

THE MENDOZA LINE

Written by

John Cooney

jmc1487@comcast.net
503-679-9783

FADE IN:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO WATERFRONT - NIGHT

A brightly-lit baseball park on the edge of the San Francisco Bay.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS BASEBALL PARK - NIGHT

SUPER:

"GAME SIX, LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES -
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA"

A roiling sea of fans under brilliant stadium lights. The dazzling digital fireworks of a three-story-high centerfield scoreboard.

Everyone is on their feet.

Strangely, all is SILENCE.

The baseball diamond: impossibly green, impeccably mowed. Infield base paths and pitcher's mound, golden brown and expertly groomed.

Lines, circles, rectangles: gleaming white, perfectly formed.

On the field - outfielders, infielders, pitcher, catcher, umpires.

And a batter, mid-20s. Tall, lean, fit. On the back of his jersey, the name O'DWYER hovers above the number 24.

The first SOUND - a DEEP INHALATION OF BREATH. An EXHALATION.

The pitcher leans forward, looks in for a signal from his catcher. Nods. Winds up.

As the pitch is delivered, the crowd's ROAR pierces the silence. Zero to DEAFENING in an instant.

JOSE O'DWYER swings. Misses.

The ball SLAMS into the catcher's mitt.

The HOME PLATE UMPIRE thrusts his closed right fist forward. The punch-out.

HOME PLATE UMPIRE
Steeerike three!

His call is engulfed in CROWD NOISE that somehow grows LOUDER.

The scoreboard erupts in spiraling rainbows and the SOUNDS of EXPLOSIONS.

Jose SNAPS the bat over his right thigh. Drops the pieces onto the field. Walks back to the visitors' dugout as the home team rushes the field to celebrate.

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STRIP MALL - NIGHT

A dimly-lit bar wedged between a flower shop and a bakery.

INT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BAR - NIGHT

The bar is seedy, half-full. Most customers pay no attention to the game playing on several TV screens.

JESSIE, a thirty-year old woman, watches the bar TV screen intently. Jeans and sweatshirt, no makeup, hair pulled back.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And the Giants hang on, forcing a
Game Seven tomorrow night in
Portland!

Jessie motions to the bartender, ZEKE, with her empty cocktail glass.

She then makes a cellphone call.

JESSIE

(on the phone)

Hey.

(fiddles with her glass)

Yeah. No, no - let it ride. All of
it.

(drums her fingers on the
bar)

Then I guess the Giants better win.

She disconnects the call as Zeke sets a fresh drink in front of her.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Thanks.

ZEKE

Celebrating?

JESSIE
Don't jinx me.

Zeke shrugs, moves away.

INT. GIANTS BALLPARK VISITORS' CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

Reporters are gathered around Jose at his locker. He is half-dressed, his hair wet after a post-game shower. A young reporter, SULLIVAN, thrusts his recorder into Jose's face.

SULLIVAN
That last pitch, OD - what was it?

JOSE
Strike three.

A few CHUCKLES in the reporting pool.

SULLIVAN
It's do or die tomorrow night in Portland. Winner goes on to the World Series. What will this game mean to you?

JOSE
I've been playing baseball since I was three years old. All I ever dreamed of as a kid was playing in the World Series. That's what it means to me.

A grizzled veteran reporter, MILLS, steps forward.

MILLS
How many times in your life have you snapped a bat over your leg?

JOSE
Snapped a bat?

MILLS
You know...other than tonight.

JOSE
I'm not following.

Mills gestures toward Jose's right thigh. It sports an angry bat-shaped welt.

JOSE (CONT'D)
I did that?

More CHUCKLES in the reporting pool. Jose isn't laughing.

EXT. PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A pleasing jumble of houses, shops, and community gardens.

INT. PORTLAND COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A cramped, funky neighborhood coffee shop. Mismatched furniture, cracked linoleum flooring. Local artwork on the walls, WORLD MUSIC on the speakers.

A diverse clientele - hipster, businesswoman, artist, street guy. Jose sits at a table in the corner, drinking coffee, reading a newspaper. A few customers glance his way, but no one bothers him.

MANUEL - a large, imposing figure, late 30s - approaches the table with a coffee pot.

MANUEL

How is your coffee, sir?

JOSE

Terrible.

Jose holds his coffee cup out. Manuel refills it.

JOSE (CONT'D)

As usual.

MANUEL

How ya doin', OD?

JOSE

Hanging in there.

MANUEL

Kick ass tonight, will ya? This town could use a World Series to takes its mind off some other shit.

JOSE

I'll tell you one thing - I ain't striking out again.

(sips his coffee,
grimaces)

Awful. How's your mom?

MANUEL

She's okay. Rooting for the Cascades, naturally.

JOSE
 (holding up coffee cup)
 Does she know her son is trying to
 poison the second baseman?

MANUEL
 Game-day fuel, brother.

Manuel LAUGHS, pats Jose on the shoulder. Continues making his rounds.

EXT. PORTLAND WATERFRONT - DAY

A beautiful, modern baseball park - Cascades Park - on the banks of the Columbia River.

INT. CASCADES TRAINING ROOM - DAY

MUTT COCHRANE, the Cascades' middle-aged manager, approaches Jose, who is sweating his ass off on a stationary bike and staring straight ahead. At nothing.

Other players are lifting weights. Stretching. Bullshitting.

The room is filled with LOUD MUSIC, CLANGING WEIGHTS, LAUGHTER, and the WHINE of the stationary bike.

COCHRANE
 (in a heavy Southern
 drawl)
 Whadda ya say, OD?

Jose keeps his eyes straight ahead.

JOSE
 All good, Skip.

Jose picks up the pace, pedals even faster. His shirt is soaked in sweat. Cochrane watches, concerned.

COCHRANE
 Save some for the game, will ya?

Jose continues to stare straight ahead.

JOSE
 Will do, Skip.

Cochrane nods, moves on.

COCHRANE
(to himself)
Glad we got that straightened out.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

SUPER:

"GAME SEVEN, LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP
SERIES- PORTLAND, OREGON"

All is SILENCE.

The ballpark: packed with fans.

The field: a perfectly-cut emerald, bordered in gold and white.

The scoreboard: colors and photos and digital sorcery.

Man on first, with a lead. Batter at the plate.

Jose in the field, near second base, pounding his glove.
Waiting.

A deep INHALATION of breath, an EXHALATION.

EXT. LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A large apartment complex in a quiet residential neighborhood.

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A messy, poorly-lit room.

The eerie glow of a TV illuminates Jessie. She is hunched forward, on the edge of her couch. Staring at the screen. Frozen in place.

The MURMUR of an ANNOUNCER's voice. The tinny CHANTS and CHEERS of a sports crowd.

JESSIE
(mutters)
Come on, Giants.

She stabs a remote at the TV. Turns up the volume.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 One down, top of the ninth,
 Cascades up by a run. The Giants'
 season is on the line with Hiller
 at the plate. Full count.

On the small screen, a baseball game is in progress. The graphic reads GIANTS 3 CASCADES 4 TOP 9 OUTS 1 BALLS 3 STRIKES 2.

The CROWD SOUNDS are louder, clearer.

Jessie holds a glass half-full of red wine, transfixed.

JESSIE
 No ground balls.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

The pitcher delivers. The crowd ROAR shatters the silence, like millions of gallons of water bursting through a dam.

The batter swings. CRACK. Jose moves laterally, behind second base, to intercept the batted ball.

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Ground ball to second - possible
 double play.

JESSIE
 No, no. NO!

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

Jose dives, gets a glove on the ball. Makes a no-look, behind-the-back flip to the shortstop, FLEEGER, who covers second base.

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT -NIGHT

ANNOUNCER (V.O. CONT'D)
 O'Dwyer to Fleeger for one!

Jessie sets the wine glass on the edge of the coffee table. It slips off, lands on the floor with a CRASH. She doesn't notice.

ANNOUNCER (O.S CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Fleeger to Crawford at first...in
 time! The Portland Cascades are
 going to the World Series!

Televised CHEERS fill the tiny room.

A cellphone on the couch begins to BUZZ.

Jessie puts her head in her hands.

On the TV screen, Jose acknowledges the crowd.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

CHEERS wash over the field. The scoreboard flashes a parade of images: Fireworks. A fluttering National League pennant. The Portland Cascades logo.

Jose's teammates high-five, low-five, and fist-bump him as they run past.

CC YAMAMOTO, a flashily-dressed on-field reporter in her mid-20s, approaches Jose. A camera operator follows.

CC
 OD - how about a couple of minutes?

JOSE
 Sure - let's do it.

The camera operator gives CC the high sign. She listens to her earpiece, nods. The camera's red light comes on.

CC
 Guys, I'm here with Jose O'Dwyer, the man behind the Cascades' unbelievable late-season run.
 (to Jose)
 National League pennant winners. A trip to the World Series. And your batting average so far in the post-season - an incredible .400. Does it get any better than this?

JOSE
 I get to play in the World Series with a great bunch of teammates. How much better could it get?

CC
 You'll be facing Vancouver in a
 battle of expansion teams. A month
 ago today -

Jose shakes his head.

JOSE
 (talking over CC)
 Come on, CC. Let's not go there.

CC
 (continues)
 - you slid into Vancouver catcher
 Will Stillman at home plate -

JOSE
 (still talking over CC)
 Should be a great Series. Always a
 pleasure talking with you.

CC
 - and put him out for the season.

Jose walks away. CC stares after him, but not for long. She's
 a pro.

CC (CONT'D)
 Any thoughts? I guess not. Back to
 you, guys.

The camera's red light turns off. CC runs after JOSE.

CC (CONT'D)
 Hey, buddy.

Jose stops walking and turns.

JOSE
 I told you I wasn't going there.

CC
 Asking about Stillman was the
 producer's idea, not mine.

The PA BLARES, the crowd BUZZES, and corny ORGAN MUSIC plays.
 Jose holds his arms up. Soaks it in.

JOSE
 Do you know what it feels like to
 be going to the World Series?

CC
 No.

JOSE

Me neither. That's why I just wanted to enjoy this for a minute.

CC

Jose, I-

JOSE

(cuts in)

I know - you're just doing your job. I'll talk to you later.

CC watches as Jose walks away.

CC

(to herself)

Later, buddy.

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT -NIGHT

Jessie sits in bed, wide awake, smoking a joint. The nightstand clock reads 2:47 a.m. A cellphone rests on her lap.

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY COMMERCIAL AREA - NIGHT

A run-down office building in the middle of a dreary block.

INT. LOUIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

LOUIE MENDOZA, early 40s and dressed in a track suit, sits at a cluttered desk in a low-rent office. Studies a piece of paper with names, numbers, symbols. A betting slip.

The walls are covered with cheap framed posters. Prize fights. Super Bowls. World Series.

JAZZ MUSIC plays from an unseen speaker.

Louie dials a number on his cellphone, puts the phone on speaker. It RINGS several times.

FEMALE VOICEMAIL MESSAGE (V.O.)

This is Jessie. You know the drill.

The message signal BEEPS.

LOUIE

(into the phone)

We both know the drill, Jess. Don't make me come looking for you.

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jessie stares at her cellphone. Takes another toke.

INT. CASCADES CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

The players, coaches, and staff are celebrating. Most are wearing goggles. SHOUTS, WHOOPS, HOLLERING. Champagne corks POP.

Cochrane, the Cascades manager, stands on an overturned bucket and WHISTLES loudly for attention.

COCHRANE
(hoarse shouting)
This is a helluva team. Each and
every one of you-

More WHISTLES, SHOUTS. Cochrane motions for quiet.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
Four more wins, gentlemen! I-

He is drowned out by CHEERS.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Aw, to hell with it.

Cochrane steps off the bucket, grabs a bottle of champagne, shakes it up, POPS the cork and sprays the room.

INT. CASCADES CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

Later. The clubhouse is a mess. Almost empty. Quiet. Jose sits on a chair in front of his locker. A clubhouse attendant, BAXTER, early 20s, sits next to him.

Baxter flicks a playing card at an overturned baseball cap, ten feet in front of them. Misses. Jose flicks a card into the hat.

JOSE
You said you were good at this. Pay
up.

Baxter fishes a crumpled bill out of his pocket. Hesitates.

BAXTER
I am good. You're just better.

Jose motions for the bill.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Seriously?

JOSE
I won, you lost. Give.

CRAWFORD, Cascades first baseman, late 20s, approaches. He's packed up and ready to leave.

CRAWFORD
OD. Cut the kid a little slack.

JOSE
I don't think so, Crawdad. If you're not playing to win, what's the point?

CRAWFORD
Dude - it's throwing cards into a hat. Not exactly a test of skill.

JOSE
Doesn't matter what it is. I won.
(thinks for a second)
Five times in a row.

CRAWFORD
Give him a pointer or two, will you?

JOSE
Oh, yeah. I'll get right on that.

CRAWFORD shakes his head, begins to move on. Stops abruptly.

CRAWFORD
Our bet. Now there's a test of skill.

JOSE
I agree. And remind me, Crawdad - who's winning?

CRAWFORD
It ain't over yet.

JOSE
It was over on Opening Day.

Jose again motions for the bill. Baxter hands it over.

EXT. CASCADES TEAM PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jose walks through the lot. Baxter stands in front of a beater car with its hood raised.

JOSE
What's the problem, Bax?

BAXTER
My car is a piece of crap is what's the problem.

He SLAMS the hood down. Pulls out his phone.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Three times in the last month I've called my girlfriend to pick me up. She's gonna kill me.

JOSE
Come on - I'll give you a ride.

BAXTER
That's okay. She's not really gonna kill me.
(pause)
I think.

JOSE
Let's go. Put your phone away and hop in.

Baxter hesitates, but only for a second. He puts his phone away.

BAXTER
Thanks, OD.

EXT. CITY NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A Mercedes sedan pulls up alongside an apartment building.

INT. JOSE'S CAR - NIGHT

ROCK MUSIC plays.

JOSE
The capital of Nevada is Carson City. Pay up.

Baxter checks his cellphone.

BAXTER

You're right. I coulda sworn it was
Las Vegas.

Baxter fishes a bill out of his pocket, hands it over.

JOSE

Ka-ching. Again. No offense.

Baxter opens the car door.

BAXTER

None taken. Thanks for the ride.

EXT. PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Jose's car departs as Baxter raises a hand in farewell.

EXT. FBI PORTLAND OFFICE - DAY

A sprawling, secure compound set back from the street.

INT. FBI PORTLAND SUPERVISOR WHITAKER'S OFFICE - DAY

TAYLOR, 30, dressed in a standard FBI dark suit, enters the office of her supervisor, WHITAKER, mid-40s.

TAYLOR

What's up, boss? You wanted to see
me?

WHITAKER

Don't call me 'boss.' And don't ask
what's up.

That takes some of the wind out of her sails.

TAYLOR

Oh. Okay.

Whitaker indicates the empty chair in front of his desk.
Taylor sits.

A large FBI seal hangs on the wall behind him. A muted news
broadcast plays on a wall TV.

Office CHATTER and muted RADIO TRAFFIC drift into the office.

WHITAKER

You're a baby agent, Taylor, so I'm
starting you off nice and slow.

TAYLOR

Sir, I was a police officer in
Pittsburgh for five years.

(pause)

Almost five years.

WHITAKER

And how many federal cases did you
put together as a police officer in
Pittsburgh for almost five years?

TAYLOR

Uh, none, but that wasn't my job.

WHITAKER

I couldn't have said it better
myself.

