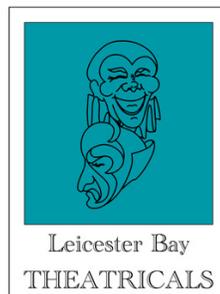


PERUSAL SCRIPT

PLAYING THE GAME

by

Eric Samuelsen



Newport, Maine

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PLAYING THE GAME

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ORDER # 3026

CAST OF CHARACTERS — 5m 3f (No doubling possible)

Frank McCullum—A wide receiver and team captain on a major college football team. A senior.

Wes McCullum—Frank’s younger brother. An offensive lineman on the same team. A freshman.

Beth McCullum—Frank’s wife.

Dix Matthews—The quarterback. A senior.

Kenial “Special K” Brown—The running back. A senior.

Coach Mitchell—The Coach

Dr. Jenson—An Associate Professor of English. A woman in her fifties.

“Belinda Rawlins”—The salesperson for a business firm.

PLAYING THE GAME a play by Eric Samuelsen. 5m 3f. One set of several interiors. Contemporary costumes. About 90 minutes. (*Suitable for Professional, College/University, Educational, and Community groups.*) The trophy is just a by-product of the game. The game is the exhilaration of a body in motion, working in a coordinated effort toward a goal and the achievement of that goal. The game is winning and winning well, losing and overcoming yourself. The game is life and we are all playing the game. But then there is what you think you have to do to play the game, if you want a personal win. Produced in 1982 at Brigham Young University. Written for Orson Scott Card’s writing class. After the BYU production it was an entry to the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival regionals. **ORDER #3026**

Eric Samuelsen taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadianton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We’re Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric, including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright.

He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at *Mormoniconoclast.com*. Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

PLAYING THE GAME

The play takes place in several locations on and around the Campus of a major U.S. university. The various locations can be suggested by the use of levels, through pieces of furniture, or however seems most effective.

SCENE ONE — *takes place in the small apartment of Frank and Beth McCullum. They are relatively poor for college couples, and their few belongings show this. They have a weightlifting set, however, of considerable expense, in the living room. Beth is small and thin. She is quiet, very bright, and a bit taken aback at finding herself the wife of a football player. She is setting the table with paper plates and napkins; company is expected. Frank enters. Frank is rangy and solidly built, obviously a top-flight, well-conditioned athlete. He is in sweats, and has been running. He's exhausted. He has a stopwatch hanging around his neck. Beth goes to him as he catches his breath.*

BETH: Well? How did you do?

(He motions to the stopwatch)

I don't know how to read this thing.

FRANK: 5:29.6. Made it.

BETH: That's great, honey. How's the knee?

FRANK: Better.

(Takes a deep breath)

Didn't make it by much.

BETH: Still, you did. . .great. So you're through for tonight?

FRANK: Leg lifts. Supposed to do fifty.

BETH: You said your knee was feeling better?

FRANK: Need to work on it every day.

(Already, he is recovering)

Felt maybe just a little loose.

BETH: Should I call Wes and tell him not to come?

FRANK: No, I'm fine.

(He starts to get some weights and fasten them around his knee)

BETH: If you say so.

(She looks at him, worried)

FRANK: How's the pizza coming?

BETH: Almost done. Uh, Frank?

FRANK: Yeah?

BETH: Paper plates will be all right, don't you think?

FRANK: I could eat it with my bare hands.

(looks at her)

Hey.

BETH: Hey to you too.

FRANK: How about a hug?

BETH: OK.

(Shyly, but with obvious affection, they embrace)

FRANK: *(After a moment)* I must be pretty stinky in these sweats.

BETH: I don't mind.

FRANK: Hey, guess what? I talked to Stanley after practice.

BETH: Oh! Don't tell me, they're going to bench you.

FRANK: Ha ha. No actually, he said he was talking to a scout for the Lions.

BETH: Who?

FRANK: The Lions. You know, the Detroit Lions.

BETH: Go on.

FRANK: Anyway, he said that they were going to do some tests on the knee, but they could maybe use one of their second round picks on me.

BETH: Oh. I'm not sure I'd want to live in Detroit.

FRANK: Second round, honey, that's high, higher than I expected. Could mean seventy, eighty thousand.

BETH: That's good money.

FRANK: Anyway, it really comes down to the State game. They haven't seen me that much. Of course, there'll probably be fifty scouts there.

BETH: All watching you?

FRANK: Yeah, rights, with Dix and Kenial and that Washington guy from State. But I could do myself some good. Honey, if I'm going to do these lifts... .

BETH: *(Gets up)* I better see how the pizza's doing, anyway. *(As she heads out)* What if these... this Chicago team doesn't get the good report?

FRANK: What?

(Concentrating)

BETH: What if this medical report's negative?

FRANK: I'll be damaged goods.

BETH: *(Shudders)* Damaged goods. Like a piece of freight.

FRANK: That's how they look at it.

BETH: *(Watches as he starts to work out. Looks at the leg)* Honey?

FRANK: Yeah?

BETH: Where was it? The injury, I mean.

FRANK: Can't you see the scar?

BETH: No, I mean, inside.

FRANK: Right here. Let me see, they told me what it was. The medial collateral ligament.

BETH: *(Feels her leg)* Where is it?

FRANK: Inside of your knee. Right where it gets a little fleshy.

BETH: Show me?

FRANK: Come here.

(Feels her leg)

Right about here. I was just making a cut, like so

(Manipulates her knee)

and he hit me right here on the outside with his helmet. I was planted, and it just popped everything inwards. Ripped the ligament completely loose.

BETH: Oh, baby.

(She moves away. He starts to work out)

FRANK: It wasn't much fun.

BETH: Honey?

FRANK: Yeah?

BETH: Why did he hit you? You didn't even have the ball or anything.

FRANK: How do you know that?

BETH: I always watch you.

FRANK: Honey, a year ago we weren't even dating.

BETH: Well, I was hoping... anyway, I was watching you. You were just running... and he suddenly hit you. Why?

FRANK: Haven't I told you this?

(She shakes her head)

Well I'd faked his jock off, that's why he hit me. It was a give and go, and I gave him a head fake, you could put in in a textbook. All I had to do was blow on past him and it was going to be the easiest six of the season. He knew it, too, so he did the only thing he could.

BETH: He hit you.

FRANK: He was awful lucky, too.

BETH: Can he do that?

FRANK: Well, honey, it's like speeding. You're OK as long as a cop doesn't catch you. The cop missed this one. But me, I did manage to get the guy's license number. Number 84.

BETH: Do you know his name?

FRANK: Brad Higgins. He was a sophomore, a second-stringer, he was just in because Carlisle pulled a hamstring.

