wallace takes the mound, the players around the batting cage regarding him suspiciously. He waves awkwardly.

WALLACE

Hi, guys. I guess I'm throwing batting practice. Just step into the swing and watch the bat meet the ball...

Stepping up behind the cage, Ken calls to the Manager.

KEN

Hey, how's this supposed to help our hitting? Give us a real pitcher.

MANAGER

You guys haven't been able to hit real pitching all year. Now get in there.

The players grumble unhappily, the first batter stepping to the plate. Wallace anxiously grabs a ball from a bucket.

WALLACE

Ready?

CUB PLAYER #4

Just pitch it, butthead!

Nodding, Wallace winds up and fires... the ball hitting the ground five feet in front of the mound and bouncing up into the stands. The players laugh as the Manager grimaces.

WALLACE

Ooops. Not used to this mound...

Wallace picks another ball out of the basket - zipping it past the batter, who doesn't even have time to swing. The ball smashes into the backstop and lodges there, the players instinctively diving out of the way. The Manager's eyes bulge in shock.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

(grins)

Hey, this is easier than I thought!

The man holding the radar gun whistles, amazed.

RADAR MAN

One-hundred-twenty-three.

The players scoff in disbelief. The batter steps back into the box, determined.

CUB PLAYER #4

No way! The gun must be busted. Try it again, butthead!

Wallace shrugs. Winding up, he lets fly again - the batter swinging and missing by a mile. Wallace laughs, starting to enjoy his newfound power. He calls out playfully.

WALLACE

That was my change-up!

RADAR MAN

One-twenty-nine...

The players all whistle, impressed. A goofy grin begins to spread across the Manager's face.

MANAGER

Next batter!

Ken Davis grabs a bat, stepping angrily to the plate.

KEN

Let's see you throw it by me,
butthead.

Wallace smiles, barely able to control his excitement. He mutters to himself.

WALLACE

Oh, man - I'm pitching to Ken
Davis! I wish I had this on the
camcorder...

Wallace lets another pitch fly. Ken swings mightily, but way too late. Now the other players are laughing, enjoying this as much as Wallace, who does a little dance on the mound.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

This is so cool! Are you guys
really trying?

Ken pounds the plate with his bat, taking an aggressive stance in the batters box.

KEN

This one's coming right back at
you, butthead...

Wallace winds up and throws - Ken can't touch it. Wallace struts around the infield grass as the other players applaud. Stevie White steps up to the backstop, an interested grin on her face. Ken rubs some dirt on his hands and steps back in.

WALLACE

Ready?

KEN

PITCH!

Nodding, Wallace throws the ball. Ken swings too hard, falling on his butt as the ball crashes through the batting cage and smashes the speed gun out of the man's hand. Ken watches in shock as Wallace jumps around the infield in triumph.

WALLACE

I did it! I struck out Ken Davis! I
can't believe it!

Wallace hurries to Ken, helping him up. He speaks like an adoring fan.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

This is a great honor for me, Mr.
Davis.

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I mean, you're my favorite player... and you weren't even close! I mean, I made you look like the pathetic amateur. I mean...

KEN

(seething)

I know what you mean.

Bip and the Manager look on, impressed.

BIP

I think we've got a new pitcher.

The Manager calls to Wallace.

MANAGER

Hey, butthead... er, Marsh! You have an agent, son?

WALLACE

An agent...?

STEVIE (O.S.)

Yes, he does.

The men turn as Stevie White steps up, flashing a killer smile. Wallace gawks at her, obviously attracted.

STEVIE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

I represent... uh...

WALLACE

Wallace Marsh.

STEVIE

Right. You're gonna be a rich man, Wallace Marsh.

Wallace smiles happily, eyeing Stevie like a schoolboy with a crush as she and the Manager step off. Brushing the dirt from his uniform, Ken watches from the batting cage, spitting in disgust. Bip puts his arm around Wallace's shoulders, walking him back to the dugout.

BIP

I can't believe you've never pitched before. It's like Leonardo DaVinci never painting, or Vanna White never learning to spell...

Wallace laughs, speaking to Bip confidentially.

WALLACE

To tell you the truth, I couldn't pitch before yesterday. I stuck my arm in that massager in the locker room and it went haywire. I don't know if it loosened a muscle, or if my arm was out of joint for thirty five years or what.

Bip grins skeptically, shaking his leg in the air.

BIP

Right. Pull on this one and it plays 'Jingle Bells'.

CUT TO:

INT. CUBS' LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The entire Cubs team is gathered around the arm massager. They all try it out, then throw a baseball - each one disappointed. Bip and the Manager watch impatiently.

BIP

Whatever happened, it only worked on Marsh.

MANAGER

This is it, Bip. I can feel it. This is the miracle this team's been waiting for.

Ken walks past, grumbling.

KEN

This is the biggest crock of shit in baseball history.

They look at Ken unhappily as we...

CUT TO:

INT. KATHY AND BILLY'S HOUSE - DAY

There is a knock at the door, Kathy answering to find Wallace on the porch. She smiles, pleasantly surprised.

KATHY

Well hello!

Wallace steps inside, nearly vibrating with excitement.

WALLACE
Hi. Where's Billy?

KATHY
(frowns)
Fine, and you?

WALLACE
No, no - I want to see you, too.
This is for both of you.

Puzzled by Wallace's behavior, Kathy watches him uncertainly as she calls up the stairs.

KATHY
Billy! Wallace is here.
(to Wallace, concerned)
Is everything okay?

WALLACE
Okay is not the word. Actually, I'm
not sure if okay is a word. But
everything's fine.

Billy races down the stairs, jumping over the last two.

BILLY
Hi, Wallace. Going to score with my
mom tonight?

Kathy playfully whacks Billy on the back of the head. Wallace holds up two baseball tickets.

WALLACE
How would you guys like to see a
Cubs game tonight?

BILLY
Cool! Who's pitching?

WALLACE
(grins)
I am.

Kathy and Billy exchange startled looks before rushing to embrace Wallace. They dance joyfully around the living room as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - NIGHT

Barkers sell programs as fans file into the stadium. As they hand the magazines to buyers, we see an insert page has been hastily added, featuring a goofy snapshot of Wallace.

PROGRAM BARKER

Get your programs, here! Cubs sign
a new pitcher - yesterday a nobody
on the street, today a well-paid
nobody!

INT. CUBS' LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The players prepare for the game. Wallace stands at his locker, scraping a piece of tape with the word 'BUTTHEAD' on it off his name plaque. The Manager watches, smiling.

MANAGER

All rookies get razzed. The thing
is not to take it personal.

WALLACE

(nervously)

I've been thinking - I don't know
if I'm ready for this.

The Manager sits Wallace down - arm around his shoulders, earnest expression on his face, in full pep-talk mode.

MANAGER

Everyone's nervous before their
first game. Ryan, Koufax, Drysdale -
they were all scared. But they had
fire. They had determination. They
had greatness. What do you have?

WALLACE

Diarrhea.

MANAGER

Well, try to use it.

(stands to go, pauses)

Whatever happens, enjoy it. Even if
it doesn't work out, you've got
something to tell your grandkids.

WALLACE

I'm in my mid-thirties with no home
life at all. I may never have any
grandkids.

MANAGER

Listen, I heard your agent's contract proposal - you can buy grandkids. Just go out there and have fun.

(moves off)

Somebody's got to. This team gives me ulcers...

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - BLEACHERS

Kathy and Billy take their seats as the Cubs warm up.

BILLY

Where's Wallace?

Kathy scans the field, pointing.

KATHY

There he is - sitting on the bench in the bullpen.

BILLY

Sitting on the bench? That's what I do. Maybe there's a future for me in baseball after all...

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - BULLPEN

Wallace sits all alone on the far end of the bench, nobody talking to him. He seems uncomfortable and out of place. A voice calls from out of the stands.

STEVIE (O.S.)

Hey, butthead!

Wallace turns to see Stevie White standing at the railing, papers in hand.

WALLACE

Please, you're my agent. Call me Mr. Butthead. Or better yet, Wallace.

STEVIE

Okay, Wallace. This is a six-week contract. Just sign the last page and initial where I've marked.

Wallace takes the contract, flipping through it.

WALLACE

Don't I have a say in any of this?

STEVIE

Sure - say 'thank you'. The only reason I got this much was because of the free publicity I promised them. You're the best baseball freak since that midget that batted for the Browns.

WALLACE

What a legacy.

Wallace signs the contract, handing it back to Stevie, who laughs.

STEVIE

Don't worry, you're kind of cute for a freak. Oh, and try not to pitch for awhile - don't blow it until I can wrap up a full years deal.

Stevie saunters away, Wallace watching appreciatively as she heads back up the aisle. He sits back down as the first batter steps up, the crowd cheering as the pitcher delivers.

WALLACE

Heybatterheybatterhey - swing!

The other players turn slowly, staring at him. Wallace grins, embarrassed.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - SCOREBOARD

The top of the ninth inning. The Cubs are down 15 to 3.

EXT. BULLPEN

The phone rings, the PITCHING COACH answering it. Wallace still sits by himself - rally cap on and rooting valiantly as the other players watch, emotionlessly.

WALLACE

Okay guys - three up, three down, then we need a rally! They got twelve runs in one inning, so can we...

The Pitching Coach hangs up the phone.

PITCHING COACH
Marsh - take your warm-ups.

WALLACE
(shocked)
Are you crazy? We're only twelve
down!

PITCHING COACH
They want to see you in a game
situation. Loosen up.

WALLACE
I'm ready... I'm loose...

Wallace grabs his mitt and jogs onto the field.

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)
... I'm a complete idiot for
putting myself in this situation...

EXT. BLEACHERS

Kathy and Billy perk up as Wallace trots to the mound.

BILLY
There he is - he's going to pitch!

KATHY
Oh my god...

EXT. PRESS BOX

Stevie speaks into a cellular phone.

STEVIE
That's right, the team pays to wash
his uniform, and in return Wallace
cleans out the shower stall once a
week...

Seeing Wallace headed for the mound, she sits up, concerned.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
Oh my god...

EXT. PITCHERS MOUND

Wallace arrives on the mound, glancing around at the now sparse, apathetic crowd. Wearing heavy, hockey goalie-like padding, Bip steps to the mound.

BIP

Here are the signs. One finger means fastball... do you throw anything else?

WALLACE

I don't know.

Bip is concerned, sensing that Wallace is rattled.

BIP

We'll stick with the fastball. What's the matter?

WALLACE

I can't believe the size of this crowd.

BIP

Yeah, only about five thousand left. And that's only because most of 'em are too drunk to move.

WALLACE

When I screw up at work I usually don't have five thousand people watching me.

BIP

Don't let it rattle you. When I'm nervous I picture everyone in their underwear. It's a great equalizer.

Bip waddles back behind the plate, Wallace looking up into the bleachers.

EXT. BLEACHERS - WALLACE'S P.O.V.

The fans still look bored and apathetic - except now they're all sitting in their underwear. The team mascot dances on top of the dugout, wearing only its giant head and a pair of boxer shorts. Kathy and Billy wave to Wallace, Kathy wearing sexy black lingerie and blowing him a kiss.

EXT. WALLACE

smiles slyly, waving to Kathy. He seems more relaxed... until a huge, hairy, potbellied BATTER lumbers to the plate, his gut drooping over his jockstrap. Wallace frowns, gesturing to Bip in disgust. Bip trudges out to the mound.

BIP

What now?

WALLACE

(averting eyes from
Batter)

Can we try something else, or at
least have this guy shave his back?

Confused, Bip turns and looks at the Batter. Understanding, he turns to Wallace.

BIP

Jesus, don't imagine him in his
underwear. You'd never throw a
strike.

WALLACE

I can't help it, it's fascinating -
like a used Kleenex or a scab...

BIP

Try!

Bip heads back behind the plate. The Batter sneers at all the excess padding.

BATTER #1

Who are you, the Michelin Man?

