

Minor Leagues, Major Problems

Written for Television by:

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EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - NIGHT.

CHRIS BARRINGTON (late 30s) stares down an OPPOSING PITCHER as he twirls his bat around. His eyes narrow in on his stance. He sports curved BLACK EYE PAINT like WARPAIN.

It's a dark and clear night, but the STADIUM LIGHTS are BLINDING.

He proudly wears a CHICAGO BABY DANGER FLOOFS jersey, bearing the number 3.

The Pitcher straightens up, comes to a stop. From the stretch.

IN SLOW MOTION: the pitcher winds, throws--

Chris' eyes lock in on the ball...

He knows where's it's going to curve to. It curves right in his sweet spot.

He cocks and unloads his bat on the ball.

KNOCK!

He pulls, DEMOLISHES the ball to left field.

It's driven...

High...

Deep...

Gone.

He points his bat high in the sky, admiring his work.

Chris trots towards first base in pure euphoria.

Sound has left the stadium, but he knows it's deafening.

He tosses his bat towards the dugout and lifts his arms in celebration...

He rounds first base before--

We're overcome by a rapturous sound--

SNAP CUT TO:

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - PRESENT.

The sound subsides. It's replaced by a DEAFENING CROWD.

We're sucked back in to his current AT-BAT.

He had IMAGINED that home run--

The PITCHER WINDS and THROWS and--

CLOSE ON: Chris' WIDE-EYES frantically searching for the ball.

CHRIS POV: --and now the BALL ZOOMS down and away and--

Chris cuts at it--

MISSES.

The UMPIRE emphatically RINGS HIM UP.

The CATCHER clutches the ball and celebrates--

TRACKING SHOT OF: CHRIS pouting back towards the dugout.

A devastated Chris ignores the CELEBRATIONS over his shoulder as he mopes on back to the dugout.

INT. CLUBHOUSE - LATER.

The dark clubhouse is barren. Pure black except for:

A lone light shines over Chris as he sits with his head hung down, staring at the floor for answers.

A distant roar of a crowd can be heard, but otherwise a pin couldn't drop in the clubhouse.

MANAGER (O.S.)
Christopher.

Chris' MANAGER (50s) wags his finger for him to follow.

A light emerges from the office as he props the door for him.

Chris raises himself up and obeys the command.

He slinks over to the office, like a death march.

The manager seals the door behind him, just like his fate.

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - LATER.

Chris slugs his BASEBALL GEAR with him as a RIDESHARE CAR pulls up for him.

DRIVER

Chris?

CHRIS

For Chris, yeah.

He lugs his GEAR to the trunk, slams it home. He slips into the car and it slowly pulls away.

It drives into the night.

EXT. HOTEL - LATER.

Chris is dropped off just outside a DINGY HOTEL and shuffles inside.

INT. HOTEL - LATER.

Chris drops his stuff on a CUCK CHAIR in the corner of the room.

He plops into bed, seemingly lifeless.

INT. HOTEL - MORNING.

Morning light intrudes on the shades.

An alarm BLASTS through the silence.

Chris shudders awake and silences the ALARM.

He rubs his eyes and shuffles to the bathroom.

PISS BUBBLES fill our ears.

Chris sleepwalks through his hygienic duties and--

Swipes his stuff and slips out the door.

EXT. HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER.

A SHUTTLE BUS zips up and screeches to a halt in front of him.

Chris hands his GEAR to the driver who stuffs it away in the back for him.

Chris ambles over to the front and climbs up the stairs.

He plops into a seat towards the front, away from other PASSENGERS.

The shuttle fires up and zooms away.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - LATER.

Chris hauls his BAG over his shoulder as the shuttle BOLTS off.

SUPERIMPOSE: MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA.

He meanders on down towards the ball-field. It's SIGNIFICANTLY smaller than the one he just played at last night.

His demeanor and approach suggests JUST that.

INT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - CONT.

Chris arrives at the dugout and plops his bag down.

He awaits some type of reception/audience, but he won't for a good beat.

PLAYERS and COACHES all eye him from down the dugout.

The new MINOR LEAGUE MANAGER, MARKUS (60s), stops in his tracks, sizes him up, and makes the first move. He's gruff, grizzled, and matter of fact. His gait says as much.

He marches with purpose towards him--

MARKUS
Christopher?

CHRIS
Call me Chris.

MARKUS
I'm Markus.
(shakes his hand, firmly)
You can call me Mark.

CHRIS
Good to meet ya, Mark.

MARKUS

We know of your exploits, but,
uhm... we're sorry about--

CHRIS

Listen, you don't need to... it's
fine.

MARKUS

We're happy to have ya, regardless.

He looks back at his PLAYERS who can't seem to hide their
awe.

MARKUS (CONT'D)

C'mon, how bout you meet the
fuckers.

Mark leads him down the dugout. Chris follows on his heels.

MARKUS (CONT'D)

Fellas, Chris. Chris, fellas.

Chris awkwardly waves to them.

CHRIS

Pleasure to meet ya, under the
circumstances.

MARKUS

Yeah... I know you'll fit right in.
We've already got a spot for ya in
the--

A SHORT, TRASHY WHITE GUY with COLORED HAIR pipes up--

CENTERFIELDER

Oh, no, you ain't takin' my spot.

Chris bows his head at that--

CHRIS

My intention is not to--

CENTERFIELDER

You don't get to sell five fuckin'
at-bats just so that you can come
down here and crowd our outfield--

MARKUS

Okay, okay-- that's enough outta
you, Petey.

CHRIS

It was four at-bats, by the way.

