

Fathers at a Game

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A Play in One Act

by

Trey Nichols

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Cast of Characters

Moe: A man in his 30's. A hothead.

Eddie: A man in his 20's. A thinker.

Lance: A man in his late teens. An innocent.

Scene

A bench at the edge of a high school football field. That will change.

Time

The Fall.

SETTING:

A bench at center.

AT RISE:

MOE and EDDIE sit facing front, watching what appears to be a high school football game. They are dressed casually; their clothing should incorporate khaki, olive and black.

Eddie has a strip of red cloth wrapped around the upper part of his right leg.

An underlying element of anxiety should charge the atmosphere, lending an aspect of incongruity to what should appear to be a relaxing setting.

Very faint, possibly unrecognizable sound of artillery fire can be heard infrequently throughout, though neither man seems to notice.

After a moment....

So!

MOE

So.

EDDIE

(Short pause. They gaze out at the field.)

Nice, huh?

MOE

Mm.

EDDIE

(Beat.)

You mean the--?

This. Everything. The field. The sky...

MOE

Yeah.

EDDIE

MOE

(Indicating the horizon)

...those clouds past the treetops. All pink and charcoal. Like fingers, you know?  
Reaching.

EDDIE

Beautiful.

MOE

Couldn't have asked for a nicer day. Not too warm, not too cold.

EDDIE

Great football weather.

MOE

You said it.

EDDIE

Yup.

MOE

There's something about this time of year.

EDDIE

Yup.

MOE

Kids carving pumpkins, running around with masks on, folks starting to bundle up. People are giddy. It's like...electricity in the air.

EDDIE

Yeah.

MOE

And everything starting up again--new school year, new football season, TV shows, new, everything new. It's a time for new beginnings.

EDDIE

Hunh.

MOE

You don't think so?

EDDIE

No, I just--

MOE

It's okay. You can disagree.

EDDIE

I dunno. I-I guess I've just always thought of it as a time for endings. Days getting shorter. Colder. Things dying. The year winding down.

MOE

You want to know something?

EDDIE

What?

MOE

You're a gloomy fuckin' guy.

EDDIE

Is that right?

MOE

Hey, it's not a put-down. It's just a fact. You're gloomy. I happen to be an optimist. I see an egg sunny-side up, you see a dead fetus. It's not like we can't eat at the same Denny's. We're just opposites. Maybe it's a good thing. Like that Chinese thing with the two tadpoles swimming round and round. They need each other to make a circle.

EDDIE

Yin and yang. I've read about it.

MOE

'Course you have. 'Cause you're also a gloomy fuckin' know-it-all. And if I didn't find you so amusing, I'd kick you. Egghead.

EDDIE

Watch it.

MOE

I'm kidding.

EDDIE

No, what you called me.

MOE

Egghead?

EDDIE

I don't think you should call me that.

MOE

Everybody calls you--

EDDIE

Used to!

MOE

Shit! Sorry.

EDDIE

Look, this whole thing is--

MOE

Hey, hey, we're on the same team here. Our boys, I mean. They're on the same team. Let's just watch the game, huh?

(They return their attention to the Field.)

Still the first quarter....

EDDIE

Right. Our boys are playing for the, um...

MOE

Eagles. They're running backs.

EDDIE

Running backs.

MOE

Like a team within a team.

EDDIE

Right. Okay, first quarter. Visiting team is offense. And the score is...

MOE

No score. We haven't missed a thing. Here we go!

(Rises, narrating the play.)

First and ten, Visitors' thirty-five! SNAP! Quarterback fades back...linebackers break through... SACKED at the thirty-three! WAY TO GO!

(Eddie winces in sudden pain, his face twisting up, eyes pinched shut.)

Eddie? You okay, buddy? Sun get in your eyes?

(No response from Eddie.)

Cause I, uh, I'd loan you my sunglasses buy I left them back in the, the--

EDDIE

(Gradually relaxing)

I'm fine. I was just, um, actually, I was...I was just thinking. And lately I seem to have gotten into the habit of scrunching up my face when my thoughts reach a certain pitch.

MOE

Yeah? Whatcha thinking about?