BIP

I see you already carry a spare
tire.

The Batter scowls, stepping into the box. Bip squats, the UMPIRE crouching behind him. Wallace takes a deep breath and winds up.

WALLACE

I hope my parents aren't watching
this on TV...

Wallace fires a 125 m.p.h. fastball which knocks Bip and the Umpire on their backs. The Batter stares, wide-eyed, as the Umpire calls out, sandwiched between Bip and the backstop.

M.L. UMPIRE
Strike!

INT. DUGOUT

The Manager and coaches exchange smug grins.

EXT. BLEACHERS

Kathy and Billy cheer, the fans around them sitting up and taking notice of the action on the field.

EXT. PRESS BOX

Impressed by Wallace's performance, Stevie speaks confidently into a cellular phone.

STEVIE
... That's right, in the contract -
a home jacuzzi, a \$50,000 signing
bonus, and a new car. But enough
about me, let's talk about
Wallace...

EXT. HOME PLATE

The Batter dives out of the box as the ball whistles down the middle of the plate.

M.L. UMPIRE
Strike three!

EXT. HOME PLATE - A MINUTE LATER

The next batter dives for safety.

M.L. UMPIRE
Strike three!

EXT. HOME PLATE - A MINUTE LATER

A third batter shrugs, bat on his shoulder, walking back to the dugout before the pitch even comes in.

M.L. UMPIRE
Steeee-rike three! You're outta
there!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DUGOUT

After the game, Wallace gathers up his things, the other players slapping him on the back as they pass by. Wallace notices Ken Davis at the end of the dugout, stepping toward him uncertainly.

WALLACE
Uh, Mr. Davis?

Ken looks up, not thrilled to see Wallace.

KEN
What do you want?

WALLACE
I wanted to apologize for the way I acted after I struck you out this morning. I didn't mean to gloat or anything, I just got a little carried away. I hope you don't mind.

They turn as a group of reporters clatter into the dugout, photographers flashing photos of Wallace and Ken. Big smile on his face, Ken places a friendly hand on Wallace's shoulder. Wallace beams happily... smile fading as Ken speaks out of the side of his mouth.

KEN
No, I don't mind. I don't mind that some little weenie throws a few lucky pitches and acts like he just won the World Series. I don't mind being made to look like a fool in front of my teammates. And I'm sure you won't mind my knocking all your teeth down your throat if you ever do it again.

Wallace can only stare at his hero in shock as the flashbulbs continue to pop.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESTAURANT BAR - NIGHT

Wallace and Kathy sit at a table, enjoying a late dinner after the game.

KATHY

This has been some day. Your whole life is going to change.

WALLACE

I guess. But it doesn't seem real. It's like a dream I used to have as a kid, only less believable.

Kathy laughs as behind the bar the bartender turns on the TV news, the sports segment playing. Wallace and Kathy look up, surprised to see Wallace's face onscreen.

INSERT - TV SCREEN

REPORTER (ON TV)

With me is Wallace Marsh, the Chicago Cubs' newest acquisition, who tonight astounded fans and opposing batters by throwing fastballs clocked at over 120 miles per hour.

Onscreen, Wallace giggles, trying not to laugh. The Reporter gives him a strange look, pressing on.

REPORTER (CONT. - ON TV) (CONT'D)

Wallace, never in my career have I...

Wallace snorts, letting out a guffaw. The Reporter pauses, confused.

REPORTER (CONT. - ON TV) (CONT'D)

Uh, is everything all right?

WALLACE (ON TV)

(trying to control self)
It's nothing, it's just - your cameraman looks ridiculous in his underwear!

Onscreen, Wallace bursts out laughing, the Reporter looking into the camera, bewildered.

INT. RESTAURANT BAR

Kathy turns away from the TV, giving Wallace an odd look.

WALLACE
(shrugs)
It's something Bip taught me...

A WAITER steps up, looking to Wallace, then the TV, then back to Wallace.

WAITER
Hey! You're the guy on the TV. You
pitch for the Cubs?

WALLACE
Uh, yeah. I do.

He looks to Kathy, smiling and raising his eyebrows. He likes the sound of that.

WAITER
Can I have your autograph?

WALLACE
(surprised)
Sure. Can I have yours? You're the
first person to ever ask me.

Wallace and the Waiter each sign napkins, exchanging them.

WAITER
Thanks, man. Sorry the team's so
bad.

The Waiter walks away, Kathy smiling at Wallace.

KATHY
I've never been with a celebrity
before.

WALLACE
That's what's weird about it. It's
like it's some kind of fluke or
something. He should've asked for
your autograph, you're the one
doing all the hard work. I know it
can't be easy raising Billy,
especially with your husband gone.

KATHY
Are you kidding? It's easier
without him.

(MORE)

KATHY (CONT'D)

He never payed attention to me. I used to think he heard every third word I said.

WALLACE

I hate guys like that.

Two more GUYS step up to the table.

GUY #1

Are you that Cubs pitcher?

GUY #2

Can we have your autograph?

WALLACE

I pitched in one game, why do you want my autograph?

GUY #1

It might be worth hundreds of dollars some day.

WALLACE

Maybe if I signed hundred dollar bills.

They laugh, Wallace signing their napkins.

KATHY

So, as I was saying, he ignored me all the time...

WALLACE

What?

KATHY

My husband. He always ignored me.

WALLACE

I hate guys like that.

KATHY

And he was constantly flirting with other women.

A beautiful girl in a tight skirt walks by, slipping a piece of paper into Wallace's jacket pocket. Wallace watches her go, amazed. Kathy waves her hand in front of his eyes.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Wallace?

WALLACE

Huh? Oh, yeah - I hate guys like that...

KATHY

What did that girl give you?

Wallace looks at the slip of paper.

WALLACE

Uh... her autograph.

KATHY

She gave you hers?

WALLACE

Well, it's her autograph... and phone number. But I'd never call her.

Wallace crumples the paper - and slips it back into his pocket. Kathy looks at him pointedly.

KATHY

I guess you could say my ex-husband was inconsiderate, thoughtless and rude.

Wallace is turned to the bar, watching himself on TV, where he holds up a Little League candy bar in mid-sales pitch.

WALLACE

What a jerk...

KATHY

Just like you've been tonight.

Wallace turns back to her, frowning sheepishly.

WALLACE

I'm sorry, I don't know what's wrong with me...

KATHY

(smiles)

I understand. It's a big night for you, you should enjoy it. But whatever happens, try to stay Wallace, okay?

Wallace grins, taking her hand.

WALLACE

Okay.

KATHY

Now give me the paper with that
girl's phone number.

Sighing, Wallace digs it out of his pocket, handing it to
Kathy, who burns it over the candle.

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

Ed Norman runs the Little Leaguers through a militaristic
practice: jumping jacks... running laps... Ed hoses down the
dirt between first and second, the kids running through the
mud carrying bats over their heads as if they were rifles.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Wallace pulls up, climbing wearily out of his car. Billy
rushes out to greet him. Behind them we see players charge
the mound, where Ed has set up a tackling dummy in a Little
League uniform.

BILLY

I saw you on the news last night,
Wallace! You were great. How'd you
do with my mom after the game?

WALLACE

Not so well, I'm afraid.

Billy frowns, disappointed.

BILLY

I know she likes you - she bought
new underwear. That's usually the
sign.

Wallace pulls the equipment bags from the trunk, trying to
change the subject.

WALLACE

She probably exchanged them for
chastity belts this morning. How's
practice?

BILLY

Great. I think I'm getting the hang
of it. Watch - you be the second
baseman, and I'll show how I spike
you...

Shouldering the equipment bag, Wallace walks with Billy to the field.

WALLACE
Ed's teaching you that?

BILLY
Not just... want to see how to cork
a bat?

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD

Wallace steps onto the field, the kids all running to surround him, cheering their new hero.

WALLACE
Okay, calm down! It's only me,
guys.

Ed stands to one side, jealous of Wallace's sudden success.

ED
Wallace is right, everybody back to
work. We've got a game next week.

KEVIN
That was so cool, Wallace - could
you kill someone with a pitch if
you hit him in the head?

WALLACE
I'm not trying to hit anyone.
Baseball is for fun.
(glares at Ed)
There will be no beaning, spiking,
corking or anything like that. Am I
understood?

THIRD BASEMAN
Hey - check out the babe!

Everyone turns to see Stevie White stepping onto the field, a TV camera crew following her.

WALLACE
Now what...?
(sees Stevie, starry-
eyed)
Oh, hi!

STEVIE
(brightly)
Hi, Mr. Butthead.
(MORE)

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Do you have time for an interview with C.N.N.? They want to do a story on the Little League coach signed by a major league team, but who still has time to guide his kids and mold them into little men. Catchy, huh?

WALLACE

Are you kidding? I barely had the energy to guide myself to practice.

The C.N.N. REPORTER turns to Ed curiously.

C.N.N. REPORTER

Say - aren't you Ed Norman?

ED

(confused)

Yes... how did you know that?

C.N.N. REPORTER

You were beamed by your own son at Wrigley Field the other night. It was 'Play of the Day' on our sports show.

KEVIN

I made 'Play of the Day'!

The kids all cheer, giving Kevin high fives as Ed rubs the bump on his forehead. Wallace takes Stevie aside.

WALLACE

Do we have to? I'm kind of busy here.

STEVIE

Are you kidding? A big league pitcher who takes time out to coach a team of measly Little Leaguers? That's great human interest.

WALLACE

Yes, but how can I coach them if I'm being interviewed by C.N.N.?

Stevie glances at her watch impatiently.

STEVIE

You can't, you've got to be across town for a commercial shoot in forty-five minutes.

(MORE)

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Let the big guy with the lump on his head run things.

Wallace perks up, interested.

WALLACE

Me in a commercial? Like Michael Jordan and Ken Davis? This is incredible! What's the product - Nike shoes? Gatorade? Soloflex?

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

Wallace stands on a pitchers mound in his Cubs uniform. We winds up and throws, an UMPIRE calling out.

UMPIRE #2 (O.S.)

Strike three!

Wallace mops his brow as an ANNOUNCER'S voice is heard.

V.O. ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Wallace Marsh - Cubs pitcher and cheese lover.

Wallace speaks awkwardly into the CAMERA.

WALLACE

Have you ever had a craving for cheese, but didn't want the bother?

(reaches off-camera)

Well, bother no more...

(holds up bottle of yellow liquid)

... with Jacob's Delicious Cheese Drink! It comes in three flavors - cheddar, jalepeno, and bubbly swiss. It's just the thing after a hard day on the mound, cheesing off batters.

He takes a swig, leaving a thick cheese moustache on his upper lip. He tries not to grimace.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Eccch! That really hits the spot. So drink Jacob's Delicious Cheese Drink - your stomach will churn for it.

A man in a COW suit steps into frame.

COW
It's dairy-licious!

The DIRECTOR calls out tiredly.

DIRECTOR
Okay, let's do it again...

Everyone groans. The Cow stalks off as Stevie steps up to Wallace, who wipes his tongue on his sleeve.

STEVIE
Nice job, you're a natural at this.

WALLACE
Really? You don't think eighty-three takes is too many?

Stevie smiles, rubbing his back supportively.

STEVIE
No, no. You're doing great - you haven't even thrown up since take 58.

WALLACE
(groaning)
Eighty-three takes...
(glances at watch)
Jeez, what time is it? I have to make a phone call...

He hurries to a pay phone, where the man in the Cow suit screams into the receiver, holding it up to the mask's mouth.

COW
Why do I have to work with amateurs? I'm a classically trained actor! I've auditioned for Shakespeare...!

The Cow slams down the phone, Wallace hurriedly inserting his coins and dialing.

WALLACE
Hello, Kathy? It's me - Wallace...
Hi. You'll never guess where I am... Right, I'm not on a date with you, which is where I said I'd be. But I'm filming a commercial!...
Yeah, for a cheese drink... No, not since take 58...