PETEY

I don't give a flying shit about walks, bucko. You got thrown out trying to swipe second so that's just as good as a strikeout in my book--

MARKUS

Petey! You're done. Go grab my fungo.

Petey mopes off and mumbles under his breath--

PETEY

Fuckin' boomer ass--

Markus and Chris watch him as he struts off.

MARKUS

Okay, folks. Let's get to it.

The PLAYERS all disassemble and leave Chris in the dust.

Chris watches as the SHORTSTOP videos himself on his phone doing tricks with a baseball, his glove, and kicking it like a soccer ball up and down to himself.

He shakes his head as he wanders back to his GEAR.

He's JUMPSCARED by a gruff thirdbaseman, we'll call him JASON (late 20s). He's chisled and it's shocking he's even here.

CHRIS

Whoa, shit--

JASON

Sorry to scare you like that. My name's Jason. Jason Phillips.

CHRIS

I've heard of you. Hard for me to believe you haven't been called up yet.

JASON

You probably also heard that our stud--

CHRIS

Stud right fielder was called up to replace me, yeah.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'd been hearing they were gonna do that all year. Amazing it took this long at all.

JASON

Just took another 0 for 5 game from you to do it.

CHRIS

Again, I went 0 for 4--

JASON

Listen, it doesn't matter. I need you to do something for me.

CHRIS

What.

JASON

Look, I know this has to be hard for you--

CHRIS

Just-- I'm not that mad about it. Just... get to the point.

JASON

I need you to be a leader for these guys. They're a little discouraged. But, they're hungry. They need a little veteran push to get them over the... proverbial hump.

CHRIS

What, haven't you been a good enough leader for them?

JASON

They don't take a guy very seriously who can barely catch a pop-up.

CHRIS

I thought I heard you're hitting for average and you hit bombs. What's the deal?

JASON

I just told you. My defense.

CHRIS

Why would you play the hot corner if...?

Jason shrugs.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Okay, well-- you could easily DH in the majors.

JASON

I think it's political.

CHRIS

Of course it is. Listen, you're doing fine. Just-- ease up on yourself. Heed my advice and you'll do okay.

JASON

You're already leading, old vet.

Jason pats him on the shoulder and struts away.

CHRIS

I'm only... wait-- how old are you?

Chris counts on his fingers, shakes his head, and follows--

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - MOMENTS LATER.

Overhead shot of: PLAYERS all taking the field, fielding grounders, playing catch, and hitting in CAGES.

Pitchers and catchers warming up in the BULLPENS.

DOWN ON THE FIELD:

Chris pats his glove as he trots out to RIGHT FIELD.

Markus tracks him down.

MARKUS

Oh, no. You're good, you're not--

CHRIS

Oh, I'm not in right?

MARKUS

You're-- no... you'll DH for us.

Chris stops in his tracks, spins on his heel--

CHRIS

Oh... okay.

Hops off the field.

MARKUS

Thanks, bud.

CHRIS

Yeah.

Chris mopes away from right as a TALL, YOUNG DUDE with DREADLOCKS and SHADES struts onto the field. Replacing him.

MARKUS

Get out there, Kev. Get after it.

Chris admires this BADASS figure as he crosses by him, imposing.

KEVIN

Lookin' good, Barringbomb.

CHRIS

Heh. No one's called me that in a long time.

KEVIN

They oughta. I know you hit bombs, my guy.

CHRIS

Thanks, bro. What's your name, Kev? Was it, Kev?

KEVIN

Kevin, yeah. Kevin.

CHRIS

I think I've heard about ya.

KEVIN

I hope so.

Chris laughs at that as he bounces off the field.

MARKUS

No more squeeze ass, let's go, gentlemen.

Chris skips backwards as he takes up a position next to Mark.

MARKUS (CONT'D)

Sorry, I'm just tryin' ta--

CHRIS

Nah, nah, you're good. You're doin' your job.

Beat.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
What's the deal with Kev?

MARKUS
Every time he's about to get brought up, he slumps. Dude's a beast until he's a legendary fumbler.

Chris processes that. Says nothing. A breeze blows a thought into Mark's mind--

MARKUS (CONT'D)
Chris, I'm gonna be honest with ya-

CHRIS
What's that, sir?

MARKUS
I hate home runs.

CHRIS
Doesn't bode well for me.
Why's that?

MARKUS
Home runs are rally killers, son.

CHRIS
You want me to try to--

MARKUS
Oh, fuck off, Chris. That's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying, you'll piss me off if you hit em.

CHRIS
Okay, um... should I change my approach at the plate?

They watch as the PLAYERS all play catch, field grounders, and toss around the diamond.

MARKUS
I don't give a tarry fuck what you do at the plate. You need to listen to me for a sec. This is a ragtag bunch. In fact, they're so weird, I've lost the rest of the hope I had for humanity. I feel like a relic.

(MORE)

MARKUS (CONT'D)

Fished from a time capsule that has no place being here. They suck. There's no chemistry. There's no camaraderie. They hate each other, but they somehow coexist. No redeeming qualities about them. They're somehow drawing a crowd. Don't ask me how, I couldn't for the life of me know. They cause brawls and do all sorts of stupid shit. Our shortstop's a tiktoker--

CHRIS

I saw that.

The SHORTSTOP props his phone against SECOND BASE and positions himself in the frame for a TIKTOK DANCE.

MARKUS

Yeah, hard not to notice.
(vigorously shakes his head)
Anyway--

Chris stares at the shortstop until finally snapping out of it--

CHRIS

What do you do to discipline them, force them to play Dizzybat?

MARKUS

Was I brought on to discipline them? No. Did I bring you in to discipline them? Also, no. Did I bring you in to get them to like each other? Another no. Did I bring you in to improve their game? Good fuckin' luck with that. I don't know what you're gonna do. Drive this team into the dirt. Knock yourself dead. See what I care.