Whitaker opens a file, removes a photo, slides it across the
desk.

WHITAKER (CONT'D)

The LA office sent a lead
requesting surveillance on this guy
while he's in town.

Taylor studies the photo. It's a booking photo of Louie
Mendoza. Turns it over, reads the writing on the back.

TAYLOR

'Louie Mendoza.' Who's he?

WHITAKER

A bookie. Supposed to fly into
Portland early tomorrow morning.
LA's looking at him as a possible
OC informant.

Taylor stares at Whitaker.

WHITAKER (CONT'D)

OC. As in organized crime.

TAYLOR

I knew that.

She didn't know that.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Why is he coming to Portland?

Whitaker drops the file on the desk and slides it across.

WHITAKER

That's what you're going to find out. This isn't coming at you too fast, is it?

TAYLOR

Should I flip him?

WHITAKER

Don't say 'flip him.' And no, don't do that. Grab a couple of your squad mates and follow him. See where he goes. What he does. Who he talks to.

TAYLOR

What about-

WHITAKER

(cuts her off)

This lead isn't complicated, Taylor. Get it done. Impress me.

Taylor stands.

TAYLOR

Okay, sir. I'm on it.

WHITAKER

Don't call me 'sir.' And don't say 'I'm on it.'

TAYLOR

What am I supposed to call you?

Whitaker puts his reading glasses on. Starts going through paperwork.

WHITAKER

Let me think about that.

INT. FBI PORTLAND CUBICLE FARM - DAY

Taylor at her desk, looks at a computer screen and writes in a notebook. She makes a final note, slams her notebook shut, pops to her feet. Starts making the rounds of the squad cubicles to ask for help.

First stop.

TAYLOR

I got this lead from the LA office-

AGENT ONE smirks.

AGENT ONE
Darn the luck! I have grand jury
tomorrow morning.

Another stop.

TAYLOR
Hey, are you available-

AGENT TWO gestures at a towering pile of files on his desk.

AGENT TWO
Does it look like I'm available?

Next stop. Agent Three, EVERETT, mid-30s, also dressed in a dark suit, has his feet on the desk and is reading a newspaper.

TAYLOR
I could really use some-

EVERETT
(keeps reading)
No can do.

TAYLOR
What's your excuse?

EVERETT
(looks up from the sports
page)
Who said I need an excuse?

TAYLOR
Come on, Everett.

Everett swings his legs off the desk, stands up.

EVERETT
Just messing with you. I'll give
you a hand.
(rolls the paper up)
But you owe me one. Got it?

Taylor takes the rolled-up paper and bops the top of Everett's head.

TAYLOR
Got it.

EXT. SUBURBAN LA GOLF DRIVING RANGE - DAY

Louie, looking out of place, scans the driving range. Finds who he's looking for, heads in that direction.

Driving range SOUNDS - balls getting THWACKED, grass getting MOWED, ball dispensers RATTLING.

MARIO, mid-40s, decked out in expensive golf gear, hits a ball. Checks his phone. Hits another ball. Louie approaches.

MARIO
You look like hell.

LOUIE
I didn't sleep much last night.

Mario extends the club toward Louie.

MARIO
Why don't you hit a couple?

Louie shakes his head.

LOUIE
No, thanks. I don't have a knack
for it like you do.

MARIO
Knack? I'm a masochist. That's all
you need to play this game.
(lowers his voice)
I'm also a sadist, but that's
another story.

Louie laughs. A nervous laugh.

MARIO (CONT'D)
Whadda ya got?

LOUIE
Lots of action on the Cascades game
last night.
(adjusts his collar)
I got one problem child, but
that'll get sorted out today.

Mario loses the friendly attitude.

MARIO
Problem child?

LOUIE
No worries, Mario. I'm on it.

Mario mishits a ball. It slices badly. He slams his driver back into his bag. Does a deep knee-bend.

MARIO

Don't go soft on me, Louie. That would be bad for business.

LOUIE

This is an opportunity. It'll turn out good - I promise.

Mario pulls another club out of his bag. Swings it a couple of times like a baseball bat, not a golf club. Points the head of the club in Louie's general direction.

MARIO

I vouched for you, Louie. For old time's sake. Don't make a liar out of me.

Louie nods, staring at the club in Mario's hand.

INT. JOSE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

CC and Jose, dressed in just-got-out-of-bed clothes, sit on a couch, drinking coffee and reading the newspaper.

Pop MUSIC plays softly in the background. CC gets up, walks to the fireplace mantel, picks up a framed photo of Jessie.

CC

This is your sister, right? You never talk about your family.

JOSE

Not much to talk about. My folks are gone, and Jessie and I - we just sorta drifted apart.

CC

Are you in contact with her?

Jose gets up, walks to the fireplace, takes the photo from CC.

JOSE

Why the sudden interest in my family?

CC

I don't know...I just want to get to know you better.

JOSE

She's my big sister. After my dad left and my mom checked out, she took care of me. But we haven't talked in years.

CC

That's sad.

JOSE

Yeah, it is. Anyway, the ball's in her court.

Jose puts the photo back on the mantel. CC leads him back to the couch and sits in his lap.

CC

Andy yelled at me last night after the game.

JOSE

Who's Andy?

CC

My producer. He was pissed off I didn't get you to talk about The Slide.

JOSE

The Slide. Give me a break.

CC

It's a legit story line. Vancouver fans are fired up.

JOSE

Stillman was blocking the plate. And FYI, I'm done talking about-
(makes air quotes)
- 'The Slide.'

CC

You might be done talking about it, but those questions will be non-stop from now until the World Series is over.

Jose shrugs.

JOSE

I scored the winning run. Why wasn't that the story?

CC puts her arm around Jose, kisses him on the cheek.

CC

You are so competitive, baby. I'm
on your side. Just presenting
another point of view, that's all.

Jose kisses CC back.

JOSE

I like it when you present other
points of view.

CC

Oh, my....

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

The iconic LA skyline against a bright blue sky.

INT. HIGH-RISE LA OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Jessie sits at a desk, talking on the phone and looking at
her computer screen. The view out her upper-floor window
faces west, toward the distant-but-visible Pacific Ocean.

JESSIE

(on the phone)

Weather in Chicago jacked up all
the....

Her voice trails off as she looks up. Louie stands in front
of her desk. Looking around the office. Waiting.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

I'll call you back. Something just
came up.

She fumbles the receiver into its cradle. Stands up. Puts a
hand on the desk to steady herself.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Hey, Louie.

LOUIE

Nice view. If I didn't know better,
I'd think you're some kind of big
shot.

Jessie looks around the office. No one is paying any
attention to them.

JESSIE
What are you doing here?

LOUIE
You got some balls, asking me that.
'Don't make me come looking for
you.' Sound familiar?

Jessie nods.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
Let's take a walk.

Jessie looks at her watch.

JESSIE
I have a meeting -

LOUIE
(cuts in)
You're having it. Right now. With
me. Let's go.

Jessie looks at Louie. Stands up.

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY PARK - DAY

Louie and Jessie walk by a row of tables where people are hunched over chess boards. Spectators watch and KIBITZ. Faint snatches of MUSIC mingle with TRAFFIC NOISES and SIRENS.

Louie stops near a table. A player captures a piece, PUNCHES the top of a chess clock with the captured piece.

LOUIE
(to Jessie)
Do you play chess?

JESSIE
No.

LOUIE
Why am I not surprised?

He resumes walking. Jessie follows.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
See, in chess, you gotta build up a
defense. Plan ahead. Anticipate
potential threats to your position.

Louie pulls a cellphone out of his pocket, looks at it. Makes a face.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 (to the phone)
 Dream on.

He puts the phone back in his pocket.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 You don't do any of that shit.
 Instead, you just try to bet your
 way out of trouble. There's a word
 for people like you.

JESSIE
 Louie, I -

LOUIE
 (cuts her off)
 'Degenerate gambler.'
 (pause)
 I guess that's two words. My bad.
 (looks around)
 Where's my money, Jess?

Jessie summons all her courage.

JESSIE
 I don't have it.

LOUIE
 Wrong answer.

He grabs Jessie's purse, then her wrist when she tries to retrieve the purse. Bends her wrist back.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 Easy does it.

Louie releases Jessie's wrist, rummages through the purse, pulls out a keychain. It's a baseball in Cascades colors - midnight blue and white - with the number '24' emblazoned on it.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 A Cascades fan betting on the
 Giants? That's odd.

JESSIE
 I bet 'em like I see 'em. I can't
 afford to be a fan.

LOUIE
 You can't afford to gamble, either,
 but here we are.

Louie dangles the keychain in the air.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
Twenty-four. Jose O'Dwyer's number,
yeah?

Jessie makes a half-hearted reach for the keychain.

JESSIE
I'll make things right. I promise.

Louie keeps the keychain out of her reach, toying with her.

LOUIE
Great ballplayer. O'Dwyer, I mean.

Louie hands the purse back to Jessie. Hangs onto the keychain. A shabbily-dressed STREET GUY approaches.

STREET GUY
Can you help me out, brother?

Louie reaches into his pocket, pulls out a roll, peels off a bill, hands it to the street guy. Leans in.

LOUIE
(to street guy)
You need to get your shit together.

The street guy nods, shuffles off.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
(to Jessie)
See? I got a big heart. You don't
pay your debts, though, I gotta
handle it.
(pause)
I wanna meet O'Dwyer. What do you
think?

Jessie is having a hard time keeping herself together.

JESSIE
Give me a few days, alright? I'm
good for it.

Louie watches the street guy walk away.

LOUIE
Whadda ya think his story is?

Jessie follows Louie's gaze to the street guy.

JESSIE

Going through hard times, I guess.

LOUIE

Hard times.

(taps Jessie's shoulder)

Just like you, huh? I'm gonna cut you a little slack. 'Til the end of the World Series, let's say.

JESSIE

Thank you.

Louie hands the keychain to Jessie. Turns around. Walks back toward the chess boards.

LOUIE

(to himself)

You're welcome.

EXT. PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

A non-descript sedan sits, idling, on Airport Way. TRAFFIC SOUNDS intermingle with the THUNDER of jet engines, cars HONKING, TAKEOFFS, and LANDINGS.

INT. TAYLOR'S SURVEILLANCE VEHICLE - DAY

Taylor looks in her rear-view mirror. Waits.

EVERETT (V.O.)

(over radio)

Subject headed your way. Red Nissan Ultima, rental plate ending in five two nine.

TAYLOR

(into radio mike)

Copy.

EXT. PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

A Red Ultima passes Taylor's sedan. She pulls into traffic.

EXT. PORTLAND COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A busy morning. Lots of foot traffic on the street.

INT. PORTLAND COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Jose at his table, reading a paper and drinking coffee.
REGGAE MUSIC. TALKING. COFFEE MACHINE NOISES.

EXT. PORTLAND COFFEE SHOP - DAY

The Ultima pulls up outside the coffee shop. Louie gets out.

INT. TAYLOR'S SURVEILLANCE VEHICLE - DAY

Down the block, Taylor pulls to the curb.

TAYLOR
(into radio mike)
He's stopped at -

She looks around for street signs.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
(into radio mike)
Two Six and Division. Going into a
coffee shop.

INT. PORTLAND COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Louie enters, sees Jose. Walks to his table and sits down.

LOUIE
How ya doin'?

Jose smiles, but just barely.

JOSE
Yeah, hi. Look, I, uh -

LOUIE
(cuts him off)
I get it. Fans bugging you all the
time. Must be a pain in the ass.

Louie takes out a Cascades keychain ball with Jose's uniform
number on it. He rolls the ball across the table.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
Your sister has one just like this.

Manuel appears at the table. Stares at Louie.

MANUEL
 (to Jose)
 Everything okay?

LOUIE
 Actually, I could use a coffee.

MANUEL
 I wasn't talking to you.

LOUIE
 (to Jose)
 And they say Portland is a friendly town.

Jose looks at Louie, at Manuel, at the keychain. Considers the situation, then -

JOSE
 Yeah, we're good. Thanks.

Manuel moves away. Louie takes a packet out of the sugar bowl on the table, rips it open, pours sugar down his throat. SMACKS his lips.

LOUIE
 I like the way you handled that.
 Smart.

JOSE
 What about my sister? Is she okay?

Louie shrugs.

LOUIE
 Okay is a relative term. She's not hurt, if that's what you mean.
 (grabs another sugar packet)
 Not yet, anyway.

Jose leans forward.

JOSE
 Who the hell are you?

LOUIE
 Me? I'm a sports gaming consultant.
 Jessie is a valued client.

Jose sits back in his chair. Shakes his head.

JOSE
 A bookie. That sounds about right.

LOUIE

By the way, she doesn't know I figured out you're her brother. Or that I'm paying you this visit.

JOSE

How did you find me? Here, I mean. Today.

LOUIE

In my business, you gotta have sources. I did my homework on you, Jose.

Manuel comes by again. Gives Louie a hard look.

MANUEL

(to Jose)
More coffee?

LOUIE

(to Manuel)
You mean some coffee?

Jose shrugs. Manuel places a cup on the table, sloshes coffee into it.

LOUIE (CONT'D)

My man.

Manuel thinks about responding. Moves off instead.

JOSE

So Jessie's jammed up again. How much this time?

Louie drinks some coffee. Makes a face. Tears open the sugar packet, dumps the contents into his coffee cup.

LOUIE

You got it all wrong, friend. This isn't some low-rent shakedown. I got a proposition for you.

Jose looks around the coffee shop. Leans forward again.

JOSE

A proposition? I already don't like it.

LOUIE

You gotta have an open mind about this sort of thing. Everything's gonna be hunky-dory.

JOSE
 (puzzled)
 Hunky-dory?

LOUIE
 Yeah - you know. Hunky-dory. A-
 okay. Fine.

He drinks more coffee. SMACKS his lips again.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 The Mendoza Line - ever hear of it?

Jose thinks for a minute. Shakes his head.

JOSE
 I don't think so.

LOUIE
 No? Well, back in the day, there
 was a major league ballplayer
 called Mendoza. There's been a few
 of 'em, actually, but this
 particular Mendoza's career batting
 average was right around .200.

Jose waits for more. Nothing.

JOSE
 That's it?

LOUIE
 Yeah. What were you expecting - a
 documentary?

JOSE
 What does that have to do with
 Jessie?

LOUIE
 Simple. You're going to bat below
 the Mendoza Line in the World
 Series. In return, Jessie's debts,
 which are considerable, will be
 wiped off the board. That's what.

Jose shakes his head and smiles.

JOSE
 That ain't gonna happen.

LOUIE
 Oh, it's gonna happen. You know
 why?

(MORE)

LOUIE (CONT'D)
'Cuz if it doesn't, your sister's
gonna get dead real quick. Hell,
they might even make you watch.

Jose puts some money on the table and stands up.

 JOSE
What's your name?

 LOUIE
I'm Louie.

 JOSE
Go back to LA, Louie. I'll talk to
Jessie and get things straightened
out. Don't worry - you'll get your
money.

Louie remains seated.

 LOUIE
The people I work for can be
unpleasant. Very unpleasant.

Jose hesitates. Sits back down.

 LOUIE (CONT'D)
I gave Jessie a chance to make
things right. She didn't come
through, so now we're on to Plan B.
I'm trying to help her, believe it
or not.

 JOSE
Bullshit.

He stands, picks up the keychain, puts it in his pocket, and
waves to Manuel on his way out. Louie follows.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Jose and Louie exit the coffee shop.