Wallace leans against the wall, the Cow pacing agitatedly behind him, smoking a cigarette through his mask.

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

It looks like we're going to be here a while, so I won't be able to make dinner... Tomorrow? Uh, I've got to go with the team on a road trip tomorrow. How about I call you when I get back?... Okay. I'm really sorry...

He hangs up, a guilty look on his face. He turns to the Cow.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

It's all yours.

COW

(wiggling an udder)

Suck me.

The Cow grabs the phone and dials, Wallace turning to see Stevie standing nearby.

STEVIE

Girlfriend?

WALLACE

Yes. No. I don't know, we've only gone out a couple of times...

STEVIE

So what's the problem? If she liked you before you were famous, think how much she's gonna like you when you have six-figure endorsement deals under your belt. Besides, tonight you're going to dinner with me.

WALLACE

Really?

STEVIE

I know this great little Russian place with the best cheese blintzes...

Wallace groans, holding his stomach. Stevie laughs playfully as they head back to the set.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUS - DAY

The Cubs players take their seats on the bus, all looking groggy and tired - except Wallace, who's never been so happy in his life. He sits next to Bip, bouncing excitedly.

WALLACE

A road trip! Isn't this great?
We're getting paid to see the
country.

BIP

See the country? How different do
you think the Holiday Inn in New
York is from the one in Pittsburgh?

The Manager walks down the aisle, handing out envelopes.

MANAGER

All right, you know the rules -
curfew's at midnight. No babes, no
booze, no sticking body parts out
the bus windows...

The Manager hands Wallace an envelope. He rips it open, jaw dropping in amazement.

WALLACE

What's this?

MANAGER

Meal money.

WALLACE

Are you kidding? This is my rent!

CUT TO:

EXT. JACK MURPHY STADIUM - NIGHT

The Cubs lead the San Diego Padres in the ninth, 6 - 5. The fans are rowdy and unhappy.

S.D. ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Now pitching for the Chicago Cubs -
Wallace Marsh.

There are loud boos as Wallace takes the mound. He looks around as the hostile fans and opposing players heckle him. Bip steps up, grinning.

BIP

Isn't it great to see the country like this? Okay, 1-2-3, just like Chicago.

WALLACE

I've never had this many people boo me before - except for when I got caught with my girlfriend under the bleachers in college. That was a tough crowd.

BIP

Tell you how we shut 'em up. When you take your warm-ups, uncork a wild one.

Bip heads back behind the plate as Wallace continues to be razzed. Wallace winds up and uncorks a high pitch. Very high. It smashes a row of stadium lights, silencing the crowd. The first batter steps up, looking to Bip anxiously.

S.D. BATTER

Jesus - how hard does this guy throw?

BIP

I don't know, he's too wild for the speed gun to get a reading.

Gulping nervously, the batter steps in. Wallace throws his first pitch, the batter diving out of the way - as does every fan in the park, ducking under their seats. Bip catches the ball down the middle of the plate, the umpire poking his head over the catcher's shoulder, relieved.

S.D. UMPIRE

Oh! Strike.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Wallace dances into the room, Bip dragging in behind him.

WALLACE

I love staying in hotels. Let's make prank phone calls to the other guys.

Bip dials the phone as Wallace trampolines on his bed.

BIP

Room service? This is Mr. Coffee in room 312. I'd like a club sandwich and tea...

(looks to Wallace)

... and my roommate would like a shot of valium.

Bip hangs up, lying back on his bed tiredly.

WALLACE

I still don't get why we have to register under fake names.

BIP

Because if the other team's fans knew we were here they'd call all night and we'd never get any sleep.

The phone rings, Wallace answering it brightly.

WALLACE

Hello, Mrs. Butterworth speaking...

A familiar voice comes over the line.

WALLACE'S MOM (ON PHONE)

So now you're using aliases to avoid talking to your mother...?

Wallace covers the mouthpiece, turning to Bip.

WALLACE

I think we need a better system.

CUT TO:

EXT. DODGER STADIUM - NIGHT

The score is tied 3 - 3 in the eighth, the Cubs at bat. Ken Davis is at the plate, swinging and missing the first pitch. Wallace and the others watch from the dugout - Wallace wearing a rally cap and chewing a plug of tobacco. He calls out encouragingly.

WALLACE

Okay, big Ken! Smack that baby!
Tear the cover off the ball!

Ken gives Wallace a look before stepping back in, where he swings and misses for strike two. Wallace calls out again.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

That's okay, Kenny-baby! You can do it - step into the pitch and watch the bat meet the ball!

Seething, Ken drops his bat to his side, yelling back at Wallace.

KEN

I know how to hit, you asshole!

He doesn't even notice as the pitch floats over the plate.

L.A. UMPIRE

Steee-rike three!

Ken slams down his bat in frustration. The players sitting near Wallace scoot away from him as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. DODGER STADIUM - CLUBHOUSE EXIT - NIGHT

The players head toward the team bus, accosted by fans. A well-endowed GROUPIE approaches Wallace.

GROUPIE

Are you that goofy pitcher? I think you're cute. Will you sign my breasts?

WALLACE

Uh, I don't have a pen...

GROUPIE

(purring)

I guess you'll have to use your tongue.

Wallace swallows, eyeing her breasts uncertainly.

WALLACE

I don't think I have enough saliva...

Stevie steps up, dragging Wallace away.

STEVIE

Sorry - he's with me...

Ken Davis watches jealously from the bus as Stevie leads Wallace to a waiting limousine.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - DAY

Bottom of the ninth. Wallace is on the mound as we hear Harry Caray's voice over the radio.

HARRY CARAY (O.S.)
 ... The Giants have two on, two out
 in the bottom of the ninth, Cubs
 lead 6 to 4. Wallace Marsh has been
 brought in to dazzle another crowd
 with his amazing fastball...

Wallace winds up and fires, the batter wincing as he checks his swing, the ball accidently hitting the bat.

HARRY CARAY (CONT. - O.S.) (CONT'D)
 ... Here's the pitch - check swing
 blooper... oh my goodness...!

The ball carries, the fans rising to their feet.

HARRY CARAY (CONT. - O.S.) (CONT'D)
 ... It's still carrying... Ken
 Davis at the warning track... It's
 gone! A check swing home run! Cubs
 lose!

The San Francisco fans go crazy, Wallace standing on the mound in shock.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLANE - NIGHT

A private jet speeds back to Chicago.

INT. PLANE

Wallace sits with Stevie, the only two passengers on the plane. Wallace seems annoyed.

WALLACE
 Why couldn't I fly back with the
 team in the morning?

STEVIE

I've got a lot of appearances lined up for you. You're a big celebrity in Chicago now.

WALLACE

(scoffs)

As the guy who gave up a three-run homer to lose our last game?

Stevie grins, looking to Wallace pointedly.

STEVIE

A check swing homer. You pitch so fast that any contact at all sends the ball over the fence. That home run will make you more famous than if you struck out the side. This is the stuff baseball legends are made of.

WALLACE

Three-run homers are the stuff ex-relief pitchers are made of.

(leans back, sighs)

It'll be good to get back. I've been neglecting my store, and the Little League team...

Stevie frowns, a little irritated.

STEVIE

What are you talking about? You don't have time for that stuff any more. This is your life now. You're a major league pitcher, you have different obligations - to the team, to yourself, to me. Let somebody else handle that other stuff, it's not your responsibility any more.

WALLACE

(thinking)

Maybe you're right. I just don't want to let anyone down...

Stevie pats his hand reassuringly.

STEVIE

I like you, Wallace. You're not like most athletes. They're all so money and celebrity conscious. You're not like that.

WALLACE

No, but I'm ready to learn...

Stevie kisses Wallace lightly on the cheek.

STEVIE

Get some sleep.

She leans back, closing her eyes. Wallace looks down, realizing that her hand still rests on his. He slips his hand away, slapping it sternly with his other hand. Stevie's hand glides over, caressing his again. Wallace turns to her, Stevie smiling seductively. They kiss as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP - DAY

Clinton sits behind the counter, reading a 'Penthouse' featuring the 'Girls of Chernobyl' - a woman on the cover shielding her three breasts with her hand. Clinton looks up as Wallace enters, his arm confidently around Stevie.

WALLACE

Hey, Clinton! How's business?

CLINTON

If we had any I could tell you.
(whispers)
Who's the luscious babe?

WALLACE

Oh, this is my agent, Stevie White.

CLINTON

Agent? Weren't you 'Pet of the
Month', February 1989?

Stevie frowns, staying as close to the door as possible.

STEVIE

Sorry.

CLINTON

I could've sworn... could you just
moisten your lips and kind of lay
back against the counter...?

Wallace hurriedly puts an arm around Clinton's shoulders, leading him toward the back of the store.

WALLACE

Uh, listen, Clinton. I was wondering - what are your plans?

CLINTON

(thinking)

I'm not sure, I'll either settle down with the 'Girls of the Big 10', or plug in my 'Booty and the Breast' videotape.

WALLACE

No, not your plans tonight, your career plans. I'm not going to have time to run the shop any more, being on the road with the Cubs and all. I'd like you to run it for me.

Clinton looks at Wallace, surprised.

CLINTON

Me? Run the shop? All by myself?

WALLACE

(benevolently)

Yes. All by yourself.

Clinton frowns, yelling at a startled Wallace.

CLINTON

And destroy my social life?

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

Wallace steps onto the field, while Stevie takes a seat in the bleachers. Ed Norman has the team gathered around the pitchers mound, where he lectures.

ED

... All baseball players spit and adjust their cups, but you've got to do it in the right order.

(demonstrates)

Snort - spit - adjust your cup. Do it wrong and you've got a logey hanging off your arm.

KIDS

Snort - spit - adjust your cup.

Billy sits at the back of the group, bored. He sees Wallace, calling out happily.

BILLY

Wallace!

The others jump up, cheering as they rush to surround him.

WALLACE

Hi, guys. Listen, could everyone kind of gather around, I've got some news...

EXT. DUGOUT

A few of the fathers have gathered near the dugout. One glances at Stevie in the bleachers, eyes going wide.

FATHER #2

Check it out, guys. In the black dress - no panties!

Excited, they high five before casually sauntering toward the stands.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD

Wallace speaks haltingly to the team. This is hard for him.

WALLACE

I know it's been tough for you guys with your coach gone all the time...

The Second Baseman calls out.

SECOND BASEMAN

We won four games since you were gone!

WALLACE

Oh... great. Anyway, I feel like I'm holding the team back because I'm not here to help...

THIRD BASEMAN

We're only two games out of first!

Wallace frowns, surprised.

WALLACE

Uh-huh. So I'm afraid I have to step down as your manager and turn the team over to Ed. Are there any questions?

KEVIN

(raises hand)

Have you nailed that luscious babe yet?

Wallace glances at Billy uneasily.

WALLACE

Well, if there are no more questions...

Ed claps his hands sharply.

ED

Okay guys, everyone to the snack bar - sodas on me.

The kids all cheer, running off. Billy steps to where Wallace stands, bewildered.

WALLACE

You guys are really good now?

BILLY

They are. I never play. Do you really have to quit, Wallace?

Wallace puts a reassuring hand on Billy's shoulder.

WALLACE

Afraid so. Playing with the Cubs is kind of a full-time thing. There's more to it than I thought.

Billy looks up as Kathy's car pulls into the parking lot.

BILLY

I have something for you, it's in my mom's car.

WALLACE

Great.

(grimaces)

Oooh - your mom's here?

They walk toward the parking lot, Wallace waving to Stevie lovingly.

The fathers all stand near the bleachers, whistling idly and sucking in their guts. Stevie waves to Wallace, bored - the fathers smiling and waving back at her.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Kathy climbs out of her car as Wallace and Billy step up. She smiles, happy to see Wallace.

KATHY

So, the baseball legend returns.
How was your trip?

BILLY

Wallace quit the Little League
team.