CHRIS

Why the apathy, coach?

MARKUS

It's the minor leagues, hotshot. I coach the Myrtle Beach Dodos. I'm not here to reinvent the fuckin' wheel. I'm here to babysit these kids until they either rise like a prodigy to the show or shit their pants down to Single A.

(MORE)

MARKUS (CONT'D)

What you do is entirely up to you. You can come down here like Crash Fuckin' Davis and hit nukes. Do what you gotta do. I don't give a flying shit.

CHRIS

Coach, I gotta be honest with you--

MARKUS

Please, always be transparent with me, fuck-o.

CHRIS

I do wanna hit my way back into the majors. I'm not trying to end my career in Triple A. With all due respect, I'm the laughing stock of the league right now. I'd be laughed out of Cooperstown.

MARKUS

Heh, Cooperstown? Ease on the gas there, buddy.

CHRIS

All I'm saying is, I'm already embarrassed by my demotion. It's shameful.

MARKUS

No offense taken, superstar. Do your thing at the plate. I'll just hate it as you do it. No big deal.

CHRIS

(laughs)
Sorry if I let ya down.

MARKUS

You already did by your being here.

Chris' smile is quickly erased. Mark claps as he marches towards the guys.

MARKUS (CONT'D)

Okay, boys, let's go! Bring it in.

A FIGURE can be seen sitting above the CENTERFIELD WALL.

Chris looks towards the outfield fence as if it's a haunted house.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - LATER.

Chris rounds the corner, climbs the bleachers and approaches the FIGURE he saw from before.

This is LAYLA (30s). Her hair dances in the wind as she dangles her petite figure over the wall.

CHRIS

Why does the field look like you cut the grass here?

LAYLA

Because you haven't seen it since you got called up.

CHRIS

No, I haven't seen it since your dad bought it.

LAYLA

Same difference.

Beat.

CHRIS

How've you been, Layla?

LAYLA

Oh, you know me.

CHRIS

I'm sorry I haven't called.

LAYLA

No, you're not.

Beat.

CHRIS

Are you happy you told me so?

LAYLA

I'm always happy. But, not about that.

CHRIS

I'm surprised you're not in the dugout, or in the booth at this point.

LAYLA

How do you know I'm not part owner of the team?

CHRIS
I guess I don't know that.

Beat.

LAYLA
Any new women in your life?

CHRIS
They come and they go.

LAYLA
Oh, do they?

CHRIS
You should know, most of all.

LAYLA
I don't really know you anymore.

Chris looks off towards the players as they run calisthenics.

Layla studies him.

CHRIS
There's not much to know.

LAYLA
You can drop the enigma act.

Chris sighs, takes a deep breath, ruminates before--

CHRIS
All I wanted was to make an impression. I thought if I-- if I could just... if I wasn't cleaning up at the plate, I could, at the very least, help cultivate an environment in the clubhouse that top brass could be proud of.

LAYLA
We heard rumblings of your positive impact on the team chemistry, but... you just weren't cutting it at the plate. Hitting sub 200... they couldn't justify you--

CHRIS
Taking up a spot in the lineup, I know that.

LAYLA
They're vying for a playoff spot--

CHRIS
Layla. I know. You don't have to...

LAYLA
Sorry.

Beat.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
For what it's worth-- he had
nothing to do with the decision--

CHRIS
It's... fine. Whatever they want me
to do down here, I'll give it my
all.

LAYLA
I know. You always do.

CHRIS
Except with us... right?

LAYLA
I knew, even then... through all
our faults...

CHRIS
Yeah...

Beat.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I'd better get back.

LAYLA
It was good to see you.

CHRIS
Yeah, I'm sure we'll be seeing more
of each other.

LAYLA
Maybe a bit more than we'd like.

CHRIS
(laughs)
Yeah. Probably. Hmm.

Chris touches her arm then turns to trot down the steps.

LAYLA
Hey.

Chris turns around--

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Try getting some base hits now and then. Would it kill you not to hit a home run every at-bat?

Chris chuckles at that.

CHRIS

I led the league in the three true outcomes. I gotta stay true to my truest myself.

He throws her a sarcastic glance.

LAYLA

That's my point. Try hitting for contact, ya dingus.

She sticks her tongue at him. He smiles and shakes his head, turns around and marches on back.

Layla watches him as he goes.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - MOMENTS LATER.

Chris trots back on the field and rejoins his teammates.

PETEY

Is it a requirement you have to hit on the owner's daughter each time you come back?

Chris glares him down.

MARKUS

Quiet you two.
(to chris)
That's not gonna be an issue, is it?

CHRIS

Just something I had to take care of.

MARKUS

You didn't answer my question.

CHRIS

It won't be a problem, no.

MARKUS

Good.

The players all side-eye each other. They avert their gaze from Chris. Back to Markus--

MARKUS (CONT'D)

Okay, fellas. Let's hit the showers. We'll reconvene in an hour, yeah?

JASON

Yeah, Skip.

MARKUS

Okay, then, fuckheads, let's get to it.

Markus claps as they all dissemble and jaunt for the clubhouse.

Chris half-assedly marches towards the dugout when--

JASON

Chris.

Jason nods for him to be pulled aside. Chris obliges.

JASON (CONT'D)

Hey. Don't worry about Petey.

CHRIS

I wasn't.

JASON

Well, just-- don't engage. He wants to get a rise out of you.

CHRIS

I can tell. I've handled teammates like him.

JASON

Have you?