(Smiles)

This year, though, he's a starter, and am I going to have fun with Mr. Higgins.

(Looks at weights)

If my leg holds up.

BETH: Just don't give him a chance to hurt you again.

FRANK: He'd better not give me a chance.

(Sees her reaction)

Just kidding, honey.

BETH: *(Watching him do leg lifts, concerned)* So, Chicago, huh?

FRANK: Well, maybe. Good draft for wide receivers. Hey, how many is that, nine or ten?

BETH: I'm sorry, I wasn't noticing.

FRANK: I'll say nine.

(Knock on door)

Hey, could you get that, honey?

(Beth goes to the door. Enter Wes McCullum. Wes is shorter than Frank, but a good deal larger, and wider.)

BETH: Wes!

WES: *(enters, gives her a big bear hug)* Hey! How's my favorite sister-in-law?

BETH: *(faintly)* Just... fine.

WES: Hey Bro, don't you ever quit, man?

FRANK: Count for me, Brat.

WES: How far are you up to?

FRANK: Eighteen. Doing fifty.

WES: I don't know, man. That's hard work, counting to fifty.

BETH: Wes, would you like something to drink?

WES: A six-pack of Bud, one after the other.

FRANK: Nice try, Brat. How many is that?

WES: Twenty-four.

BETH: *(Still trying)* 7-up OK?

WES: Gatorade?

BETH: I'll get you a glass.

(She goes into the kitchen)

FRANK: How many?

WES: Twenty-eight. Hey, Bro, how is the leg, huh?

FRANK: Why do you think I'm doing this, dammit? It's loose.

WES: You OK for Saturday?

FRANK: No problem.

(Concentrates on lifting. This is obviously causing him pain)

You bring that registration stuff?

WES: Yeah, I got it right here. What a hassle. I was looking at this computer form thing this morning. I didn't know what was coming down. Still, from what they tell me, it sure beats standing in line for four...

FRANK: How many is that?

WES: Forty-one. You OK?

BETH: *(Enters with drinks)* 'Bout finished, honey?

FRANK: Just eight more.

WES: Frank, uh, I know this ain't exactly news, but you look awful.

FRANK: What?

BETH: *(Trying to look unworried)* He says that the real benefits don't come until the last four or five. It's supposed to hurt a little, that's how you know if it'd doing any good.

WES: Well, sure. I know that.

(They watch Frank)

FRANK: Forty-eight

WES: No kidding.

BETH: He always does this after he does his running. He got his mile under five and a half minutes today.

(Lying)

I'm uses to this by now.

FRANK: *(Straining, white-faced)* Fifty!

WES: Hey, way to be, Bro!

(Frank starts another)

Frank? Weren't you doing fifty?

FRANK: *(Finishes)* One more for good luck.

(Lays on floor)

WES: *(Breaks the ice)* Hey, is that pizza I smell?

BETH: Please! This isn't just pizza! This is Frank McCullum famous pizza.

WES: *(Mock offended)* Hey, I'll have you know I invented the sauce.

FRANK: I improved on it. Give me a hand, will you Brat?

(Wes helps him up)

WES: How can you improve on perfection?

FRANK: You'll see. Hey, if we're going to eat, I better go shower.

BETH: That's fine, hon, it'll still be a minute.

(Frank exits. Beth goes to weights and tries to move them)

WES: Here, let me do that.

(Helps with weights)

So listen, when are you two going to provide me with a nephew?

BETH: Now, really, Wes, that's a tacky question.

WES: Come on, Beth, you can tell me, your favorite brother-in-law. Frank

(dramatically)

can't have children. That's it, isn't it?

BETH: Wes, please.

WES: Listen, sis, just remember one thing. Frank and I, well, we do have pretty much the same genes. No one would ever find out.

BETH: Wes, that's not funny.

(Chuckling)

WES: Ah-ha! Caught you!

BETH: Why your brother puts up with you, I'll never know.

WES: I'm stronger than he is.

BETH: *(Laughs for a bit. There is a bit of an awkward pause)* So. How are your classes this term?

WES: I'm still eligible.

BETH: That's not saying much.

WES: You know, you're just as bad a Frank.

BETH: Worse. I'm much more persistent.

WES: Well, OK. I'm skinning by in Physical Science, boy is it boring. Chemistry, so-so, there's a lot of math there, and I'm OK with numbers. I'm blowing English and big surprise, I'm acing Football Fundamentals.

BETH: Do you need some help in English?

WES: I don't need help; I need a paper.

BETH: You need help with a paper.

WES: No, I need a paper. Wanna write me one?

BETH: Wes!

WES: I was just joking.

BETH: OK, Wes, we'll lay off.

WES: That'll be the day

BETH: Look, Wes, what you need to do is look at Frank and me as a sort of personal cod liver oil.

WES: I've been drinking cod liver oil all my life. What I want is a Bud.

BETH: I'll tell you what. AS soon as the season's over, I'll stock up. Budweiser's your brand?

WES: I'm not picky. Seriously, I'm doing OK. I'm not going to make Dean's list or anything, but I'm surviving. I'm eligible.

BETH: OK.

(Enter Frank, limping, in shirt and slacks)

Frank?

FRANK: What?

BETH: What's the matter?

FRANK: Oh, the limp. Took a shot today in practice from the new kid, Saple. Bruised it a little.

BETH: You're sure?

FRANK: 110%. How's the pizza?

BETH: It should be just about ready.

(Exits)

FRANK: You said you had that registration stuff?

WES: Got it right here.

FRANK: We'll get to work on it while we eat.

WES: Hey, it could maybe wait for a couple of days, Bro. You're looking kind of beat.

FRANK: I'm fine. The deadline's when, Monday?

WES: Yeah. The thing is, it's gonna take some time.

FRANK: Shouldn't.

WES: Well, like, I may not have all the forms.

FRANK: With the computer thing, all you need is the one sheet.

WES: Yeah, I guess.

FRANK: Let's get to it, then.

WES: The thing is... . You see, I was talking to Coach Muller, and he thought maybe I might want to think about changing my major.

FRANK: He did, huh?

WES: It sounded like a pretty good deal, Frank. The way Mule explained it, it's a log harder major than it sounds. The think is, if I went with a P. E. major, they could work with me some, change my schedule to fit practice easier. Mule said... .

FRANK: Screw Coach Muller

WES: Frank, most of the players are in Phiz Ed.

FRANK: Well, screw them too. Some of those dummies attend class once a month but they still can play football. You got more on the ball than that, buddy.

WES: Frank, I'm busting my butt and I'm barely eligible.