INT. TAYLOR'S SURVEILLANCE VEHICLE - DAY

Taylor picks up a camera. Through the zoom lens, she sees
Louie and an unknown (to her) male subject - Jose.

She snaps some photos rapid-fire, then keys the radio mike.

TAYLOR
 (into radio mike)
 Subject has exited the coffee shop.
 He's talking to an unknown male.

EVERETT (V.O.)
 (over radio)
 Get pictures.

TAYLOR
 Copy.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Jose pulls out his cell phone.

JOSE
 I'm calling the cops.

Louie pulls out some photographs, hands them to Jose.

LOUIE
 Take a look at these first.

Jose glances at the top photo, then grabs them and goes through them one by one.

Jessie: In a car at a traffic light. Walking into an office building. Sitting at a bar. Shopping in a grocery store.

JOSE
 How...?

LOUIE
 I told you. I got sources.

Louie snatches the photos back.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 I know all about you, too. What car you drive. Where you get your hair cut. When you scratch your ass.
 (pause)
 You even think about snitching me off, I'll know immediately.

Louie shakes his head.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 If the people I work for found out you went to the cops....
 (voice trails off)

Jose stares at Louie.

LOUIE (CONT'D)

Hey - the Cascades can still win the World Series. They'll just have to do it with a little less help from their star player.

JOSE

(fiddles with the
keychain)

You're talking about throwing the Series.

LOUIE

No, no, no. Just a slight adjustment to your batting average. Big difference. Someone making the right bets could do very well knowing how Jose O'Dwyer's gonna hit in the Series.

(looks around)

Or not hit.

INT. TAYLOR'S SURVEILLANCE VEHICLE - DAY

EVERETT (V.O.)

(over radio)

If they split up, I'll take the subject. Try to ID the unsub. Get a license plate if you can.

TAYLOR

(into radio mike)

Ten-four.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Louie's now in charge. He moves in very close to Jose.

LOUIE

Don't talk to Jessie about this. Not now. Not ever. If you do, I'll know. You feel me?

Jose is distraught.

JOSE

Yeah.

LOUIE

The Mendoza Line. Simple, right?

Mendoza punches Jose in the arm and walks away.

INT. TAYLOR'S SURVEILLANCE VEHICLE - DAY

TAYLOR
 (into radio mike)
 Subject is walking northbound on
 Two Six. I'll be out on foot with
 the unsub.

EVERETT (V.O.)
 (over radio)
 Northbound on Two Six. Copy.

EXT. DIVISION STREET - DAY

Taylor walks quickly toward the coffee shop, reaches the intersection.

No sign of Jose.

Taylor looks around. Nothing.

TAYLOR
 Aw, come on.

EXT. PORTLAND WATERFRONT - DAY

Sunlight washes over Cascades Park.

INT. CASCADES CLUBHOUSE - DAY

Cochrane stands in the middle of a large locker room, surrounded by Cascades baseball players and staff.

The mood is joyful, but Cochrane is serious.

After a few WHOOPS and HOLLERS, Cochrane motions for silence and the players listen up.

COCHRANE
 A so-called expert on the radio
 this morning said the Cascades
 should be -
 (makes air quotes)
 "proud," no matter what happens in
 the Series. I guess that means
 we're the underdogs.

Cochrane looks around. The room is now silent.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
I wanted to call that sumbitch up
and say, "What in the fuck are
y'all talking about?" but my momma
didn't raise me like that.

LAUGHTER among the players and staff.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
I got one question - are y'all
ready to win a world championship?

The clubhouse ERUPTS with raucous CHEERS. In the chaos, Jose
just nods.

Jose walks to his locker and sits down. FLEEGER, the Cascades
shortstop, sits at his locker, next to Jose's.

FLEEGER
We're going to the Series, baby!

Jose puts on a brave face, but he's having a tough time.

JOSE
Fleegs, I -

Jose cuts himself off. He can't talk to anyone about this.

JOSE (CONT'D)
Yeah. We made it.

FLEEGER
You okay, OD? What's going on?

The moment has passed.

JOSE
I'm good, brother.

Jose starts to sort his gear out. Crawford walks by. Stops.

CRAWFORD
Our thing is coming down to the
wire. OD, and I know how much you
hate to lose. I just wanna make
sure you're ready when it happens.

Jose stands up. Taps Crawford on the chest.

JOSE
I'm ready for you to fold under
pressure. As usual.

Crawford knocks Jose's hand away.

CRAWFORD
What did you say?

Fleeger stands up, moves between the two.

FLEEGER
(looking around)
Easy, fellas. Not here, not now.

CRAWFORD
(to Jose)
You best watch yourself around me.

JOSE
(to Crawford)
Go take some extra batting
practice. You need it.

Crawford thinks about answering. Moves away.

FLEEGER
What's that all about?

JOSE
A friendly side bet. Most hits at
the end of the season. But keep
that under your hat, okay?

FLEEGER
Yeah, sure. Who's ahead?

JOSE
You're kidding, right? I am.
(pause)
By one hit.

FLEEGER
And what are the stakes in this
friendly side bet?

Jose sits back down.

JOSE
Sorry, Fleegs. That's between me
and Crawdad.

INT. LOUIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Louie sits at his desk, on the phone, A large TV screen,
volume muted, hangs on the wall facing him. Soft JAZZ MUSIC
plays.

LOUIE
 (on the phone)
 What can I say? An oral contract is
 legally binding.

Louie glances up. A replay of Jose sliding into Rain Wolves
 catcher Will Stillman is being played. 'The Slide.'

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 (on the phone)
 No, it will be your problem. That I
 can promise you.

Louie hangs up. He picks up a remote, points it at the TV. A
 BROADCASTER's voice is talking over the video.

BROADCASTER
 -bad blood between the two
 ballclubs. For more, let's bring in
 Cascades on-field reporter CC
 Yamamoto. CC?

CC appears on screen. Louie mutes the volume, but continues
 to watch.

LOUIE
 (to TV)
 CC. Looking good.
 (to himself)
 'Bad blood.' I love this game.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

CC is on the field with her camera operator. PUBLIC ADDRESS
 ANNOUNCEMENTS play, interspersed with CANNED ORGAN MUSIC.
 Fans file into the ballpark.

On the field, players from both teams are warming up.

CC
 -out for the season, and that has
 Vancouver fans fired up. Expect an
 unfriendly reception for Jose
 O'Dwyer when this series moves
 north of the border. Guys?

INT. CASCADES BROADCASTERS BOOTH - NIGHT

Play-by-play man EVAN ANDERSON and color commentator ANDRE
 WHITE, sit at a table covered in paperwork and TV monitors.

ANDERSON

CC, how does Cascades manager Mutt Cochrane think this controversy is going to play out?

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

CC

Evan, Mutt Cochrane has remained conspicuously silent on the subject. Someone who has not remained silent is Vancouver pitcher Dave Strong, who'll be starting Game Three.

In centerfield, Jose and Fleeger are warming up by playing catch. Before each throw, they take a step or two back, gradually increasing the distance between them.

A Vancouver player, OZZIE VASQUEZ, approaches Jose.

OZZIE

(fake nasally voice)
Can I have your autograph, Mr. O'Dwyer?

Jose throws the ball, hugs Ozzie.

JOSE

Oz! We miss you, dude.

Jose continues to play catch as he talks with Ozzie.

OZZIE

Me too, bro, but I made it to the World Series!

Jose scoops a low throw off the field, throws it back to Fleeger.

JOSE

Yeah, you did. Just wish it had been with us.

Jose looks over Ozzie's shoulder. A Vancouver player is staring at him. Dave STRONG.

JOSE (CONT'D)

Your boy isn't too happy to see me.

Ozzie doesn't turn around.

OZZIE

Strong, you mean? Yeah - he and Stillman came up together.

Jose makes a catch, steps back, throws.

JOSE

How is Stillman, anyway? I sent him a text, but I never heard back.

Strong makes a beeline toward Jose. He looks pissed off.

OZZIE

Slow recovery. Still has a couple more surgeries to get through.

Jose sees Strong approaching.

JOSE

Here we go.

Ozzie turns around, moves to intercept Strong. Fleeger heads in their direction.

STRONG

(to Ozzie)

You got traded, Oz. Remember?

(to Jose)

You better watch your ass, O'Dwyer.

Strong turns away, escorted by Ozzie.

JOSE

(calling after him)

Game Three, huh, Strong? Maybe you can get past the fourth inning this time.

Strong turns back. Ozzie stays between him and Jose. Strong points his glove at Jose.

STRONG

(yelling)

Let's see who gets past the fourth inning!

Fleeger arrives as Ozzie moves Strong away.

FLEEGER

First Crawdad, now Strong. When did you become Mr. Popular?

JOSE

Check out my rookie card: Throws right. Bats right. Extremely popular.

FLEEGER

An error card, huh? Those are worth big bucks - can you get me one?

Jose takes the ball out of Fleeger's glove. Motions toward a spot on the field.

JOSE

Go.

INT. CASCADES BROADCASTERS BOOTH - NIGHT

SUPER:

"GAME ONE, WORLD SERIES - PORTLAND,
OREGON"

Anderson and White are calling the game. CROWD NOISE fills the booth.

ANDERSON

-bottom of the first, no score.
Full count on O'Dwyer, who has been
on an absolute tear in the post-
season.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

The CROWD NOISE is even louder on the field. Jose steps out of the batter's box. Adjusts his batting glove. Knocks dirt off his cleats.

Ozzie is the Rain Wolves catcher.

JOSE

(looking ahead, but
talking to Ozzie)
This kid has an arm.

OZZIE

You haven't seen all his pitches.

INT. FBI PORTLAND SUPERVISOR WHITAKER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Whitaker sits at his desk. Taylor is seated across from him.

The Cascades game is playing on a TV screen attached to the wall. The volume is muted.

Whitaker is reading Taylor's surveillance report.

WHITAKER

So - Mendoza meets some guy in a coffee shop in Southeast Portland.

TAYLOR

Yes, sir.

WHITAKER

But you have no idea who this guy is.

TAYLOR

Correct.

WHITAKER

Aaaannnd...you lost him.

TAYLOR

Also correct.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

Chants of "OD! OD! OD!" rock the ballpark.

Jose steps back into the box. The Vancouver pitcher winds up. Delivers. Jose watches the ball as it crosses the plate.

ANDERSON (V.O.)

Garcia delivers and...called strike three!

OZZIE

Now you've seen all his pitches.

Jose flips his bat in the air, Catches it. Walks back to the dugout.

WHITE (V.O.)

A wicked slider from Garcia gets O'Dwyer looking. I don't remember the last time that happened.

INT. FBI PORTLAND SUPERVISOR WHITAKER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

WHITAKER

Please tell me you took photos.

TAYLOR

I did.

Taylor produces her camera, holds it up to Whitaker. He looks at the view screen. At Taylor. At the view screen.

WHITAKER

This is the guy from the coffee shop. The guy who met with Mendoza.

TAYLOR

Yes.

WHITAKER

You're sure about that.

TAYLOR

Hundred percent. Why?

Whitaker turns and points to the TV screen. On the screen, Jose is walking back to the dugout.

WHITAKER

Because this guy is that guy.

Taylor stares at the screen. At the photo on her cellphone. At the screen.

TAYLOR

You're right.

WHITAKER

Jose O'Dwyer.

TAYLOR

He's a baseball player?

WHITAKER

Right again. You're on a roll.

TAYLOR

This lead just got a whole lot more complicated, didn't it?

Whitaker smiles as he reaches for the phone on his desk.

WHITAKER

You're starting to grow on me, Taylor.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

The Cascades home crowd is doing the wave. CHEERS and CANNED MUSIC mix with the PA ANNOUNCER's echoing voice. A recurring CHANT cuts through the chaos:

CROWD
 DEE-FENSE!
 (rhythmic 1-2-3 clapping)
 DEE-FENSE!
 (rhythmic 1-2-3 clapping)

Jose is on the field, playing behind second base. Completely focused on the pitcher and batter in front of him.

The Cascades pitcher delivers the pitch. A CRACK of the bat. A screaming line drive heads toward right field, to Jose's left. He and Crawford sprint toward where they can intercept the ball.

JOSE
 I got it! I got it!

CRAWFORD
 (simultaneously)
 It's mine! It's mine!

Jose and Crawford are headed for a high-speed collision. Crawford pulls up at the last second as Jose leaps in the air and makes a spectacular grab for the out.

The crowd ERUPTS in approval. Jose tosses the ball to Crawford.

CRAWFORD (CONT'D)
 That was mine all the way.

Crawford fires the ball to Fleeger.

JOSE
 Then why didn't you catch it?

Crawford stares hard as Jose jogs back toward second base.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

Most of the Cascades players stand at the top of the dugout, watching the action on the field.

They're brothers - arms around each other, pounding each other on the back. LAUGHING and spitting sunflower shells and ROOTING ON their teammate at bat.

Jose sits on the bench, alone. Pretends to check the knots on his glove. Fleeger sits down beside him.

FLEEGER

You okay?

Jose glances at Fleeger. Continues to fiddle with his glove.

JOSE

Yeah. Just give me a minute.

Fleeger hesitates, then nods. Stands up. Walks away.

EXT. CASCADES BALLPARK - NIGHT

Jose in a succession of at-bat final pitches. He:

Strikes out swinging.

Strikes out looking.

Lines out to the pitcher.

INT. LOUIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Louie sits at his desk, watches the game on his office TV. Smiles as he sees Jose hit a line drive back to the pitcher. Picks up his cellphone and makes a call.

LOUIE

(on the phone)

What'd I tell you?

Louie listens, LAUGHS, ends the call. Leans back in his chair and puts his feet on the desk.

INT. CASCADES BALLPARK - NIGHT

Fans head for the exits. Ground crews swarm onto the field.

The scoreboard above the centerfield bleachers tells the story: RAIN WOLVES 4, CASCADES 2 FINAL SCORE.

CC walks toward the Cascades dugout.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

Jose sits in the dugout, head buried in his hands.

CC approaches, rests her arms on the dugout fence.

CC
Hey, buddy.

Jose looks up.

JOSE
Hey.

CC
Just me. No camera.

Jose stands, holds up a hand.

JOSE
I can't talk right now. Sorry.

CC
Look, I wanted to tell you-

Jose disappears through a door that leads to the tunnel beneath the stands. CC holds a finger to her ear. Looks up at the broadcast booth and waves.

CC (CONT'D)
(into a microphone
attached to her collar)
Nothing. Just poking around. On my
way.

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The post-game show plays on the TV at low volume. Jessie drinks a glass of wine, taps on her phone.

Her screen shows a photo of Jose and a phone number beneath it.

Jessie drains her wine glass. Touches the screen and calls Jose's number. Hangs up without waiting for an answer.

INT. CASCADES CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

The clubhouse is silent, the mood subdued. Cochrane stands in the middle of the room.

COCHRANE
That, gentlemen, was a piss-poor
performance.

The players sit or stand by their lockers. Cochrane walks around the clubhouse as he speaks. He carries a can of beer in one hand, and periodically takes a chug from it.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
 You might not believe this, because
 I'm an old fuck now, but I used to
 be a ballplayer myself.
 (drinks)
 A second baseman. Even had a cup of
 coffee in the big leagues.

He stops in front of Jose's locker.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
 I didn't have nearly the talent of
 a Jose O'Dwyer, but...

Jose looks up, waiting for more. Cochrane resumes walking.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
 I hated to lose. Fucking hated it.
 It weighed on me.