Wallace shrugs uneasily. As he and Kathy talk, Billy climbs into the back seat of the car.

WALLACE

I just don't have the time, with
the road trips and the
interviews...

KATHY

Yeah, that makes sense. It's too
bad though, I know the kids loved
having a real baseball star
coaching them. It's really good to
see you, Wallace.

WALLACE

It's good to see you, too. I'm
sorry I didn't call, but some
strange things happened on the road
trip...

KATHY

That's okay, you'll make it up at
that dinner you owe me.

WALLACE

(frowns)

Dinner, right. I'm afraid I may
have to give a rain check on that.
I'm really swamped right now...

Wallace and Kathy look up as Stevie approaches. The fathers tag along behind her, having a hard time walking with their guts sucked in.

STEVIE

Wallace, can we leave now?
 (nods to fathers)
 It's getting crowded around here.

WALLACE

Uh, sure. Kathy Aaron, I'd like you
 to meet Stevie White.

Kathy sizes up Stevie knowingly. They nod to one another.

KATHY

I see.

WALLACE

Stevie's my agent.

Kathy smiles wanly. Stevie frowns at Wallace as Billy climbs out of the car, presenting Wallace a large painting of him on the mound in his Cubs uniform.

BILLY

I had some trouble with the eyes.
 They're kind of weird looking.

WALLACE

Then it probably looks just like
 me.

(looks at painting,
 touched)

Billy... this is terrific... you
 did this yourself?

BILLY

Yeah.

WALLACE

I don't know what to say. Thank
 you.

Stevie is already in Wallace's car, honking the horn.

STEVIE

Come on, Wallace. We've got to be
 downtown in half an hour.

Wallace looks to Kathy and Billy apologetically.

WALLACE

I've got to go. Listen, I'll give
 you guys a call. For real this
 time. This is a great painting,
 Billy.

Wallace climbs into his car, he and Stevie pulling away.
Kathy and Billy watch him go, Billy waving sadly.

BILLY
Goodbye, Wallace.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - BLEACHERS - DAY

TV cameras have been set up all over Wrigley Field for a nationally televised game. The mood is different, the stands full and the fans rowdy. They hold up handmade signs for the cameras - one man raising a 'MATTHEW 3:15' sign, another waving a banner reading 'JOHN 3:3'. They notice one another, a fistfight breaking out.

EXT. KEN DAVIS

steps to the plate. He glances toward the left field bleachers, where a sign reading 'KEN DAVIS HOMER ZONE' has been hung. He grins smugly as a TV ANNOUNCER calls the game.

TV ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
... One out, runner on first as Ken Davis steps to the plate for the streaking Cubs. They lead by one, eighth inning, four p.m. Chicago time, stadium full, C.B.S., network of champions, Saturday, the 23rd of June, 1992, A.D., fans going wild...

INT. DUGOUT

The Manager glances at the scoreboard, conferring with his coaches.

MANAGER
He's slumping - better have him bunt the runner over.

The Manager flashes a sign to the third base coach.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

The third base coach relays the sign to Ken, who scowls unhappily before stepping into the box.

EXT. BULLPEN

Wallace watches the game from the bullpen, shouting encouragement.

WALLACE
C'mon, Ken-baby! Let's go, big
fella--

The bullpen catcher hurriedly reaches over, covering Wallace's mouth with his hands.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

The pitcher delivers to the plate - but instead of squaring to bunt Ken swings away.

TV ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The runner goes and Davis swings -
it's a long fly ball, the left
fielder going back... back... to
the wall...

The fans stand anxiously, watching the flight of the ball.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT. - O.S.) (CONT'D)
... and it's caught on the warning
track. Hendricks guns it to the
cutoff man, who fires to first for
an easy double play.

The fans slump back into their seats, disappointed.

INT. DUGOUT

The Manager tosses his hat across the dugout in disgust as Ken trots back in.

MANAGER
What the hell was that? I told you
to bunt!

KEN
I guess I missed the sign. Sorry.

Grabbing his mitt, Ken starts onto the field, muttering to the shortstop.

KEN (CONT'D)
Who does he think he is? I'm not
laying down a bunt on national
TV...

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

In the bullpen, the Pitching Coach hangs up the phone, turning to Wallace.

PITCHING COACH
Okay, Marsh - you're in.

Wallace jumps up, taking off his jacket. He trots down the foul line, the fans beginning to chuckle as he passes. They point and laugh, word spreading quickly. The players on the field are puzzled by the laughter... all except for Ken, who grins nastily in left field.

KEN
Let's see how you like being the center of attention now, butthead.

Wallace reaches the mound, confused by the fans' reaction. As he turns we see that someone has replaced the name on the back of his jersey with the word 'BUTTHEAD'. The other players try not to laugh as Wallace self-consciously checks his fly.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH

The TV Announcer frowns, puzzled.

TV ANNOUNCER
Something seems to have caught the fans' attention...
(looks at TV monitor)
... Ooops - never mind.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

Shrugging, Wallace delivers the first pitch - the batter laughing so hard he doesn't even bother to swing.

TV ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The first pitch... an incredible fastball by butthead - I mean Marsh.

The fans begin to chant.

FANS
Butthead! Butthead! Butthead!

Wallace finally looks over his shoulder, pulling on his jersey to see the fake nameplate. Laughing, he tips his cap to the crowd, who cheer and chant even louder.

In left field, Ken's smile fades as he looks around the stadium in disbelief.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAY

We chart Wallace's rise as the season progresses. He models an expensive new suit, standing uncertainly in front of a mirror as Stevie nods approvingly, pinching his behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR LOT - DAY

A salesman drops the keys to a new Porsche convertible into Wallace's hand. Stevie climbs into the car, the salesman checking out her legs and nudging Wallace admiringly.

CUT TO:

INT. EXPENSIVE HOME - DAY

A real estate broker shows Wallace and Stevie the empty living room of a palatial home. The broker looks to Wallace expectantly. He shrugs, looking to Stevie, who nods her head 'yes'. Handshakes all around.

CUT TO:

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - CONCESSIONS STAND - DAY

The concessions stands at the ballpark have started to sell official Wallace Marsh 'Butthead' souvenirs - caps, pennants, t-shirts. They're doing a brisk business.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - PITCHERS MOUND - DAY

Wallace strikes out a batter to end the game. He smiles happily as Bip hurries out to congratulate him.

HARRY CARAY (O.S.)
 ... Cubs win! Cubs win! Wallace
 Marsh strikes out the side as the
 Cubs take their tenth in a row...

CUT TO:

INT. TV STATION - BLOOPER SET - DAY

Wallace stands uncomfortably on the set of a sports bloopers TV show. He speaks woodenly into the camera.

WALLACE

Hello, I'm Wallace Marsh, host of 'Goofy Sports Bloopers'. Tonight we'd like to focus on 'Baseball's Wackiest Career-Ending Beanballs'...

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - BATTERS BOX - DAY

Ken Davis takes a big swing and misses, pounding the dirt with his bat before heading back to the dugout.

HARRY CARAY (O.S.)

Strike three! Ken Davis is now 0 for his last 24 at-bats. I've never seen him slump this badly...

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - LEFT FIELD BLEACHERS - DAY

The fans replace the 'KEN DAVIS HOMER ZONE' banner with a new one reading 'BUTTHEAD MARSH FAN CLUB'. They all wear rump-shaped butthead hats.

CUT TO:

EXT. BILLY'S ROOM - DAY

Billy sits on his bed, the walls covered with Wallace Marsh paraphernalia. He affixes a stamp to an envelope addressed to Wallace, hurrying out to mail it.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

On the mound, Wallace throws a pitch inside, the batter diving out of the way. Angry, he tosses aside his bat and charges the mound. Wallace turns and runs, zig-zagging across the field as the larger, less agile batter chases after him. He races into left field, where Ken watches with amusement. Panting, the batter yells at Wallace.

ANGRY BATTER
Come back here, you little weenie!

Frustrated, the batter slugs Ken in the face.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - DAY

A bus pulls up to a stop light, an advertisement on the side plugging the 'WALLACE MARSH HOTLINE - 1-900-BUT-HEAD'. Below a gauzy photo of Wallace the ad promises 'LEARN HIS SECRET THOUGHTS AND DESIRES - DIET TIPS - ADVICE TO THE LOVELORN'.

CUT TO:

EXT. BILLY'S HOUSE - DAY

Billy opens the mailbox, thrilled to find a manila envelope from the 'Wallace Marsh Fan Club'. He tears it open, smile fading as he finds an autographed 8 x 10 of Wallace, and a form letter with the name 'Billy' typed in all the appropriate places.

CUT TO:

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

The Manager sits at his desk as a COACH enters tentatively.

COACH
Uh, the new mascot's here...

MANAGER
What is it, another teddy bear?

The Coach steps aside as the mascot enters - wearing a Cubs uniform, it sports a huge butt where it's head should be. The Manager can only cradle his head in his hands.

COACH
(brightly)
It plays the kazoo...

CUT TO:

INT. ASSEMBLY HALL - NIGHT

Wallace stands at a podium, speaking to a group of Shriners. He seems more comfortable than we've seen him before.

We PULL BACK to see everyone in the audience wearing only their underwear and fezzes.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASEBALL PARKS - VARIOUS SHOTS - DAY/NIGHT

We see a series of shots as Wallace pitches, striking out batters. He is beginning to look more tired and withdrawn as we hear Harry Caray's voice over the action.

HARRY CARAY (V.O.)

Chicago is in the grips of pennant fever as the Cubs now trail the New York Mets by only three games. The entire Cub team has rallied from their early season slump, galvanized by the miraculous relief pitching of Wallace 'Butthead' Marsh...

CUT TO:

EXT. THREE-RIVERS STADIUM - CLUBHOUSE EXIT - NIGHT

Fans surround Wallace as he heads for the team bus, calling for his autograph. He pushes through them tiredly.

WALLACE

I can't, not now... excuse me...

He climbs onto the bus, ignoring their pleas.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEBALL CARD SHOW - DAY

Wallace sits at a table, beneath a sign reading 'WALLACE MARSH AUTOGRAPHED BASEBALLS - \$50'. A long line of children and their fathers wait, money in hand, as Wallace signs.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE on a TV, where Wallace is onscreen holding up a tennis shoe.

WALLACE (ON TV)

The 'Air-Butthead', by Nike...

CLICK! The channel changes to another commercial, where Wallace holds up an adult diaper.

WALLACE (ON TV) (CONT'D)
 ... The official Wallace Marsh
 adult diaper - for the fan who
 never wants to leave his seat...

CLICK! The channel changes again, Wallace now holding a box labeled 'FRESH N' FREE'.

WALLACE (ON TV) (CONT'D)
 ... Say, girls - ever have that
 'not-so-fresh' feeling...?

CLICK! The channel changes once more, this time to Ken Davis holding a bottle of cheese drink and standing with the Cow.

KEN & COW
 It's dairy-licious!

We PULL BACK to see Billy slumped on the couch, TV remote in hand. He frowns unhappily, clicking the TV set off.

CUT TO:

INT. WALLACE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Wallace stands in the entryway of his lavishly furnished home, Stevie adjusting the collar of his expensive suit.

WALLACE
 Do we have to go? I can't remember
 the last time we spent a quiet
 evening at home.

STEVIE
 There's a new sports bar opening,
 and they've already paid you a lot
 of money to show up.

WALLACE
 How about we stay home and give
 them back the money.
 (grabs her passionately)
 Picture this - you, me, candles, a
 steaming bathtub and a jar of
 mayonnaise.

Stevie laughs condescendingly, patting Wallace on the cheek.

STEVIE

You're a funny guy, Wallace. I'll
get the car.

She gives Wallace a quick kiss as he laughs along with her,
slumping tiredly against the wall as she leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERFRONT STADIUM - DAY

Wallace is on the mound, runners on second and third. Harry
Caray announcing.

HARRY CARAY (O.S.)

