

Poor Sports

By Kyle John Schmidt

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Draft 9.15

Characters

(2W, 2M)

BARB – 40-50, Rachelle’s mom. Drinks beer.

JONI – 40-50, Mandy’s mom. Drinks cocktails.

KENNY – 40-50, Joni’s husband. Volunteer firefighter, member of the Lions Club, president of the bank.

COACH – 30s, Rachelle and Mandy’s softball coach. Has a wife and two kids.

ANNOUNCER – A voice over a loudspeaker. (Played by the same actor as KENNY or COACH.)

Setting

In and around Searsboro: a small, rural town.

"For when the One Great Scorer comes
To mark against your name,
He writes – not that you won or lost –
But how you played the Game."

-Alumnus Football, Grantland Rice

Scene 1: The Bleachers

Summer morning.

A small, rural town.

BARB, 40-50, sits alone on a set of bleachers at a high school softball game.

She drinks from a can inside a koozie.

Beside her is a lumpy jacket.

JONI, 40-50, enters with a thermos.

JONI

Hey Barb! You got a seat for me?

BARB

Got a bleacher full of 'em, Joni.

JONI

I miss anything?

BARB

The girls are still warming up.

JONI

Thank goodness. Mandy would kill me if I'd showed up late. It's the last season opener of her high school career. After softball, it's college. And I'll never wash a uniform again.

BARB

Almost thought I'd have to watch the game alone.

JONI

Kenny drank all the Schnapps last night and you know I can't make Joni-Juice without Schnapps. Of course, the liquor store doesn't open 'til noon, so I had to drive to the Wal-Mart over in Osky. There to here took an hour. And the whole way back I was speeding and mixing. I can only imagine what the cop would have said if he'd pulled me over.

“You again?”

BARB

Har, har. Want a cup?

JONI

No thanks.

BARB

I made enough for two.

JONI

That’s alright.

BARB

It’s Joni-Juice.

JONI

I brought beer.

BARB

Is that a twelve pack?

JONI

So?

BARB

It’s not a double-header, Barb.

JONI

I’m not going to drink all of it.

BARB

That’s what you always say.

JONI

The twelve pack was on sale.

BARB

You always say that, too.

JONI

Are we it?
BARB

I invited Marna.
JONI

She coming?
BARB

She said she's not feeling well. And you know what that means.
JONI

She's not coming to high school games anymore.
BARB

And we'll never see her again.
JONI

Another one gone.
BARB

This bleacher used to be full of our friends. Laughing. Having a good time.
JONI

Now it's like they're all dead.
BARB

I haven't seen Marna in months. And Taren since the fall. And Cindy. Laura.
JONI

Bonnie.
BARB

I hate Bonnie.
JONI

Me too.
BARB

She's always talking about her divorce. Like it's a new thing. Like she discovered it. Anyone can get a divorce. You could. I could. It's not a special talent. She doesn't need to show it off.
JONI

BARB

And she tans too much.

JONI

But everyone else, I can't call anymore. There's nothing to talk about. Now their daughters are off in college, they're all boring.

BARB

The last time I called Marna, we talked about tinsel. For ten minutes. And it's not even Christmas.

JONI

I don't know why we have to send our kids to college anyway. They all come back fat.

BARB

And wearing pajama pants.

JONI

You're so lucky you won't have to go through that with your daughter.

BARB

Rachelle's going to college. We're already looking at schools. It might be a community college, but Rachelle's going to college.

JONI

I meant Rachelle won't get fat. She's a stick.

BARB

She's not a stick.

JONI

She looks like a stick.

BARB

She's still developing.

JONI

At least we still get together.

BARB

It's better than drinking alone.

Here, here. JONI

Cheers. BARB

JONI and BARB clink drinks.

You see my new car? JONI

BARB
You parked on the grass, knocked over a trash can, and honked 'til I waved back.

You like it? JONI

It's loud. BARB

JONI
That's what a sportscar sounds like. It's how they make them.

BARB
Didn't you just get a new car last summer?

JONI
Some people get new cars every year.

BARB
Not here. Not in this town.

JONI
In the cities, that's normal. Don't you watch tv?

BARB
I have a cousin in Chicago who gets new cars all the time.

JONI
See.

BARB
Whenever she catches her husband cheating.

Kenny's not cheating. JONI

I didn't say he was. BARB

You inferred it. JONI

Then you weren't listening. I was talking about my cousin. BARB

Did you hear the coach's wife left him? JONI

The softball coach? BARB

Yeah, the wife split town. JONI

That's not true. BARB

I heard she's living up north with her parents and she took their two kids. JONI

Rachelle babysits for them. She babysat just last week. BARB

I'm just repeating what Marna said. JONI

Marna makes things up. You know she does drugs. BARB

Marna doesn't do drugs. JONI

Have you seen her purse? BARB

JONI

Those are prescriptions. She has prescriptions. For her menopause.

BARB

You don't take mood stabilizers for menopause.

JONI

Sometimes you do.

BARB

When you break with reality.

JONI

Marna did not break with reality.

BARB

She did too. When she gained all that weight. And took all those diet pills. And wouldn't stop crying. After her uterus fell out.

JONI

That's menopause. It's normal. It's natural.

BARB

Then why'd they put her on so many drugs?

JONI

Because that's what you do.

BARB

When you can't handle reality . . .

JONI

When you're menopausal.

BARB

Well, until Marna quits using drugs, you can't believe what she says.

BARB reaches under the jacket beside her and pulls out a beer.

JONI

Number 2?

BARB

So?

JONI

And there's an empty can under the bleacher. Are you on your third beer?

BARB

That's not mine.

JONI

Barb, they haven't even thrown the first pitch.

BARB

How many cups of Joni-Juice have you had already?

JONI

I have only had a few sips, because I'm sitting here worried to death that you're going to get so drunk and fall off the bleacher and break your collarbone again like the Tri-County game last year.

BARB

I was pushed. Marna pushed me. She admitted she pushed me.

JONI

You keep plowing through your twelve-pack, you won't need a push.

BARB

I heard you made Mandy go out for softball this summer.

JONI

I didn't make Mandy do anything.

BARB

Bonnie said she didn't want to go out this summer.

JONI

Bonnie? Why are you talking to Bonnie? We hate Bonnie. We just talked about how much we hate Bonnie.

BARB

I talk to people I hate all the time.

JONI

Of course you do.

BARB

If I didn't talk to people I hated, I'd never talk.

JONI

You better watch out. Now her kids are grown and she's divorced, Bonnie devotes all her time and energy to sleeping around. I'm serious. Bonnie approached my husband last summer. It's true. She did. He told me. And if you're not careful, she'll be after yours next.

BARB

My husband wouldn't sleep with Bonnie.

JONI

Neither would mine.

BARB

Then there's nothing to worry about.

JONI

And for your information, Mandy chose to play softball this summer. Because it's her last season. And she could make all-conference. And that's a big deal.

BARB

I heard you forced her.

JONI

Mandy made the decision herself.

BARB

After you forced her?

JONI

No. After a trip to the dealership.

BARB

You bought her a car?

JONI

It was Kenny's idea.

BARB

Just so she'd go out for softball?

JONI

No, Barb. She needed a car for college, too. Her other one was almost two years old.

BARB

So you and Mandy both got new cars this summer?

JONI

And they're matching! That was my idea. Mandy didn't like it, but that was part of the deal.

BARB

Congratulations.

JONI

Thanks.

BARB

We were thinking of getting Rachelle a new car for her senior year.

JONI

(Laughing:) Barb.

BARB

What?

JONI

You can't afford a new car.

BARB

Yes we can.

JONI

I know the financial crap pool that you and Stuart are in. Kenny runs the bank. He tells me everything. And the only reason he's not foreclosing your house and repossessing your furniture is because we're so close.

BARB

Stuart's getting more business. And I've been tending bar.

JONI

Someone let you behind a bar?

BARB

Yes. And I make good money. So if we want to give Rachelle a new car, we will.

JONI

If you have all this extra money lying around, then you should use it to pay back those under-the-table personal loans that Kenny gave you last winter. I'm not trying to be rude. But you made a complete mess of your credit card and Stuart with his business and hearing you wanting to get Rachelle a new car you can't afford breaks my heart. It does. It breaks my heart for you.

BARB

Is Mandy okay?

JONI

Why?