Cochrane stops, looks around the clubhouse.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
 I'm not the handsome young stud I
 used to be, but I still hate
 losing.

Cochrane looks straight at Jose.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
 Sometimes I wonder - does everybody
 else hate losing as much as I do?

Jose gets ready to say something. Is Cochrane singling him
 out? Cochrane resumes walking.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
 Y'all played like shit.
 (drinks)
 But I also managed like shit, so I
 guess we're even.

Cochrane points toward the visitors' clubhouse.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
 Those sumbitches showed up tonight.
 We didn't. Whatever else happens,
 don't have any regrets when you get
 to the last out of the season.
 (drinks again)
 If you think losing this game hurts
 right now, wait 'til you look back
 on it twenty years down the road.

Cochrane finishes his beer and crumples the empty can.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

The fact is, gentlemen, you may
never get back here.

Jose stares at the ground.

Cochrane fires the beer can into a wastebasket in a distant corner of the room - an impressive shot. Walks out.

The clubhouse is dead silent.

INT. FBI PORTLAND CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Taylor, Whitaker, Everett, and MADISON, early 30s, a female FBI ANALYST, sit at a conference table. A large screen is at the front of the room.

FBI and local law enforcement RADIO BROADCASTS are streamed continuously into the room.

Whitaker touches a laptop keyboard, and the photo of Mendoza and Jose outside the coffee shop appears on the screen.

WHITAKER

To the surprise of no one,
Headquarters is now very interested
in Mendoza's trip to Portland.

(to Everett)

What happened after he left the
coffee shop?

EVERETT

Drove back to PDX. Stopped on the
way to gas up his rental car,
dropped the car off, went through
security, boarded his plane.

WHITAKER

And LA confirmed he got off the
plane in Burbank.

(to Taylor)

What about O'Dwyer? Oh, that's
right - you lost him.

TAYLOR

I, uh, I mean....

WHITAKER

You should have had more help out
there. That's my bad.

Whitaker touches the keyboard again. On the screen, a huge spreadsheet appears. Dates. Times. Telephone numbers called. Call Duration. The spreadsheet is titled, "MENDOZA BURNER PHONES."

WHITAKER (CONT'D)

(to Madison)

What do we know about Mendoza's phone activity?

MADISON

Well, LA says he uses burner phones for all his bookie work - disposable and untraceable. Plus, he changes them out pretty regularly. But-

WHITAKER

(cuts in)

Let me take a wild guess. LA has a source.

MADISON

Exactly. LA's getting the burner phone numbers, so they're pulling the records almost in real time.

WHITAKER

And?

Madison gestures toward the screen.

MADISON

Raw data from his current phone. I'm in the process of identifying contacted numbers, putting names to them, looking-

TAYLOR

(interrupting)

Is this baseball guy is one of his clients?

MADISON

O'Dwyer, you mean?

TAYLOR

Yeah.

MADISON

Too soon to tell. Even if he is, he might be using a burner phone, too, which means it would take some time to identify him.

WHITAKER
(to Taylor)
'This baseball guy?' Really?
(to Madison)
Any other Portland-area numbers?

MADISON
Just one.

WHITAKER
(to Madison)
Let's ID that subscriber ASAP.

MADISON
Will do.

EVERETT
(to Madison)
Maddie, you're killing me. The
World Series only lasts seven
games, max. You know that, right?

MADISON
What can I tell you, Ev? This stuff
takes as long as it takes.

Taylor senses some heat between Madison and Everett. She gives Everett the side-eye. He looks at her and winks.

WHITAKER
I've assigned this case to Everett.
The three of you will work it
together. Keep in mind that
Headquarters is all over this, for
obvious reasons.

Whitaker stands up. Taylor looks at him, at Everett, at Madison.

TAYLOR
Hold on.

WHITAKER
Something on your mind?

TAYLOR
Yeah. Yes.

Whitaker sits down.

WHITAKER
I'm all ears.

TAYLOR

You assigned a lead to me. I covered it. I took the surveillance photo that ID'd O'Dwyer. Now you're assigning the case to Everett?

WHITAKER

Part of a squad supervisor's job is to assign cases.

TAYLOR

I get that. What I don't get, respectfully, is you giving this case to another agent, even though I did most of the work that got us to where we are.

(to Everett)

Nothing personal, Ev.

Everett nods.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

(to Whitaker)

Sir. Mr. Whitaker. Boss. Whatever you want me to call you. I'm fully capable of investigating a case, and I think I deserve the chance to prove that.

Whitaker stands up again.

WHITAKER

(to Taylor)

I appreciate your input.

(to Everett)

Send me a briefing memo in the next hour.

EVERETT

(to Whitaker)

Got it.

Whitaker leaves the room.

TAYLOR

This is bullshit.

EVERETT

Not to take sides, but you gotta pick your battles.

TAYLOR

Excuse me?

MADISON

He's right. You've been here how long? Like five minutes?

TAYLOR

Two months.

MADISON

Okay. Two months. Man or woman, you gotta pay some dues in this job, and you haven't paid 'em. Not yet, anyway.

TAYLOR

And you have?

MADISON

Well, let me see. When I was in the Army, my foot got blown off by an IED outside Baghdad. That screwed me out of becoming an agent, so I applied and got hired as an analyst instead, about five years ago now. So, yeah, I think I'm all set in the dues-paying department.

Taylor wasn't ready for that.

TAYLOR

Oh.

Taylor looks at Madison. At Everett. At the spreadsheet on the screen.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Okay. What do we do now?

EXT. CASCADES TEAM PARKING LOT - DAY

Jose gets out of his car, starts walking toward the ballpark. Baxter is checking under the hood of his own car. SLAMS the hood shut.

BAXTER

Hey.

Jose stops, gestures at Baxter's car.

JOSE

What's the latest?

BAXTER

Oh, you know. Another day, another disaster. Nothing I can't deal with.

JOSE

Maybe it's time for an upgrade.

BAXTER

Yeah. That's on my list. Right after I win the lottery and buy myself a castle.

Jose hesitates.

JOSE

Sorry. I didn't mean...I wasn't....

Baxter smiles, waves him off.

BAXTER

Don't sweat it. You got more important stuff on your mind.

Jose shakes his head.

JOSE

Hey, man. I can worry about more than one thing at a time.

They start walking toward the ballpark.

JOSE (CONT'D)

You've always been there for me, Bax. Ever since I came up to the big leagues. You need help, just say the word.

Baxter claps Jose on the back.

BAXTER

We're good, brother. Take it to 'em tonight.

JOSE

That's the plan.

They walk in silence for a moment.

JOSE (CONT'D)

What's the capital of Rhode Island?

Baxter GROANS.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

SUPER:

"GAME TWO, WORLD SERIES - PORTLAND,
OREGON"

The crowd is insanely LOUD. CHEERS, WHISTLES, SHOUTS. PA
ANNOUNCEMENTS. ORGAN MUSIC.

Jose steps into the batter's box.

JOSE
(staring straight ahead)
What's the word, Oz?

OZZIE
Found a great barbecue joint last
night in Southeast.

INT. CASCADES BROADCASTERS BOOTH - NIGHT

ANDERSON
Dre, what is going on with Jose
O'Dwyer? He failed to reach base in
Game One, a rarity for him this
season.

WHITE
Even great hitters have off games.
All the same, I'm a little
surprised he didn't make better
contact with the ball. Portland
needs him to show up tonight.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

The Vancouver pitcher looks in for a signal. Shakes it off.

OZZIE
(to Jose)
A rookie shaking me off. What's
next - robot umpires?
(glances at the Rain
Wolves' dugout)
Actually, that's a good idea.

The pitcher nods at another signal. Sets, delivers. Jose
doesn't swing.

UMPIRE
 (loudly)
 Ball one!
 (to Ozzie)
 I heard that comment.

Ozzie LAUGHS, throws the ball back to the pitcher. Jose steps out of the batter's box, stares at the third base coach, steps back in.

JOSE
 (to Ozzie, staring
 straight ahead)
 Do you always talk this much behind
 the plate?

UMPIRE
 He does, yeah.

OZZIE
 I got a lot on my mind.

Jose hits the next pitch into left field for a single. He runs to first, turns toward second base, returns to first.

INT. CASCADES BROADCAST BOOTH - NIGHT

ANDERSON
 And O'Dwyer is safely aboard with a
 two-out single.

INT. LOUIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Soft JAZZ plays in the background, over the MURMUR of sound from the TV. Louie watches the game, consults a notebook.

The notebook page has two columns: At Bats and Hits. In the At Bats column are four vertical lines. Louie draws a diagonal line across the four vertical lines, then one vertical line in the Hits column.

Five at-bats, one hit.

LOUIE
 (to himself)
 Easy does it.

EXT. CASCADES BALLPARK - NIGHT

The next batter is Crawford. He steps into the batter's box.

OZZIE

How ya been, Crawdad?

Crawford ignores him. Pops up the first pitch.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

Nice chatting with you.

Ozzie rips his catcher's mask off, spots the ball, circles until he's under it. Makes the catch. Rolls the ball to the pitcher's mound, jogs toward the visitors' dugout.

ANDERSON (V.O.)

No runs on a hit for the Cascades.
At the end of one, a scoreless tie
here in Portland.

INT. - FBI PORTLAND CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Everett and Taylor are watching the game and reviewing phone records on their laptops.

Madison walks in, clutching a printout.

MADISON

I think I got something.

EXT. CASCADES BALLPARK - NIGHT

Jose is playing behind second base. The crowd is STOMPING, SHOUTING, CHANTING, and generally making a RUCKUS.

A pitch. The Vancouver batter hits it directly to Jose. The ball takes a weird hop, bounces off Jose's chest.

Jose scrambles, picks up the ball, throws to first. The ball sails over Crawford's head and into the Cascades' dugout.

Error! The Vancouver batter jogs to second.

Crawford trots to Jose while the next batter approaches the plate. Scattered BOOS drift onto the field.

CRAWFORD

Get your head in the game, man.

JOSE

You never made an error?

CRAWFORD

In the World Series? No.

Crawford trots back to his position.

INT. - FBI PORTLAND CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Whitaker, Everett, Taylor, and Madison sit at the conference table. A page of phone records is displayed on a large screen in front of the room.

WHITAKER

O'Dwyer looks terrible. One hit,
one error, no runs scored or batted
in.

TAYLOR

I don't follow baseball. How bad is
that?

WHITAKER

Bad. He was killing it all through
the playoffs. Until now. Makes you
wonder if this has anything to do
with Mendoza.

EVERETT

Speaking of which....

Everett gestures toward Madison.

WHITAKER

(to Madison)

Let's hear it.

Madison taps on her laptop, and a 323 area code number on the screen is highlighted. The name next to the number is Jessie Hernandez.

MADISON

Jessie Hernandez lives in Studio
City, California. Her number has
been in frequent contact with
several of Mendoza's burner phones
going back more than a year.

Whitaker drums his fingers on the table, looks around.

WHITAKER

Okay. And who exactly is Jessie
Hernandez?

MADISON

Not sure. Still working on that.

WHITAKER

Then what about her? Lots of people call Mendoza. He's a bookie, remember?

Madison taps on her laptop. The large screen at the front of the room now displays the 323 number and a 971 number, side-by-side.

MADISON

Jessie's number has also had contact with this 971 number twice in the past three years. Including what looks like a hang-up call yesterday.

Whitaker can barely contain his impatience.

WHITAKER

And?

MADISON

The 971 number comes back to a Jose O'Dwyer.

WHITAKER

Our Jose O'Dwyer? Are you sure?

Madison nods. Whitaker lets out a LOW WHISTLE.

WHITAKER (CONT'D)

(to Everett)

What do you think?

EVERETT

Well...Taylor's got an idea.

Everyone looks at Taylor.

TAYLOR

A pretext interview. We approach Jessie Hernandez about something totally unrelated and see if we can get her talking.

Whitaker considers it.

WHITAKER

All right. Get LA on the phone and brief 'em up.

TAYLOR

I think I should do the interview, sir. Mr. Whitaker. Boss.

Whitaker looks at Everett.

EVERETT

She and Hernandez are about the same age, and Taylor knows the case as well as anyone in LA.

WHITAKER

(to Everett)

Your call. You're the case agent.

Everett nods.

WHITAKER (CONT'D)

(to Taylor)

Okay. Book a flight.

TAYLOR

Yes, sir. I mean....

WHITAKER

You know what? Just call me Bob.

TAYLOR

Alright, sir. I mean Bob.

EXT. CASCADES BALLPARK - NIGHT

Jose is at bat. The crowd is SCREAMING for a hit.

The scoreboard reads RAIN WOLVES 2 CASCADES 0 BOTTOM 8 OUTS 2 BALLS 1 STRIKES 2.

Jose digs in. The pitcher nods, sets, delivers. Jose swings, hits a towering infield fly. He trots down the first base line as the Vancouver third baseman settles under the ball and catches it.

The crowd is silenced. Jose turns toward the Cascades dugout. In the stands, a drunk fan wearing an O'Dwyer jersey, beer in hand, gets up. He's not quite steady on his feet.

DRUNK FAN

(in a bullhorn voice)

Hey! O'Dwyer!

Jose glances in the direction of the fan.

DRUNK FAN (CONT'D)

Quit sucking!

Jose slows down momentarily, then continues toward the dugout.

INT. CASCADES BROADCAST BOOTH - NIGHT

ANDERSON

I don't think I've ever seen
Portland fans call out Jose O'Dwyer
before.

WHITE

When you're the hero, it's nothing
but love. When you're one for eight
in the World Series, things can get
a little testy.

ANDERSON

You said O'Dwyer has to show up in
order for Portland to win the
Series. So far, he's more or less
missing in action.

WHITE

The bottom line is simple: They
can't do it without him.

EXT. SOUTHEAST PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

CC knocks on the front door of a house set well back from the
street. Jose opens the door.

CC

Hey, buddy.

JOSE

Hi. Come in.

CC enters.

INT. JOSE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is sparsely furnished - simple table, four
chairs, refrigerator, stove. No signs of baseball or fame or
wealth.

Jose washes dishes as CC leans against the kitchen counter
and watches.

JOSE

Sorry I haven't...It's been tough
the last few days.

CC

No, I understand. You've got a lot
on your plate.

JOSE

This hasn't been what I thought it would be, you know? Things are more, uh, complicated, than I expected.

CC

The World Series, you mean?

JOSE

Yeah, that and....

CC

And what?

Jose stops washing dishes. Dries his hands.

JOSE

Something happened the other day.

CC puts Jose's face in her hands, leans forward until their foreheads are touching.

CC

Baby, what was it? Talk to me.

JOSE

I was at the coffee shop. You know, Manuel's place-

CC's cell phone rings. She holds up a hand, fishes it out of her pocket, looks at the screen.

CC

Oh, shit. It's my producer. I have to take this. Give me a second.

(into the phone)

Andy, hi. Listen, I'm right in the middle of the something. Is there any way I-

(listens)

Well, I guess I can. If you really need me, I mean.

(listens)

Yeah, okay. See you then.

CC ends the call, looks around for Jose.

INT. JOSE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jose stands at the open front door, looking out. CC approaches and puts her arms around him.

CC
I'm so sorry, baby.

Jose closes the door.

CC (CONT'D)
Tell me what's bothering you. You
were in the coffee shop....

Jose gently separates himself from CC.

JOSE
It was no big deal. Just some
loudmouth giving me a hard time.