FRANK: It won't hurt you. I busted my butt to stay eligible for four years. But come May, I'll have a diploma worth something.

WES: Coach Muller said that there's nothing wrong with majoring in Phiz Ed.

FRANK: No jobs, either. Wes, why are we even playing football? We're both too small, you know. You were a pretty good catcher in high school. Why not play baseball? They pay you legally there.

WES: I like playing football.

FRANK: Wrong. Because football's harder. We're McCullums, Wes, we don't take the easy way out. Dad never did and neither will we.

WES: Come on Frank, play fair. Leave Dad out of this. This is still my decision, OK?

FRANK: Yeah, OK.

WES: I knew I should have gone to USC.

FRANK: Well, I'm sorry. Look, Brat, I'll make you a deal. If, at the end of next semester, you just can't hack it, I'll let you switch majors.

WES: Come on Frank, I don't have to ask your permission for anything.

FRANK: Like hell.

WES: *(Laughs)* You're such a jerk.

FRANK: So, a deal?

WES: A deal.

(A knock on the door)

BETH: Can I get one of you to help me with this?

(Off)

FRANK: I'll get the door. Brat, help Beth, will you?

(He opens the door. Enter Dix Matthews, and Kenial Brown. Dix is the quarterback; vain, arrogant, funny, good looking. Kenial is the halfback, small, but almost perfectly built, quieter, but a leader)

DIX: Hey, Que pasa?

FRANK: Dix, Kenial. What are you guys doing here?

DIX: We're spies.

KENIAL: We heard you were breaking training, so we thought we'd come and get stoned before we turned you in to Coach.

DIX: Is that pizza I smell?

(Wes enters carrying pizza, Beth following)

WES: Hands off the pizza.

KENIAL: Hey, what makes you so cool?

WES: Hey, the fact that I am the dude between Willie Winston and you on Saturday.

KENIAL: Willie 315 lb. All-American Winston? You have all the pizza you want, my man.

DIX: Hey, Beth, how's it going?

BETH: Just fine.

FRANK: What's up?

DIX: What's up is that you two church mice do not yet have a telephone.

FRANK: They charge twenty bucks to install. We're saving up.

DIX: Anyway, I live closest, so Coach asked me to tell you. Ten o'clock meeting tomorrow.

FRANK: Oh crap.

KENIAL: That's what I said.

FRANK: I've got a class at ten. What's the big deal?

BETH: Frank, the Landsbergers asked us to be careful!

FRANK: It's OK, honey.

BETH: Frank?

(He's turned away)

Guys? Try to keep food off the carpet.

FRANK: Yeah, be careful on the carpet.

BETH: Frank, it'd be better if we could get everyone up to the table.

FRANK: I think we're all fine, honey.

(They all eat, greedily and messily)

BETH: *(After a pause, making conversation)* So, how was the practice today?

DIX: It sucked.

KENIAL: A real situation.

BETH: Situation?

KENIAL: It's Michellese for snafu.

FRANK: Honey, when everything's going wrong, Coach Mitchell calls it a situation.

KENIAL: Yeah, like today our defense was a situation.

KENIAL: I kinda like that new fleaflicker thing.

DIX: Ah, I don't go for that fancy stuff. I like to throw the ball to you, K, not the other way around.

KENIAL: I think it'll work great, though, as fast as their cornerbacks release.

DIX: Yeah, if our tailback can ever throw the ball straight.

KENIAL: Hey, be cool.

FRANK: The point is, I don't want to beat them with that sandlot stuff. It doesn't hurt enough.

KENIAL: I just want to beat 'em. I don't care how.

DIX: Remember last year?

KENIAL: And the year before that. And the year before that.

DIX: Yeah, but last year's the one that really hurts. We had that sucker won.

KENIAL: Worst football game I've ever been in.

FRANK: You know when we lost that game?

WES: The punt return by Washington.

KENIAL: Yeah, that lucky bounce.

FRANK: Yeah, but we still coulda won it after that.

KENIAL: Well, it wasn't when Corky missed the field goal.

DIX: Nah, I knew he was going to miss that sucker. He was as tight as....

FRANK: Dix, not in front of my wife. No, the turning point was two plays before the kick.

DIX: That's right, the down and out.

KENIAL: Thought I was going to die.

WES: That's the one Russ Maitlin dropped, wasn't it?

DIX: Best pass I threw the whole day. Looked just like there was a hole in his stomach, went right through it. That yo-yo.

BETH: What sort of play is that?

KENIAL: It's a pick.

BETH: What?

FRANK: It's kind of a crossing pattern, honey. See, you've got the flanker, that was Russ Maitlin, and he's lined up outside. The tight end is on the inside. The tight end, he goes down about ten yards, and cuts in, over the middle. The defenders follow him. Then the flanker, he delays, and goes down the outside. The defender shouldn't be able to get over in time to stop him.

BETH: I thought you were the flanker.

FRANK: This was in the fourth quarter.

BETH: Oh, that's right. So Russ was in for you?

FRANK: That's right. Otherwise... .

(Pause)

DIX: Otherwise, we win 27-21.

KENIAL: Speaking of the knee....

FRANK: It's fine.

KENIAL: You sure? You sure pulled up lame in practice today.

FRANK: It's fine.

DIX: Hey, who was it who did that number on you, anyway?

FRANK: I think it was that new kid, Saple.

DIX: No, I mean last year, in the game. It was 84, wasn't it?

FRANK: That's right.

BETH: Higgins.

KENIAL: We'll have to get that mother.

DIX: Right on. Call a couple of 63 sweeps early. Crackback early and work on a freshman the rest of the game.

FRANK: *(Uneasily)* We'll have to see.

KENIAL: See? Hey, we gonna do that bloodsucker. Pat that man in a situation.

BETH: Frank, what is this? What's this crackback business?

FRANK: Nothing, honey, just a running play.

BETH: That's not what it sounds like. A situation?

FRANK: Honey,

(signaling the others)

Honey, what Dix is talking about is a 63 sweep, a misdirection play. It's a deceptive sort of play that looks like a dive by Kenial here, but actually is a sweep left by Herm. Herm's usually a blocker so the surprise factor of his carrying the ball is really big. If the play works right, the cornerback and the linebacker end up really looking like chumps.

(Deep breath)

And it's also the play where I have the best shot at Higgins.

BETH: Oh.

(Quietly)

An eye for an eye?

FRANK: Or a knee for a knee? I think you know me better than that.

DIX: Now, if ol' number 84 should happen to trip and break his own leg, well....

FRANK: Can it, Dix.

KENIAL: Look, we're football players, man. We'll joke all the time about some dude getting wiped out, but we don't mean nothin'.