BARB

She's missed every fly ball during warm-up.

JONI

She hasn't missed every fly ball.

BARB

I've been watching her. It's like she's afraid of the ball.

JONI

She's a graduated senior, Barb. She's not afraid of the ball.

BARB

Look, she dropped another.

JONI

(To the field:) Amanda Leigh Kercheval! Keep your eye on the ball!

BARB

Coach couldn't stop telling me how much Rachelle's improved this summer. She's really developed into a ball player. That's what he said.

JONI

Maybe she'll be a starter next year.

BARB

I think there's a chance she'll start this year.

JONI

Mandy's been a starter since 9th grade, but I can still remember what it feels like the first time they start. The name over the loudspeaker. The national anthem.

BARB

I know what it feels like. Rachelle started in volleyball.

JONI

That was only a few games.

BARB

The games we won.

BARB reaches for another beer.

JONI

How much of that 12-pack do you have left?

BARB

I'm not drinking all of it now.

JONI

That's what you said during track season. Every track meet: *I'm not drinking all of it now. I'm not drinking all of it now.* And every track meet—

BARB

The meets are longer.

JONI

You're *glug, glug, glug*—

BARB

I'm nervous.

JONI

Nervous? You're nervous?

BARB

Yes. I'm nervous.

JONI

What did you have to be nervous about, Barb? Rachelle barely plays.

BARB

The other moms make me nervous.

JONI

Like who?

BARB

I was at the concession stand and some freshman girl's mom who I don't even talk to said she saw my husband. In Des Moines. In a hotel parking lot. And she couldn't understand why Rachelle's dad was at hotel on a Tuesday. And I don't like what she's insinuating. He does lots of business in Des Moines. And he doesn't like driving late at night. With deer. And drunk drivers. My son was killed—

JONI

Here we go again.

BARB

My son was killed by a drunk driver.

JONI

I know.

BARB

You don't know. No one knows. No one understands.

JONI

I do too understand.

BARB

How can you possibly understand?

JONI

With Mandy going to college, it's like I'm losing her.

BARB

It's not the same thing.

JONI

It almost is.

BARB

Mandy can come visit. You can visit her. I will never see my son again.

JONI

But you'll still have one kid at home at the end of summer. You still have Rachelle's senior year to look forward to. I'm going to be alone. All alone in my house. If I would have known how hard all this graduating stuff was going to be on me, I would have had Mandy flunk 4th grade, too.

BARB

Rachelle didn't flunk 4th grade.

JONI

Held back. Same thing.

BARB

It was for developmental reasons. She was small for her age. She wasn't as developed as the other kids. But she's fine now.

JONI

Well, she has trouble reading.

BARB

Mandy just dropped another one. Is she okay? Maybe she's sick.

JONI

She's not sick.

BARB

There's a summer flu going around. Rachelle had it last week.

JONI

Mandy's fine.

BARB

She just missed a grounder.

JONI

Shouldn't you be watching your own goddamn daughter?

BARB

Rachelle's doing fine. She dove for a ball and caught it earlier.

JONI

I hope she gets the chance to do that during a game.

BARB

We always knew that Rachelle would be an athlete. Once she developed. Her dad played football.

JONI

I can't imagine Stuart playing football.

BARB

Rachelle's bio father.

JONI

Oh that's right.

BARB

He played football.

JONI

I always forget Rachelle was adopted.

BARB

We don't like to make a big deal about it.

JONI

Was her bio mother an athlete?

BARB

No.

JONI

Because if both the parents were athletes—

BARB

She wasn't.

JONI

Wasn't Rachelle's bio mom on drugs?

No. BARB

I always thought she did drugs. JONI

She didn't. BARB

She looks like she does drugs. JONI

How would you know what Rachelle's bio mom looks like? BARB

I think I saw her the other day. JONI

You did not. BARB

She was working at the interstate. JONI

She lives in Waterloo. BARB

No, she was working at the truck stop. In the gas station. Running the cash register. JONI

That wasn't her. She lives in Waterloo. We sent her a Christmas card. BARB

She could have moved back. JONI

We would have heard. BARB

What was her name? JONI

BARB

I don't remember.

JONI

But you sent her a Christmas card.

BARB

Tiffani.

JONI

Tiffani! That's right. When I saw her at the gas station, Barb, she did not look good. Boney arms. Droopy butt. Frizzy hair. Acne all over. I mean, this girl looked rode hard and put up wet.

BARB

It wasn't her.

JONI

Are you sure?

BARB

I'm very sure. She lives in Waterloo.

JONI

Because we saw Rachelle at the counter. They were talking. Rachelle didn't tell you?

BARB

She must have forgot.

JONI

I hope I didn't get Rachelle in trouble.

BARB

We had an open adoption. And if Rachelle wants to talk to her bio mom, that's fine. She doesn't need our permission.

JONI

They really seemed to be enjoying spending time together.

BARB

Mandy overthrew the ball.

JONI

No she didn't.

BARB

It's in the crowd. People are laughing. You sure Mandy's okay?

JONI

She always plays better in the game. I remember a basketball game at Keota where she couldn't make a 3 in the warm-up, but sunk two in the first quarter.

BARB

Didn't they lose that game?

JONI

It was close.

BARB

Your cup's empty.

JONI

I'm pacing myself.

BARB

Fast pace.

JONI

You're one to talk.

The ANNOUNCER comes in over the loudspeaker.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Welcome to Badger-Gabriel Field—

BARB

Quiet, Joni, it's starting.

JONI

I am being quiet.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

—the season opener of the Searsboro Bravettes versus the visiting Millersburg Tigers.

JONI
Great. We're playing Millersburg.

BARB
Asshole of America.

JONI
I heard their dollar store closed.

BARB
It closed?

JONI
No one in Millersburg could afford the groceries.

BARB
At the dollar store?

JONI
It's bad there. No jobs. Lots of drugs. Everything's falling apart.

BARB
And they have sex with dogs.

JONI
Seriously?

BARB
There was a raid.

JONI
My sister got a dog in Millersburg once. It didn't like people.

BARB
There you go.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Now for the Millersburg Tigers starting line-up . . .

JONI
I hate when we play Millersburg.

BARB

Me too.

JONI

They're just poor sports. Starting fights. Not playing fair. They don't move on after the game. Holding grudges. They don't shake hands. If they win or if they lose. And it's supposed to be about how you play the game. But they're sour. A sour people.

BARB

That's because of where they're from.

JONI

You think so?

BARB

If your house was crappy and your street was torn up and you were surrounded by drugs and things never worked out and you couldn't afford to leave, you'd get mad at life and become a poor sport, too.

JONI

That's why I'm glad I live here.

BARB

Yeah, things are better here.

JONI

Our town has a dollar store.

BARB

We still have that dollar store.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And now for your hometown Searsboro Bravettes.

JONI

Where's my pom-pom?

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Second base. Jeni Plants.

JONI

I always wave my pom-pom when they call Mandy's name

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Short stop. Jaime Morrow.

JONI

Mandy won't know I'm here if I don't wave my pom-pom.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Center field. Lisa Linn.

JONI

Why aren't you helping me?

BARB

Because I'm listening for Rachelle's name.

JONI

They never call Rachelle's name. Help me.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Third base. Brianna Baltisberger.
Catcher. Emily VanArkel.

JONI

I packed it. I know I did.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Left Field. Tara Sutherland.
First base. Neetra Davis.

BARB

Is that a flask?

JONI

Shut up.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Pitcher. Sheila Darland.

JONI

(Picking up her pom-pom:) Found it!

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And batting last and playing rightfield.

JONI

Here we go!

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Rachelle Watts.

BARB

Rachelle? That's my Rachelle. Rachelle is starting. My daughter is starting.

JONI

No, Barb, wait. They're going to make a correction. Mandy's still in the dug-out.

BARB

Where's my phone? I have to call her dad.

JONI

Hold on, Barb. It's a mistake. They're going to fix this. You don't leave a graduated senior like Mandy on the bench.

BARB

(On the phone:) Stuart. She's starting. Our Rachelle. She's starting. Rightfield. *(To the field:)* COME ON, RACHELLE!

JONI

Shh! There's going to be a correction.

BARB

(On the phone:) She's smiling. Beaming. Stuart, she's so happy. I've never seen her so happy.

JONI

Here it comes.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And now please stand as we play our national anthem.