One more out and Wallace Marsh will
have thrown sixty consecutive
scoreless innings, for a new major-
league record...

Wallace fires to the plate, the batter meekly sticking out
his bat and making contact. The ball is popped to left field,
where Ken lopes slowly after it, malicious grin on his face.

HARRY CARAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

A pop to left, Ken Davis after
it...

Ken pulls up, the ball dropping three feet in front of him.

HARRY CARAY (CONT. - O.S.)

Oooh! It drops in! Two runs score. Cubs lose, and Wallace
Marsh's chance for the record goes up in smoke.

The crowd cheers as Wallace watches from the mound, fuming.

INT. RIVERFRONT STADIUM - CLUBHOUSE

The Cubs file into the clubhouse, the Manager waiting for Ken
- but Wallace gets to him first.

WALLACE

What the hell was that? You can't
field now, either?

KEN

Shut up. I couldn't get to it, sue
me.

WALLACE

You used to be my hero. I respected you because you'd hit 30 home runs and bat .280 every year for a losing team. But you don't care about the team, all you care about is the money and the fame.

Ken's temper flares. He grabs Wallace by the jersey.

KEN

You think you're better than me? I've seen you - you spend all your time making commercials for things you don't use and autographing baseballs for fifty bucks a pop. So don't pull this high and mighty crap with me...

The Manager rushes forward, stepping between the two men.

MANAGER

That's enough. I don't give a crap who makes more shoe commercials or who donates more money to charity. All I care about is who performs on the field.

(to Ken)

I have one strict rule - you dog it, you sit. You're benched, Davis.

Ken stares at him, stunned.

KEN

Benched? I'm the team captain!

MANAGER

Then you're gonna have to captain sitting on your ass. That's final. Now hit the showers instead of each other.

The Manager moves off, Ken glaring at Wallace.

KEN

You don't like the way I do things? Maybe you ought to look in a mirror.

Ken stalks away, leaving Wallace at his locker. He sits, shaken.

Looking up, he sees the heroic portrait of himself that Billy painted hanging in his locker, staring at it thoughtfully.

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

The Little Leaguers celebrate a victory on the field, throwing their mitts and hats into the air. Billy sits alone in the dugout, drawing on the wall - his sketch now an elaborate mural. Kathy steps into the dugout, car keys in hand. She sighs, concerned.

CUT TO:

INT. WALLACE'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Stevie sits at a desk, doing some paperwork as the phone rings. She answers, distracted.

STEVIE

Wallace Marsh residence...

We INTERCUT with Kathy on the other end of the phone. She sits at the kitchen table in her house.

KATHY

Hello. I'd like to speak with Wallace... who is this?

STEVIE

(recognizing her voice)

I'm Mr. Marsh's business manager. I'm sorry, but he's not in.

KATHY

I'd like to leave a message for him. My name is Kathy Aaron. It's about my son, Billy. He has kind of a special relationship with Wallace, and he's been very depressed lately...

Stevie sighs, rolling her eyes impatiently.

STEVIE

I'm sorry, Mr. Marsh is far too busy to make personal appearances for every young boy that idolizes him. If he's depressed, may I suggest a shrink.

Stevie hangs up, shaking her head.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
Gotta get a new number...

She stands, exiting the den.

INT. WALLACE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Wallace sits slumped in an easy chair, staring at the TV. Stevie steps up, massaging his shoulders as onscreen Wallace pitches another product.

WALLACE (ON TV)
... And if the little bat turns
blue, you're pregnant!

Wallace clicks off the TV, a troubled look on his face.

WALLACE (CONT'D)
Do you think I'm just like Ken
Davis?

STEVIE
No, of course not - your house is
much nicer than his. There's a new
nightclub opening tonight. It might
be good for you to attend - free
publicity.

WALLACE
(groans)
I'm a baseball player, not a
spokesmodel... Christ, I'm not even
really a baseball player.

STEVIE
Well, we've got a few free hours -
what do you want to do?

Stevie leans forward, nibbling his ear. Wallace grins, eyes twinkling.

WALLACE
I know just the thing!

CUT TO:

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Wallace and Stevie walk down the midway, each carrying an armful of stuffed animals. Wallace smiles, enjoying himself, while Stevie is obviously bored.

STEVIE

Well, that was fun. Can we go now?

WALLACE

We haven't been on any rides yet. The 'Spine-Crusher', the 'Gut-Churner'...

Stevie looks at the cheap rides skeptically.

STEVIE

The 'Bolt-Loosener'...

WALLACE

(nudges her happily)

Isn't this great? Doesn't it remind you of your childhood?

STEVIE

Going around in circles and feeling nauseous? No - it reminds me of my two marriages.

Suddenly a dart flies out of nowhere, sticking one of Wallace's plush toys right between the eyes.

WALLACE

What the--

BILLY (O.S.)

Sorry, mister...

Wallace turns as Billy steps up to retrieve the dart. Their eyes meet, surprise on their faces. Wallace is thrilled to see his little friend again.

WALLACE

Billy!

Billy just stares back - then punches Wallace in the crotch and runs off. Dropping the toys, he hunches over in pain, looking up to see Billy standing with Kathy at the dart toss booth. Frowning, Kathy steps forward.

KATHY

I'm sorry, Wallace. Are you okay?

WALLACE
Nothing ten hours in a fetal
position won't cure.

KATHY
Good. See ya.

She turns to leave, Wallace calling after her.

WALLACE
Hey, wait a minute! What's the
rush?

Kathy turns back angrily.

KATHY
Nothing. I just know you're far too
busy to make personal appearances
for every young boy that idolizes
you.

WALLACE
Huh? What're you talking about?

Stevie steps forward impatiently.

STEVIE
Wallace, can we please go now?

WALLACE
In a minute. Kathy Aaron, this is
Stevie White...

KATHY & STEVIE
(coldly)
We've met.

Wallace looks at the two women knowingly.

WALLACE
I get it. Look, Kathy, we haven't
seen each other for four months.
When you're around other people
attachments form...

Wallace glances up as Ed Norman steps forward, putting his
arm around Kathy. Kevin follows, looking as bored as Stevie.

ED
Long time no see, Wallace.
(to Kathy)
Is everything okay?

KATHY

Fine. Why don't you take the boys
and get some hot dogs. I'll be
right there.

Ed nods, herding Billy and Kevin off down the midway. Billy
looks back at Wallace sadly. Wallace laughs in disbelief.

WALLACE

Ed Norman?

KATHY

(shrugs)

Hey, it's been months. Attachments
form.

WALLACE

Look, I didn't mean to hurt you...

Kathy cuts him off.

KATHY

This doesn't have anything to do
with you and me, Wallace. Did you
know that Billy's written to you
half a dozen times, and all he's
gotten back are form letters and
autographed pictures.

Wallace frowns uncertainly.

WALLACE

I didn't know, I never--

KATHY

He's ten years old, Wallace. He
doesn't understand how someone
could forget his friends so
quickly.

(laughs sarcastically)

Maybe I should thank you, you
taught him a valuable lesson. I
just wish he didn't have to learn
it so early.

Kathy turns and hurries down the midway after Ed and the
boys. Wallace watches her go, feeling like dirt. Stevie steps
up, now carrying all the stuffed animals.

STEVIE

Had enough fun yet?

CUT TO:

EXT. CARNIVAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Wallace tries to jam the stuffed animals into the Porsche's tiny storage compartment while Stevie sits in the car.

WALLACE

I can't believe she's seeing Ed Norman. All he wants is to get into her pants.

STEVIE

I don't think he'd look very good in her pants.

WALLACE

I'm serious. He doesn't care about her. And he'd only be interested in Billy if he aged ten years and grew breasts.

Wallace tries to close the hood on the stuffed animals by sitting on it.

STEVIE

What do you care? You never even see these people any more. You've got a new life...

WALLACE

That's another thing! Ed Norman's taken over my old life - managing the Little League team, dating Kathy - and he's doing a better job of it than I did!

STEVIE

Know what I think? I don't think you're pissed off at this Ed guy - you're mad because you still care about her.

Wallace is finally able to close the hood and latch it. He waves Stevie off dismissively.

WALLACE

That's ridiculous. We only went out a couple times.

STEVIE

It doesn't matter.

WALLACE

If that's the case, why am I with you?

STEVIE
Ask Ed Norman.

They stare at one another a moment - before the hood pops open, stuffed toys flying out and burying Wallace.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

Wallace stands next to his Porsche, which is parked on a hill overlooking the Little League field. Deep in thought, he watches as the team run drills - Ed Norman standing at second, padded like an attack dog trainer as the kids take turns sliding and spiking him. Sighing nostalgically, Wallace climbs into the car, driving away.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP - DAY

Wallace pulls up and parks, stunned to see that the card shop has changed. The sign over the door now reads:

**XXX HOT VIDEOS
and baseball cards**

Jumping out of his car, Wallace rushes into the store.

INT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP

Dazed, Wallace enters to find the store completely redecorated - the windows painted black, magazine and video racks lining the walls, private viewing booths in back. And worst of all, business is booming. Clinton now stands behind the counter while everyone else reads dirty magazines. Wallace storms to the front counter, where two men haggle.

MAN IN BOOKSTORE
I'll trade you Nolan Ryan and Jose
Canseco for Misty Beethoven...

Wallace pushes through them to confront Clinton, who is happy to see him.

WALLACE
What the hell is going on here?

CLINTON

What do you think? Great, huh?
(calls to customer)
Hey! You lick it you buy it!

WALLACE

(sputtering)
What have you done? This used to be
a nice, wholesome store. A place
where kids could come and hang out.

Clinton glances at his watch.

CLINTON

Still is - junior high doesn't let
out for another half hour.

Wallace glares at Clinton furiously.

WALLACE

Change it back. I want everything
back just like it was before.

Wallace stalks out, slamming the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

Sport bag in hand, Wallace walks down the tunnel to the
clubhouse. He drags, depressed by the trip back to his old
neighborhood. Stevie waits by the clubhouse entrance, fixing
him with an angry stare.

STEVIE

Where the hell have you been?

WALLACE

I'm having a bad day, okay? I just
found out I've gone from Little
League coach to the porn king of
greater Chicago.

STEVIE

I've been worried. You missed three
commercial shoots today - jock itch
spray, aspirin, and asthma
inhalers.

Wallace laughs humorlessly.

WALLACE

Sounds great. Do I eventually get
my own disease, like Lou Gehrig?

The clubhouse doors bang open, the Manager storming out.

MANAGER

Where the hell have you been?

WALLACE

(tiredly)

C'mon, Casey. Not today, all right?

MANAGER

What do you mean 'not today'? If we
win today we clinch a tie for the
division with the Mets, and you
stroll in here twenty minutes
before game time?

Wallace sighs tiredly, patting the Manager on the shoulder.

WALLACE

Look - talk to my agent...

(to Stevie)

... Talk with my manager. I'll be
asleep in the bullpen with the
other pitchers.

Wallace trudges into the locker room, Stevie and the Manager
surprised by his change in attitude.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - NIGHT

In the booth, Harry Caray calls the game tensely.

HARRY CARAY

Bottom of the ninth, one out. The
Cubs' four run lead is down to one.
The Mets won earlier today, if the
Cubs can hold on they'll finish the
season in a tie for first. But
Wallace Marsh is on the mound, and
he's struggling. I've never seen
him like this...

Wallace stands on the mound, sweating heavily. He seems
distracted, chewing his lip as Bip and the Manager step up.

MANAGER

Sorry, Wallace - I'm gonna have to pull you.

WALLACE

Come on, Casey. I can get these guys. I'm just a little wild, that's all.

All three turn and look to home, where a half dozen balls are lodged in the wire screen behind the plate. Only a few brave fans remain in their seats.

MANAGER

We're only up by one, Wallace. This game's too important. Besides, you're scaring the fans.

The Manager reaches out, Wallace sighing as he hands him the ball. Bip smacks him on the ass as he trots to the dugout, a smattering of applause from the fans.