CC grabs Jose's hand.

CC
Talk to me. Please?

JOSE
Really - it was nothing.

EXT. STUDIO CITY COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - DAY

A non-descript sedan is parked on a busy street, in front of
a typical LA strip mall. TRAFFIC NOISES.

INT. SEDAN - DAY

Taylor sits in the passenger seat. POLICE RADIO BEEPS,
CRACKLES, VOICES.

SIMS, a female LA FBI agent, 40, is behind the wheel, holding
a car radio mike.

SIMS
(into mike)
What's her twenty?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
(over radio)
Still inside the restaurant. Just
got her order.

SIMS
(into mike)
Copy.
(to Taylor)
You heard the man. How do you want
to do this?

Taylor thinks for a minute.

TAYLOR
I'll go in alone. Two agents might
freak her out.

SIMS
One agent might freak her out.

TAYLOR
If that's your idea of a pep talk,
it needs work.

SIMS
I don't do pep talks.
(pause)
But good luck.

Taylor smiles, opens the car door.

INT. DINER - DAY

The diner is half-full. Dishes and silverware CLANK,
customers TALK, servers PLACE ORDERS, sappy BACKGROUND MUSIC
plays.

Jessie sits in a booth by the window, eating and reading a
document. She is dressed in work clothes.

Taylor approaches the booth, FBI credentials in hand but
visible only to Jessie.

TAYLOR
Jessie Hernandez? I'm Ellen Taylor.
Mind if I sit down?

Taylor doesn't wait for an invitation. She puts her
credentials away and sits facing Jessie.

JESSIE
I guess that was a rhetorical
question.

TAYLOR
You don't seem very surprised that
the FBI wants to talk to you.

Jessie puts the report down and pushes her plate to one side.

JESSIE
Is that something they teach you to
say at FBI school?

TAYLOR
Academy.

JESSIE
What?

TAYLOR
It's the FBI Academy. Not FBI
school. And no, I came up with that
all by myself.

Taylor flags down a passing waitress.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
(to waitress)
Could I get some coffee, please?

The waitress nods and moves on.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
I didn't want to bother you at home
or show up at your office, so I
thought we could talk over coffee.

Jessie looks around the diner.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Oh, it's just me. Do you know why
I'm here?

JESSIE
No idea.

The waitress sets a cup of coffee on the table.

TAYLOR
(to waitress)
Thanks.
(to Jessie)
You know, I was going to give you
some bullshit story to break the
ice, but maybe I'll just cut to the
chase.

Taylor pulls an envelope from her suit jacket, takes a photo
out of it, puts it on the table and pushed the photo toward
Jessie.

It's a booking photo of Louie Mendoza.

Jessie looks at it, pushes it back.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
How is it that you know this gentleman?

JESSIE
Did I say I know him?

TAYLOR
Oh, we're way past that.

Taylor drinks some coffee.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Let's try this again.

She pulls another photo from the envelope, pushes it across the table. It's Jose.

Jessie stares at the photo. Tears well up in her eyes.

JESSIE
Oh, shit.

She takes out her cell phone, dials a number.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hey, it's me. Listen, I'm going to be late to work this morning.
(listens)
Okay, thanks. 'Bye.

Jessie puts her phone away.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Is there someplace else we can talk?

EXT. CASCADES BALLPARK - DAY

Players are stretching. Throwing. Jogging. Hitting in a batting cage. BS'ing. Coaches confer with each other and with players.

The ballpark ECHOES with the SOUNDS of baseballs being hit, players SHOUTING at each other, snippets of RECORDED MUSIC and PA ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Jose sits in the outfield near second base, stretching. Crawford approaches him, takes a knee.

CRAWFORD
Hey.

JOSE
(continues stretching)
What's up?

CRAWFORD,
Look, man, I've been thinking. I
don't want our little side action
to get in the team's way.

JOSE
What's that supposed to mean?

CRAWFORD
I don't know - seems like
something's not right.

JOSE
So you want out of the bet?

CRAWFORD
This ain't about the bet. You just
don't seem like your usual self,
and I, uh-

JOSE
So now all of a sudden you're
worried about me?

CRAWFORD
You and me, we never really got on
the same page. But we're teammates
and I want this, bad. I just want
to - I don't know - make sure
you're good.

Jose stands up. Crawford does, too.

JOSE
You want this? Nobody wants this
more than I do. Nobody. And I don't
need you checking up on me. I'm
fine.

Crawford shakes his head, put his hands up in surrender.

CRAWFORD
Whatever you say, man. Good luck
with that Lone Ranger bullshit.

Crawford walks away.

INT. CASCADES CLUBHOUSE - DAY

MUSIC and CHATTER fill the room as Jose stands at his locker. Baxter approaches.

BAXTER
Skip wants to see you.

Jose nods without looking at Baxter.

JOSE
On my way.

INT. COCHRANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Cochrane and an older man dressed in a suit are sitting in Cochrane's cramped office. Jose pokes his head in the door.

JOSE
Skip?

Cochrane and the man stand up.

COCHRANE
Come on in.

Jose enters. Cochrane shuts the door behind him. The man holds out his hand. This is MURPHY, early 50s.

MURPHY
Frank Murphy. Nice to meet you.

JOSE
(confused)
Yeah, likewise.

COCHRANE
Frank works for the ownership group. He runs a private security firm.

Jose looks back and forth between Cochrane and Murphy.

JOSE
Uh-huh.

Murphy beckons Jose over to Cochrane's desk. He picks up a tablet and taps on it until he finds what he's looking for.

MURPHY

This showed up online last night. I brought it directly to Mr. Cochrane.

Murphy taps the tablet screen. A digital image of Jose, wearing his Cascades uniform and tied to a stake in the middle of a blazing funeral pyre, appears.

The caption reads, A WARM RECEPTION AWAITS JOSE O'DWYER IN VANCOUVER!

JOSE

What's this?

MURPHY

Some wingnut posted it on Twitter. The account's been taken down, but these assholes are out there.

COCHRANE

(to Jose)

Our security folks have already contacted the league and the police, here and in Vancouver.

MURPHY

(to Jose)

You might consider a personal security detail, at least while the Series is going on.

JOSE

Security detail? Like a bodyguard, you mean?

COCHRANE

Just a thought, OD. Totally up to you.

Jose backs his way toward the door.

JOSE

Skip, I just wanna play baseball. I didn't sign up for all this other bullshit.

Cochrane looks at Murphy and gestures towards the door.

COCHRANE

Thank you, Frank.

Murphy nods, leaves Cochrane's office, and closes the door behind him.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

Sit down, son.

Cochrane and Jose sit at Cochrane's desk.

JOSE

I wasn't trying to take out Stillman. I would never do that to another player.

COCHRANE

I know, but people believe what they wanna believe. You're gonna be the bad guy up there. Get ready for that.

JOSE

It's funny - a few days ago, I felt like I was bullet-proof. Now, I'm not so sure.

Cochrane pulls a fifth of bourbon and two glasses from the bottom drawer of his desk. He pours two generous shots and hands one to Jose.

COCHRANE

You're bullet-proof until you don't believe it anymore. My unsolicited, old-man advice to you is to hang on to that feeling as long as you possibly can.

JOSE

I'll try.

COCHRANE

Trying is half the battle.

Cochrane raises his glass, Jose picks his glass up. They toast and down their shots.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)

At least half.

EXT. FBI PORTLAND OFFICE PARKING GARAGE - DAY

A two-story structure adjacent to the FBI complex.

INT. FBI PORTLAND OFFICE PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Taylor pulls into a parking slot. Everett, who has already parked, waits as she exits her vehicle.

EVERETT

How did it go?

TAYLOR

Good. I need to bring Whitaker up to speed.

EVERETT

You need to bring me up to speed first. I'm the case agent, remember?

TAYLOR

Look who's grumpy in the morning.

EVERETT

I prefer 'undercaffeinated.'

TAYLOR

That's an easy fix.

INT. FBI PORTLAND OFFICE - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Taylor and Everett get coffee. Other employees move in and out.

TAYLOR

Mendoza's her bookie. O'Dwyer is her brother.

EVERETT

Run that by me again?

Whitaker enters.

TAYLOR

I know - it's crazy.

WHITAKER

What's crazy?

Taylor and Everett move to a corner of the room. Whitaker pours himself some coffee and joins them.

TAYLOR

Jose O'Dwyer is Jessie Hernandez's brother.

WHITAKER

And the hits just keep on coming. Have you confirmed this?

TAYLOR
Not yet, but I think she was
telling the truth.

WHITAKER
Are they close?

Taylor shakes her head.

TAYLOR
According to Jessie, they haven't
spoken in several years.

EVERETT
Why not?

TAYLOR
I'm not sure. Sounds like she more
or less raised him after mom was
introduced to meth.

WHITAKER
Did you bring up Mendoza's meeting
with O'Dwyer?

TAYLOR
Not directly. I asked her if
O'Dwyer knows Mendoza. She said her
brother is a quote unquote boy
scout, and that there's no way he
could be involved with Mendoza in
any way, shape, or form.

Whitaker looks around the break room.

WHITAKER
I better make some calls. Let's
continue this in my office in -
(consults his watch)
Half an hour.

Whitaker leaves.

TAYLOR
We need to interview O'Dwyer.

Everett plays with his coffee cup. Taylor waits for a
response.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Right?

EVERETT
Yeah, at some point, but this case
has lots of moving parts.

TAYLOR
So what?

Everett laughs.

EVERETT
I keep forgetting - you really are
new to this job.

TAYLOR
What's that supposed to mean?

EVERETT
Have you thought about the
shitstorm that's gonna come down
when this story gets out?

TAYLOR
No...I guess not.

EVERETT
(ticks off points on his
fingers)
Star baseball player. Playing in
the World Series. Poorly, by the
way. And meeting with a bookie. One
of whose clients is the player's
sister.

TAYLOR
Well...when you put it that way.

EVERETT
Is there another way to put it? We
all gotta be on the same sheet of
music. No one-man army stuff.

TAYLOR
Yeah. I got it.

EVERETT
I'm not kidding, Ellen.

TAYLOR
I said I got it.

EXT. PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - TARMAC - DAY

A team plane with Portland Cascades logos sits on the runway.

INT. CASCADES TEAM PLANE - DAY

ENGINE NOISES, CHATTER, MUSIC.

The team and coaching staff are scattered throughout the cabin. Some players are sleeping, some are playing cards, some are reading. The coaches are seated together, up front.

Jose is sitting by himself, fiddling with his phone. He plays a voicemail message on the phone speaker.

CC'S VOICE

(on speaker)

Hey, buddy. Have a great flight and don't worry. Everything's gonna be hunky-dory.

JOSE

(to himself)

Hunky-dory?

Jose stares at the phone before powering it down.

PILOT (V.O.)

So sit back, relax, and enjoy the short flight to Vancouver. And on a personal note - Go Cascades!

WHISTLES and SHOUTS of approval from players and coaches.

INT. CASCADES TEAM PLANE - DAY

Later. The jet is airborne, en route to Vancouver.

Jose is staring out the window. Baxter sits down next to him, holds up his phone.

BAXTER

I gotta show you this, man.

JOSE

Is this one of your 'cats do the craziest things' videos?

BAXTER

Funny.

Baxter taps the phone, holds it in front of Jose. On the screen is an image of Rain Wolves pitcher Dave Strong and a REPORTER.

JOSE

Bax, come on. Not this guy.

BAXTER

No, hang on - check it out.

Baxter touches the screen. A VIDEO of Strong's interview begins to play.

REPORTER

(on cellphone video)

You've had harsh words for Jose O'Dwyer, who ended Will Stillman's season in a violent home plate collision.

STRONG

(on cellphone video)

That's ancient history. I'm focused on pitching as well as I can, as deep into the game as I can, and helping my ballclub get a win.

Baxter stops the video.

BAXTER

Sounds like he's had a change of heart.

JOSE

I don't know. He looked pretty pissed off the other night.

Baxter gets up.

BAXTER.

Despite your immense popularity.

Jose stares at Baxter, not understanding.

BAXTER

Fleegs told me about your rookie card.

Jose laughs.

JOSE

Oh, yeah. Despite that.

INT. FBI PORTLAND SUPERVISOR WHITAKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Taylor and Everett walk into Whitaker's office. Whitaker is stuffing documents into a briefcase.

WHITAKER

Change of plans.

INT. FBI PORTLAND OFFICE - HALLWAY

Whitaker walks quickly, briefcase in hand. Taylor and Everett walk beside him. Periodic ANNOUNCEMENTS are being broadcast throughout the office.

WHITAKER

(glances at his watch)

I got thirty minutes to catch this plane.

TAYLOR

I don't understand - why do they want you back at Headquarters? Shouldn't you stay here and, you know, supervise?

Whitaker pushes through the door leading out of the office and toward the parking garage.

EXT. PORTLAND FBI OFFICE - COURTYARD - DAY

Everett and Taylor follow Whitaker.

WHITAKER

Big cases, big problems.

Taylor looks at Everett, not understanding. He mouths the word "later."

WHITAKER (CONT'D)

(to Everett)

I'll call for an update when I get to DC.

INT. PORTLAND FBI PARKING GARAGE - DAY

They enter the garage. Tires SQUEAL, engines START, car doors SLAM.

WHITAKER

(to Taylor)

You've done a good job on this. Keep it up.

TAYLOR

Thanks...Bob.

They reach Whitaker's car. He puts a key into the lock.

WHITAKER

That was awkward.
 (to Everett)
 I'll call you after the meeting.

Everett and Taylor watch as Whitaker backs up and drives out of the garage.

TAYLOR

'Big cases, big problems?'

EVERETT

Oh, that. 'Big cases, big problems. Little cases, little problems. No cases, no problems.' It's a Bureau thing. Kind of a joke, but not really.

TAYLOR

I joined the FBI to work big cases.

EVERETT

You know - I kinda figured that about you.

EXT. VANCOUVER BC WATERFRONT - DAY

The state-of-the-art Rain Wolves ballpark near Vancouver Harbor.

EXT. VANCOUVER RAIN WOLVES FIELD - DAY

Several hours before game time. The stands are empty except for stadium workers.

On the field, players from both teams warm up. Groundskeepers line the field with chalk, hose down the infield dirt.

Pre-game sounds echo through the mostly empty ballpark. The CRACK of bats hitting pre-game batting practice pitches. Ballpark ORGAN MUSIC. SHOUTS and WHISTLES from PLAYERS.

Jose stands in center field, alone. Takes it all in. Smiles.

A ball rolls toward him, stops at his feet. Ozzie, in his Rain Wolves uniform, walks behind it, stops in front of Jose.

OZZIE

You look like a kid in a candy store.

JOSE

I feel like one. Out here, anyway.

Ozzie looks around.

OZZIE

'Grown men paid to play a kids'
game.' Not that simple, is it?

Jose leans forward, picks up the ball, hands it go Ozzie.

JOSE

I love playing ball, man. But the
rest of it....

Ozzie grips the ball in his right hand.

OZZIE

Remember last season? In Detroit?

Jose laughs.

JOSE

The infamous Who Can Throw The Best
Knuckleball contest.

Ozzie goes into the stretch, like a pitcher with runners on
base.

OZZIE

Mutt lost it, man. Screaming about
how we were gonna ruin our arms.

Jose is laughing hard now.

JOSE

Those veins on the side of his
neck.

OZZIE

When you said he was having an
'epic meltdown?' That just pissed
him off more.

Jose takes the ball, grips it like a pitcher.