BARB

(On the phone:) I've got to go, Stuart. I'll call you later. *(To the field:)* RACHELLE! RACHELLE! That's my little girl.

The Star-Spangled Banner plays.

Lip trembling and smiling bright, BARB stands and places a hand firmly to her heart.

JONI sits. And drinks.

END OF SCENE

Scene 2: Kenny's Den

JONI and KENNY's house after the game.

KENNY, 40-50, is texting.

JONI enters, very drunk.

JONI

Kenny, I just sat through the worst seven innings of my entire life.

KENNY

Did you run out of Joni-Juice?

JONI

That isn't funny. That isn't funny!

KENNY

What happened?

JONI

Mandy didn't start.

KENNY

She sick?

JONI

No, she wasn't sick. Idiot.

KENNY

Then why didn't she start?

JONI

Well gee, Kenny, that's a good question. Why don't you call up the coach and ask him because it's a mystery to me.

KENNY

Maybe he's mixing things up a bit.

JONI

He's not mixing things up a bit. He started Rachelle in Mandy's place.

KENNY

Barb and Stuart's girl?

JONI

Yeah, that Rachelle. And Barb gloated about it the whole game.

KENNY

Why were you sitting with Barb?

JONI

She's my best friend.

KENNY

You don't even like her.

JONI

That doesn't mean we're not close friends.

KENNY

Did you talk to Mandy after the game?

JONI

No. I couldn't. I was so humiliated. I just drove off.

KENNY

I'm sure it's going to be fine.

JONI

No, Kenny, it's not going to be fine. You didn't hear Barb. Normally, she sits there all quiet and drinks, but suddenly this game she's on her feet wailing like a fire truck. And I ran out of Joni-Juice in the third inning and there was nothing to drink except that awful cheap piss Barb drinks. So I sat there, drinking warm beer, smiling, while my daughter, a graduated senior, who has started every season since her 9th grade year, is on the bench, humiliated, while Barb's daughter, Rachelle, who's adopted, looks like stick, flunked 4th grade, can't read, while Barb, just, "WHOO! THAT'S MY GIRL! GOOD JOB, RACHELLE!" like it's the World Series. Like she's Jose Conesco's mom. Like it's not right field.

KENNY gets a text on his phone.

JONI

Did you just get a text?

It's from the bank.

KENNY

On a Saturday?

JONI

Is that a problem?

KENNY

No.

JONI

Why don't you go to bed?

KENNY

I can't go to bed.

JONI

You always feel better in the morning. Go to bed.

KENNY

It's 2 in the afternoon, Kenny! How am I supposed to go to bed at 2 in the afternoon?

JONI

You're tired, Joni. And when you're tired, you get loud.

KENNY

KENNY gets another text.

Who keeps texting you?

JONI

It's Frank. He wants to go golfing.

KENNY

So you got a text from the bank and a text from Frank?

JONI

Is that okay?

KENNY

Yes.

JONI

KENNY

I'm sure Mandy's going to be fine.

JONI

No. She won't, Kenny. Rachelle caught a ball. A foul ball. And that should have been Mandy's out. People clapped. And I couldn't help but think how a catch like that would have helped Mandy. All her life, Mandy's wanted to be all-conference in something. That's her dream. And she's never gotten that. And now it's her last chance, her last season of softball, the final chapter of her high school career, and she's the mule on the bench.

KENNY gets another text.

JONI

Who's that one from?

KENNY

Frank again.

JONI

You sure?

KENNY

Yes.

JONI

Why did he send you a picture message?

KENNY

Stop looking at my phone.

JONI

You need to stop worrying that I'm going to see something on your phone and start worrying about your daughter.

KENNY

Joni, I already bought Mandy a car so she'd go out for softball because you wouldn't stop bawling and carrying on about it.

JONI

There's no reason for her going out if she's not going to play.

KENNY

I can't control that.

JONI

You're in the Lions Club. You're a volunteer fire fighter. You run the bank.

KENNY

That doesn't mean anything.

JONI

It means everything. The coach just bought a new house last year for his wife and their two little kids. Who financed that?

KENNY

That wasn't me. That was the bank.

JONI

But who runs the bank? Who's the bank president? You have leverage. Make him start Mandy. She can be all-conference. I know it. If she just has the chance.

KENNY

Joni, hush. Be quiet.

JONI

I won't be quiet.

KENNY

Mandy's home. The front door. I heard it close.

JONI

I didn't hear anything.

KENNY

That's because you're too drunk.

JONI

I'm not too drunk.

KENNY

That's what you always say.

JONI

If you're not going to talk to the coach, then I'm going to.

KENNY

Go ahead, go humiliate yourself. Like you do every day.

JONI

You're the humiliating one. The one who humiliates me.

KENNY

Mandy can't even stand to be in public with you anymore.

JONI

She can too. We're going to the mall later.

KENNY

She'll make an excuse not to go again. Like last week. And the week before.

JONI

She's been busy. It's a long drive. And she's got all those friends.

KENNY

No, she's tired of apologizing for your behavior all the time. You're always saying stupid things. Or getting worked up. Being loud. Or shitting your goddamn pants.

JONI

I never shit my pants.

KENNY

You shit your pants at Mandy's graduation.

JONI

That wasn't me.

KENNY

You drank so much, you shit your pants.

JONI

That didn't happen.

KENNY

Then why did you change your clothes when we got home?

JONI

I didn't like what I was wearing.

KENNY

And you cried and sobbed and carried on the whole damn day.

JONI

That was our last graduation, Kenny. Our youngest kid. It was a hard day.

KENNY

You're a goddamn, humiliating mess.

JONI

I went to see Dr. Paulson yesterday. Do you know what he told me?

KENNY

Stop drinking?

JONI

No, Kenny, he told me that I had an STD.

KENNY

A what?

JONI

S! T! D! Sexually transmitted disease. Me. A woman. Married for 26 years. Inexplicably gets an STD.

KENNY

It's probably a yeast infection. You're always complaining about your yeast infections.

JONI

He said I had an STD. A drug-resistant STD. They can't even cure it with normal antibiotics. I had to drive to a specialty pharmacy in Des Moines this morning. And it might not work so I'll have to go back. And my doctor. The man who delivered all my kids. Does my mammograms. Jokes with me at the grocery store. Lectured me for half an hour about safe sex. Using condoms! Being more selective with my sexual partners. Like I've had more than one partner in 26 years.

KENNY

You probably got it a while ago. In college.

JONI

I didn't get it in college.

KENNY

You slept with a lot of people in college.

JONI

I was there for a semester.

KENNY

And you were really busy.

JONI

I got it from you, Kenny. From you. You gave me an STD.

KENNY

Do you want me to take back your car? That new car you love so much? The one you left in the middle of the goddamn lawn because you're so wasted you can't see straight? I'll take it back.

JONI

Maybe a car won't erase this one, Kenny. Because this is worse than hearing rumors. Or finding text messages. Or seeing Bonnie climbing over my backyard fence while I'm bringing in groceries. This is my body. A temple. And you brought something dirty into the temple. Something drug-resistant.

KENNY

Joni.

JONI

Don't apologize. Do not apologize. I've never wanted you to apologize or have an explanation or give me a stupid car. All I've wanted is for you to give our kids a good life. That's all I want. Talk to the coach. Make him start Mandy. Give me something to look forward to.

KENNY

I didn't give you an STD.

KENNY gets another text.

JONI

Jeez, Kenny, that Frank must really want to go golfing.

END OF SCENE

Scene 3: Coach's Front Porch

Later that night.

A farm house in the middle of nowhere.

JONI knocks on the front door.

She knocks again.

And again.

And again.

And again.

JONI

Coach. Coach! Are you there? Coach? Are you home?

COACH, 30s, opens the door.

JONI

Coach, there you are.

COACH

Joni, what are you doing here so late? It's after dark.

JONI

Am I interrupting something?

COACH

I was just sitting down to dinner. I'd offer you something—

JONI

No, no. I can't eat this late. It'll give me nightmares. It would be airplanes and kidnapping all night long.

COACH

What are you doing all the way out here?

JONI

I was just out for a drive.

COACH

Long drive from town.

JONI

Actually, I was at the bank looking over some of my husband's files and I found a discrepancy with your house payment schedule.

COACH

My wife usually takes care of that.

JONI

Well, it looks like she didn't take care of it this month.