BETH: *(Brightly, musing)* Of course you don't.

(Awkward pause)

WES: Well, listen Bro, we better get to this stuff. I've got that seven o'clock class.

DIX: Gross. What class is that?

WES: English 110.

KENIAL: At seven in the morning? Who's your teacher?

WES: Parkinson.

DIX: Couldn't you get Maxie?

WES: Who's Maxie?

FRANK: Dix, lay off, OK?

DIX: You haven't even told him who Maxie is?

FRANK: Isn't it getting a little late, Dix?

WES: Now, wait a second, Frank. Who's Maxie?

FRANK: He's this teacher, he wears gorilla suits to class.

KENIAL: Only once a week.

WES: Gorilla suits?

DIX: Now see, you're making him sound like an old weirdo.

FRANK: He is an old weirdo.

WES: You guys gotta tell me now.

FRANK: No. N-O. The less you know about the kinda crap that goes on around here, the better.

KENIAL: Come on, man.

DIX: We're not going to corrupt him.

FRANK: *(Looks at them all)* I'm just thinking of what's best for you, Wes.

WES: I know, Frank. I'm just interested, that's all. What's this about gorilla suits?

DIX: Well, Maxie's an English professor. Guy in his forties. So once a week, he gets in this gorilla suit.

Calls himself George the gorilla. And he makes these football predictions.

KENIAL: He's pretty good too.

DIX: Yeah, not bad.

KENIAL: Maxie's a big fan. Throws outrageous parties a couple times a year. His brother runs a used car lot in town, and he'll buy 4-5 keggers, really a big deal.

DIX: The think with Maxie is, he can do you a lot of good. He knows the rest of the faculty, can give you a

lot of advice on which profs to take and which ones to avoid.

FRANK: Don't you think that's enough, Dix?

WES: Mellow out, Frank. I remember our deal. I'm just interested. So Dix, like how would he help me ?

DIX: Now look, Wes, have you figures out your schedule for next term?

FRANK: We were just going to do that.

DIX: Well then, my man, why don't you just listen to your quarterback for a second.

WES: I'm listening.

DIX: Lecture number one, Profology. Now listen. All teachers are either Snobs, Sniffers, Hard-noses, or Buddies. You got it?

WES: Got it.

DIX: Well, it's very simple. You try and base your schedule on the categories your teacher fits. Perfection is a schedule of straight sniffers. I've managed it twice since I met Maxie.

BETH: Dix, just a second. What are these categories? What's a sniffer?

DIX: Maxie is a sniffer. He's the kind that about wets his pants every time a football player walks into his classroom. You smile and act real polite, and call him Dr. Hackett, and it's fat city.

KENIAL: He gave me an A one term, and all I did was give him an autographed football. No work, no nothing.

DIX: Any comments, Frank?

FRANK: It's your huddle.

DIX: All right, having established the basic principles let's take a look at this schedule. You have to take Math 100. Here you go, nine in the morning, or two in the afternoon. Friedman.

KENIAL: He's not a bad dude. Semi sniffer.

WES: You know him, Frank?

FRANK: Go on, Dix, History 170.

KENIAL: Salisbury.

WES: Is he easy?

KENIAL: It's a she. You wear a tee-shirt and shorts to class the first day, and she'll spend the rest of the term asking you to come by her office.

FRANK: You catch that, Brat? Salisbury. What's next?

WES: Accounting 101

DIX: That's tougher. Let me see. Probably Landon.

KENIAL: For sure.

DIX: The only thing about Landon, he's a frontrunner. Restic took a class from him one semester, and almost flunked out. Remember that game against Nebraska when Restic's man had five sacks? All the sudden, he said, Old Man Landon went cold as ice. But it's off-season, so you should be all right. Especially if you keep Winston off yours truly. Now, see, you got three classes you don't have to worry about.

FRANK: Is it my turn yet?

DIX: We know what you've got to say.

WES: Fair's fair, Dix. Go on Frank.

FRANK: Wes, how many football players does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

WES: I'll bite. How many?

FRANK: Only one. But they give him 12 credit hours for it. No hard feelings, Dix?

DIX: I figured you'd say something like that.

FRANK: Wes, do you know the poem "To an athlete dying young", by A. E. Houseman?

(Wes looks at Kenial and Dix. They all start laughing)

Yeah, OK, that was a stupid question. But you should read it. It's a great poem.

KENIAL: Right.

WES: Yes, Frank, I'm sure it's terrific.

(Thumbing through catalogue)

That was Maxie what?

FRANK: Did I laugh at you guys?

DIX: Yes.

FRANK: Yeah, but I listened first.

KENIAL: OK, guys, be quiet. Frank's going to quote a poem at us.

(All assume postures of high intellect and learning)

FRANK: That's better. OK. The poem is about this guy, he's a runner. There's been this competition between these two villages, some kind of athletic competition, and this runner guy, he won the whole thing for his village, and he's the hero. So they all cheer him, and give him a garland laurel, which is kind of like a flower thing for a trophy. And no, when they're talking about him in the poem, it's like five years later, and he's dead.

WES: That's so sad.

KENIAL: Do you have a handkerchief, Dix?

FRANK: Hey, that was my reaction when we read it in class. Except, I had to read it about five times before I even got that he was dead. You know poems, it's kind of hard to understand. So anyway, I memorized the last couple of lines from the poem. It goes:

So set, before it's echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge cup.

And round that early-laureled head
Will flock to gaze the strength-less dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

(This is too much for Kenial and Wes, and they again burst into laughter.)

Just a second guys, let me finish the story. I was taking this class from this old bag of an English teacher. So, this dog's breakfast of a teacher, she makes us read this stupid thing, and it was the weirdest thing, because the whole time she was reading the poem and assigning us to read it, I had the feeling she was aiming it at me, like she was throwing it right at the football player. And if she hadn't done that, I think I would have just said, "Shine on it." But it was like a personal challenge. You know. So I read it, and we were supposed to write a paper on it, and I must have read that poem thirty times. And I figured out what

it meant. What Houseman was saying was that this athlete, all he was interested in was the personal glory of winning the race, and he'd won it, and now he was dead, and it was just wasted, just totally wasted. And I thought about that, how people thought athletes just competed for the glory, or the trophy or whatever, and then I got mad. And I wrote Dr. Jenson a paper just ripping that poem to shreds. I just attached it. And on the top of the paper, when I got it back were two words. See me. So I went in to see her, and we had it out for two hours. And then the next semester I changed to an English major, and this semester, I'm taking my fourth class from Dr. Jenson.

DIX: *(Starts applauding)* Bravo, Frank.