JOSE

We never did get the knuckleball
down.

OZZIE

Speak for yourself.
(hesitates)
Listen, OD.

(MORE)

OZZIE (CONT'D)
 (looks around)
 Strong is off the rails. He can't
 get over the whole Stillman thing.
 It's all he talks about.

Jose hands the ball to Ozzie.

JOSE
 So why is he doing interviews
 saying it's ancient history?

OZZIE
 Who knows with this guy? Just watch
 yourself tonight.

Jose and Ozzie bump fists.

JOSE
 Let's have some fun out there.

Jose takes off at a jog.

INT. VISITING TEAM ANNOUNCERS BOOTH - NIGHT

SUPER:

"GAME THREE, WORLD SERIES - VANCOUVER,
 BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA"

The crowd NOISE is deafening.

ANDERSON
 The Cascades have dug themselves a
 hole, 'Dre. Down two-zip after
 losing a pair at home.

WHITE
 Not only that, they will be facing
 a hostile crowd here tonight. Rain
 Wolves fans have not forgotten
 about The Slide.

ANDERSON
 But Vancouver pitcher Dave Strong,
 who is on the mound tonight, says
 that's all in the past now.

White laughs.

WHITE
 Partner, please - I played against
 Dave Strong.

ANDERSON

Do I detect a hint of skepticism?

WHITE

Let's just say he has a long
memory.

INT. VISITORS DUGOUT - NIGHT

Jose sits on the bench. Fleeger sits down next to him. Players are YELLING encouragement at the Cascades lead-off hitter.

FLEEGER

I've been thinking about what
Cochrane said. About maybe never
getting back here.

JOSE

Okay.

FLEEGER

Something's going on with you. You
don't want to talk about it, that's
cool. But this could be it, man.
Our only trip to the Big Dance.

Fleeger doesn't wait for an answer. He slaps Jose on the back, get up, walks away.

Jose gets up and heads for the bat rack. He grabs his bat and walks to the top step of the dugout.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

The Cascades lead-off batter strikes out.

CHEERS turn to THUNDEROUS BOOS and PIERCING SCREAMS as Jose emerges from the dugout and walks to the on-deck circle. Anti-O'Dwyer signs dot the crowd.

Jose goes through his pre-batting routine. The Cascades batter at the plate pops up on the first pitch. Jose is next up.

The BOOS and SCREAM grow louder as Jose walks to the plate, adjusts his batting gloves and helmet, steps into the batter's box.

On the mound, Strong shakes off a signal from Ozzie. Then another one. And a third.

Jose steps out of the box and back in.

Fastball, high and inside. Jose leans back to avoid getting hit, but his feet don't move.

The CROWD NOISE is like a living thing.

Strong looks in, shakes off the signal. Nods. Delivers.

CRACK - Jose hits the pitch high and deep down the third-base line and just inside the foul line.

ANDERSON'S VOICE (V.O.)

A towering shot into left field! It
may be...it might be...it could
be...that ball is...gone! The
Cascades take the early lead on a
tape measure home run by Jose
O'Dwyer!

Jose trots around the bases as BOOS and SCREAMS rain down from the stands.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LA STREET - NIGHT

A beat-up SUV is stopped at a red light, first in a line of cars. Louie is behind the wheel.

INT. LOUIE'S VEHICLE - NIGHT

SCREAMS and BOOS are broadcast over the car radio.

Louie pounds the dashboard in frustration. The light turns green. Horns BLARE as Louie doesn't move.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LA STREET - NIGHT

The car behind Louie pulls out and stops alongside. The driver is a young man. He lowers the passenger-side window.

DRIVER

(yelling)
Hey, dumbfuck! Those lights don't
grow any greener!

Louie bursts out of his car, tire iron in hand.

LOUIE

(shouting)
What did you say to me?

The other driver PUNCHES it and speeds away.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 That's what I thought.

INT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BAR - NIGHT

Jessie watches the World Series on the bar TV, sound off, drink in front of her. Twangy COUNTRY MUSIC plays on a jukebox.

An older bar guy, 50, sits down next to her. Checks her out. Jessie ignores him.

BAR GUY
 Who you rootin' for?

JESSIE
 (eyes on the TV)
 A good game.

BAR GUY
 Me, I'm pullin' for Portland.

Bar Guy motions for Zeke, the bartender.

BAR GUY (CONT'D)
 (to Jessie)
 What're you drinkin'?

JESSIE
 I'm all set, thanks.

Bar Guy holds up his hands.

BAR GUY
 Just tryin' to be friendly.

JESSIE
 I'm not looking for friends.

Bar Guy gets up and walks away. Zeke approaches.

ZEKE
 Everything okay?

Jessie LAUGHS. It sounds more like a SOB.

JESSIE
 Peachy.

She holds up her glass and waggles it.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
You're falling behind.

ZEKE
Not driving, are you?

JESSIE
No, Dad, but thanks for asking.

Zeke nods and turns to walk away.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Hey.

Zeke turns back.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Sorry about that. I'm not at my
best right now.

ZEKE
(indicates the TV screen)
You got something riding on this?

JESSIE
Just everything.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

Rain Wolves at bat. Jose is playing infield. Ozzie is a runner, leading off first base.

The Rain Wolves batter hits a single into right field. The crowd ROARS, the scoreboard lights up the field with flashing colors.

Ozzie sprints to second, where Jose is waiting. Jose holds his glove in front of his mouth to hide what he says.

JOSE
We're getting one back tonight.

Ozzie adjusts his gloves, not looking at Jose.

OZZIE
Strong is losing his shit.

JOSE
How do you mean?

OZZIE
That home run set him off.

JOSE

He should be used to it by now.
He's had plenty of practice.

OZZIE

I'm serious, man.

Jose hesitates, then trots back to his position.

EXT. HIGH-END LA NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A street lined with palm trees and expensive homes.

INT. MARIO'S MAN-CAVE - NIGHT

High-end man-cave - pool table, enormous flat screen TV,
leather couches, framed sports memorabilia on the walls.

Mario chips golf balls toward a contraption that sends the
ball back when he hits it in. Several balls surround the
contraption. Louie watches.

The World Series game is on the enormous TV. The VOLUME is on
low.

MARIO

You said O'Dwyer would hit way
below his season average in the
Series.

LOUIE

And I was right. He's two for nine -
barely over the Mendoza Line.

Mario chips. The ball goes into the contraption and is shot
back toward Mario.

LOUIE (CONT'D)

Finally!

Mario gives Louie a dirty look.

LOUIE (CONT'D)

I mean nice shot.

Mario walks across the room to the contraption and begins to
kick balls back to his chipping position.

MARIO

And this plan of yours was supposed
to give us a betting edge. Yes?

LOUIE

Yeah, and it has. Portland's down two games to none. They're not scoring runs like they did during the regular season.

Mario walks back to his original position.

MARIO

O'Dwyer just hit a fucking home run, Louie.

He chips the ball toward the contraption. Another miss.

MARIO (CONT'D)

You better make sure this works out. That's all I'm saying.

LOUIE

It is working out, Mario. Trust me.

Mario turns toward Louie.

MARIO

I don't trust nobody. Especially bookies.

Mario chips a ball hard in Louie's direction. The ball whizzes past Louie's head, hits a framed Dodgers jersey hanging on the wall, cracks the glass.

Louie looks at the damaged photograph, then at Mario.

The framed Dodgers jersey falls to the floor with a loud CRASH. Louie flinches as though he's heard a gunshot. Mario is unfazed.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Don't fuck this up.

LOUIE

What do you want me to do?

MARIO

You're the idea guy. Get an idea.

INT. VISITING ANNOUNCERS BOOTH - NIGHT

The CROWD SOUNDS are only slightly muffled inside the booth. Evan Anderson and Dre White sit at a table covered with stats, water bottles, scorecards, rosters.

ANDERSON

Dre, you said the Cascades can't win the Series without O'Dwyer performing at a high level. Well, partner, he came up huge in the first inning.

WHITE

That was an absolute moon shot. Let's see if it jump-starts him for the rest of the Series.

ANDERSON

We're about to find out, because O'Dwyer is first up here in the top of the fourth, with the Cascades clinging to a one-nothing lead.

WHITE

You can bet Dave Strong is kicking himself for giving up a home run. To Jose O'Dwyer, of all people.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

Jose swings a weighted bat as he stands in the on-deck circle. BOOS, CURSES, and SHOUTS rain down on him from the stands.

On the centerfield scoreboard, The Slide is replayed, prompting an even greater OUTBURST from the crowd.

Cochrane charges out of the dugout, points at the scoreboard and makes a beeline for the home plate umpire.

The UMPIRE removes his facemask and walks toward Cochrane. At the same time, Ozzie removes his catcher's mask and trots out to the pitcher's mound.

The crowd is at a FEVER PITCH.

Cochrane is in the umpire's face, very animated. The umpire folds his arms across his chest.

COCHRANE

(still pointing at the scoreboard)

Are you fucking kidding me? That is horseshit, Bill! Someone's gonna get hurt out here!

The umpire is unmoved. He's been down this road hundreds of times.

UMPIRE

Mutt, come on. Get off the field.
I'm embarrassed for you.

COCHRANE

I'll get off the field when you get
that fucking video off that fucking
screen!

UMPIRE

What I will do is run your ass. Do
you really want to tell your
grandkids you got tossed from a
World Series game?

Cochrane kicks the dirt, waves a hand in disgust, retreats to
the Cascades dugout accompanied by an AVALANCHE of BOOS.

INT. FBI PORTLAND CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

The wall-mounted TV is tuned to the game, muted. Taylor,
alone in the conference room, watches intently as she eats a
sandwich. Files, documents, and a laptop computer have been
pushed aside.

On the TV screen, O'Dwyer walks toward home plate as Ozzie
jogs back to home plate from the pitcher's mound.

Taylor grabs a remote and turns the volume up. The sound of
an ANNOUNCER'S VOICE gradually grows louder.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (V.O.)

And the crowd is all over O'Dwyer!

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

Jose stands just outside the batter's box, using his bat to
knock dirt off his cleats. The fans are LETTING HIM HAVE IT.

Strong stalks around the pitcher's mound, pumps himself up.

On the scoreboard, the video of The Slide has stopped
showing. Now on the jumbo screen - a photograph of a young
ballplayer above a graphic: RAIN WOLVES C WILL STILLMAN.

The crowd CHEERS wildly.

P.A. ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, please direct
your attention to the Rain Wolves
dugout.

A player dressed in uniform pants and a hoodie walks slowly, painfully, to the stop of the steps, removes his cap, waves it around. It's Stillman.

The combination of CHEERS, SCREAMS, WHISTLES, and APPLAUSE turns into a single HIGH-PITCHED SOUND.

On the mound, Strong points at Stillman and thumps his chest with his mitt.

Jose looks around, bat resting on the back of his neck, one hand on each end of the bat. Taking it all in.

The umpire puts his facemask back on.

UMPIRE
(shouting, to Ozzie)
Let's get this party started.

The umpire points at Strong as Ozzie settles in behind home plate.

Jose steps into the batter's box. The CROWD NOISE reaches a CRESCENDO.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
(shouting)
Unbelievable! I can't hear myself
talk. I can't even hear myself
think.

Strong shakes off a signal from Ozzie. Nods at the second. Winds up. Delivers.

The pitch is low and away. Ozzie scrambles to block it with his body.

UMPIRE
Ball!

The umpire's call is lost in the MINDLESS HOWL of the crowd.

Jose digs in at the plate. Strong leans forward, waits for the signal, shakes it off. Again. A third time. Irritated, he walks toward home plate, waves for Ozzie to meet him halfway.

INT. VISITING TEAM ANNOUNCERS BOOTH - NIGHT

Both announcers lean forward in their seats.

ANDERSON

(shouting)

What do you make of Strong shaking Vasquez off like that?

WHITE

(shouting)

Strong knows exactly what he wants to do and his catcher isn't on board.

ANDERSON

(shouting)

Meaning?

WHITE

(shouting)

I'm not sure, but we're about to find out.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

Ozzie returns to his spot behind home plate. Jose steps back into the batter's box. The umpire settles in.

Strong doesn't look for a signal. Instead, he winds up and throws a fastball high and inside, just under Jose's chin.

Jose bails out of the box to avoid getting hit, stumbles backwards.

The crowd ROARS its approval.

UMPIRE

Time!

The umpire points at the Rain Wolves dugout, then at Strong.

INT. VISITING TEAM ANNOUNCERS BOOTH - NIGHT

ANDERSON

(shouting)

Home plate umpire Bill Hennessy is warning both Strong and Rain Wolves manager Tino Espinoza!

WHITE

(shouting)

Strong is sending a message, Evan.

ANDERSON
 (shouting)
 What's the message?

WHITE
 (shouting)
 'I'm coming for you.'

INT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BAR - NIGHT

Jessie and a crowd of patrons are watching the game on the bar TV. The patrons are MURMURING after the near-beanball.

One PATRON, a drunk, pudgy twenty-something man wearing a Rain Wolves jersey and a luxurious beard, crowds in next to Jessie and RAPS his empty glass on the bar.

PATRON
 (to the bartender)
 Hey! How about a refill?
 (to Jessie)
 You're pretty.

Jessie tries to ignore him, but the patron is insistent.

PATRON (CONT'D)
 (gesturing at the TV)
 A little chin music, yeah? O'Dwyer
 takes out Stillman and gets away
 with it? I don't fucking think so.

JESSIE
 How about you just watch the game
 for a while?

PATRON
 What are you - Little Miss
 Princess? You think you're better
 than me?

Jessie considers the idea.

JESSIE
 Leave me alone.

The patron pounds his empty glass on the bar. The bartender, Zeke, comes over.

ZEKE
 That doesn't make me work any
 faster.

PATRON
And yet, here you are.
(pushes the glass toward
him)
Double vodka tonic.

Zeke takes the glass and moves away. The patron takes a side-step toward Jessie.

PATRON (CONT'D)
A regular Little Miss Princess.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

The JET ENGINE LAUNCH-like crowd noise continues.

Strong picks up a rosin bag, tosses it to the back of the pitcher's mound.

INT. VISITORS DUGOUT - NIGHT

Cochrane stands at the top of the dugout, spitting sunflower seeds.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

Jose steps into the batter's box.

Ozzie pounds his catcher's glove, settles in.

The umpire crouches in behind Ozzie, ready for the pitch.

Strong doesn't wait for a signal. He winds up. Delivers.

INT. VISITORS DUGOUT - NIGHT

Cochrane watches from the top of the dugout. The JET ENGINE DRONE of the crowd continues.

Cochrane suddenly recoils, as though he's been hit by something, then charges from the dugout, followed by the rest of his team.

INT. VISITING TEAM ANNOUNCERS BOOTH - NIGHT

Anderson is out of his chair.

ANDERSON
Oh, no!

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

As Cochrane runs toward home plate, the CROWD NOISE abruptly changes, as though a switch has been thrown, from JET ENGINE DRONE to a collective INTAKE OF BREATH, then to a LOW, INSISTENT BUZZ.

INT. FBI PORTLAND CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Taylor GASPS and holds a hand to her mouth as she watches the wall-mounted TV.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
O'Dwyer is down!

INT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BAR - NIGHT

Jessie watches, her face distorted by shock and horror. The patron jabs a finger at the TV screen.

PATRON
Yeah! That's what I'm talking
about!

Jessie slides off her barstool, stands behind the patron, and puts a hand on his shoulder. When he turns, she punches him in the nose.