COACH

She's with the kids visiting her parents right now.

JONI

Coach, you know that Kenny has a really strict policy at the bank. With late payments. And I'd hate for him to take more drastic measures.

COACH

Drastic measures?

JONI

Kenny could take your house away. Or ruin your credit. Or repossess your furniture. I've seen a couple get their kids taken away by social services.

COACH

For missing a payment.

JONI

For something as simple as missing payment.

COACH

That's crazy.

JONI

It is crazy. But I don't make the rules. Kenny does. And he thinks he's God because he's bank president. And in the Lions Club. And a volunteer fire fighter.

COACH

Can I ask you a question?

JONI

Yes, of course. I'm here to help.

COACH

Do you always drive all the way out to a person's house to talk about house payments or only Saturday nights after a softball game?

JONI

I'm trying to protect you, Coach. Because Kenny's not a good person, whatever you or anybody think. I'd honestly divorce him if I thought that Mandy could handle it. But you know what divorce does to kids. And I'd rather be miserable with Kenny than happy and hurting Mandy.

COACH

I'll be sure to tell my wife about the house payment, okay Joni?

JONI

Actually you don't need to worry about it. It's been fixed.

COACH

It's been fixed?

JONI

I made the payment myself.

COACH

You made my house payment?

JONI

And next month's too, because I know you're busy with softball season and things can get so hectic with those two cute little kids of yours. And you're a friend. I consider you a friend. We're friends. And I appreciate all the coaching and mentorship you've given Mandy over the years. She really looks up to you. And I know she's going to miss you when she's in college next year.

COACH

Joni.

JONI

Yes, Coach?

COACH

Does this have anything to do with Mandy not starting today?

JONI

We all make mistakes. And oversights. I know you were probably just giving Mandy a warning to work harder. Or you feel bad for Rachelle. I feel bad for her, too. Being held back. The way her body looks. Not being able to read well. But that's no reason to punish other girls. Mandy's had to overcome a lot, too. She had braces. And got her period early. And keeping a healthy weight is always going to be a struggle. She got her dad's body type.

COACH

Listen, Joni. Every year there's a parent who goes a little crazy over who starts and who doesn't start and if you want to yell at me a little, that's okay. I'm a big boy, I can take it. But I'm not going change my starting line-up because you made my house payment last month.

JONI

And this month. I paid for this month too.

COACH

I don't let parents make coaching decisions—

JONI

I don't want to make your decisions.

COACH

—based on bribery.

JONI

I'm not bribing you.

COACH

Don't feel bad. You're not the first.

JONI

That wasn't my intention, so I wasn't even the latest. I just want you to know the effect this having on Mandy. This season is her last chance to be all-conference. And she's dreamt of that since she was a little girl. And you are taking that chance from her. And I can't sit idly by while that happens. I would be a bad mother if I did nothing while my daughter sat on the bench, wasting, when she's got so much potential. She was so depressed she wouldn't go to the mall with me today. And we love going to the mall together. It's our favorite thing. And I won't let you take that from us.

COACH

I'm sorry, Joni, I can't help you. I really can't. It wouldn't be right. Now, excuse me, my food's getting cold . . .

COACH starts going inside.

JONI

Are you having a team supper tonight?

COACH

No, why?

JONI

That's Rachelle's car. The orange beater. Parked over there. In the bushes. Behind your garage. Is Rachelle here?

COACH

Rachelle's our babysitter.

JONI

But you're home. What do you need a babysitter for?

COACH

My wife likes to invite Rachelle over for dinner from time to time.

JONI

But I thought your wife was at her parents. With your kids.

COACH

She is. They are. So I made dinner.

JONI

Oh. I see.

COACH

Rachelle's parents aren't doing well.

JONI

They seem fine to me. I talked to Barb at the game this morning.

COACH

Then you know about Rachelle's dad?

Stuart?
JONI

Yeah, Stuart.
COACH

What's happening with Stuart?
JONI

He's got that, I guess you call, boyfriend.
COACH

Boyfriend? Stuart has a boyfriend?
JONI

Yeah, in Des Moines.
COACH

But Stuart's married. We've known him for years. He's a Republican.
JONI

It's what Rachelle says.
COACH

You know Rachelle's always been a little slower than the other kids.
JONI

She's not taking it very well. So I'm trying to help her.
COACH

She could come over to our house. I cook. I listen. I'm helpful. And Mandy's there.
JONI

I don't think Rachelle wants people to know what she's going through.
COACH

She told you.
JONI

I'm a teacher. Trained to handle situations. Bound by confidentiality. I shouldn't be telling you anything. There are laws. And you could be in trouble if you say anything to anyone.
COACH

JONI

But Barb's my friend. We tell each other everything.

COACH

Rachelle doesn't feel comfortable talking to her mom right now.

JONI

Why?

COACH

Rachelle believes her parents loved her brother more than her.

JONI

Oh.

COACH

Yeah.

JONI

Because of the way she looks.

COACH

Because she was adopted. And her brother was a biological child. And since he died, Barb and Stuart have been checked out and I'm the only one who is doing anything to help her. So Rachelle would appreciate it if you kept this to yourself.

JONI

Okay. Well. Mandy would appreciate it if she could be a starter on the softball team again.

COACH

Joni, I can't do that.

JONI

Why not?

COACH

She's afraid of the ball.

JONI

You haven't given her a chance.

COACH

And she's missed half the practices. She shows up late. She doesn't want to be there.

JONI

She wants to be there more than anything. If you can't see that then you're not paying attention because you're so wrapped up in helping Rachelle. And if all the other parents knew how much you're helping Rachelle, they'd probably agree.

COACH

I'll make sure that Mandy gets back to starting in no time.

JONI

Maybe even the next game.

COACH

Maybe even the next game.

JONI

Good.

COACH

And thank you for your discretion.

JONI

It's all about what's best for the kids.

COACH

Did you want to come in for some dinner?

JONI

I'd better not.

COACH

It's not a problem.

JONI

I don't want to intrude.

COACH

I made salmon. There's chocolate mousse. I have wine.

JONI

I should really get home. But tell Rachelle that Mandy's mom says hello.

END OF SCENE

Scene 4: Barb's House

The following day.

BARB stands in the door.

COACH stands nearby.

I'm really sorry, Mrs. Watts. COACH

It's Barb. BARB

Barb, I feel just terrible. COACH

I know. BARB

My wife feels terrible too. We didn't mean to worry you. COACH

I just didn't know that Rachelle was babysitting last night. BARB

It was last minute. My wife and I wanted to go see a movie in Osky and we called Rachelle. I thought she told you. COACH

She didn't. BARB

Then we got home late and Rachelle had already put the kids to bed. And we were worried about her driving home. We know how you feel about her driving so late at night. Especially after your son and what happened to him. Rachelle tried calling you to let you know she was staying the night. COACH

I was working. I tend bar. She knows that. She should have called the bar. BARB

COACH

She tried calling Mr. Watts.

BARB

Stuart was in Des Moines. Doing business.

COACH

So we figured it was best that Rachelle stayed the night.

BARB

I just don't want to impose on your family.

COACH

It's not a problem, Rachelle's a great babysitter. The kids love her. My wife really relies on her. And we've got a guest room. She had her own bed. So it wasn't a problem.

BARB

Do you mind if I talk to your wife?

COACH

Sure. Of course.

BARB

I want to make sure Rachelle isn't imposing.

COACH

I can have her give you a call when I get back to the homestead.

BARB

You said that last week when Rachelle accidentally slept over after babysitting and I never got a call.

COACH

You know how it is with two little kids running around. But I'll make sure she calls you tonight.

BARB

Please do that.

COACH

Hey, do you remember that catch Rachelle made during the game yesterday?

BARB

The foul ball?

COACH

Yes, the foul ball.

BARB

Of course I remember. It was the play of the game. She really had to hustle for that. Rachelle's got hustle.

COACH

Well, I swiped the ball for you.

COACH brings out a softball.

BARB

You what?

COACH

I saw how excited you got in the bleachers so I swiped it from the umpire during the changeover.

BARB

Thank you, Coach.

COACH

Well, Rachelle's become such a good little ball player. And a starter. I'm really proud of her. She's like a daughter to me.

BARB

Does your wife still live with you?

COACH

Of course she does.

BARB

I heard that your wife's living with her parents.

COACH

Who told you that?