EDDIE

Something you said. About the electricity in the air. You're absolutely right. Everything is heightened this time of year. Colors are more intense. Sounds have an edge they don't have in summer.

(Beat. Then, softly, gazing out:)

Apples...

MOE

Huh?

EDDIE

That apple tree.

MOE

Where?

EDDIE

Across the field. See it?

MOE

Oh yeah, of course! The boys used to climb that tree when they were little fellas. Come home all sticky, little faces dripping with juice.

EDDIE

Just looking at the tree, I can feel my mouth start to pucker. I can taste it...

(Closes his eyes)

...the taut skin...tart meat...juice...

MOE

Yeah, same with smells. Like the grass. Those big whatchamacallits with the spinning blades were out here just the other day.

(Inhales deeply.)

Can you smell that field?

EDDIE

(Sniffs deeply)

Mmmm.

MOE

And something else.

(Sniffs.)

Weenies! Some folks are having a barbecue!

(They both sniff deeply, with great concentration,)

Smell that?

EDDIE

Yeah. It's fantastic.

MOE

Mmmm, my mouth's watering buckets.

EDDIE

We should've packed an ice chest.

MOE

Oh, man! Ground beef! Six-pack!

EDDIE

Potato salad! Chips!

(Sniffs.)

It's gone.

MOE

Nah. Wind just changed.

(Beat.)

Hey, listen. You hear that?

EDDIE

What?

MOE

Bunch of kids. Playing ring-around-the-rosy.

(They listen. Both start humming along.)

EDDIE

“Ashes, ashes...”

(Small pause.)

Moe, I hate to be a killjoy, but I think I’m having a little trouble with my--ha-ha--doggone leg.

MOE

What do I keep telling you? Quit jogging on sidewalks! One of these days you’re gonna wind up with shinsplints, and I’ll be minus a racquetball partner.

EDDIE

Right. Sorry.

MOE

Just hang in there. It won’t be long.

(Squeezes Eddie affectionately on the shoulder.)

Hey! What the hell are we doing? We got a game to watch!

(Jumps to his feet.)

We’re still defense, right?

EDDIE

Far as I--

MOE

First and ten, fifty yard line! SNAP! Quarterback moves back...no opening!... it’s the blitz! DOWN at their own forty-five! GO EAGLES!

(Watching the field.)

Ouch. QB don’t know what hit him.

(Chuckles)

They’re bringing out the stretcher. HEY! GET OUTTA THERE! LEAVE HIM FOR THE CROWS! I love this game.

(He sits back down.)

EDDIE

The kids are playing pretty rough this year.

MOE

You’re telling me. Looks like they’ve putting something more than milk in their Wheaties.

(Eddie massages his leg, trying to downplay a new wave of pain. Moe notices and slides closer, putting an arm around Eddie's shoulder.)

MOE (CONT.)

Hey, big guy. How long's it been since our boys've been playing football together?

EDDIE

I don't think I know.

MOE

Sure you do. They're what, seventeen now?

EDDIE

Seventeen, right...

MOE

They're seniors. And they been playing since they were in junior high.

EDDIE

...right...

MOE

...so that's...

EDDIE

...six years.

MOE

That's right! Six years. A lot of other kids would have dropped out, just quit. But not those two.

EDDIE

They're survivors.

MOE

Right! Now tell me, quick, how old were you when Little Eddie was born?

EDDIE

Oh, god...

MOE

Come on! Seems like just yesterday. You were in there holding, uhh, Diane's hand for ten hours straight!

EDDIE

(Softly, more to himself)

Diane...

MOE

Don'tcha remember? Her insides were all messed up. The doctor was gonna cut her open. I was out in the waiting room with a Sports Illustrated. I drove you home. Remember? You were a wreck. We stopped for coffee and a bear claw. The sun was just coming up over the Shell station. Remember the clouds? All pink and charcoal...like, uh...fingers...

EDDIE

Twenty-five! I was twenty-five.

MOE

So I was twenty-eight when Little Moe popped out! How old does that make us now?

EDDIE

I'm...

MOE

Quick.

EDDIE

...forty-two!

MOE

And I'm forty-five!

EDDIE

Whew!