The patron clutches his face, staggered.

PATRON (CONT'D)
(muffled)
You bitch!

Other customers pull Jessie away, but not without a fight.

JESSIE
(screaming)
Let me go! I'm not done yet!

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

Portland players converge on the pitcher's mound as Vancouver players form a circle around Strong, trying to protect him.

Cochrane and Cascades training staff kneel beside Jose, who lies in a twisted heap near home plate, motionless.

Ozzie slams his mask to the ground and walks away - from home plate, from the melee, from what has just happened.

Coaches from both teams try to intervene as Portland and Vancouver players square off.

Despite the chaos, the crowd is strangely quiet.

Mini-brawls break out and are quelled as the Cascades announcers discuss the situation.

ANDERSON (V.O.)

Strong uncorked a 100 mile an hour-plus fastball, and there appears to be little doubt about what - or should I say who - he was trying to hit.

WHITE (V.O.)

None whatsoever. Nothing and no one can justify what Dave Strong just did.

ANDERSON (V.O.)

More importantly, O'Dwyer is not moving, and Cascades trainers are signaling for medical personnel.

INT. FBI CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Everett enters the conference room, sees Taylor staring at the TV screen.

EVERETT

What's going on?

Taylor points at the screen. Everett watches for a moment.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

Oh, shit.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

The bulk of both teams are gathered near the pitcher's mound. Fleeger is being restrained by several teammates.

An ambulance rolls toward home plate. Cochrane and the Cascades training staff are still kneeling beside Jose.

COCHRANE

(pats Jose on the leg)
You're bullet-proof, OD. You're gonna be okay.

The ambulance pulls up near home plate and medical personnel descend on Jose.

EXT. PORTLAND MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - DAY

A massive facility in the West Portland Hills.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A sea-foam green curtain is drawn around a bed. The walls and floor are beige. Brightly-colored flowers line the windowsill and cover every inch of a table.

SILENCE. Then - a slow, rhythmic THUMP...THA-THUMP...THUMP...THA-THUMP.

Then - steady INHALATIONS and EXHALATIONS of breath.

Then - hospital room SOUNDS - periodic BEEPS, muffled PA ANNOUNCEMENTS.

A young female nurse, MARIE, enters the room, draws back the curtain. Jose lies on the hospital bed.

His head is covered with a white wrapping. Wires connect his chest to a BEEPING machine, and a tube connects his right arm to a bag of liquid suspended on a metal frame.

His face has several days' worth of stubble. His eyes are open.

MARIE

Oh! You're awake.

She approaches the hospital bed and takes Jose by the hand.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Hi, Jose. I'm Marie.

Jose opens his mouth but doesn't speak.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Relax, honey. Everything's gonna be just fine.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Cochrane and Fleeger are in Jose's room, standing by his bed. Jose is more alert. The tube is out of his arm, the wires no longer connected to his chest.

A TV hangs from the wall, volume muted.

FLEEGER
You look good, brother.

JOSE
(weak voice)
What happened?

Fleeger looks at Cochrane, then at his watch.

FLEEGER
Uh, the doctor should be here any second. She's gonna help, uh....

COCHRANE
The main thing is that you're okay, son.

Jose glances at the TV, then stares hard at it. Reaches for the remote, hits the volume button.

On the screen are World Series highlights - but not of Game Three. This is footage from Game Five.

TV ANNOUNCER
- the Cascades, down three games to two.

Shots of Jose, down at home plate after getting beamed, replaces the highlights.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
With O'Dwyer out for the Series, their backs are against the wall.

Cochrane grabs the TV remote, hits the OFF button. Jose appears dazed.

JOSE
What...I don't understand....

Cochrane rubs his face. Gets up and walks around the room.

COCHRANE
You got hit by a pitch.

Jose's having a tough time taking this in.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
(hastily)
But the doctor says you're gonna be fine. Wait 'til you see your batting helm-

JOSE
 (cuts in, gestures at the
 TV)
 Wait a minute. Why are they talking
 about Game Five?

Fleeger puts a hand on Jose's arm.

FLEEGER
 Dude, you were out for a while. But
 you're good now. And you're back in
 Portland. It's gonna be okay.

Jose's eyes fill with tears.

JOSE
 Out? What does that mean?

The DOCTOR enters the room, harried and hurried. She
 approaches Jose's bed.

COCHRANE
 Great timing, Doc.

DOCTOR
 Mr. O'Dwyer. How are you feeling?

Jose sinks back in his bed. Fights back tears.

JOSE
 I wish I'd never heard of the World
 Series. That's how I'm feeling.

INT. LOUIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Louie paces in his office, talking on his cellphone. He is
 intense, almost manic.

LOUIE
 If Portland wins, you're dead. Is
 that simple enough?

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jessie sits at her kitchen table. Her cellphone's speaker is
 on.

JESSIE
 Are you not hearing me? I haven't
 talked to him in three years.
 (MORE)

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Besides, he almost got killed the
other night. He's done for the
Series.

INT. LOUIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Louie stops pacing, lights a cigarette.

LOUIE
Those all sound like 'you'
problems. I'm not fucking around,
Jessie. Get in touch with your
brother and make him understand.
For your sake.

Louie ends the call.

INT. JESSIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jessie puts her phone on the table. Agent Sims sits across
the table from her and talks into a portable recording device
attached to the phone.

SIMS
This is SA Sims. The time now is
approximately 8:43 p.m. I'm going
to turn off the recording device.

Sims puts the device on the table.

SIMS (CONT'D)
Nice job.

INT. FBI PORTLAND CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Madison sits across from Taylor. Both are working on their
laptops. Whitaker walks in, agitated.

WHITAKER
(to Taylor)
O'Dwyer's still in the hospital?

TAYLOR
Supposed to get out today.

Whitaker sits at the table.

WHITAKER
(to Madison)
What about phone records?

MADISON

I tracked down the other Portland number that's associated with Mendoza. It comes back to a CC Yamamoto.

WHITAKER

The baseball reporter? This case just gets weirder and weirder. Where's Everett?

MADISON

He had grand jury on another case.

Whitaker stands up, starts pacing.

WHITAKER

That would've been good to know before I set up a conference call with the unit chief.

TAYLOR

My bad. I was supposed to let you know he was at grand jury. I apologize.

WHITAKER

Get your head in the game, Taylor.
(to Madison)
Tell Everett to come see me when he gets back. We're getting nowhere fast on this case.

MADISON

Yes, sir.

Whitaker leaves.

TAYLOR

Coffee?

EXT. FBI PORTLAND OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Taylor and Madison walk together.

MADISON

Ev needs to put everything else aside and focus on this. Whitaker's not one to forgive and forget when someone else drops the ball.

TAYLOR
Everett's got a lot on his mind.

MADISON
You bailed him out, Ellen. Not everybody would have done that.

TAYLOR
I owed him. Look, I know you two are - well, whatever you are, but don't tell Everett I covered for him. Okay?

Madison slows down, stops. Taylor stops, too. They face each other.

MADISON
Are you serious?

TAYLOR
Yeah. I'm generally pretty serious.

Madison shrugs.

MADISON
Okay.

They resume walking.

MADISON (CONT'D)
'Whatever you are?' It sounds so romantic when you put it that way.

Madison starts to laugh. Taylor thinks about it, starts laughing, too.

INT. HOSPITAL LOADING DOCK AREA - DAY

A couple of trucks are backed up to the loading dock, but the area is otherwise quiet. FAINT TRAFFIC NOISES and SNIPPETS of CONVERSATION.

Jose, fully dressed and no longer wearing white wrapping around his head, looks out on an empty loading area. With him is Marie, his nurse. He carries a small duffel bag.

MARIE
See? No press. No anybody.

JOSE
Perfect.

MARIE

Your team made all kind of preparations to get you out of here. Like a military operation.

JOSE

Change of plans. Thanks, Marie.

She gives him a hug.

MARIE

Don't worry. You'll be back next season better than ever.

Marie can't know how that sounds to Jose.

JOSE

Yeah...thanks again.

He walks down a set of steps to the service road. Starts fiddling with his cell phone. Looks up to see Taylor walking toward him.

TAYLOR

Mr. O'Dwyer.

JOSE

(mutters)

Shit.

(to Taylor)

I don't have any comment right now, okay? I'm just trying to get out of here.

Taylor shakes her head.

TAYLOR

Not a reporter.

JOSE

You want an autograph? Sure thing. Just give me a pen, and, uh....

Taylor continues shaking her head.

TAYLOR

Not a fan.

She shows Jose her credentials.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

FBI, Mr. O'Dwyer. You and I need to talk.

Jose looks around. No one else is in the immediate area.

JOSE

Are you really an FBI agent?

Taylor throw her hands up, looks pissed off.

TAYLOR

That's like the third time I've heard that since I moved to Portland. It's because I'm a woman, isn't it?

Jose shakes his head.

JOSE

No. I've just never met an FBI agent before, and I definitely wasn't expecting to meet one today. Or here.

TAYLOR

Well, I've never met a baseball player before, either, but you don't see me asking if you're really Jose O'Dwyer.

Jose laughs.

JOSE

Except you already know I'm Jose O'Dwyer, and I've never seen you before. I don't even know your name.

Taylor tries to stay pissed off, but can't.

TAYLOR

Good point. And it's Ellen. Ellen Taylor.

EXT. PORTLAND CITY STREET - DAY

Taylor's sedan moves through traffic.

INT. TAYLOR'S VEHICLE - DAY

Taylor is driving. Jose sits in the passenger seat. POP MUSIC plays in the background. Faint TRAFFIC NOISES can be heard.

JOSE

Aren't you supposed to read me my rights or something? The way the last few days have gone, that would fit right in.

TAYLOR

This isn't a custodial interrogation.

JOSE

Say what?

TAYLOR

You're not in custody, and I'm not interrogating you. No need to advise you of your rights.

JOSE

So what do you call this?

TAYLOR

I call it me giving you a ride home.

Jose turns in his seat to get a better look at Taylor.

JOSE

Okay. Why exactly are you giving me a ride home?

TAYLOR

I met your sister the other day, in LA. We had a chat about Louie Mendoza.

Jose tries unsuccessfully to contain his emotions.

JOSE

You talked to Jessie?

TAYLOR

Yeah. Frankly, I shouldn't be here, but I wanted to let you know your sister's gonna be okay. We're making sure of that.

JOSE

Good. Thank you.

(pause)

Now are you going to interrogate me?

TAYLOR

(laughs)

I haven't asked you a single question.

JOSE

I don't know...maybe you're just getting warmed up.

TAYLOR

I don't need to warm up before I question someone.

JOSE

I can't talk to you anyway.

TAYLOR

Nobody's asking you to. Not yet.

Jose doesn't answer. Taylor pulls up at a light and looks at him.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Aren't you guys flying to Vancouver tonight?

JOSE

The team is. The doc says I'm done for the season.

TAYLOR

So you're not medically cleared to travel?

The light turns green, and Taylor resumes driving.

JOSE

No, I'm cleared to travel. I'm just not going to travel.

TAYLOR

Why not?

JOSE

It's complicated.

TAYLOR

I wish I had a dime for every time a guy told me that.

JOSE

It is complicated. Things aren't exactly going the way I thought they would.

TAYLOR

But...the World Series is a big deal, right? And you're, like, the best player on your team. Aren't your teammates counting on you?

(pause)

But I'm not a baseball fan, so what do I know?

Jose doesn't know what to make of Taylor.

JOSE

Yeah, well...it's not...I mean....

He throws up his hands in frustration.

JOSE (CONT'D)

Forget it.

EXT. SOUTHEAST PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Taylor's vehicle pulls up in front of Jose's house.

INT. TAYLOR'S VEHICLE - DAY

TAYLOR

Here we are.

Jose grabs his duffel out of the back seat.

JOSE

It's Ellen, right? Thanks for the ride. See you around.

Taylor gives Jose an appraising look.

TAYLOR

Yeah - you probably will.

EXT. PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - TARMAC - NIGHT

The Cascades players and coaches are boarding the team plane. On nearby runways, commercial aircraft are TAKING OFF and LANDING.

Fleeger stands on the tarmac, facing the building from which team members are walking toward the plane.

Crawford stops in front of him.

CRAWFORD
O'Dwyer's a no-show. What a surprise.

FLEEGER
What's that supposed to mean?

Crawford shakes his head.

CRAWFORD
'One-way Jose.' He can't play, so to hell with his teammates.

FLEEGER
Let me ask you something, Crawdad. You ever been drilled by a pitch like OD was? A beanball?

CRAWFORD
No.

FLEEGER
Huh. Or kicked in the head really hard, like by a horse or something?

CRAWFORD
No. Why?

FLEEGER
(smiling)
No particular reason. Just wondering.

Fleeger turns away from Crawford and begins walking up the stairs. Crawford follows.

CRAWFORD
Wait a minute! What's that supposed to mean?

EXT. DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER BC HOTEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A taxi pulls up in front of a fancy downtown hotel. Jose gets out, bag over his shoulder, and pays the driver.

INT. VANCOUVER HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Jose is at the reception desk, checking in. Cochrane walks by, beer can in hand, does a double take. He approaches Jose and puts a hand on his shoulder.

COCHRANE

Well, this is a surprise. How are you feeling, son?

JOSE

I messed up, Skip. I should've been on the plane.

COCHRANE

Don't tell me. Tell your teammates.

JOSE

I will.

COCHRANE

Bus leaves for the ballpark at noon.

Cochrane raises his beer can in a toast and continues walking.

INT. FBI PORTLAND OFFICE - DAY

Everett is at his desk, on the phone.

EVERETT

Got it. Thanks.

He hangs up, walks to Taylor's cubicle. She leans back in her chair and waits.

TAYLOR

What?

EVERETT

Anything you'd like to share with me? Anything I might want to know as the case agent on O'Dwyer?

(pause)

Anything at all?

Taylor tries to lean farther back in her chair, but can't.

Everett puts his hands on his knees, like a runner who's just finished a marathon.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

The Cascades had a plan set up to get O'Dwyer out of the hospital. To bypass any media or fans that might be waiting.

He stands up and begins pacing in front of Taylor's cubicle.

TAYLOR

Okay.

EVERETT

Instead, O'Dwyer bypassed the Cascades. Vanished. One of their security guys checked the hospital's surveillance video to find out what happened.

TAYLOR

Listen, Ev-

EVERETT

(cuts in)

I guess I don't have tell you who was waiting for O'Dwyer at the loading docks.

TAYLOR

Can I explain?

EVERETT

There is no explanation that can make this better. I won't tell Whitaker, but it's gonna come out sooner or later.

Everett begins to walk away, then comes back to Taylor's cubicle.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

Trust is everything in this job. You should know that.

He turns and leaves.

TAYLOR

(to herself)

Oh, Ellen.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD PARKING AREA - DAY

The Cascades team bus pulls up at the Rain Wolves Field players' entrance.

INT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD VISITORS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Team members prepare for the game. Cochrane stands on a bench in the middle of the room.

The room is filled with MUSIC and CHATTER. Cochrane gives a loud WHISTLE.

COCHRANE
Heads up, everybody.

The room gradually falls silent as Jose makes his way to Cochrane.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
OD asked for a minute to talk to y'all.

Cochrane steps off the bench. As Jose approaches, various teammates reach out to fist bump or high five him.

Crawford stares at the ground as Jose walks past.

Jose climbs onto the bench.

JOSE
I, uh, wanted to say I'm sorry I wasn't on the team flight up here. There's no excuse for that, and I apologize.