BARB

I shouldn't have said anything.

No, who told you that?
COACH

One of the other moms.
BARB

Who was it?
COACH

I can't say.
BARB

Was it Joni? It was Joni, wasn't it?
COACH

She heard it from somewhere. And was telling me. Just in passing. She didn't mean anything.
BARB

I'm a teacher, Mrs. Watts. There are boundaries. I could lose my job, my teaching license. Everything. If there's even a whisper. I have a reputation.
COACH

I know. I know.
BARB

And that's slander. I could sue.
COACH

I shouldn't listen to Joni.
BARB

No you shouldn't. Because you know she came over to my house last night.
COACH

Joni was at your house?
BARB

She came to threaten me.
COACH

BARB

Joni threatened you? Why?

COACH

I shouldn't say.

BARB

Was it because you didn't start Mandy?

COACH

She said the bank would take my house. My kids. Everything. If Mandy didn't start.

BARB

She's been doing this for years. To get special treatment for her kid. While other kids who are just as talented, maybe even more so, are left sitting on the sides. But no one would ever say anything. Just because they have money. Because they can get new cars.

COACH

I probably shouldn't have told you.

BARB

No, this isn't right. Rachelle earned her spot on the starting line-up. She's worked so hard. She's had to overcome a lot of things. I didn't bribe my daughter into going out for softball with a car. Rachelle went out because she wanted to. Had a work ethic. I should reward her. You've seen the pile of junk she drives.

COACH

I'm just worried that Joni will start spreading rumors about me.

BARB

You can't back down. For Rachelle's sake, you can't back down.

COACH

But Joni's liable to start rumors. Making things up. Dragging down whoever she can. They won't stop at taking my house. She'll go for my reputation.

BARB

Don't you worry about that. You've got support from me and Stuart. We'll stand behind you. If anything happens. I trust you. I believe in you. I won't let Joni get away with that crap. Don't back down. Whatever you do, don't back down.

COACH

Barb, I can't tell you how much that means to me. And my wife.

COACH hugs BARB.

END OF SCENE

Scene 5: The Bank

The next day.

KENNY's office.

KENNY shows BARB to a chair across from his desk.

KENNY

Come on in, Barb. Sit down. How are you?

BARB

Good. I'm feeling great. Rachelle's been starting on the softball team. She started the game on Saturday. Made the catch of the game.

KENNY

I didn't hear about that.

BARB

It was spectacular. Magical. They gave me the ball after the game. It's on the mantel. I'm thinking of having it bronzed.

KENNY

You must be really proud.

BARB

Of course I'm proud. Rachelle's worked really hard all these years. And it's finally paying off. I'm just sorry she took Mandy's place in the starting line-up.

KENNY

I'm sure she earned it.

BARB

She did. She most definitely did. With a strong work ethic. And hustle. My girl's got hustle.

KENNY

So what brings you to the bank today?

BARB

I wanted to talk about a loan.

KENNY

Barb, I'm not sure we can give you another extension on your payments.

BARB

No, I need an application.

KENNY

You want to take out another loan?

BARB

Yes.

KENNY

For what?

BARB

Rachelle just became a starter on the softball team and she's going into her senior year and I want to let her know how proud I am. So it's time she got a new car.

KENNY

You want a car loan?

BARB

The car's not for me. It's for Rachelle. You understand: Mandy just got a new car and the first car you got her was new. Rachelle's only had that orange piece of junk we got from salvage.

KENNY

Have you talked to a car dealer about a loan?

BARB

Yes. This morning. It was awful. The dealer said he won't give us financing. He wasn't very nice about it. Said my credit score might as well be double digits. I didn't think that was funny at all. So I thought you could give us financing.

KENNY

How would you pay for this new loan?

BARB

I've picked up a second job. Tending bar.

KENNY

But you and Stuart aren't making all the payments on the loans you've got out now.

BARB

Kenny, you have to understand. Rachelle's old car just isn't cutting it anymore. She's got to be able to get from practices and school and babysitting and back. This is a necessity.

KENNY

I'm not sure you and Stuart can afford a new car.

BARB

Don't you tell me what we can or can't afford.

KENNY

Why don't we bring Stuart in and we can all talk about this?

BARB

He's got business. In Des Moines. All week. So you'll have to deal with me.

KENNY

Are you sure getting a new car is wise right now? And I say this as a friend, Barb. Maybe you should wait until Stuart's business improves and you can afford the loan payments that you already have out.

BARB

I'm tired of waiting. All we do is wait. But things never get better.

KENNY

Then how about we sit down and come up with a financial plan together, Barb.

BARB

I already have a plan, Kenny. There's a game tomorrow. I'm going to surprise Rachelle. With a new car. That's the plan. It's decided.

KENNY

I think that's a great plan, Barb, I really do. But I can't help you right now.

BARB

What if I got someone else on the loan? Like a co-signer?

KENNY

Barb, you can't pay back the money you already owe. A co-signer isn't going to help that.

BARB

Yes. I know that. But do you remember Tiffani?

KENNY

Tiffani?

BARB

Rachelle's bio mom? She said you knew her.

KENNY

Of course. I do. Not very well.

BARB

What if Tiffani was a co-signer on the loan?

KENNY

I don't know if Tiffani would be a good co-signer.

BARB

Kenny. They were awful at the dealership this morning. Mean. Wouldn't make a deal. Treated me like crap. And on the way back home I stopped to get gas at the interstate. And I saw Tiffani and I'd heard that she was on drugs again, but she looked fine to me and I mentioned to her how I wanted to get Rachelle a new car. And she mentioned you might be able to help and she would co-sign and that's the only reason I came here. Because she suggested it. I didn't think it would be an option, because I can't imagine her finances are any good or that she makes a lot at the gas station. But she insisted that you could make it work. Because you always help her out. Paying for her nursing school. Those cooking classes. Her lawyer when she went to jail. You've always been willing to do whatever to help. And now all she wants is for Rachelle to have a new car. So I thought if you helped Tiffani all these other times, why can't you help her now?

KENNY

You know, Barb, maybe it won't be a problem, if you and Tiffani are co-signing.

BARB

You'll do it?

KENNY

We're friends. And Tiffani, she's a friend. And what's the point of running the bank if I can't help out friends. Right?

BARB

Thank you, Kenny. Thank you so much. Tiffani was telling me how great you've been to her. She said you're like her guardian angel. There whenever she needs it.

KENNY

We'll just have to keep this loan off the books.

BARB

Of course.

KENNY

For accounting purposes.

BARB

Sure.

KENNY

And not tell Joni.

BARB

Yes. That's understood.

KENNY

Good. Let me get some paperwork for that car loan.

BARB

Kenny.

KENNY

Yes?

BARB

(Begins to cry:) Really, Kenny, thank you.

KENNY

Don't cry, Barb. I'm glad to help.

BARB

I'm sorry. It's just. I was thinking that I never got to give my son a new car. Before he died. But at least I can do that for Rachelle, right?

END OF SCENE

Scene 6: The Bleachers

Another softball game, days later.

BARB and JONI are sitting on the bleachers.

BARB has been talking for a while.

A long while.

JONI looks bored.

JONI is drinking from her thermos and cup, but BARB hasn't cracked open her beer yet.

BARB

Here's my ultimate dream. No, listen, this one's good. I promise. The game's over. We win. The swinging gate in the backfield opens. And I fly into right driving that new car, spinning donuts and dusting everybody like I'm in a commercial. And the announcer makes a big deal about it. Things like "Hey! You! Get that brand new car off the field!" Or threatening to call the cops. And then I skid to a stop and some fireworks go off across the field, and I get out of the car and the announcer says, like he's on a game-show, "Nevermind, it's just Rachelle's mom! With Rachelle's new car!"

JONI

Geez, Barb, I don't think I've seen you this motivated since the Lions Club gave away free beer at Summer Fun Days.

BARB

I've never bought a new car. I want to do something special. What's wrong with doing something special?

JONI

It's all you've been talking about. We've been here for forty minutes and you haven't even taken a drink yet. And you know how hard it is to talk to you when you're sober.

BARB

I'm just excited.

JONI

I hope it doesn't blow up in your face.

BARB

How would it blow up in my face?

JONI

If Rachelle doesn't start—

BARB

Why wouldn't she start?

JONI

I don't know—

BARB

She started last time. Played a heck of a game. Made a catch. Why wouldn't she start this time?