WES: *(Seriously)* Sol the poem was a crock?

FRANK: A total crock.

KENIAL: OK, so you like this teacher and everything. But what's the practical benefit?

FRANK: Well, two more semesters, and I get my teaching certificate. In high schools, you know how much easier it is to get into coaching if you can teach something else on the side? I can teach English.

DIX: And how much will that pay?

BETH: We don't need much.

KENIAL: Sounds great, Frank. And every year after the season's over, Dix and I will cruise on down to visit. We'll drive my custom-built Maserati, we'll each have our arm around our personal Playmate of the Month, and we'll stay a couple of week until we've eaten all your food.

(They all laugh)

WES: Well, I guess I'd better be pushing off. Look, Frank, Dix, maybe I ought to make up my own schedule, huh? Take my chances like any other dumb freshman.

KENIAL: I think that's best, man.

BETH: And don't hesitate to call if you need some help.

WES: I won't. Hey, great pizza, Bro, almost as good as my sauce.

FRANK: Thanks. Hey Brat, on that form, make sure you put Weston McCullum, not just Wes.

KENIAL: You remember how to spell it? W-E-S-T-O. . .

FRANK: Hey, I'm not that bad, am I?

DIX: Yep.

WES: It's OK, Bro. I probably would have put Wes. Well, like I said, I've got that early class. Thanks for the talk, Dix, we'll see you in practice.

FRANK: Come over for dinner tomorrow. We'll play cards or something.

WES: Sounds good.

(He exits)

FRANK: Look, Dix, I've got a paper coming up myself pretty soon.

DIX: Kicking us out, huh?

FRANK: 'Fraid so.

DIX: I can take a hint. You still want to run some patterns after practice tomorrow?

FRANK: As usual.

KENIAL: Listen, Frank, this ain't my place, but can I say something?

FRANK: You think I should lay off the kid. I'm too hard on him, and I'm trying to run his life.

KENIAL: Right.

FRANK: I know. It's just that before Dad died, he told me to take care of the kid. I overdo, I guess.

KENIAL: He's a good kid, Frank.

FRANK: Close the door on your way out.

KENIAL: See you tomorrow.

(He and Dix exit)

BETH: You look bushed, honey.

FRANK: I'm OK...

(Yawns)

BETH: Let's go to bed, Frank.

FRANK: Can't. I gotta get that paper in tomorrow. Dr. Jenson's already given me one extension.

BETH: Have you done the research?

FRANK: I've got the books here. I'll skim through them tonight.

BETH: Frank, you've got to get your sleep.

FRANK: I'm OK...

BETH: Can I help?

FRANK: You go ahead and go to bed.

BETH: If you're sure.

FRANK: I'm sure.

BETH: Goodnight, then, honey.

*(She goes out. He picks up a book, starts to read it. He yawns, rubs his eyes. He picks up the book again. **Blackout**)*

SCENE TWO — *This scene takes place in Dr. Jenson's office. Dr. Jenson is a middle-aged woman. She wears dark sunglasses at all times due to a slight impediment, has a badly scarred face, and speaks with a gravelly voice. She's an ironic, organized, and brilliant woman. She is sitting at her desk dictating into a microphone.*

DR. JENSON: Essay question number four. Discuss Goethe's Werther as an expression of *Sturm und Drang*. Be very specific. Essay question number five.

(There's a knock on the door)

Go away!

(Into mike)

Ignore that, Gladys.

(She shuts off the machine)

FRANK: *(Enters)* I can come back later.

DR. JENSON: Sit down and stop acting so abject. How long were you listening outside my door?

FRANK: Ma'am?

DR. JENSON: Deny it and I'll flunk you.

FRANK: I really wasn't.

DR. JENSON: A likely story. It doesn't matter, the test I was dictating wasn't for your class anyway.

FRANK: Good. I didn't know what you were talking about.

DR. JENSON: I know you won't believe it, but I actually sat down by my TV and watched the Baylor game last Saturday.

FRANK: Really? What did you think?

DR. JENSON: Well, let's face it, football doesn't give one much to think about. But I must say, I did rather enjoy myself. I don't think I'd want to do it every year.

FRANK: How much did you watch?

DR. JENSON: Heavens, I don't know. We were behind when I turned it on, and I turned it off right after you scored our fourth touchdown.

FRANK: Oh yeah, that pass in the fourth quarter. You know, I was supposed to be the decoy on that play, I wasn't even the primary target, but the safety fell down and Dix just barely got it to me.

DR. JENSON: So the announcers informed me.

FRANK: Well, that was a good game for your first one.

DR. JENSON: Your first paper here as a freshman was on football, wasn't it? Football as a metaphor for society.

FRANK: You flunked me on it, too.

DR. JENSON: It wasn't that bad a paper. I was just appalled that you were too illiterate not to know what a cliché that was.

FRANK: No, you just hated football.

DR. JENSON: I was justified. You hated poetry. Tell me, Frank, what are your chances of playing professionally?

FRANK: Not too bad. Depends on my knee mostly. I'm a litter smaller than they like but I've got a pretty good shot at it, I think. Why?

DR. JENSON: Just wondering what your plans were for the future. Your last paper would seem to preclude any academic ambitions.

FRANK: You've read it, then.

DR. JENSON: I gave it a valiant effort.

FRANK: That bad?

DR. JENSON: It had one redeeming merit, Frank. It was short.

FRANK: I didn't think it was that bad.

DR. JENSON: Oh, let's be honest, Frank. How much time did you spend on the assignment?

FRANK: I worked on it.

DR. JENSON: How long?

FRANK: I take it you want the truth. About three hours the night before it was due.

DR. JENSON: Really? It shouldn't have taken you that long.

FRANK: So, how badly did I blow it?

DR. JENSON: I didn't assign it a grade, Frank. Not yet anyway. I thought I'd talk to you first.

FRANK: Well, what are we talking? A 'C'? A 'D'?

DR. JENSON: We're not talking either of them.

FRANK: Geez.

DR. JENSON: To further complicate matters, I have this eligibility form from your Coach Mitchell and I'm

supposed to turn it in this week. Now, just what do you think I should do?

FRANK: I don't know. What does this paper do to me?

DR. JENSON: Let's see. A 'B-' on the *Mysterious Stranger* review, 'C-' on the midterm, a 'D' on the Dreiser assignment, 7 absences.

FRANK: Four of those are excused.

DR. JENSON: So they are. Well then, right now, you seem to be heading for a big fat D.

FRANK: That's passing.

DR. JENSON: But are you still eligible? I mean, can I feel good about putting this D on this form from your coach?

FRANK: Oh, yeah, I'm still OK.