Crawford takes a tentative peek at Jose, unsure if he's hearing correctly.

JOSE (CONT'D)
Anyway, I'm here now, and I'll do whatever I can to help this ballclub win the next two games!

The locker room erupts in APPLAUSE and CHEERS. Jose give the thumbs-up sign and gets down from the bench.

As he walks by Crawford, Jose slows down, as if to stop and talk. Crawford doesn't look up. Jose moves on.

INT. VISITORS DUGOUT - NIGHT

Jose stands at the top step of the dugout, watching his teammates warm up for the game.

Cochrane steps up and stands alongside.

COCHRANE
Get out there, OD. You're a big part of the reason we're here.

JOSE

I don't feel right doing that. The focus should be on them, not me.

COCHRANE

Putting some focus on yourself might be the best thing you can do right now.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

The stands are filling up as game time grows near.

Jose stands near second base and takes it all in. A Rain Wolves player, dressed in game pants and a Vancouver hoodie, approaches. The player is holding a little girl by the hand.

The player is WILL STILLMAN.

STILLMAN

Hey.

JOSE

How you feeling, man? I tried reaching out, but....

Stillman shakes his head.

STILLMAN

Getting there. Wish I was playing. Wish we were both playing.

JOSE

Me, too.

Stillman gestures to the little girl.

STILLMAN

This is Anna. Anna Strong. She has something she wants to tell you.

Jose hesitates, then leans forward and extends his hand.

JOSE

Hey. I'm Jose.

ANNA looks at Stillman. He nods. She reaches for Jose's hand and shakes it.

ANNA

(in a tiny voice)
My dad says he's sorry you got hurt. He feels bad.

She looks at Stillman again.

STILLMAN
 (to Anna)
 Good job, honey.

STILLMAN (CONT'D)
 (to Jose)
 I'm sure you heard Strong's out for
 the rest of the Series. Suspended
 indefinitely.

JOSE
 (to Stillman, quietly)
 Good.
 (to Anna)
 You're a brave girl.

ANNA
 (to Jose)
 Are you still mad at him?

Jose ignores the question.

JOSE
 (to Stillman)
 I'm sorry you got hurt. I didn't
 mean for that to happen.

STILLMAN
 Thanks, but she's waiting for an
 answer. Are you still mad at her
 dad?

JOSE
 What do you think?

STILLMAN
 It doesn't matter what I think.

Jose looks at Anna, who is near tears. Kneels down. Takes a
 deep breath and exhales. Holds his arms out.

JOSE
 (to Anna)
 Sweetie, tell your dad not to
 worry. It's all good.

Anna leans into Jose, buries her head in his shoulder.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD STANDS NEAR THIRD BASE - NIGHT

A fan records the interaction with his phone.

EXT. RAIN WOLVES FIELD - NIGHT

Jose walks toward the Cascades dugout. CC intercepts him near the first base line.

CC

What's going on? They wouldn't let me see you in the hospital. You haven't returned my calls or answered my texts. I've been so worried about you.

JOSE

Worried? Why? Everything's hunky-dory.

Jose heads for the dugout. CC begins to follow, then stops herself.

CC

(to herself)
Hunky-dory?
(pause, then realization)
Oh, shit.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

SUPER:

"GAME SIX, WORLD SERIES - VANCOUVER,
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA"

Jose stands at the top of the dugout, clapping and WHISTLING loudly. Cochrane stands beside him.

The crowd is relatively subdued.

INT. VISITING TEAM ANNOUNCERS BOOTH - NIGHT

Anderson and White are calling the game.

ANDERSON

Through six and half, Portland leads Vancouver, four to one. Time for the seventh inning stretch. Back after these messages.

Anderson makes some notes while White looks out at the crowd. Something catches his eye, and he pokes Anderson in the arm.

WHITE

Hey...check it out.

Anderson follows White's gaze to the centerfield scoreboard. The giant screen is showing footage of Jose talking to Stillman, who is holding Anna by the hand.

At the sight of Jose, the crowd goes WILD, begins to BOO loudly.

A producer, BELL, 30s, sticks his head inside the booth.

ANDERSON

What's this?

BELL

Stillman, O'Dwyer, and Strong's daughter. Before the game tonight.

ANDERSON

You gotta be kidding me.

BELL

This thing is all over the Internet.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

Jose and Fleeger sit next to each other, oblivious to the BOOING and footage. Jose slaps Fleeger on the back.

JOSE

Almost there, Fleegs! We just gotta hang on for three more innings. Is that asking too much?

Fleeger looks up, elbows Jose in the ribs. Cochrane is motioning for Jose to join him.

Jose walks up the steps and joins Cochrane at the top of the dugout. Cochrane gestures toward the centerfield scoreboard and footage of Jose hugging Anna.

Lots of the BOOS now turn to CHEERS.

COCHRANE

Dave Strong is a no-good son of a bitch.

(pause)

Cute kid, though.

He pats Jose on the back.

COCHRANE (CONT'D)
 You done good, son. Now let's win
 this thing and get the hell back to
 Portland.

INT. LOUIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Louie sits at his desk, drinking whiskey and watching Game Six on his TV. ANNOUNCERS' VOICES and BASEBALL GAME SOUNDS are barely audible.

His cellphone RINGS. Louie picks it up from the desk and glances at the screen.

LOUIE
 (to the phone)
 Hard pass.

He puts the cellphone down just as his desk phone RINGS. Louie doesn't answer and an old voicemail machine activates.

VOICE OF CALLER (V.O.)
 It's very upsetting when people
 don't take my calls.

The caller is Mario. Louie stands, begins to pace the office.

VOICE OF CALLER (V.O.)
 Don't make me come looking for you.

The message ends with a CLICK.

Louie stops pacing and stands in front of the TV.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (V.O.)
 -Game Seven of the World Series, as
 the Cascades look to cap off an
 epic comeback tomorrow night in
 Portland.

Louie draws his leg back, as if to kick the screen, but restrains himself.

LOUIE
 Fuck!

INT. CASCADES TEAM PLANE - NIGHT

The cabin is filled with the DRONE of the engines, CONVERSATION, and the occasional BURST OF LAUGHTER. The team is in high spirits.

Crawford is alone in a row, sitting by the window, watching something on a tablet. Jose approaches. Crawford removes his earphones, waits.

JOSE

Can I sit down for a minute?

Crawford shrugs. Jose sits in the aisle seat.

JOSE (CONT'D)

I'm not sure why, but a fastball upside the head gets you thinking.

Crawford doesn't respond. He isn't going to make this easy.

JOSE (CONT'D)

You tried talking to me the other day. I didn't want to listen. Now I understand you were trying to do right by the team.

CRAWFORD

So you think you can say you're sorry, like you did today, and we're all good?

JOSE

Well, I-

CRAWFORD

(cuts in)

That ain't happening, OD. You're way too late, and what I'm hearing is way too little.

Crawford puts his earphones back in and resumes watching his tablet. Jose hesitates, then gets up and walks away.

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STREET - NIGHT

A beat-up SUV pulls to the curb. Louie gets out of the car.

EXT. LANDING OUTSIDE UPSTAIRS APARTMENT DOOR - NIGHT

Louie KICKS the door with his boot.

LOUIE

(loudly)

Open up, Jess.

He KICKS again, harder. The door opens to reveal FBI Agent Sims.

SIMS
Good evening.

Louie looks at the number on the door, then at Sims.

LOUIE
Who the hell are you?

Two agents approach Louie from behind. One is holding a pair of handcuffs.

SIMS
I'm Agent Sims, Mr. Mendoza. Put
your hands behind your back.

Louie looks over his shoulder. Shrugs. Puts his hands behind his back. An agent handcuffs him.

LOUIE
There must be some
misunderstanding.

SIMS
If that's the case, I'm sure you
can help us clear things up.

LOUIE
Well, I...I guess so....

SIMS
Excellent.

Sims nods and the two men escort Louie down the stairs.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

SUPER:

"GAME SEVEN, WORLD SERIES - PORTLAND,
OREGON"

Rowdy fans. Dazzling lights. Glittering scoreboard. Perfect field. Umpires. Players.

SILENCE.

Then - A DEEP INHALATION OF BREATH. An EXHALATION.

Then - the SOUNDS of the game begin to SEEP IN. APPLAUSE. CHANTS. FEET STOMPING. WHISTLES. PA ANNOUNCEMENTS. MUSIC. All mixed together in one glorious chorus.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

Jose stands on the top step, squinting.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

The Rain Wolves pitcher, Garcia, stands on the mound. Looks in for a signal. Winds up.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

JOSE
(to himself)
Curve.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

Garcia pitches.

The HOME PLATE UMPIRE signals a strike.

HOME PLATE UMPIRE
Steeerike!

Ozzie throws the ball back to Garcia.

INT. CASCADES BROADCASTERS BOOTH - NIGHT

Anderson and White are calling the game over the NOISE of the raucous crowd.

ANDERSON
Curve ball in there for a called strike two. Dre, are you surprised to see the rookie Garcia pitching in relief here in the eighth?

WHITE
Well, he's been lights out in the playoffs, and Tino Espinoza obviously has decided to pull out all the stops in this deciding game.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

Garcia looks for a signal. Nods. Winds up.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

Jose squints, staring intently.

JOSE
(to himself)
Slider.

The home plate umpire makes a punch-out gesture.

HOME PLATE UMPIRE
Steeerike three! You're out!

BOOS fills the stadium.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
A nasty slider gets Johnson
looking, and it's all tied up at
two apiece here in Portland. Back
with the ninth inning after this.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

Jose steps in front of Crawford as he heads onto the field.

JOSE
You're first up next inning.

Crawford eyes Jose, unsure of what's going.

CRAWFORD
Yeah. So?

JOSE
Garcia's tipping his pitches.

CRAWFORD
I don't have time for this.

Crawford moves to walk past, but Jose puts a hand in his chest.

JOSE
Yeah, you do. Just listen for a
minute.

Elsewhere in the dugout, Mutt Cochrane notices the encounter. He sees Jose assume a wind-up position as Crawford listens.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

The crowd SCREAMS, STOMPS, SINGS.

The Cascades relief pitcher, Alvin, is tall, muscular, wild-looking. In short order, he:

Strikes out the first batter.

HOME PLATE UMPIRE
(makes punch-out gesture)
Strike three!

Strikes out the second batter.

HOME PLATE UMPIRE (CONT'D)
(makes punch-out gesture)
Strike three!

Strikes out the third batter.

HOME PLATE UMPIRE (CONT'D)
(makes punch-out gesture)
Strike three!

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

The players are WHOOPING, HOLLERING, SCREAMING. Pounding each other on the back. They are FIRED UP.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
Curt Alvin retires the side on nine straight pitches! Crawford will bat first in the bottom of the ninth. What a Game Seven!

Crawford comes into the dugout. Jose takes his fielding glove. Crawford puts on a batting helmet and selects his bat.

CRAWFORD
You sure about this?

JOSE
Positive.

The two bump fists. Crawford returns to the field.

EXT. CASCADES PARK - NIGHT

Crawford, at the plate, knocks dirt off his cleats. Steps into the box. Ozzie is behind the plate.

OZZIE
Fun, ain't it?

CRAWFORD
Nothing' better.

Garcia looks in for a signal.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

Jose studies Garcia.

JOSE
(to himself)
Fastball.

EXT. CASCADES PARK- NIGHT

Crawford waits for the pitch.

ANDERSON (V.O.)
Three and two the count. Pitch on
the way.
(pause)
And Crawford belts an inside
fastball! It may be...it might
be...it could be...that ball is
GONE! And the Cascades win the
World Series on a walk-off home-run
by Desmond Crawford!

Crawford trots around the bases as the crowd EXPLODES
Confetti begins drifting onto the field.

INT. CASCADES DUGOUT - NIGHT

The players stream onto the field. Cochrane catches Jose on
his way up the steps.

COCHRANE
You did good, son.

Jose smiles, hugs Crawford, runs onto the field.

EXT. CASCADES TEAM PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jose, Crawford, and Fleeger walk through the lot.

FLEEGER
So Crawdad wins the bet.

CRAWFORD
By one hit. But only thanks to OD.

O'DWYER
Best bet I ever lost.

FLEEGER
Okay - tell me already. What were
the stakes?

The three approach Baxter, who is tinkering with his car engine.

JOSE
(to Crawford)
You sure about this?

CRAWFORD
(to Jose)
Positive.

Baxter sees the players approaching, wipes his hands off. Shakes each of their hands.

BAXTER
I'm so proud of you guys.
Congratulations!

JOSE
Bax, I got some good news for you.

Jose reaches into his pocket.

JOSE (CONT'D)
Me and Crawdad had a bet going this
season. I lost.

Jose pulls out a key ring, begins working a key off it.

JOSE (CONT'D)
Loser gives the winner their car.

Baxter looks at Jose, then at Crawford.

JOSE (CONT'D)
But Crawdad just won a new car as
the Series MVP, so he told me to
give my car to you, instead.

Baxter tears up, shakes his head.

BAXTER
(chokes up)
No, guys, thanks, It's too much.
There's no way....

FLEEGER

Bax, give it up. These guys don't
take no for an answer.

Fleeger takes the car key from Jose, presses it into Baxter's hand. Baxter hugs each of the players in turn, pulls out his cellphone, makes a call.

BAXTER

Baby, you're not gonna believe
this.

FLEEGER

(to Jose)

I guess you need a ride.

A car comes toward them. Stops a short distance away. Taylor gets out.

FLEEGER (CONT'D)

Or maybe not.

Jessie gets out of the passenger side. Jose stares at her.

JOSE

(quietly)

Jessie?

He walks toward Jessie. She walks toward him. They meet and embrace.

FLEEGER

Okay. Definitely not.

CC, on the other side of the lot, watches Jose. Pulls keys out of her purse and unlocks her car door. Everett approaches her.

EVERETT

Ms. Yamamoto?

CC

Yes?

Everett shows his credentials. Hands her a business card.

EVERETT

Give me a call tomorrow, will you?
We're looking for some help with an
investigation.

CC stares at the card. At Everett. He nods and walks away. Taylor walks toward him.

EVERETT (CONT'D)
Ellen, I, uh....

TAYLOR
Rushed to judgement? Are overcome
with remorse? Don't know how you
can make it up to me?

EVERETT
These are my choices?

Taylor smiles.

TAYLOR
Yeah. More or less.

EXT. CASCADES SPRING TRAINING COMPLEX - DAY

A well-designed training facility in the Arizona desert.

SUPER:

"SPRING TRAINING - FOUR MONTHS LATER"

EXT. CASCADES SPRING TRAINING PARK - DAY

A beautiful spring day in Arizona.

The crowd is laid-back, relaxed.

Jose, in uniform, signs autographs for a couple of fans lined
up in the first row of the stands. A pre-season game is about
to begin.

He finishes signing, looks up. Sees Taylor, who is dressed in
jeans and a Cascades t-shirt.

JOSE
Ellen, isn't it?

Taylor smiles and nods.

JOSE (CONT'D)
Are you going to read me my rights?

TAYLOR
You're not in custody. I'm not
interrogating you.

Jose considers this for a minute.

JOSE

Does that mean we could maybe get a
drink after the game?

TAYLOR

I think it does.

Jose jogs toward second base as the HOME PLATE UMPIRE dusts
off home plate, walks behind the catcher, puts on his mask.

HOME PLATE UMPIRE

Play Ball!

THE END