JONI

She's been looking a little slow in warm-ups.

BARB

She's conserving energy.

JONI

She's dragging ass.

BARB

Mandy's been parked next to the water cooler for five minutes.

JONI

That's because she's waiting for Rachelle to stop taking a nap in the dug-out so they can throw the ball around.

BARB

She not napping, she's— *(To the field:)* RACHELLE GET UP! MANDY WAKE HER UP! COME ON GIRLS! IT'S TIME TO PLAY BALL! *(To JONI:)* For your information, Rachelle wasn't feeling well this morning. She still has the summer flu.

JONI

If she's so sick, she should stay home.

BARB

No, she should not stay home. I can't keep hiding that car from her.

Then give her the damn thing. JONI

I want to give it to her at the game. BARB

Why? JONI

Because that's the plan. BARB

Is passing around the flu part of the plan, too? JONI

Is your thermos empty? BARB

No. JONI

I know you get grumpy when your Joni-Jug runs out of Joni-Juice. BARB

It's not empty. JONI

Would you like a beer? BARB

Drink your own beer, Barb. JONI

I'm not thirsty. You can have it. BARB

If you're not going to drink, go to another bleacher. JONI

Why? BARB

JONI

Because you're not fun when you're sober.

BARB

When I'm excited, you mean. When I've got something to be proud of. When I'm happy.

JONI

When you blather.

BARB

I'm not blathering.

JONI

You are. On and on. Rachele's car this. Rachele's car that. Come on, Barb: you didn't win the Olympics. You didn't land on the moon. You bought a car. Big whoop. We're all tired of it, Barb. Exhausted! All of us.

BARB

It's just you.

JONI

It's not just me. Marna told me you've already called her ten different times to talk about the car.

BARB

It wasn't ten times.

JONI

Said you didn't even ask anything about her.

BARB

I asked plenty about her.

JONI

That's not what she said.

BARB

If she didn't want to talk to me, she shouldn't have picked up the phone.

JONI

She kept thinking you were calling to show support

BARB

Show support? What does Marna need support for?

JONI

Oh, nothing. Absolutely nothing. It's nothing. Compared to Rachelle's new car.

BARB

What is it?

JONI

Just forget about it. You've got more important things to worry about.

BARB

Joni.

JONI

Cancer. It's cancer. Marna has cancer.

BARB

Cancer?

JONI

Breast cancer.

BARB

When did that happen?

JONI

Before you called her ten times to talk about the car.

BARB

I didn't know. She didn't tell me.

JONI

You didn't give her a chance.

BARB

I've had a lot going on in my life the past couple of days. A lot of distractions.

JONI

Because Stuart isn't coming home?

BARB

Who said he isn't coming home?

JONI

I heard he's still in Des Moines.

BARB

Doing business. He's working really hard at his business.

JONI

Marna said she was at the mall in Des Moines and saw Stuart shopping with someone.

BARB

That was his sister.

JONI

It was a man.

BARB

Then it was probably his business partner.

JONI

Marna said he looked really young.

BARB

I wouldn't know. I've never met him.

JONI

And cute. She said. Really cute.

BARB

I'll have to thank Marna for taking a break from her battle with cancer to go to the mall and stalk my husband and stare at his business partner.

JONI

Someone took her there to cheer her up. People have been trying to lift her spirits. Marna said you're the only one of her friends that hasn't called or sent a card or offered to do something.

BARB

You don't see anyone calling me to say how sorry they are for me. You don't see anyone supporting me.

What do you need support for?
JONI

My son.
BARB

And here we go.
JONI

His birthday was last week. He would have been twenty-three. And I celebrated all by myself.
BARB

Barb, it's been years.
JONI

Six years. Only six years since he's been gone. And that's not counting the year in the hospital. Yet everyone just expects me to pick up and keep moving and pretend I'm better and I've gotten over it and you know what, I am and I have. I bought a new car. For my daughter. With all these features. The salesman said it's decked out. A seat warmer. Moon roof—
BARB

It looks really great.
JONI

It does look really great.
BARB

Very festive.
JONI

What's that supposed to mean?
BARB

You want me to be supportive. I'm trying to be supportive.
JONI

You don't sound supportive.
BARB

Then you're not listening. JONI

You don't like the color. BARB

It's a great color. JONI

Really? BARB

For a frog. Or a tractor. JONI

I thought the color was too much. BARB

You can take it back. JONI

No, I can't. BARB

You can too. JONI

Tiffani picked it out. BARB

Tiffani? JONI

Rachelle's bio mom. She co-signed the loan, so I let her pick it out. BARB

Why would you let Rachelle's bio mom co-sign a car loan with you? JONI

She wants to be more involved in Rachelle's life. BARB

JONI

Doesn't that make you nervous?

BARB

Why would it make me nervous? Rachelle understands that I'm her mom.

JONI

I was talking about Tiffani's reputation. You know what they say about people who work at the interstate.

BARB

She has more of a job than you do.

JONI

I help my husband up at the bank.

BARB

Until he can't stand to be around you and sends you home.

JONI

He doesn't send me home.

BARB

"Oh Marna, he sent me home from 'work' again. Boo hoo hoo!"

JONI

I never told Marna that.

BARB

"Wail! Scream! Cry!"

JONI

Better than Tiffani and working at the interstate. Lot lizards. CB radio sluts. Trucker fuckers. That's what they say about people who work at that gas station. They take more loads than a warehouse, have more crabs than a seafood restaurant, and carry more drugs than a pharmacy. That's why Tiffani looks so goddamn bad. Because of all the drugs she snorts and smokes and swallows.

BARB

Tiffani's never taken drugs.

JONI

Then why does Rachelle have so many developmental problems?

BARB

My daughter does not have developmental problems.

JONI

She can't read. Doesn't get jokes. The way her body looks. She twitches sometimes. And it makes me sad, Barb, it really does, to think of all the crank Tiffani had to take for Rachelle to turn out like that.

BARB

Your husband likes her.

JONI

Kenny doesn't know Tiffani.

BARB

Are you sure? They seemed to know each. Pretty well. Yesterday. When we were at the bank.

JONI

Why was Tiffani at the bank?

BARB

She had to co-sign the loan papers for the car.

JONI

Kenny gave you the loan?

BARB

He wasn't going to. Not until Tiffani offered to co-sign. Then he leapt into action. Couldn't be stopped. Anything for Tiffani. I think he said that. "Anything for Tiffani."

JONI

He's friendly. Kenny likes helping people. That's why he's a banker.

BARB

That's what Tiffani said. That Kenny's so friendly. Helps her with money. And school. When she gets in trouble. Sends her texts. I wonder what I have to do to make Kenny that friendly! No. Actually. I don't wonder. Not at all.

JONI

She used to go to our church. We know her from our church.

BARB

You don't go to church.

JONI

We used to. The Catholic one. In Osky. With Tiffani. Ask anyone. We knew her parents. They're church friends. Kenny financed their home. She babysat my kids. It was a long time ago.

BARB

Before she was pregnant with Rachelle?

JONI

Yes. But we didn't know about Rachelle. Her parents kept it secret. It never came up. And we never asked. But we're still friends and Kenny's always helped Tiffani out of a tight spot.

BARB

Because he's so friendly.

JONI

Yes.

BARB

Like he's friendly with Bonnie?

JONI

I don't know what you're talking about.

BARB

And Marna.

JONI

He never did that.

BARB

Cindy. Taren. All your friends. And Tiffani.

JONI

He's the bank president. He would never sleep with a creature like Tiffani.

BARB

I saw the way Tiffani and Kenny look at each other. I know what people look like when they've slept together.

JONI

So do I. Oh look, Coach is talking to Rachelle.

Both women look out to the field.

A long moment.

BARB finally cracks open her beer and drinks.

JONI

You get thirsty, Barb?

BARB discards the empty can.

BARB

Quit being so loud.

JONI

I'll show you loud.

BARB

You do every game.

JONI

How's Mandy supposed to get warmed up if Rachelle keeps taking breaks?

BARB

She's not taking a break.

JONI

She's hunched over.

BARB

She's stretching.

JONI

They're supposed to be throwing the ball around. Everyone else is throwing the ball around. Why isn't she throwing the ball? *(To the field:)* Throw the ball, Rachelle.

BARB

Don't yell at my daughter.