DR. JENSON: Don't you have to have a 'C' or better in every class?

FRANK: No, just a cumulative 'C'.

DR. JENSON: Are you sure? I thought they changed the requirements.

FRANK: (*First stirrings of alarm*) Did they? I don't remember.

DR. JENSON: I'm pretty sure they did. In fact, am I on that committee?
(*Thinks*)

I don't remember. They all blur together after a while.

FRANK: I might not be eligible?

DR. JENSON: I'm pretty sure you're not, not with this last paper.

FRANK: Coach told us something about this at the beginning of the year. He gives the same speech at the beginning of each season. After a while you stop listening.

DR. JENSON: I told you the first day of class, young man, that this wasn't going to be the same sort of piddling comp. class you're used to.

FRANK: Dr. Jenson, you know I can do the work.

DR. JENSON: You haven't shown me much so far, not this semester.

FRANK: This has been a rough semester. I just got married, I've got a part-time job, on top of ...
(*stops himself*)

It's been tough.

DR. JENSON: When you're finished crying on my shoulder, what do I do about this?
(*Waves paper*)

FRANK: Can I re-write the paper? You know the kind of work I'm capable of. Give me a week, and it'll be beautiful.

DR. JENSON: A week? You've known about this assignment for six weeks.

FRANK: I know.

DR. JENSON: The rest of the class completed the assignment on time. Married and working full-time, some of them. So why should I make an exception for you?

FRANK: I'd expect a reduction in points.

DR. JENSON: You're ducking the issue. You've cut my class three times, done mediocre work, and slept through half my lectures. And now you're asking for special consideration? I repeat the question, what makes you so hot?

(*There is a pause*)

FRANK: Maybe it's because we're friends.

DR. JENSON: Friends. Clever answer, Frank.

FRANK: I wasn't trying to be clever.

DR. JENSON: No, I know you weren't. Friends.

(sighs)

I must be getting old. Getting soft all of a sudden. Friends.

(tartly)

If you'd have so much as mentioned the word football, I'd have booted you out of this office, you know that don't you? And I still might, too.

FRANK: I've never asked for special favors.

DR. JENSON: You've gotten them nonetheless. Just like you're getting them now.

FRANK: Maybe, I would appreciate a chance to re-write.

DR. JENSON: Because we're friends.

FRANK: Aren't we?

DR. JENSON: Friend Frank, what is your schedule like?

FRANK: My schedule?

DR. JENSON: Your daily routine. How do you spend your time?

FRANK: I wake up at seven, eat breakfast. I have classes from eight to eleven. I go to work at eleven and work till two. I usually pack a lunch and eat at work. Then I have football practice.

DR. JENSON: Where do you work?

FRANK: Super Sound. I'm a salesman for this stereo shop. Beth works, but we can't make ends meet on her check.

DR. JENSON: Go on. What time do you get out of practice?

FRANK: Well, seven, but then Dix and I work out until eight.

DR. JENSON: Why do you do that?

FRANK: Dr. Jenson. It's kind of personal.

DR. JENSON: I thought we were friends.

FRANK: Yes, we are. See, Dr. Jenson, this is The Game. This is State.

DR. JENSON: So?

FRANK: Well, we've never beaten them.

DR. JENSON: Fiddlesticks. Of course we have. We've only been playing them for 85 years. When I was a senior here, we beat them by 40 points.

FRANK: I know that, but you see, we've never beaten them. Me and Dix and the other seniors. If I try and explain, you'll prolly laugh at me.

DR. JENSON: Who, me?

FRANK: It's just very corny.

DR. JENSON: I'll be good.

FRANK: See, after the game last year, I was hurt, and a bunch of the guys got together up in my hospital room. I told you it was corny.

DR. JENSON: I didn't say a word.

FRANK: Well, Dix and Kenial, and Sid Cacek and Restic and, well, you know, the juniors, the guys who

are all seniors now, we all got together, and we held hands around the bed. And we dedicated ourselves to winning this game this season. I can't describe it very well, but we all decided that we were really going to make some sacrifices. Dix is still a little mad at me for getting married. He says it distracts me too much. Anyway, all year, there've been nine of us who get together and work for an extra hour after practice. I think it's really made the difference this season.

DR. JENSON: And then you and the other musketeers go to bed.

FRANK: No. After that I work out alone.

DR. JENSON: More manly dedication, I suppose.

FRANK: With my knee, I need more work than the other guys.

DR. JENSON: What does your wife think about that?

FRANK: After the State game, I'll make it up to her.

DR. JENSON: (*waves the paper*) And if you don't play... .

FRANK: That's up to you, now, isn't it?

DR. JENSON: All right, Frank. Here's the bottom line. I will not sign this eligibility form until I have a paper from you. That means this Friday.

FRANK: I can have it to you Monday morning.

DR. JENSON: I should say so. If you don't turn it in Friday, you'll have all day Saturday to work on it.

FRANK: Why can't I have a week?

DR. JENSON: Because I said so.

FRANK: Why?

DR. JENSON: Frank, if the devil were to come up to you right now and tell you, "Frank, if you will sell your soul to me, and prove it by murdering Olivia Jenson, I will see to it that you will beat State," if he said that to you, I would be laying here on the floor with my throat slit. Goals or no goals, football or no football, young man, you are in college, and I'm going to make sure you get your priorities straight.

FRANK: Three days.

DR. JENSON: And I want at least B work. I'm knocking you down one full letter-grade for late work.

FRANK: Dr. Jenson, I'm cutting a class just to see you right now.

DR. JENSON: You don't need to cut classes, Frank. You told me your schedule, you get off practice at seven. That gives you three hours a night minimum.

FRANK: I told you, I work out in the evenings.

DR. JENSON: Frank, if you're not in shape by now... .

FRANK: You don't understand. I just don't think I can do it by Friday.

DR. JENSON: I'm betting you can.

FRANK: (*Looks at her, relaxes*) What if I get on my knees and beg?

DR. JENSON: Friday. Now if you were to offer, say a token contribution to the Olivia Jenson fund for starving college professors... .

FRANK: How much?

DR. JENSON: Sorry, you can't afford me.

FRANK: I know people who can.

DR. JENSON: Away, tempter.

(Pause)

Now, you understand the assignment?

FRANK: Some aspect of Henry James.

DR. JENSON: That's right.

(Hands him his paper)

Here, just for nostalgia's sake. You can still use Turn of the Screw, and I like your basic premise, the discussion of gothic genre. Did a paper on that myself, one time. You going to be OK?

FRANK: I'll give it a whirl.

DR. JENSON: It's going to be quite a game on Saturday.

FRANK: Yes, Ma'am.