INT. DUGOUT

Wallace tosses his mitt down in disgust, taking a seat on the bench. Ken sits a few feet away, barely able to keep a gloating smile off his face.

KEN

Gee, that's too bad, Wallace. But don't worry, it's not so bad here on the bench. You get to relax, enjoy the night air, drink Gatorade - and, oh yeah, there's all the shit you can eat.

Ken laughs as Wallace slumps forward, trying to ignore him.

CUT TO:

INT. CUBS' LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The locker room is a madhouse, Cubs players hollering and spraying themselves with champagne. Reporters crowd in, cameras covered in plastic to keep them dry. A LOCAL REPORTER yells over the din of the celebration.

LOCAL REPORTER

Here on the final day of the season, the Chicago Cubs, picked to finish last at the start of this campaign, have won, clinching a tie for first place with the New York Mets. Their win tonight forces a one-game playoff, to be played here Saturday afternoon.

The Local Reporter dodges a spray of foam, glancing around for someone to interview. He spots Wallace, sitting alone in front of his locker.

LOCAL REPORTER (CONT.) (CONT'D)

Let's see if I can get a word with Wallace Marsh, the amazing relief pitcher who came out of nowhere to inspire this team to greatness. Wallace, you started the season as a Little League coach, and you're ending it in a playoff for the National League East title. How do you feel?

He shoves the microphone into Wallace's face. Wallace looks at him blankly, speaking softly.

WALLACE

I live alone. I don't have any real friends. My entire life is a fluke. How do you think I feel?

The Local Reporter just stares at Wallace, mouth open, completely stumped. He turns back to the camera as he hurries away from Wallace.

LOCAL REPORTER

A sober, introspective moment with Wallace Marsh. Speaking of friendless, let's try and get a word with Ken Davis...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - NIGHT

After the game, Wallace steps out of the dugout, wistfully surveying the playing field. Sighing, he looks into the empty stands, surprised to see Bip sitting all alone.

WALLACE

What are you doing here - searching for some of the balls I lost?

Bip smiles, caught.

BIP

Naw, I just like to sit here sometimes. See the field in the moonlight, the smell of beer and peanuts still in the air. Kind of reminds me how much I love the game. And when you're hitting .239 you need a lot of reminding.

Wallace climbs up into the bleachers, sitting beside Bip.

WALLACE

That's something you always forget - fail 7 times out of 10 and you're an All-Star. Fail 8 times out of 10 and you're a bum.

BIP

That's why you have to love it. The odds are always in someone else's favor. The whole season is based on luck and little miracles. It's a game for dreamers.

Wallace frowns, confused. This is tough for him to say.

WALLACE

That's what I can't understand. Making it to the big leagues, pitching for the Cubs - it's always been my dream, ever since I was a kid. And now that I'm here I'm miserable. I feel like I'm missing something, like I should be enjoying myself more. But lately all I can think about is going back to my old life.

(looks to Bip sheepishly)

Am I a jerk?

BIP

No. You're a jerk when you leave your wet towels all over the bathroom floor. You're not a jerk for being unhappy.

Wallace leans back, relieved to be able to talk to someone.

WALLACE

When I was a kid, I never imagined all this other stuff - shooting commercials, other players hating me, never having any time to myself. It's not like I thought it would be.

BIP

You're not a kid now. Maybe it's not your dream anymore.

Wallace nods thoughtfully.

WALLACE

What's your dream, Bip?

BIP

That I could break .240.

They both laugh, the sound echoing through the empty stadium as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

The kids are lined up in the outfield, running sprints - finishing each with a slide, spikes in the air. Ed Norman blows a whistle to stop the boys, clapping and yelling.

ED

C'mon, girls - you can run faster than that. Five more, and let's see some aggressive sliding!

The kids groan, lining up across the field from Ed. He blows the whistle, the team running toward him. But as he blows, the whistle shoots out of his mouth. Kneeling, Ed can't find it in the unmown grass. Hearing a rumbling sound, he looks up to see the kids charging at him.

ED (CONT'D)

No... wait... halt...

He searches frantically for the whistle, glancing up as the kids slide - a dozen pairs of cleats headed right at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - PARKING LOT - DAY

Paramedics load a moaning Ed into the back of an ambulance. They close the doors and drive away as the fathers watch, concerned. The kids goof around in the background, playing keep-away with Billy's cap.

FATHER #1

Multiple lacerations, abrasions and contusions. What does that mean?

FATHERS #2 & 3

No coach.

FATHER #1

So what do we do? We've got the championship game tomorrow.

Father #2 speaks nobly.

FATHER #2

If they forfeit now, they'll be laughing stocks. It's terrible to be constantly harassed and called a loser by people on the other teams.

FATHER #3

Yeah, kids can be cruel...

FATHER #2

What kids? I'm talking about my co-workers. All their kids are on championship teams.

FATHER #1

What if one of us coaches?

Father #3 shakes his head grimly.

FATHER #3

Can't. League rules - the team's gotta use the coaches registered on the regular season roster.

FATHER #2

(thinking)

That'd be Ed and...

The fathers look to one another, frowning.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

A commercial shoot is in progress. A line of girls in skimpy bathing suits dance around Wallace, who wears a tuxedo and holds a bottle of beer.

WALLACE

Blatz Light - one-sixth the calories, so you can drink six times as much!

PULL BACK to see the fathers standing behind the crew, mouths agape as they watch the dancers' jiggling breasts.

FATHER #2

Amazing. Do you think they're real?

FATHER #1

Who cares? I want my TV chair upholstered with that stuff...

The Director calls out.

DIRECTOR

Cut! Stop the music, stop the boobs. We'll try it again in two minutes.

Everyone scatters to do their jobs as Wallace steps off the set. He approaches the fathers, who wave happily.

FATHER #2

Hi, Wallace! Thanks for seeing us.
(nods to dancers)
This makes the bleachers look like a dog pound.

WALLACE

I was surprised you called. What's up?

The fathers look to one another, unsure how to start.

FATHER #1

You see, Wallace, Ed had a tiny accident at practice today - nothing serious - and we need someone to coach the team in the championship game tomorrow.

Wallace smiles, speaking quickly.

WALLACE

Really? I'll be there.

Standing to one side, Stevie has heard everything. She steps forward sternly.

STEVIE

Oh no you won't. You're playing for the National League east title tomorrow. No Little League game is that important.

Wallace turns to Stevie, speaking through clenched teeth.

WALLACE

I can run my own life, Stevie.

STEVIE

No you can't - that's my job.
(to fathers)
Goodbye, gentlemen.

Stevie steers Wallace back to the set. She straightens his hair, concerned.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

What's going on, Wallace? I don't understand you lately.

WALLACE

Join the club.

CUT TO:

EXT. BILLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Wallace steps onto the porch, nervously knocking on the door. He looks more like the old Wallace - no expensive shoes or suit. Billy answers the door, Wallace instinctively covering his crotch with his hand.

WALLACE

Hi, Billy! It's me.

No response. Billy just stares at him blankly.

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

Uh, is your mom home?

BILLY

I'll check.

Billy slams the door in Wallace's face. He stands there uncomfortably, wondering if maybe this isn't a mistake. He turns as the door opens, Kathy now staring at him emotionlessly.

WALLACE

Hi! It's me.

No response. Wallace drops the cheerful facade.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Why is it that you're not talking,
but I still feel like we're
arguing?

KATHY

What do you want, Wallace?

WALLACE

I wouldn't mind coming in - it's
getting kind of chilly out here.

She steps aside, motioning him in.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

(muttering)

But not as chilly as in here, I
bet.

INT. BILLY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Kathy leads Wallace into the living room, where Billy plays
video games on the TV. Wallace stands over him, watching.

WALLACE

Hey, you're pretty good at this.
These games take hand-eye
coordination - if we could just get
a bat in your hand...

Without a word, Billy puts down the joystick, stands, and
leaves the room. Wallace sighs, looking to Kathy.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I came to apologize.

KATHY

About what? Your dream came true.
We're very happy for you.

WALLACE

I can tell... Look, I only thought
my dream came true. My whole life
all I ever wanted was to be a
baseball player, but I was always
too small or too weak or too dorky.

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Then suddenly this miracle happens, and I'm thirty-five years old and pitching for the Cubs. It's like everything was handed to me on a silver platter, and I went a little nuts.

Wallace and Kathy turn as Billy carries an armload of Wallace Marsh paraphernalia from his room. He tosses it in the fireplace before leaving again. Frowning, Wallace continues.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I had money, I had fame, I had a nice house - but a miracle isn't anything if there's no one to share it with.

KATHY

What about Stevie?

WALLACE

(sighs)

Stevie. Stevie's like the fancy suits and the car. It's like someone turned me loose in a big department store and told me I could have whatever I wanted.

KATHY

And what are we - Pic N' Save? You completely forgot about us, Wallace. You were Billy's best friend and all he got from you was form letters. And it's not like you just disappeared - you're on TV every day, getting more and more successful and more and more distant.

Billy re-enters with a can of lighter fluid, spraying the souvenirs in the fireplace before leaving once more. Wallace sits next to Kathy, taking her hand.

WALLACE

I swear, I never knew about Billy's letters...

She starts to talk, Wallace raising his hand to stop her.

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

... And I know that's no excuse for ignoring him. What I'm saying is things got out of my control.

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

I wasn't running my own life, or making my own choices. But I'm going to change that. And the first thing I want to do is take you guys out for that dinner I owe you.

Kathy thinks a moment, smiling gently.

KATHY

Maybe we can go to Pic N' Save afterward. See if we can buy the old Wallace back.

WALLACE

I think there's one left.

Grinning, Wallace leans forward, giving Kathy a kiss. He eyes her playfully.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I've got to ask - what's with you and Ed Norman?

KATHY

Nothing. Ed called and asked if we wanted to go to the carnival, and Billy'd been so depressed I figured 'why not'? He tried to romance me into bed by reciting 'Casey at the Bat'.

WALLACE

You're joking. What happened?

Kathy pats him on the shoulder, laughing.

KATHY

Relax - there was no joy in Mudville.

They both look up as Billy steps to the fireplace once more, striking a match and lighting the Wallace Marsh merchandise with a WHOOSH. Wallace looks to Kathy grimly.

WALLACE

This is going to be harder than I thought...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

The Little Leaguers are in position for fielding drills, watching as Ed Norman makes his way to the plate. Heavily bandaged, Ed is barely able to move. He staggers forward, the other fathers trailing him.

FATHER #2

Are you sure you can do this, Ed?

FATHER #1

If you're in any discomfort...

Ed speaks deliberately, obviously in pain.

ED

I'm fine. Never felt better.

Reaching home plate, the catcher hands Ed a bat and ball. He calls to the boys through gritted teeth.

ED (CONT'D)

Okay, bring it home.

Ed tosses the ball into the air weakly, hitting with great discomfort. The Third Baseman fields the dribbler, gunning it home... the throw hitting Ed in the chest. Heavily sedated, Ed can only whimper.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE PARKING LOT

Wallace, Kathy and Billy pull up in Wallace's old car. Giving Billy a friendly nudge, Wallace grins.

WALLACE

Ready to kick some butt, Billy?

Billy ignores him, Wallace sighing.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

You know, you're going to have to talk to me sooner or later.

BILLY

Bite me.

He scrambles out of the car, Wallace looking to Kathy.

WALLACE

It's a start.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD

The fathers stand over Ed, who lays flat on his back on home plate, eyes rolling back in his head.

FATHER #2

Really, Ed, if you're not up to it...

The Second Baseman looks up to see Wallace, Billy and Kathy step onto the field.

SECOND BASEMAN

Look! It's Wallace!

Ed is immediately forgotten, trampled in the stampede as everyone rushes to greet Wallace.

FATHER #1

I can't believe it - you made it!

FATHER #3

We're saved!

Wallace drops the equipment bag, speaking to the kids purposefully.