JONI

I'm not yelling, I'm encouraging. Mandy needs to get warmed up. *(To the field:)* Come on, Stick.

BARB

Don't call her Stick.

JONI

It's her nickname. She likes it.

BARB

No she doesn't.

JONI

(To the field:) Atta girl, Stick! Get that ball goin'!

BARB

Quit calling my daughter names.

JONI

It made her throw the ball.

BARB

It didn't help your daughter catch the ball.

JONI

Old Stick has to work on her arm.

BARB

Stop calling her names.

JONI

Stick. Stick. STICK!

BARB

You don't get to be rude because your fat daughter doesn't start anymore.

JONI

My daughter's not fat.

BARB

Then why's her uniform so tight.

JONI

Because I shrunk it. In the wash. And I feel stupid about it.

BARB

Polyester doesn't shrink, Joni.

JONI

You just wait to see who starts.

BARB

I don't need to wait. Coach already told me. It's Rachelle. Rachelle. My daughter, Rachelle.

JONI

What did you have to give him?

BARB

I didn't have to give him anything.

JONI

Oh, so what did your daughter have to give him?

BARB

She tried to make his house payment, but someone had already done that.

JONI

Drink another beer, Barb.

BARB

Or what? You'll get your husband to take away my house?

JONI

Kenny would take your house, if it was worth anything.

BARB

Or if he weren't too busy sleeping around.

JONI

Look at your husband. If he'd ever come home.

He's coming home tonight. BARB

Is he bringing his business partner? JONI

(*To the field:*) Get that damn ball going, Fatty Mandy. BARB

What did you call her? JONI

Fatty Mandy. BARB

No one calls her that. JONI

They sure as hell should. (*To the field:*) Come on, Fatty Mandy! Get it to the glove! BARB

You knocked over my thermos. JONI

It's empty anyway. BARB

You can do it, Stick! COME ON, STICK! JONI

Quit kicking my beer. BARB

I'm not kicking your beer. JONI

You're kicking it! Quit it. BARB

Or what? What are you going to do about it, Barb? JONI

JONI kicks Barb's beer off the bleachers.

JONI

Nothing. There's nothing. Nothing you can do to me.

A pause.

BARB

I'm sitting somewhere else.

JONI

Barb.

BARB

No, I'm tired of this. You're loud. You talk too much. You say dumb things. You're not liked. No one wants to be around you. I wouldn't sit here except everyone else looks down on my drinking. But I'd rather sit over there, not drink, and get the shakes, than listen to you act like you're too good for me. You're not better than me, Joni. We live in the same shitty town, we know the same shitty people, we go to the same shitty places, we live the same shitty lives. In the grand scheme, you're just as poor as me.

JONI

Barb.

BARB

I don't want to hear it. I'm leaving.

JONI

Barb, look.

JONI points out to the field.

BARB

Why's everyone on the field? What's going on? Did they find something?

JONI

It's Rachelle. She fell over. She was throwing the ball and then fell over.

BARB

Is she okay? Is something wrong?

JONI

She's not getting up. She was on the ground. Jerking. And shaking. And she vomited.

BARB

Did someone call an ambulance? Why isn't there an ambulance? There should be an ambulance here. *(Yelling:)* Someone call the ambulance! Someone help my daughter! Someone help!

BARB exits.

A pause.

Then:

JONI

(To the field:) Mandy! Keep warming up! Get someone to throw the ball with you! Come on, Mandy! It's game time! Make your momma proud!

JONI toasts the field with her thermos.

The sound of an ambulance siren distantly approaches.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 7: The Softball Field

A few hours later.

COACH stands with a bag of softball equipment.

BARB approaches with a plastic bag full of clothes.

COACH

Barb! Is Rachelle okay? What happened?

BARB

She was sick, Coach. Really sick.

COACH

Again? Wasn't she sick last week?

BARB

She's been sick all summer. And I didn't listen.

COACH

Is she going to be okay?

BARB

Yes. She's going to be okay. It's just sad. I didn't want the first time my daughter sees her new car to be when I drove her home from the hospital. She would have liked it more, I think, if she'd gotten it after the game. She would have been more appreciative. Would have said, "thank you."

COACH

Well, next time she's sick, keep her home. Okay?

BARB

Okay.

COACH

I wish you would have called me earlier to let me know she was alright. I was really worried. Seeing a player go down and then not hearing anything. I'm not mad. I just like to be kept in the loop about my players. I hope Rachelle feels better. And you let her know that we lost the game without her.

BARB

The doctor ran some tests. At the hospital. They think they know why she passed out.

Why?
COACH

She was dehydrated.
BARB

That's why we have a water cooler in the dug-out.
COACH

And she's anemic.
BARB

Then you need to make sure she's eating right.
COACH

And she's pregnant.
BARB

Oh.
COACH

Yeah.
BARB

I didn't know that Rachelle had a boyfriend.
COACH

She doesn't.
BARB

I'm sure she has some boyfriend somewhere that she hasn't told you about. Do you want me to talk to her? Let me talk to her. I'm a teacher. I can get to the bottom of this.
COACH

She told me. About what's been going on.
BARB

Barb, can we talk about this later? Over the phone? There are people watching. And my wife's coming to pick me up. With my kids. She just got back from her parents. So this isn't a good time.
COACH

BARB

I'm just here to drop off Rachele's uniform.

COACH

Why are you dropping off her uniform?

BARB

Because she didn't feel like doing it herself. She feels stupid. That was her word. Stupid. And I've been working all her life to teach that girl that she isn't stupid and in the car all she could say was, "See, Mom, see. I'm stupid. I'm really stupid."

COACH

She doesn't have to quit softball over something like this.

BARB

She doesn't feel like playing anymore.

COACH

She's always got a place on the team. Tell her that. Make sure she knows that she's always got a place on the team. If she decides to take care of the pregnancy, and wants to come back and play softball later this summer. I won't say anything. No one has to know. I'll just tell the other girls that she's on vacation. Or getting her tonsils out. Or something. She doesn't have to quit.

BARB

You're lucky my husband locked away my gun after I started drinking. Because I wouldn't hesitate to shoot your head off right now.

COACH

Barb. I'm serious. It's not too late to reconsider. We can make it all go away. And pretend none of this ever happened.

BARB makes a gun with her hand.

BARB

Bang.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 8: Outside Mandy's Bedroom

Later that day.

JONI in the hallway outside MANDY's bedroom door.

There's a softball uniform in a pile in front of the door.

JONI

Mandy? Mandy. Hey Mandy. Come on, Mandy. You've got to leave your room. If you come out right now, we'll go to the mall. I'll let you pick something out. I have a credit card. You can use it. I'll even sit in the car and wait outside in the parking lot. And I promise not to talk the whole time. Please. For me. It's not too late. Open your door. JUST WAIT UNTIL YOUR FATHER COMES HOME! You're a good player. The coach said that to me. Took me aside. Said you had potential. That you could be all-conference. That's why you're a starter. He has faith in you. I swear. Mandy. Please. You're a starter!

KENNY enters.

KENNY

Would you quit your bellowing? I could hear you down the street. The neighbors are going to file a complaint.

JONI

Kenny, get a screwdriver. We have to take the door down. Mandy, your dad's here and he's pissed. Kenny, she says she doesn't want to play. But she started this morning and she was doing so good. But she missed a fly ball in the second inning. It wasn't a big deal, anyone could have missed it, but then the other team started cheering for her and doing imitations and the crowd got into it and then Mandy walked off the field. In tears. In the middle of the game. And she locked herself in her room and threw her uniform in my face and said she won't play anymore. But we got her a car. Tell her you'll take away her car. Tell her she can't go to college. You have to tell her something. There's still time. Maybe the game isn't over. Maybe she can still play. Maybe we can still get her in the game. For the last inning.

KENNY

Joni, she's gone.

JONI

What do you mean she's gone?

KENNY

Mandy called me from her car.

JONI

I've been sitting at her door.

KENNY

She crawled out the window to get away from you.

JONI

But she left her uniform. How's she going to play without her uniform? Come on, we have to go, Kenny. She needs her uniform.

KENNY

She's done, Joni. She's done.

JONI

No. No. No. Kenny. No.

KENNY

That's what she wants, Joni.

JONI

There are two months of softball left. The season's barely started. She can't quit now.

KENNY

She doesn't want to play.