DR. JENSON: Oh, stop calling me that. We're friends, remember?

FRANK: OK.

DR. JENSON: Actually, this is one game I wouldn't mind seeing in person. What do you think, Frank? Think you could get me tickets?

FRANK: I could get you front row seats on the fifty-yard line. If you wanted them badly enough.

DR. JENSON: *(A pause, then she gets it)* I guess I'll stay home, then. The announcers explain things so well on television.

FRANK: My wife does the same thing. Well, I'd better get started.

DR. JENSON: Frank.

(He pauses on his way out)

You do understand, don't you?

FRANK: Well, it's your game. I guess you get to make the rules.

DR. JENSON: That's one way to look at it, I guess.

FRANK: We'll see you Friday.

*(He exits. After a minute, she picks up her mike. **Blackout.**)*

SCENE THREE — *Frank and Beth's apartment. Frank is sleeping on the sofa, books and papers strewn. It is Thursday afternoon. Beth enters.*

BETH: *(Startled at seeing him)* Frank?

(She goes to him, gently wakes him)

Frank?

FRANK: *(Stirs, looks at her)* Hi, honey.

BETH: Frank, it's one o'clock. What are you doing home?

FRANK: Is it that late?

BETH: Honey, is something wrong?

FRANK: No, of course not.

BETH: Didn't you go to work today?

FRANK: I got off. I didn't mean to sleep this long.

BETH: I wish you'd told me you were going to be home. Do you want some lunch?

FRANK: Lunch? No, I ate.

BETH: OK. That paper's due tomorrow, isn't it?

FRANK: Tomorrow.

BETH: How's it going?

FRANK: Slow.

BETH: Then, it's a good thing you got off work today.

FRANK: Allen said it was OK. It's not been very busy.

BETH: Before you go give me what you've finished on the paper, and I'll type it at work.

FRANK: It won't be much.

BETH: I thought you worked on it last night?

FRANK: Kept dozing off.

BETH: I wish I could help.

FRANK: How much do you know about Henry James?

BETH: (*Lightly*) Hardly anything. Now, Jesse James, I know a lot about Jesse James. I saw a movie about him once. Are they related, do you think?

FRANK: Now that I think of it, honey, a bowl of soup of something does sound good.

BETH: OK.

(After a pause, she heads into the kitchen)

FRANK: (*Puts one of the books down*) I don't have the faintest idea what this guy is talking about. Honey, what's prolixity?

BETH: Longwindedness.

FRANK: I'll drink to that. It doesn't mean "close to?"

BETH: No, that's proximity.

FRANK: OK. What's this? Elides. E-L-I-D-E-S.

BETH: It's where you leave something out.

FRANK: Hmm. The sentence still doesn't make any sense.

BETH: So try me.

FRANK: "James's prolixity elides the ethereal; his evocations of ectoplasm are both quotidian and colloquial." This is a ghost story, not Tolstoy. Why can't this clown write it in English!

BETH: Could you use another source?

FRANK: This guy is the only one who even touches on the thesis statement I'm working with. I give up. Could I get you to do me a favor?

BETH: What?

FRANK: Couch put together a few new plays for State. I've got about a half hour before practice, could I get you to quiz me on assignments? The playbook's there, by the couch.

BETH: Honey, that's a half hour you could be spending on your paper.

FRANK: I wouldn't be able to get anything done.

BETH: If you could just get one paragraph done, it's be something.

FRANK: I'm just burned out on this thing.

BETH: Well, what's the problem, maybe I can help.

FRANK: There's no problem. I've already got the thesis statement, I just need to support it. An eight-source bibliography she wants.

BETH: So where are you stuck?

FRANK: Honey, look, I'm just having a hard time finding a source that agrees with me. I'm trying to discuss *The Turn of the Screw* in the context of the basic ghost story of the late 1880's. The problem is the only book I can find on the subject is this lousy Greek one. I'm sorry, hon. I just need to get away from it for a sec.

BETH: OK. Let me check the soup, and then I'll get your playbook.

(Exits into kitchen)

FRANK: I'll really look the fool if I blow one of these assignments on Saturday, is the thing.

(Finds the playbook)

BETH: I understand. Soup's ready, hon, do you want crackers?

FRANK: No thanks.

(She re-enters.)

Here.

(Hands her the playbook)

Just the last three pages. Just tell me the signal, it's written up here at the top.

BETH: All right. Let's see. Is this right, Green 44 X slant?

FRANK: Strong side right. I go down about ten yards, and find the crease. We put it in because Higgins has kind of a deep drop; we're trying to stay under him. I got to make sure I cut inside on the count of 3 one thousand, it's a timing play.

BETH: Uh. . .Green, 28 pass X Y flare.

FRANK: Strongside right. I hit the safety like it's a sweep, release, and head deep.

BETH: How do I know if you're getting these right?

FRANK: I'm getting them. Go on.

BETH: Red 40 X screen 4

FRANK: Strongside left. I hit the end, release, go down and out, catch the ball and lateral to Kenial. I hope we don't run it.

BETH: Red 29 X post. Option.

FRANK: Halfback option pass. I release late, because Kenial doesn't throw the ball that far.

BETH: I think that's all. A warning about not letting this into the hands of any unauthorized people.

FRANK: You're authorized. All wives are.

BETH: That's a relief.

FRANK: Anyway. Thanks Hon.

BETH: You haven't touched the soup.

FRANK: *(Sips quickly)* Really hits the spot.

BETH: You look awfully tired, Frank.

FRANK: No, I'm fine. This nap really did me good. Hope you don't mind if I slurp?

BETH: Go right ahead.

FRANK: *(Polished it off)* That should hold me till dinner. There's a little left, if you want some.

BETH: No thanks.

(Pause)

So we'll eat around seven tonight?

FRANK: Eight-thirty, as usual.

BETH: You're staying late again.

FRANK: Now's when we need it.

BETH: You're going to wear Dix's arm off.

FRANK: Hon, you wouldn't believe how much good it's done us.

BETH: I guess I just figured you'd want to get home early tonight and get to work on that paper.

FRANK: The thing is, I'd really like to push it tonight. If I could do, say, five six-minute miles in succession, really push it, it'd really round off my program.

BETH: You're going to try for that tonight?

FRANK: Tomorrow night I've got to rest up a little, take it kind of easy.

BETH: You mean you can actually miss one night.

(Quiet, the sarcasm not registering)

FRANK: Honey, I've got all day tomorrow to finish this paper.

BETH: Honey, you really don't have that much time.

FRANK: I'll cut my classes tomorrow.

BETH: Well, that's three hours. Are you OK in those classes?