WALLACE

Okay guys, we're here to win a ballgame - but we're gonna win it fairly. I don't want to see any spiking, beaning, bat-corking, or cheating of any kind.

The kids all nod, the fathers looking to one another worriedly.

FATHERS

We're doomed.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

The Cubs are warming up for their game as well. The mood is tense, as the stakes are high. Bip and Ken stand next to the batting cage as the Manager steps up, glancing around worriedly.

MANAGER

Where the hell is Marsh? I warned him about being late the other day.

BIP
 Don't worry, he'll show...
 (to himself)
 ... I hope.

MANAGER
 Yeah, he wouldn't miss this game...
 (to himself)
 ... I hope.

KEN
 He'd have to be bleeding to death
 in a car wreck...
 (to himself)
 ... I hope.

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DUGOUT - DAY

The kids prepare for their first at bats, the game beginning. Wallace walks down the bench, clapping his hands and calling to the boys.

WALLACE
 Okay, let's start it up with a big
 inning here, guys.

Billy sits in his place at the far end of the dugout, where his mural on the wall has become an elaborate work of art. Wallace steps up while Billy continues to draw.

WALLACE (CONT'D)
 Wow, that's an impressive piece of
 work, Billy. A real epic... Who's
 the guy in the Cubs hat hanging
 from a streetlight?
 (realizing)
 On second thought, don't tell me...

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

Stevie sits in a seat behind the dugout, the Manager rushing up in a panic.

MANAGER
 Where's your superstar? He's late
 again!

STEVIE
(surprised)
Are you sure? He's probably around
someplace...

MANAGER
If he isn't here in five minutes
he's benched!

The Manager starts to walk away, only to be stopped by a
Coach.

COACH
We've got another problem, Casey.
Adams is out, he's got the flu.

MANAGER
This is all I need. There's no
chance he can play?

COACH
Only if you install a toilet in
left field.

Cursing under his breath, the Manager scans the field.
Spotting Ken Davis, he calls to him.

MANAGER
Davis! Get over here.

Ken trots up curiously.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Adams is sick, so you're starting.

KEN
Great, Casey. I'll--

MANAGER
(cuts him off)
This game's too important for you
to screw it up. If I don't see
maximum effort out there you're
gonna spend next season in the
minors. Got that?

Ken nods, the Manager glancing at his watch before turning
back to Stevie.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Four minutes or he's benched!

He stalks off, Stevie ignoring Ken's smug grin as she hurries up the aisle.

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - BLEACHERS - DAY

Ed sits next to Kathy, who tries to listen to the Cubs game on a portable radio while he rambles on deliriously.

HARRY CARAY (on radio)	ED
News out of the Cubs' locker room is that Wallace Marsh has not reported for pre-game warm-ups yet today. With the game starting in twenty minutes, management is understandably worried. bag, but still...	... I was so proud of Kevin in the emergency room. He even helped the nurse hook up his old man's I.V. - of course he got the glucose pouch mixed up with a colostomy

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD

The scoreboard shows a 12 - 12 tie going into the seventh inning. Wallace paces, checking his watch nervously.

WALLACE
Okay guys - three up, three down!

KEVIN
Coach, we're up.

Wallace glances into the parking lot as Stevie pulls up. She hurries toward the field, looking none too pleased.

WALLACE
Okay, home run, then three up, three down. It's getting late...

Stevie storms into the dugout, confronting Wallace angrily. The kids on the bench watch - Billy particularly intrigued.

STEVIE
What the hell do you think you're doing - other than ruining both our careers?

WALLACE
These kids need me. I don't think I'm cut out for the big leagues...

By now the parents in the bleachers are no longer interested in the game, but the argument in the dugout. Kathy watches with interest as Stevie scoffs cynically.

STEVIE

Right. Now you're going to tell me you prefer the quiet, simple life to being rich and famous.

Wallace shrugs helplessly.

WALLACE

I guess my dream changed.

STEVIE

Brilliant. Let me clue you in on a little secret - any schmuck can have a nagging wife and snot-nosed kids, but only a handful of people get the kind of fame and wealth you've been given.

A moment of silence. They just stare at one another. As do all the kids in the dugout, the parents in the stands, and the players on the field, the game having stopped dead.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

So? You coming to the game, or what?

WALLACE

I can't. If I leave now the team forfeits.

STEVIE

If you don't show up at the game, I never want to see you again.

Wallace frowns, nodding.

WALLACE

Maybe that's best. I wanted to talk to you...

Stevie calmly picks up a bat, eyeing it thoughtfully.

STEVIE

Uh-huh. Wallace, did you remember to wear your cup?

CLOSE ON the parents in the bleachers wincing as we hear a thud, followed by a scream. Back in the dugout, Stevie drops the bat, a satisfied smile on her face, while Wallace stands hunched over.

WALLACE
 (gasps for breath)
 Jeez, enough with the testicles
 already! What was that for? Just
 because we're breaking up?

STEVIE
 Are you kidding? We were a lousy
 couple. I'm pissed about all the
 endorsement money I'll be losing.

Stevie strides out of the dugout, past the fathers, who cover
 their crotches. Wallace looks up to see that the game has
 stopped, everyone watching him.

WALLACE
 What? Did we win?

He glances into the stands, giving Kathy an embarrassed look.
 She smiles back sympathetically. Even Billy looks at him with
 a new respect.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

Players line up on the foul lines for the introductions. As
 their names are called they step forward, acknowledging the
 fan reaction. The Manager fumes as Wallace's name is
 announced - the fans' applause turning to puzzled silence
 when they see he is not there. Ken grins happily, the Manager
 muttering under his breath.

MANAGER
 Marsh is benched.
 Benchedbenchedbenched.

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DUGOUT - DAY

The scoreboard shows the game still tied 12 - 12 in the 13th
 inning. Wallace paces anxiously, calling out to the boys.

WALLACE
 Let's go, guys - a little hustle!

Kathy sticks her head into the dugout, portable radio in
 hand.

KATHY
 Fifth inning, Cubs down by two.

HARRY CARAY (ON RADIO)
 ... A sharp single to left... Ken
 Davis charging - it's through his
 legs! Fernandez scores from second.
 That looked like a bad hop...

KATHY
 Cubs down by three...

Wallace turns back to the field, clapping his hands and
 calling out urgently.

WALLACE
 A lot of hustle! Big steaming gobs
 of hustle!

CUT TO:

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DUGOUT - DAY

Inning over, the Cubs' fielders jog back into the dugout, the
 Manager waiting angrily for Ken.

MANAGER
 That ball went right through your
 legs! I should've known better than
 to put this team's fate in your
 empty mitt...
 (turns)
 Griffin - grab a bat, you're in for
 Davis.

KEN
 It was a bad hop, Casey. I swear.
 The outfield's all chewed up.
 (seriously)
 Don't do this to me again. Please.

The Manager looks hard at Ken, controlling his temper.

MANAGER
 Griffin - sit down. Davis, get out
 there, you're up.

Relieved, Ken grabs a helmet and bat, hurrying onto the
 field. Bip steps up to the Manager curiously.

BIP
 Any sign of Wallace yet?

Now the Manager explodes.

MANAGER

I don't care about Marsh! Quit asking about Marsh! He is benched - permanently! Even when we're not playing, he eats and sleeps on this bench!

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

The scoreboard now shows the game in the 17th inning, the Screaming Weasels up 17 - 14. Kevin Norman is on the mound, looking pretty spent. Wallace yells encouragement.

WALLACE

Okay, Kev-boy! One more out and we're the champs! You can do it...

Kevin uncorks a floater, which the batter cracks into left for a clean single, scoring two runners. The scoreboard changes to 17 - 16. Wallace shakes his head unhappily.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Kevin's exhausted. I'm gonna have to make a change.

He signals to the umpire for time-out, stepping into the dugout.

INT. DUGOUT

Wallace approaches Billy, who stands on the bench as he draws on the ceiling.

WALLACE

Hey, Michelangelo - I need you to go into right field.

Billy continues to draw, ignoring him. Wallace sighs in exasperation.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I don't care whether you're talking to me or not, I need you to play. I'm bringing Tommy in to pitch, and I need you in right.

BILLY

Why? Are you trying to make sure we lose?

Wallace is relieved - at least he's got him talking.

WALLACE

Look, Billy - you're mad at me because I let you down. Well you made a commitment to this team, and now they need you. You can't let them down.

BILLY

If the ball is hit to me, I will let them down.

WALLACE

Nobody can fault you if you try, Billy. It's the effort, not the outcome. It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game. I can't think of any more cliches, so get out there.

He hands Billy his glove, guiding him out of the dugout.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Besides, nobody ever hits it to right.

BILLY

Can I get that in writing?

EXT. BLEACHERS

The parents watch as Wallace jogs to the mound to make the change. He motions the right fielder in as he takes the ball from a disappointed Kevin. Father #1 points excitedly.

FATHER #1

Tommy's pitching!

They all cheer, encouraged. Kathy points happily to Billy, who trudges out to right field.

KATHY

Billy's in right field!

The other parents all groan. Kathy sits tensely next to Ed, who is unaware of anything around him. Two little kids sit behind him, tossing wet candies onto his head and back.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD

Finishing his warm-ups, Tommy faces the first batter. He delivers, the batter smacking a long fly to right. Billy sees the ball coming, a look of terror on his face.

BILLY

Wallace, you lying bastard...

Billy heads back, the ball carrying. He reaches the warning track, bumping into the fence.

EXT. VARIOUS SHOTS

as the spectators react: The parents in the bleachers stand as one... Kathy clenches her fists hopefully... Wallace walks onto the field, watching the arc of the ball... Kevin sits in the dugout, shaking his head sadly... Ed stares into the middle distance, making odd gurgling noises.

EXT. BILLY

blindly sticks up his mitt as the ball descends. He closes his eyes, the ball smacking into his glove - and popping out. Billy opens his eyes as the ball squirts away. Diving for it, he catches it with his bare hand just before it hits the grass.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD

Wallace, the kids and the parents all cheer wildly, rushing onto the field to mob Billy - who lays on the grass, staring at the ball in his hand in disbelief. Wallace reaches him first, lifting Billy onto his shoulders in triumph.

BILLY

I did it, Wallace! I didn't screw up!

Billy bobbles the ball, dropping in on top of Wallace's head. Kathy races up, hugging them both.

KATHY

Billy, I'm so proud of you!

WALLACE

(rubbing head)

How did Ed survive as long as he did with these kids?

Kathy looks to Wallace seriously, holding up her radio.

KATHY

The Cubs are down by one in the seventh inning. They're using every pitcher they have - they need you, Wallace.

Wallace scowls, shaking his head.

WALLACE

I don't want to play for money any more. This is what baseball's about - playing for the love of it.

Still perched on his shoulder, Billy leans forward, looking down at Wallace.

BILLY

Your team needs you, Wallace. You made a commitment to them and you can't let them down. Sound familiar?

Wallace looks up at Billy, frowning.

WALLACE

If I'd known you were going to use the things I said against me, I'd have kept my mouth shut.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

It's late in the game, the Cubs down by one. Bip steps to the plate with a runner on first.

HARRY CARAY

... Bip Anderson steps in, batting .239. It's been a tough year at the plate for Bip - frankly I'm surprised they're not bringing in a pinch hitter...

Taking a deep breath, Bip digs in. The pitcher delivers, Bip connecting solidly - a huge grin spreading over his face as the ball rockets over the left field fence and onto Waveland Avenue. The fans go wild as Bip trots around the bases.

HARRY CARAY (CONT'D)

Deep fly to left! It might be... it could be... it is! Home run! Cubs lead! Cubs lead! And Bip Anderson finally breaks .240!

Bip returns to the dugout, where he is mobbed by his teammates.

CUT TO:

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - TUNNEL - DAY

Wallace, Kathy and Billy run down the tunnel to the clubhouse. They stop at the locker room door, Wallace turning to Kathy and Billy nervously.