JONI

You don't know that.

KENNY

I do. She called me. Crying. I told her she doesn't have to play if she doesn't want to.

JONI

Why would you say that?

KENNY

It's going to be okay.

JONI

It's not going to be okay. What am I going to do, Kenny? What am I supposed to do with the rest of my summer? What am I supposed to do with the rest of my life? Did

Mandy ever think of me? She didn't even try this summer. She walked onto that field, didn't even try. Stood there like an ape. She's going to get fat, Kenny. She'll come home in pajama pants. We won't recognize her. She won't be our daughter anymore. We lost our daughter. I don't have a daughter anymore. My kids are gone.

KENNY

We have to move on. We all have to move on.

JONI

Move on to what, Kenny? Move. On. To. What?

KENNY gets a text.

JONI stares him down.

KENNY answers the text.

END OF SCENE

Scene 9: The Bleachers

Two months later.

The last softball game of the season.

The sun is setting.

BARB and JONI sit in the bleachers.

JONI

You got an extra beer?

BARB

Drank the last one in the twelfth inning.

JONI

I've been out of Joni-Juice since the eighth.

BARB

I wish someone would just score a run. The sun's going to set. They'll have to turn on the lights. And then the bugs.

JONI

Maybe they'll let it end in a tie.

BARB

This is the play-offs. Someone has to win. Someone has to break the tie.

JONI

The play-offs? So this could be the last softball game of the season?

BARB

If we lose.

JONI

If they keep going, we might actually see a game sober for once.

BARB

Stop trying to scare me.

JONI

Who are we playing?

BARB

Asshole of America.

JONI

Millersburg? Didn't we play them already?

BARB

Beginning of the season. First game. Rachelle made a good catch in that game. I still have the ball.

JONI

I can barely remember that.

BARB

I can barely remember any of the games that followed.

JONI

You usually blacked out.

BARB

That sounds right.

JONI

Long season.

BARB

But not long enough.

JONI

I told Marna we were still going to all the softball games.

BARB

She didn't want to join?

JONI

She said watching high school athletics without a kid playing was the only thing in the world more depressing than cancer.

BARB

I'd drink to that if I had anything left to drink.

JONI

Here, here.

BARB and JONI half-heartedly clink their empty drink containers.

JONI

We took Mandy to college last week. It wasn't nice. We drove her there. We moved her in. She yelled at me. I don't remember why. I probably asked a stupid question. Then I had a farewell dinner planned. At a nice restaurant. But Mandy wasn't hungry. So we drove back. And now it's over. And she's gone. And she hasn't called us since.

BARB

At least she made it to college.

JONI

How's Rachelle?

BARB

Still pregnant.

JONI

The coach?

BARB

There he is. Still coaching. And he's back with his wife. Pretending nothing happened. I've tried talking to him after games, but he walks away. His wife thinks I'm nuts. That Rachelle's lying.

JONI

You should report him. I'd report him.

BARB

Rachelle told me to keep my nose out of it. Or else.

JONI

Or else what?

BARB

Or else I won't be part of my grandchild's life.

JONI

I would still report him.

BARB

Rachelle's already moved out.

JONI

Where's she living?

BARB

She moved in with Tiffani.

JONI

Why'd she do that?

BARB

Because I'm not helpful. That's what Tiffani told me. That's why Rachelle wanted to move. Because I'm not a helpful person. Tiffani hasn't been around for 18 years, but suddenly she's the helpful one.

JONI

At least you'll have a grandchild. At least you'll have something.

BARB

I had to help move my daughter into Tiffani's house. It smelled like cat piss. And Rachelle doesn't even get her own room. She's sleeping on the couch. On an old pillow. With a dirty sheet. She'd rather live like that than live with me. That's how bad I am.

JONI

She'll move back.

BARB

No she won't.

JONI

She might.

BARB

Tiffani convinced her to drop out of school so they can work together at the truckstop. They spend all day together. Side by side. Running the cash register. A mother and daughter team. They said that to me. That they're a mother/daughter team. I spent 18 years of my life doing everything for that kid just to keep the seat warm for someone else. Tiffani's the lot lizard. Tiffani's the druggie. Tiffani's the one with all the boyfriends. But I'm the one that Rachelle doesn't think is stable.

JONI

I need a drink.

BARB

If I was principal of the school that's the first thing I'd do. Get beer in the concession stand for people to have at the games. Then fire the coach. Then kill Tiffani.

JONI

You'd make a good principal.

BARB

I know. But they never give power to the people who would use it right.

JONI

I took a job at the optometrist in Osky.

BARB

Did you?

JONI

I help people pick out glasses. Tell them they look nice. It's not much. But it gets me out of the house.

BARB

I bet Kenny likes that.

JONI

He says I don't bother him as much. Now my gums aren't flapping around all the time. And it's true, I don't talk as much as I used to. I don't have anything to talk about. And that's a good thing. When I don't talk, I get along better with everyone. Like now. I'm quiet and watching. And everyone likes me more. I've always been good at cheering from the stands. I don't hurt anyone here. And no one hurts me. *(Pause.)* Did someone just score a run?

BARB

I don't know.

JONI

Me neither.

BARB

I talked to Bonnie this week.

JONI
She tell you all about her divorce again?

BARB
No.

JONI
That's a first.

BARB
She's moving to Florida.

JONI
Florida? Why?

BARB
She wants to. She can. Her kids are grown. She likes the sun. There's nothing left for her here.

JONI
Must be nice to be able to pack up and go.

BARB
It must.

JONI
And Florida sounds nice.

BARB
It does.

JONI
She'll probably be lonely.

BARB
Probably.

JONI
I know I would.

BARB
Me too.

JONI

I wish this game would never end.

BARB

Yeah.

JONI

Last night I drank so much I fell down the stairs and I couldn't get up and Kenny just left me there. On the landing. Let me cry. All night long. Said it was my own fault. Said I wasn't hurt.

BARB

Were you?

JONI

No. I wasn't. Just sad. I was really sad.

BARB

I've got an extra room. If you ever want a place to stay.

JONI

I couldn't do that.

BARB

I won't charge rent. And you can stay as long as you like.

JONI

But Mandy—

BARB

She's in college. She won't care.

JONI

My other kids.

BARB

They're gone. They're all gone.

JONI

I don't know.

BARB

If you want to leave him, Joni. I've got the room. And I'd let you talk as much as you want. About anything you want. Or you don't have to talk if you don't want to. We could just sit in silence.

JONI

I'm sure Stuart wouldn't like me just moving in.

BARB

Stuart's moving to Des Moines.

JONI

Why's he doing that?

BARB

I met his, I don't know what you're supposed to call it. Boyfriend? He's young. Just graduated college. I don't know why he's with Stuart, but they're going to live together. Stuart hasn't asked for the divorce yet. I think he's worried I won't be able to take it.

JONI

I'm sorry.

BARB

We went out to dinner together. The three of us. Everything was fine. We were laughing. And then I don't know why, maybe I got sad and started thinking, but I made some stupid crack about how Stuart's boyfriend is the same age our son would have been had he lived. And Stuart got up and yelled at me. In the restaurant. In front of everyone. About intolerance. And what love is. And how I'll never know love because I'm ignorant and small-minded. And people clapped for him. The whole restaurant. They really did. Strangers applauded. Because I'm such an awful person for missing my son.

BARB cries.

JONI holds BARB's hand.

But the women don't look at each other.

JONI

There's a volleyball game in a few weeks. And football's coming up. Our boys are supposed to be good. And the marching band is always coming up with a new routine.

BARB

There's always another season to look forward to. If we can make it.

JONI

Yes, if we can make it, there's another season.

BARB

Look. It's over. The game.

JONI

Did we win?

BARB

I don't know. I can't tell.

JONI

Those girls from Millersburg. Look at them. Just awful. You're supposed to shake hands with the other team at the end of the game. They won't even shake hands.

BARB

They're such poor sports.

JONI

Rotten people.

BARB

Not like us.

JONI

No. We're not like that. Not at all. They don't know. They never learned: it's not if you win or lose.

BARB

It's how you play the game.

JONI

No. Barb. No. It's how you end the game. That's what counts. The ending.

Cicadas drone and crickets chirp.

The two women sit together, holding hands even tighter, still not looking at each other, as another season slowly slips away.

And the new season begins.

Lights fade.

END OF PLAY