CHRIS

Let's just say I had a certain teammate years ago, whose spot I... usurped, one could say. And then he refused to be sent down. He didn't travel with the club. Then he pouted so much that he got his way.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Started getting base knocks when he was given that chance he never shoulda got. Stole my spot back. I was forced to watch as he did it. I never heard the end of it. Suffice it to say... I'm no stranger to a pissing contest.

JASON

Not gonna lie, Barringbomb. I actually heard about that. Dude's a piece a shit. All's well that ends well, though. I heard he's not in the league anymore.

CHRIS

On the contrary... he's been bouncing from team to team. He's still in the bigs.

JASON

No shit?

CHRIS

Make no mistake, my friend-- I'm obviously not thrilled that I'm here. But, since I am... I'm gonna do what's expected of me and I will do right by you guys.

Jason takes this in.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'd rather be a good teammate than be a shitty one and still be in the show. Count on that.

Chris pats him on the shoulder and heads towards the dugout. This strikes a chord with Jason as he meanders on back, lagging behind him.

INT. SHOWERS - LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER.

Chris dries himself off with a towel as he mosies on back to his locker.

He spies the NEW NAMEPLATE on his locker. He stares in disbelief at how prepared it is...

CHRIS

It's like they knew I'd be back.

PETEY

Get used to it, boomer.

CHRIS

What, you gonna bunt your way to the major leagues? That gonna be your path to a call-up?

PETEY

Sure beats the hell outta striking out five times a game.

Chris rises and stands over him in just a towel.

CHRIS

I bet you can't actually swing that bat for a base knock. It's probably too heavy for those feeble arms of yours.

PETEY

At least I don't need PED's to get the ball out of the infield.

CHRIS

You couldn't squeak it by the pitcher if you tried.

Petey rises to meet him. There's little room between faces.

The SHORTSTOP hits RECORD on his phone and videos from afar.

PHONE POV: LIVESTREAM from KING PAPI with 7k viewers...

Kevin, Jason, and KAWASAKI (late 20s) the LEFT FIELDER, all move to hold them back and put distance between them.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'm fine. I'm fine.

Chris backs off.

Petey isn't done with his dick measuring as he refuses to let up on his stare.

KEVIN

You good?

CHRIS

Yeah, yeah.

PETEY

Doesn't matter if the ball ends up in the catcher's glove or over the fence. You'll never have my respect.

CHRIS

That's your fuckin' problem, Petey. You can't see beyond your own hubris and that's why you'll never make it out of the minor leagues.

JASON

That's enough, guys.

Chris spies the "C" on Jason's JERSEY. He lets up.

Petey shoves Kawasaki off him. He puts his arms up as if to surrender.

Chris returns to his locker to put on his gear.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - NIGHT.

Chris emerges from the clubhouse and into the dugout, looks upon the game LIGHTS illuminating the diamond.

The stands are mostly empty, some FANS still filing in.

PA SYSTEM

This game is brought to you by Toby's plumbing! Get a free look at your toilet with the purchase of a seat, a hotdog, and a beer!

Chris watches as the opposing PITCHER warms up. Chris mimicks SWINGING without a bat to get a feel for the timing.

Markus sneaks up behind him--

MARKUS

You try to steal second, your ass is mine, Barrington. You run towards second without a crack of the bat, you may as well keep on running.

CHRIS

That's kinda my thing, coach--

MARKUS

Chris. Stealing? No one is fast enough to outrun a ball flying in at god knows how many miles an hour. Catchers can laser it from home. Fuck you. Wait for the hit. No one runs. You're all slow as molasses on shit. I don't care how many steals you had. Park your ass on first. We hit and run here, smart ass.

Chris is taken aback.

CHRIS

Okay.

MARKUS

Do not anger the baseball gods. You know how relentless they can be.

CHRIS

No, yeah. I get it. Understood.

Markus pats him on the shoulder and patrols the dugout.

Chris watches as the pageantry of the OTHER TEAM on the diamond continues.

RIPPEN (30s) a BIG, STRONG, TALL FIRST BASEMEN appears next to Chris. He would look like a specimen if not for his dad bod.

RIPPEN

Hey, Chris. We weren't much for introductions earlier, so I'm Rippen.

CHRIS

Rippen? Nice to meet ya.

RIPPEN

Likewise.

They shake firmly.

RIPPEN (CONT'D)

Look, I know it seemed like we were all standoffish. But... this team couldn't hurt a fly if we tried to have a bad bone in our bodies.

CHRIS

No, I-- I can believe it.

RIPPEN

See over there--

Chris looks down the line of the dugout--

RIPPEN (CONT'D)

We have a vegan Reiki healer on our team. Catcher. Ezra. Recovering cross-fitter.

CHRIS POV: he spots a feminine looking CATCHER, EZRA (20s) sporting the gear, along with HEALING CRYSTALS and BURNING INCENSE. The most HIPPIE looking athlete you'll ever see.

RIPPEN (CONT'D)

Our second baseman believes that the star patterns impacts his at-bats on a given day. That's JONESY.

CHRIS POV: the SECOND BASEMAN JONESY (20s) with TAROT CARDS studies them intently. Most likely to appear as a non-athlete but is somehow athletic. Scrawny as all get-out.

RIPPEN (CONT'D)

That's our pitcher for tonight. Scottie. He mostly keeps to himself. He'll do everything in his power to avoid the most cliché of superstitions in all of baseball.

CHRIS POV: SCOTTIE (20s) sports a backwards JACKET as he warms himself. He mumbles something to himself as he stares off into the distance. He most looks like an athlete out of anyone in this entire dugout.

RIPPEN (CONT'D)

This is the weirdest bunch of dudes you'll ever meet in your life. I'm sure being on our big league affiliate, you felt like you were in your element. Here, you'll feel like the most normal dude on the planet. But, somehow, it works. And we all love each other. I promise.