FRANK: Sure, I'm fine and Allen said he wouldn't need me this week.

BETH: I see.

FRANK: So I've got plenty of time.

BETH: You're missing the whole week.

FRANK: Well, Monday I was still sore from the game, Tuesday we had that team meeting, and yesterday I was working on this. Can't be helped, honey.

BETH: I guess not. I'm just worried about covering the rent. It's due Monday, and I don't get paid till the 10th.

FRANK: I get paid Tuesday. We're fine.

BETH: For rent and the car payment?

FRANK: I'll talk to the Landsbergers, I bet we can get them to hang onto the rent check until the 10th.

BETH: What'll we do for groceries?

FRANK: We'll be all right. After we win on Saturday, we'll probably be out.

BETH: I just want to know what we're going to do if Allen decides he can do without you permanently.

FRANK: Allen? Are you kidding?

BETH: The point is, we decided last September that we couldn't make it on my paycheck alone.

FRANK: After this weekend, I'll make the time up.

BETH: I hope so, Frank. I don't mean to quarrel, honey, but I'm worried.

FRANK: We're going to be fine.

BETH: I wish I could be that optimistic. The thing is, every month since we've lived here, we've asked the Landsbergers to hold our check. And they never say anything. They just smile and say it's OK. And we still owe that three hundred dollars for the transmission, we said we'd pay a little bit each month, and we haven't, and they haven't even sent us a bill. It's creepy, Frank, all these people smiling at us and saying, "don't worry, you'll pay when you can," that's not how it works, that's not how people in business do things.

FRANK: (*Puzzled*) Yes, it is.

BETH: (*Defeated*) Then why had I never seen it before? I mean, you get a job, and you go to work, and you always make sure you look busy when the boss is looking, and maybe twice a year, you call in sick, and you make darn sure you sound sick over the telephone. That's the way things are. But you, the day after you decided you need a job, you find on of the cushiest jobs in the area...

FRANK: It's not that cushy a job. I work.

BETH: I know you do, honey. But you almost never work Mondays because that's the day after a game. You almost never work Friday's because you've got a game the next day. You've missed this whole week out there. And Allen never says anything. He could hire fifty people tomorrow, and he still keeps you on.

FRANK: Allen knows that after the season's over, I'll be there every day.

BETH: I don't know. I just keep feeling it can't last. Don't you see what I'm saying? I just don't see that you're holding up your end of things, Frank! If we were normal, regular people, we'd be in serious financial trouble. And you're not even worried.

FRANK: (*Knowingly, condescendingly*) Big game nerves. Everyone handles them differently.

BETH: Frank... .

FRANK: I remember last year before the state game, a bunch of us got in Dix's car and went out to one of the hamburger drive-up places. I was really packed; we had to wait ten minutes before we got to the window. We finally get to the window, ordered, and it came to 25-30 bucks, a big order. You know football players. So anyway, we pay the girl, and just drive off, completely forgetting that we were supposed to get some food for our money. The thing is, it was three blocks before any of us realized what had happened. Big game nerves. You'll get over it.

BETH: No Frank, you know what football does to my nerves? Last week's game, I sat here and watched it, and in the first quarter, early in the game, some guy hit you in the knee, and you didn't get up for a second. I was handling it up to then, but when you didn't get up, I was so sick, I went into the bathroom and threw up. Comparatively, I think I handle worrying about the rent a lot easier.

FRANK: After Saturday, honey, everything's going to be fine.

BETH: This is a recording. You know what I wish?

FRANK: You wish I didn't play football.

BETH: I've never said that.

FRANK: That's what you mean though.

BETH: No, No, I've never said that and I won't say it now. I wish that it didn't matter that you play football.

FRANK: Does it?

BETH: Haven't you heard what I've been saying? Would Allen ever say to you. "Frank, I don't care who you are. You don't show up to work for a week, you're fired." He would to anyone else. Would the Landsbergers ever say, "Frank, rent is due on the first, if it's not in by then, you're gone." Would they?

FRANK: Do you want them to?

BETH: No, but I'm afraid. If we weren't married, I'd probably love it.

FRANK: Then why did you marry a football player? You knew what you were getting yourself in for. It that's how you feel, why marry a jock?

BETH: I didn't marry a football player. I married you.

(They look at each other warily, away of love, aware that the antagonism is abated)

FRANK: Honey, after Saturday, OK?

BETH: OK

(She picks up the dishes, heads for the kitchen)

But honey, can I just say one last thing? One word, and I'll leave it alone.

FRANK: OK

BETH: No running tonight? Please? Play catch with Dix if you have to, but then come home and get this paper done. OK?

FRANK: Honey, I'll have plenty of time tomorrow.

BETH: The thing is, Frank, I've got to type it, and I'd like to have it when I go to work tomorrow.

FRANK: I'll drop it by on my way to practice.

BETH: Dr. Jenson wanted it Friday morning.

FRANK: Dr. Jenson wanted it Friday.

BETH: Honey, you're cutting this closer than you need to. You're not going to suddenly lose all your stamina if you spend one evening worrying about something other than State.

FRANK: I've got it all scheduled out; I'm going to be fine.

BETH: Well, could you switch the schedule around? Maybe the running could be your reward for finishing the paper. Isn't the paper the priority?

FRANK: Beth, don't be a nag.

BETH: *(A pause, furious. Then softly, with great intensity)* Heaven forbid that I should be a nag.
(Starts to exit)

My, look at the time. I'd better get back to work.

FRANK: *(Trying to make amends)* Honey.

(She stops and looks at him.)

Could you drop me off at practice?

BETH: Why don't you just run?

FRANK: Ouch.

(Pause)

Hey, I'm sorry. I blew it, OK? That was a rotten thing to say.

(Lightly)

I'm such a louse. Forgive me?

BETH: *(Tightly)* Of course I forgive you.

FRANK: Hey, after the game on Saturday, we'll get you all prettied up, and go down and try out that new French restaurant downtown.

BETH: We can't afford it.

FRANK: I'll hock my barbells. OK?

BETH: *(Chilly)* Whatever you say.

(starts to go)

Are you coming?

FRANK: Nor with you mad at me.

BETH: I'm not mad at you.

FRANK: Saturday night on the town, then. OK?

BETH: *(Smiles briefly)* Honey, it's OK. . . You'll want to go to the victory party.

FRANK: We'll skip it.

BETH: Honey, it's really OK.

FRANK: You're sure?

BETH: Come on. I'll take you to practice.

FRANK: OK.

*(They exit. **Blackout**)*

SCENE FOUR — 7 pages

SCENE FIVE — 11 pages

SCENE SIX — 6 pages

THE END