WALLACE

This is it. I can't tell if I'm nervous, or my stomach still hurts from getting hit in the crotch.

KATHY

You know you can do it. We'll be right here watching you.

WALLACE

You and forty million people on TV. I don't think I can picture that many people in their underwear.

Billy pats Wallace on the shoulder reassuringly.

BILLY

If I can catch that ball, you can pitch.

WALLACE

Right. Either that or we've used up our share of miracles for one day.

CUT TO:

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

It's the top of the ninth, two down. The Cubs are still up by one, but the pitcher on the mound is running out of gas. He delivers a pitch for ball four, the batter trotting to first. The Manager and coaches watch, concerned.

COACH

He's running on fumes out there.

MANAGER

What am I supposed to do? I've used everyone, there's no one left. I swear, if I ever see Marsh again...

Just then Wallace steps into the dugout, in uniform.

WALLACE
Somebody mention my name?

The Manager and coaches turn, stunned.

MANAGER
Marsh - you're benched! Now get in
there and pitch!

The Manager grabs Wallace by the arm, nearly dragging him onto the field. The fans begin to cheer when they see him, the other players watching with surprise. Ken frowns angrily, walking in from his position in left field.

HARRY CARAY
The roar you hear is for Wallace
Marsh, who is now making his way to
the mound. If anyone can nail down
a victory he can. Listen to the
chant - 'Wallace! Wallace!'.

CROWD
Butthead! Butthead!

EXT. PITCHERS MOUND

Reaching the mound, the Manager takes the ball from the pitcher, who heads for the dugout. Bip steps up, greeting Wallace with a teasing grin.

BIP
Long time no see.

The Manager cuts in tensely, handing Wallace the ball.

MANAGER
It's up to you, Wallace. I've used
everyone else - you're the last
pitcher we've got.

BIP
No sweat. We only need one out.
Right, Wallace?

Wallace smiles, trying to hide his nervousness.

WALLACE
Right.

They all look up as Ken approaches furiously.

KEN

What's this asshole doing in the game? I thought he was benched. He doesn't even bother to show up for eight innings and you put him right in?

Wallace turns on Ken, nudging him in the chest with his mitt as he talks.

WALLACE

You haven't shown up since April! All you've been doing is sulking and dogging it like a spoiled brat throwing a tantrum.

(quietly)

What the hell happened to you, Ken? What happened to that Little Leaguer that used to play ball for the love of it?

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH

Harry Caray watches the commotion on the mound through binoculars.

HARRY CARAY

Ken Davis is on the mound now... looks like he and Wallace Marsh are... uh... discussing strategy...

EXT. PITCHERS MOUND

The Manager and Bip step between the two men.

MANAGER

All right, that's enough. Davis, get back to your position. We've still got a game to win here.

Ken reluctantly heads back out to left, the Manager shaking his head in disgust as he trots back to the dugout. Bip and Wallace are alone on the mound.

WALLACE

Heard your home run on the radio. You're over .240 now.

BIP

Yeah. Let's not waste my shining moment.

Bip heads back behind the plate, the crowd cheering expectantly.

EXT. BLEACHERS

Kathy and Billy step up, standing at the top of an aisle. They watch anxiously as Wallace takes his warm-ups.

KATHY
You can do it, Wallace.

BILLY
(shouting)
Go get 'em, butthead!

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

Wallace finishes his warm-ups, the batter stepping into the box. Looking around at the crowd, Wallace takes a deep breath to calm himself before going into his wind-up. He delivers - the batter meekly sticking out his bat and making contact. The ball rifles back at Wallace, who can't get out of the way as it nails him in the right shoulder. The ball caroms into right field for a single, the runner on first advancing to third.

EXT. BLEACHERS

The fans gasp, Kathy and Billy wincing when they see Wallace hit the ground.

EXT. PITCHERS MOUND

Wallace sits on the mound, gritting his teeth in pain.

WALLACE
What is this, beat-on-Wallace day?

The infielders race to the mound, Bip and the Manager coming to his aid.

BIP
Jeez, what a shot! Are you okay?

WALLACE
I don't know. That really tagged me. My arm feels weak and numb - just like it used to.

MANAGER

Say you're okay, Wallace. You've got to be okay. If you're not okay we're gonna have to bring the mascot in to pitch.

Wallace stands shakily, rubbing his shoulder and rotating his arm.

WALLACE

I'm fine - scared me more than anything.

Everyone lets out a relieved sigh.

EXT. BLEACHERS

The fans cheer as Wallace waves to them that he's okay. Kathy and Billy applaud, joining in as the chant begins anew.

FANS

Butthead! Butthead!

EXT. PITCHERS MOUND

The Manager leaves, the other players returning to their positions. Bip starts to go, Wallace stopping him.

WALLACE

We may have a problem here. I think my shoulder's screwed up.

BIP

What do you want to do?

WALLACE

What can I do? I've got to pitch.

BIP

Look, we only need one out - here's what we do...

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH

Harry Caray calls the game.

HARRY CARAY

This is it - the whole season rides on this batter. Two outs, top of the ninth, Mets on first and third. Holy cow!

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

Bip takes his place behind the plate as the next batter steps in. Bip grins, eyeing the batter.

BIP

Man, did you see that thing take off? And that guy barely swung. Can you imagine how far it'd go if it beamed someone in the helmet?

The batter sneers.

N.Y. BATTER

Yeah? When I hit it it's gonna end up in Lake Michigan.

Bip laughs, nodding to Wallace on the mound. Wallace winds up, muttering to himself.

WALLACE

Please God - don't let it hit me in the face...

Wallace closes his eyes and throws. He lets loose a 40 m.p.h. floater, but the batter is so keyed for a 125 m.p.h. fastball that he is way out in front. Swing and a miss. Wallace opens his eyes, surprised.

M.L. UMPIRE

Strike one!

Bip chuckles, tossing the ball back to Wallace as the batter pounds the dirt with his bat. The crowd cheers.

N.Y. BATTER

What kind of cheap pitch was that? Is he afraid to throw me his fastball?

BIP

Why should he be afraid? You couldn't even hit one moving that slow.

EXT. BLEACHERS

Kathy and Billy exchange puzzled looks.

KATHY

What was that?

BILLY

It looked like his old throw-like-a-girl pitch.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH

Harry Caray is equally confused.

HARRY CARAY

Apparently Wallace Marsh has been working on a changeup... either that or he's wearing his glove on the wrong hand...

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

Bip squats, the batter digs in, and Wallace winds up and delivers - another 40 m.p.h. creampuff. The batter grins hungrily and swings, cranking it a good 450 feet... foul. Still out in front. The crowd cheers, but a bit uneasily, as the batter kicks at the dirt, frustrated.

N.Y. BATTER

Damn! Just throw me one more like that!

BIP

So you can hit foul balls all night? Forget that - our champagne's getting warm in the locker room...

Bip laughs derisively as he tosses a new ball back to Wallace. Realizing this may be the last time he's ever on a major league mound, Wallace looks around - at the screaming fans, his teammates in the field, and in the dugout.

WALLACE

Okay, calm down. What's the worst thing that could happen? He drills it, they win, we lose, I'm hated and despised by everyone in Chicago for the rest of my life. What's the best thing?

(thinks)

It hits me in the head, they win, we lose, I die and don't have to hear the terrible things said about me.

Resigned, Wallace winds up once more, checks the runners, and with a nervous sigh releases the ball.

It floats lazily toward the plate... where the batter times it perfectly, crushing a shot down the left field line. Wallace turns to watch the flight of the ball.

INT. DUGOUT

The Manager watches the ball arc into the air, groaning when he realizes who it's hit to.

MANAGER

Oh no - Davis...

EXT. KEN

lopes nonchalantly after the ball. Suddenly a look of determination crosses his face. He begins to trot harder... then runs... faster... and faster - finally taking a diving leap, slamming into the wall face first and tumbling to the ground... the ball in his mitt.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

Wallace and the other players jump for joy, rushing to where Ken lays in the outfield.

EXT. BLEACHERS

Kathy and Billy hug each other as the crowd goes wild.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH

Harry Caray screams into the microphone.

HARRY CARAY

Cubs win! Cubs win! Division
champs! Division champs! Postseason
broadcast pay! Postseason broadcast
pay!

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD

Wallace rushes to Ken as the left fielder staggers to his feet. Ken flashes Wallace a sheepish grin.

KEN

I was a rotten player in Little
League.

Wallace laughs as Ken is lifted onto the other players' shoulders. Ken tosses him the game ball as he is carried off. Wallace looks around him, soaking it all in. He smiles happily... the smile fading when Stevie rushes up, camera crew at her side. She calls to Wallace over the din.

STEVIE

Wallace! I just landed us the mother of all commercials! Are you ready? Roll it!

(into microphone)

Wallace Marsh! You and the Cubs just won the division championship - what are you gonna do now?

Looking into the stands, Wallace sees Kathy and Billy standing at the railing, waving to him proudly. He smiles gently as Stevie thrusts the microphone in his face.

WALLACE

I'm going home with my friends.

He tosses Stevie the game ball as he hurries off, leaving she and the camera crew abandoned. Glancing around desperately, Stevie rushes over to Ken.

STEVIE

Ken Davis - you and the Cubs just won a division championship...

Wallace steps to the railing, where Kathy and Billy wait for him. He helps them onto the field, where the three of them embrace happily.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP - DAY

The sign out front reads 'BASEBALL CARDS AND STUFF' again. A banner announcing the 'GRAND RE-OPENING' hangs over the door. SUPERIMPOSE TITLE:

SIX MONTHS LATER

INT. BASEBALL CARD SHOP

Billy paints a mural on the back wall, depicting the Cubs in action - with Wallace prominently featured on the mound. Wallace, Kathy and Clinton restock the shelves with baseball paraphernalia. The TV is on, the Cubs playing their season opener... but Wallace barely seems to notice.

WALLACE

How's the mural coming, Billy? We open in three days.

BILLY

I ran out of paint filling in Ken Davis' butt.

KATHY

(smirks)

We'll buy you another five gallons.

Wallace and Kathy laugh while Clinton opens a shipping crate.

CLINTON

I ordered some new videos for the store.

WALLACE

(suspiciously)

I hope they're all baseball related.

CLINTON

Sure they are - they all have baseball themes...

He holds up three video boxes featuring scantily clad couples.

CLINTON (CONT.) (CONT'D)

'The Unnatural'... 'Hung Like a Bull Durham'... and 'Field of Reams'...

Wallace snatches the videos from Clinton's hand.

WALLACE

Throw 'em out...

He notices Billy watching with interest.

WALLACE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

On second thought, burn 'em.

He tosses them aside, rummaging through the crate as the phone rings. Kathy hurries to answer it, giving Wallace a quick kiss as she passes by.

KATHY

I'll get it...

Wallace pulls a box of baseball cards from the crate.

WALLACE

Hey, the new cards are here...

Billy and Clinton step over, opening new packs of cards as Kathy calls to Wallace.

KATHY

Wallace - it's your mother. She says she got her foot caught in her Stairmaster, and now she's trying out as a kicker with the Miami Dolphins.

WALLACE

(groans)

Don't listen to anything my mother says. She's always making up these unbelievable stories.

BILLY

Hey, cool! Look at this, Wallace.

Billy holds up a baseball card, Wallace's jaw dropping in surprise. It's a Wallace Marsh rookie card.

WALLACE

My own card... amazing...

CLINTON

Yeah, this pack's full of them...

KATHY

It's so cute - look at the little 'butthead' drawing on the back.

She gives him a kiss, Wallace still looking at the card.

WALLACE

I can't believe I have my own baseball card. This could be worth something someday.

BILLY

Sure. I'll trade you two of them for one Ken Davis.

Wallace frowns at Billy, who begins to laugh. Kathy and Clinton snicker as Wallace grabs Billy, playfully wrestling with him as we...

FADE OUT

THE END