CHRIS

Listen, I believe you. I know what it takes. And I'm sure we have it. I don't know my place yet. But, I'll figure it out. I've been around the block enough to know. And... I appreciate you trying to make me feel like I belong. Thanks, Rippen. You're a good guy.

Chris grabs his shoulder and pats him on the back.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I appreciate you.

RIPPEN
Trust me, we're glad to have ya.
Maybe not all of us--

Chris glances at Petey who glares him down.

RIPPEN (CONT'D)
But, we are. Believe me. It's an
honor to be in your company.

CHRIS
Thanks, man. Seriously. Means a
lot.

RIPPEN
You bet.

Rippen daps him up and pats his glove on his back before
marching away.

Chris disengages with Petey as he returns his attention back
to the field.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - LATER.

Chris makes his way to the plate as the umpire dons his MASK
and the CATCHER pats his glove. Dust kicks up as he does.

He arrives at the batter's box. Digs in. Pitcher aims in at
the ready.

The PITCHER tosses in a FASTBALL that zooms by Chris on the
outside corner.

The UMPIRE lets loose a STRIKE GRUNT.

Chris looks at the scoreboard: 0-1 COUNT.

He backs out of the box, hits his cleats with his bat.

Digs back into the plate.

The pitcher nods his head to catcher.

He zips in another fastball--

Chris hops backward to avoid the ball, inside--

The ump backs up from the plate.

Scoreboard face: 1-1 COUNT.

Chris locks in.

The pitcher nods and fires--

The ball is ZOOMING in the middle half--

Chris' eyes widen at it--

He cuts at it--

The ball CURVES towards the outer edge.

Chris MISSES.

CHRIS

Damn!

Chris backs out of the box again.

His eyes narrow in on the pitcher.

The pitcher smiles as he nods in agreement with his catcher.

He winds...

Throws...

The ball appears middle-middle...

...before SLIDING out toward the other batter's box.

Chris chases after it--

SWING AND A MISS.

UMPIRE

STRIKE THREE!

Chris flips his bat up to himself and snatches it out of the air as he mopes on back to the dugout.

INT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - LUXURY BOX - CONT.

Layla looks on from the safety and comfort of her luxury box.

She clasps her hands and presses them to her lips, almost an offering... a prayer...

INT. DUGOUT - CONT.

Chris slams his bat into the batrack and takes up a spot away from his teammates.

JASON
Head up, chief.

Jason pats his shoulder as he climbs the dugout steps.

KEVIN
Get em next time, bombs.

Petey looks down from the end of the dugout at Chris--

PETEY
Like clockwork...

Chris pays him no mind as he studies the ground, as if he'll find any answers down there...

Markus sits down next to him, silent at first.

MARKUS
What happened in there?

CHRIS
It looked like it was gonna be in the zone... but... then, it dipped outside.

MARKUS
Yeah, sliders do that.

Beat.

MARKUS (CONT'D)
What about before that?

CHRIS
What do you mean?

MARKUS
That one was right in your wheelhouse. You're a fastball hitter, dumbass.

CHRIS
I know.

MARKUS
Next time, don't swing at that bullshit outside. Don't be an idiot. Hit that damn fastball.

Chris knowingly but poutingly nods his head.

MARKUS (CONT'D)

Pitcher gives you a gift. Take him to poundtown. Don't even bring him to dinner first.

CHRIS

Right, skip. Thanks.

Markus aggressively slaps him on the arm, rises and shuffles off.

Chris ruminates on that as he mindlessly stares off into the distance.

FADE INTO:

TIME-LAPSE: the scoreboard shows goose-eggs across the board for both teams as the game's innings pass us by.

Until, a 1 and then another 1 are put up for the VISITING TEAM.

The Myrtle Beach Dodos are down 2-0 going into the BOTTOM of the EIGHTH.

BACK TO THE GAME:

Kevin takes a ball on the outside edge--

UMPIRE

Ball four.

Kevin tosses his bat and trots towards first base.

MARKUS

Atta baby, good eye. Good eye.

Petey jogs from first to second.

SCOREBOARD FACE: TWO MEN ON, ONE OUT.

ON-DECK: RIPPEN.

IN THE HOLE: CHRIS BARRINGTON.

INT. LUXURY BOX - CONT.

Layla looks, nibbling on her finger nails, from the bases, to the dugout. She spies: Chris from above.

She sharply turns towards the door and marches with purpose out and down the stairs--

INT. DUGOUT - CONT.

Chris claps for his teammates, as does the rest of the team.

CHRIS
Let's go, Rip!

Rippen takes a ball right down the pipe. His eyes to the sky. That was his pitch.

He crowds the plate, awaits the next pitch--

A TAP on Chris' shoulder.

He turns around--

The BAT BOY (teens) nods his head towards the end of the dugout, where Layla waits for him.

Chris nods in acknowledgement, he gets off his knee and props himself up with his bat.

He marches on down the dugout as Layla becomes closer to us.

Chris leans up against the fence, where Layla's on the other side.

Markus looks down the dugout at them, narrows his glance, then returns his attention to the field--

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Come to give me more tips at the plate?

LAYLA
I don't know if you've heard, but... my dad's looking to sell the team.

CHRIS
You mean, the whole organization?

LAYLA
Look, it's complicated, but... basically he wants to try to make Myrtle Beach like the new... I don't know, Vegas... for ballclubs.

CHRIS

What do you mean? Myrtle Beach is only for like tourists and old white people.

LAYLA

Tourists ARE old white people.

CHRIS

My point exactly.

LAYLA

So, what are you trying to say?

CHRIS

That it's a horrible idea and would never work.

LAYLA

Well... it's already in the works. A deal is being worked out after the Bay Area Athletes' move to Vegas went south. Now they're thinking about--

CHRIS

You're kidding...

LAYLA

I shit you not. It's a happening thing and the only way it's not is if the Myrtle Beach Dodos turns out to be a winning and profitable ballclub and they decide not to start from scratch.

CHRIS

No fuckin' way.

LAYLA

My dad is restructuring a deal with them as we speak. The Myrtle Beach Dodos will become the Myrtle Beach Athletes and the Dodos won't even move to Iowa. They will cease to exist.

CHRIS

I don't believe it...

LAYLA

It's all based on success. Or...

LAYLA (CONT'D)
 ...lack thereof.

CHRIS
 Lack thereof.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 Right.

Chris looks back to the field--

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 Fuck!

RIPPEN pops up on the infield. It's caught by the OPPOSING
 THIRD BASEMAN.

PA SYSTEM
 Two down. New batter... Chris
 Barrington.

Light applause from the crowd. Less than you'd expect.

CHRIS
 I gotta go.

Chris leans off the fence and trots down the dugout. Snatches
 a helmet and jaunts towards the plate.

Layla re-positions herself to the fence from the dugout to
 the fence right by the field. She watches as Chris takes up
 his spot at the plate--

CHRIS POV: the PITCHER stares him down. Agrees to the pitch.

Gets set from the stretch...

Fires...

FASTBALL, inside. Catches the inside edge.

UMPIRE
 HE-R-HIKE!

SCOREBOARD: 0-1 count.

CHRIS
 Okay...

The pitcher has an evil grin as he moves to the stretch.

Winds...

Deals...

SAILS HIGH.

UMPIRE

HALL.

1-1.

Chris lets out a deep breath.

The pitcher nods, rises up into the stretch.

CHRIS POV: he watches as the pitcher winds...

Throws...

The ball starts inside...

Then zips outside--

Chris' eyes glide to the catcher's mitt throwing up dust after the ball is clasped.

He looks at the umpire--

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

HURR!

A STRIKE.

Chris' eyes widen in disbelief.

CHRIS

That hit the corner?

The umpire just looks his way and nods. Then ignores him.

UMPIRE

One, two!

Chris backs out of the box--

CHRIS

Time.

UMPIRE

Time!

Chris looks off and swings. He scans the crowd...

Searching...

He doesn't find Layla.

But, then-- a realization--

He looks back over at the dugout--

SPIES LAYLA.

She gives him a sinister look.

Chris is overcome by the moment.

Takes a deep breath. Lets a deep one out.

He steps back in the box.

He taps the plate with his bat and locks eyes with the pitcher.

The pitcher smiles and sets up.

He winds, throws--

Chris recognizes it immediately--

A SLIDER.

It's spinning from middle to outside.

Chris rips--

KNOCK! He makes contact.

He looks up at it as it flies high...

Off to the right...

Hooking...

FOUL.

He steps back out.

Another breath.

The pitcher snags the ball angrily. He shakes it off.

Chris digs back in the box.

His eyes lasers on the pitcher.

Petey looks from his lead on second at Chris. Glaring.

Kevin takes his short lead from first, watching... waiting...

Chris licks his lips.

The pitcher nods and stands tall.

He leg kicks...

Throws...

The pitch starts inside...

Chris' eyes LIGHT UP--

The ball spins...

It HANGS over the middle.

Chris lets loose--

POP!

He LAUNCHES it into the dark of night.

It disappears above the lights and into the sky.

The ball flies toward left center...

And far over the bleachers...

And into the parking lot.

GONE.

Chris tosses the bat like dirty laundry as he casually jaunts to first.

Rounds the base as he emphatically high fives his FIRST BASE COACH.

Layla folds her arms as he watches him victory trot around second.

Chris rounds third and low fives his THIRD BASE COACH.

He heads towards home and CHEST BUMPS Kevin.

Petey half assedly high fives him without giving him a look.

They all trot to the celebrating dugout that warmly welcomes them.

High fives all around from his team to Chris.

Scoreboard: 3-2 DODOS LEAD.

Layla looks at him through the fence--

She can only watch him celebrate so much before she stomps off.

Chris spots her as she leaves.

The smile's wiped from his face.

Until he's MOBBED by his team once again.

He protects himself while simultaneously welcoming it.

Markus looks out towards the deflated opposition as he smacks some bubble gum.

He looks toward his bullpen and slaps his left arm to his right arm.

The BULLPEN COACH nods to him and urges a RELIEF PITCHER to take off his jacket and warm up.

He looks to Chris who finally doesn't have any bodies on him and wobbles over to him--

MARKUS

That the first breaking ball you hit all year?

CHRIS

(laughs)
Sure feels like it.

MARKUS

Yeah, well... any moron can hit a hanging slider. But, hey... Show these kids who's really boss.

CHRIS

It's good to finally get a win.

MARKUS

We ain't outta the woods yet.

This shuts Chris up.

Markus pops some seeds in his mouth and waltzes away.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - MOMENTS LATER.

We follow the CLOSER as he marches onto the mound.

CLOSE ON: His focused, mustachio'd face.

We back onto the mound as he steps on. Tosses the ball to himself. Plants his foot to rubber. At the ready.

The OPPOSING BATTER steps in.

From the stretch, no windup.

He fires in a FASTBALL. Right by him.

Strike one.

IN RAPID SUCCESSION: STRIKE TWO AWAY. SWINGING STRIKE THREE HIGH.

Next batter--

QUICK CUTTING:

ALL THREE SWINGS CAN'T KEEP UP: STRIKE ONE, TWO, THREE.

Two down, nobody on.

A NERVOUS OPPOSING BATTER steps in.

The CLOSER comes to a stop. Leg kick. Throws--

The sound of BALL on FLESH.

He hits him with the pitch.

The NERVOUS BATTER takes his base, clutching at his arm.

The CLOSER takes the ball in his glove, angrily snatching it out of the air.

MARKUS

C'mon baby, attababy. C'mon
Fireballer, let's go! You got it.

Markus paces, spits.

The Fireballing Closer fires another one in--

Ball.

Next pitch: kicks, throws...

INSIDE. Ball two.

Our Closer gets set. He checks on the runner at first--

Kicks and tosses another--

--BALL outside...

SCOREBOARD: 3-0 COUNT.

Markus claps--

MARKUS (CONT'D)
 Alright, alright. Slow down.
 Collect yourself. Let's go, buddy.

Closer tosses over to first--

Safe. Rippen Throws back.

The closer digs in...

Comes set. Kicks and throws...

HIGH. Ball Four.

MARKUS (CONT'D)
 Time!

Markus climbs out of the dugout.

He marches with purpose towards his frustrated closer...

Markus steps on the mound. The closer doesn't face him.

MARKUS (CONT'D)
 Hell's wrong with you, kid?

Our closer shakes his head. Tosses the ball to himself.

MARKUS (CONT'D)
 First two batters had you lookin'
 like Mariano Rivera, now you can't
 throw a strike to save an
 Orphanage. Fuck's goin' on?

CLOSER
 I dunno.

Markus looks to the plate--

The OPPOSING POWER HITTER stands tall. Swinging the bat like Paul Bunyan.

MARKUS
 You know who's up next, right?

CLOSER
 Yeah, I know.

MARKUS
 You got him?

Closer looks to the Paul Bunyan lookin' motherfucker--

CLOSER

I got him.

They nod to one another. An understanding.

The UMPIRE interrupts--

UMPIRE

Okay, ladies-- knitting club's over. Time to get back to some ball.

MARKUS

Okay. Go get 'im.

Markus pats him on the shoulder and trots off the mound.

The Umpire takes his spot back behind the plate.

Paul Bunyan steps in, eyes locked in on Closer.

CLOSE ON: an ANXIOUS Chris from the dugout...

He rubs his palms.

The Closer comes to the stretch. Checks second. FIRES--

A rocket starting middle middle, sailing IN.

UMPIRE

Hee-riike!

Caught the inside corner. Strike one.

Bunyan looks to the Umpire wearing confusion and anger.

Umpire non-chalantly shrugs him off.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Caught the inside edge.

Bunyan shakes his head in disgust.

Locks back in on Closer...

Closer catches the ball and gets his feet set and comfortable.

He stands tall. Takes a deep breath.

Launches another one in--

This time trailing outside...

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
HEE RIIIKE!!

Bunyan snaps his head back to Umpire again--

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Outside corner. Get your bat off
your shoulders, son.

Bunyan shakes his head again, taps the plate, eyes set on Closer...

A CONFIDENT Closer stands tall.

The CATCHER sets up inside--

Our Closer nods to him.

Becomes ready in the set position. Looks to second--

Satisfied, he kicks, fires--

He misses his location...

The ball spins from inside, but heads middle-middle...

Bunyan unloads--

KNOCK!!!

It's as if the entire stadium went silent. A silencing BOOM.

A long...

Deep drive to left field...

No need to look back.

It's GONE.

Bunyan trots the bases. The TWO BASERUNNERS touch home.

Chris hangs his head low.

Markus kicks dirt and marches up and down the dugout.

Bunyan praises the skies as he rounds third and touches home plate. Praising the sky once again for good measure.

Closer aggressively catches the ball from the catcher and pouts around the mound.

The NEXT BATTER digs in, at the ready.

Closer kicks and fires--

Ground ball to short--

King Papi charges it...

Gloves it...

Tosses on the run--

The throw sails up and away from Rippen--

Rippen stretches--

Catches it--

Toe taps first.

FIRST BASE UMPIRE rigorously pumps his fist, calling him OUT.

King Papi fist pumps and points to the skies.

The Dodos all trot in from the diamond and into the dugout.

Markus claps them all in. Slaps Closer on the butt.

The Fireballing Closer hauls back--

Heaves his glove at the wall--

CLOSER

Fuck!!!

This quiets the entire dugout.

Chris rubs his hands nervously together.

PA SYSTEM

Chris Barrington is up, Jason
Phillips is on deck, and Seiya
Kawasaki is in the hole.

Chris realizes his heart's in his throat. He jumps up--

Grabs his bat and marches on out to the batter's box.

He digs in. Locks in on the pitcher.

The OPPOSING PITCHER stands tall in his stance. He kicks,
tosses it--

Chris lets it go by.

UMPIRE
HURRIKE!

He looks back into the dugout--

Markus knowingly looks to him, nods and shrugs--

Chris nods back to him.

The pitcher comes to a stop.

Kicks--

Throws...

It sails outside. Ball. 1-1.

Chris knocks the dirt of his cleats. Steps back in.

His eyes lock with the Pitcher's.

From the stretch...

Kicks and throws--

Chris' eyes light up--

Recognizes...

FASTBALL down the middle, zipping in--

Chris turns on it--

POP!

A towering drive to left...

LONG. GONE.

Chris trots the bases.

He notices as he passes by the dugout...

Markus rolls his eyes and averts his gaze.

Chris face says, "right...rally killer."

He jogs around the bases, touches home, and triumphantly returns to the dugout.

High fives all around. Except from Markus.

Markus claps and looks to Jason stepping in.

Chris looks out to the diamond...

Jason prepares for the pitch, his feet dance as he--

Grips and rips the ball past the SHORTSTOP for a base hit.

Claps from the dugout.

Kawasaki digs in--

TIME LAPSE: Balls, one, two, three and four.

Kawasaki flips the bat for a walk. Takes first.

MOMENTS LATER:

King Papi SWINGS and MISSES and clutches his bat and mopes to the dugout.

ONE OUT.

Micky, our Vegan Crossfitter SECOND BASEMAN, POPS UP to the OPPOSING FIRST BASEMAN in foul territory.

TWO OUTS.

Miggy, our resident baby-faced CATCHER (early 20s) digs in.

CHRIS

C'mon Miggy, c'mon. You got this,
let's go!

Miggy taps his foot, ready to swing--

The BALL sails inside and CLIPS him on the ELBOW GUARD.

Miggy trots to first.

The DUGOUT ERUPTS!

Bases Loaded. Two outs for...

PETEY.

The Frustrated Pitcher catches the toss back to him and scolds himself around the mound.

He calms himself and takes up his spot on the rubber.

Petey confidently strolls to the plate. Swagger and all.

MARKUS

Here we go, Pete. Here we go.

Petey taps the plate and circularly moves the bat towards the pitcher.

The pitcher locks in.

Petey shows bunt--

He kicks and throws--

Petey pulls the bat away.

Inside for a ball.

MARKUS (CONT'D)

I didn't give a sign for that.

Chris looks to Markus, mortified.

MARKUS (CONT'D)

But, that's not a bad idea.

CHRIS

Coach, there's two outs.

MARKUS

He can just show bunt, genius. Make him throw strikes. He's erratic.

Chris shrugs.

Petey shows bunt again.

The Pitcher winds and throws--

Low and outside.

The catcher slides and blocks the ball. Picks up the ball and looks down Jason--

He retreats to third.

Catcher tosses the ball back to the pitcher.

The third baseman doesn't charge. He stays on third to keep Jason honest.

Petey's eyes light up.

He looks to the dugout and then locks in on the pitcher.

The pitcher comes set.

He kicks, throws...

Petey LAYS down the BUNT--

It pops down the third base line, bouncing toward the THIRD BASEMAN.

Jason CHARGES for home...

The DUGOUT ERUPTS.

Petey burns down the first base path...

The third baseman charges the ball--

Jason's closing in on home...

Petey races towards first--

The third baseman bare hands the ball--

He's ignoring home...

His eyes are only to first--

Jason slides in to home--

The third baseman heaves toward first--

Petey stretches out to hit first...

The ball sails...

...into the first baseman's glove--

Petey's foot stomps on first...

The FIRST BASE UMPIRE looks at the bag.

He THRUSTS his fist at FIRST--

FIRST BASE UMP
OUT!!!

Chris' heart deflates.

The Third Baseman and Opposing Pitcher jump in the air.

The first baseman clutches the ball, fist pumping.

Markus' mouth is wide open.

Jason shakes his head as he mopes toward the dugout.

The team all joins in with the pitcher and third baseman for a celebration near the mound.

Petey shakes his head as he pouts toward the dugout.

In the BG: the OPPOSING TEAM gloats as they jump up and down and around the diamond...

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BALLPARK - LATER.

Chris struts out of the ballpark and into the parking lot.

He's met by Layla who tosses him a cocked eyebrow.

LAYLA

You can hit as many dingers as you want, but the Dodos will always be the Dodos. Blown saves are a part of their identity.

CHRIS

Can't expect to win on a suicide squeeze with two outs either.

LAYLA

Oh, c'mon. Are you really gonna blame Petey for that loss?

Chris shakes his head.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Just because you two can't get along?

CHRIS

I think he tried to do it just to spite me.

LAYLA

He's a cocky kid. But, that's what he is. A kid.

CHRIS

They're all kids. I don't know what I'm even doing here.

LAYLA

You know why you're here.

CHRIS

I really don't. Enlighten me.

LAYLA

You're gonna help me. and you know it.

CHRIS

No. I'm gonna climb my way back to the bigs. One dinger at a time.

LAYLA

And then what?

CHRIS

Come on. You know what.

LAYLA

Gonna get that ring you never gave me.

CHRIS

You never let me.

LAYLA

You never let yourself. You know this thing is consuming you. You'll never land yourself that ring for as long as you keep on swinging for those damn fences.

CHRIS

Oh, that's right. Hit for contact. That's right, I forgot.

LAYLA

Markus told you himself. A real Rally killer, you are.

CHRIS

Okay, Yoda.

LAYLA

(scoffs, laughs)

Oh, Chris. Some people never change, huh?

CHRIS

Take care of yourself, Layla.

Chris brushes on by her.

LAYLA

What, no parting gift?

Chris turns back around--

CHRIS

Oh, yeah. Tell your dad something for me.

LAYLA
That you said hi?

CHRIS
Tell him... I'm taking these kids
to the stratosphere.

Layla folds her arms, her eyes narrowing in--

CHRIS (CONT'D)
And tell the Bay Area Athletes to
fuck right off. I'm gonna carpet
bomb the fuck outta his stadium he
built with his own two hands, but
doesn't seem to give a flying shit
about.

Chris turns his back and marches off into the night.

Layla, taken aback--

LAYLA
(softly to herself)
Chris Barrington, the man you
are...

Layla struts her stuff as she walks toward the stadium...
...where the lights go out.

AND WE FADE TO BLACK, TOO.

TITLE CARD: MINOR LEAGUES, MAJOR PROBLEMS.

CREDITS.

END PILOT.