MOE

We've been through some rough times together, buddy...

EDDIE

We've been to hell and back.

MOE

...but we've done okay for ourselves. Huh? We got a lot to crow about. Beautiful families. Nice homes.

EDDIE

You're right. I guess I don't think about it much.

MOE

Well, you should. Sometimes it's nice to just sit and reflect. Beautiful day like this. Forget your aches and pains. Think happy thoughts.

EDDIE

Our boys are gonna score touchdowns today.

MOE

That's the spirit. Hey, I betcha someday we'll be sitting here watching our grandsons play. We're the forefathers of a new tradition. Centuries from now our great-great-great-great-grandkids are gonna be sitting right here, on this very bench, watching their sons playing ball. And if they study their family trees, they'll see that all the twigs and branches lead down to the two big trunks that started it all: me and Debbie and you and Doris.

EDDIE

You mean me and Diane.

MOE

Huh?

EDDIE

You and Debbie and me and--

MOE

(Momentarily flustered)

No, no, no, I mean you and, and, Jesus, what's the matter with you?! You just spoiled a beautiful moment! Let's just watch the game! My kid'll kick my ass if he thinks I missed a single play!

(Scans the field.)

Hey! Those visiting scumbags missed their first down. Our boys are up! (Rises, yelling to the field.) YO! HEY GUYS! Come on, Eddie.

(He raises a fist and makes a spiral motion with his forearm, gyrating his hips.)

HEY, HEY, HEY! LET'S GO!

(Eddie gets up to cheer, but stops suddenly. He doubles over in pain and returns to the bench.)

Eddie, come on. It's our boys out there.

(No response.)

Eddie? You, uh, you having another one of those deep moments.

(No response.)

Your leg bugging you?

(No response. Moe is getting nervous.)

You okay?

(No response.)

'Cause it might be kinda impossible for me to, to, see, there's no one around who can, I mean, besides the coaches and doctors, but it's not like I can just go right up to them: "Hi, my buddy's got a bum leg, can you shoot him up with something so he can enjoy the game?"

(Pause. Eddie has not moved.)

Oh God. Eddie...

(Eddie suddenly sits upright, his agitation melting into forced serenity.)

EDDIE

Sorry, Moe. What was that?

MOE

Jesus. Are you okay?!

EDDIE

I'm fine.

MOE

I was shittin' bricks. How's your leg?

EDDIE

It's fine. I read somewhere you can control things like that. Pain, things like that. There's a section of the brain, and when you learn how to use it, you can turn it on and off. Like a little light switch.

MOE

So what the hell was the matter with you?!

EDDIE

Forget it. First and ten...

MOE

Come on! You gave me a heart attack.

EDDIE  
I just got a little embarrassed about something.

MOE  
What?

EDDIE  
Never mind.

MOE  
What? You pop a woody scoping a cheeleader?

EDDIE  
No. Nothing like that.

MOE  
One of the players? HA! I'm kidding. Tell me!

EDDIE  
It was nothing.

MOE  
Come on!

EDDIE  
This is stupid.

MOE  
(A mock tantrum)  
Come on, come on, come on!

EDDIE  
Watch the game.

MOE  
It can wait!

EDDIE  
Moe, our boys are playing.

MOE  
Hey, you don't have to tell me what our boy are doing. I know what are boys are doing. And they never kept secrets from each other.

EDDIE

Moe.

MOE

'Cause if one ever tried, the other one knew just how to make him 'fess up.

(He licks his index finger.)

EDDIE

Hey, look!

MOE

(Wiggling his finger menacingly)

Wet willie...wet willie...

EDDIE

It's the punt.

MOE

(Looking skyward)

Hell of a kick. It'll be up there awhile.

(Moves in closer.)

Wet Willie...tell me the big secret!

EDDIE

There's no secret!

MOE

(Sticking his finger in Eddie's ear)

Wet willie, wet willie!

(They wrestle a bit.)

EDDIE

Hey! Cut it out!

MOE

(More aggressively)

Wet Willie! Wet Willie!

EDDIE

Moe! I hate that!

MOE

(Grabs Eddie by the collar)

Wet Willie--tell me and I'll stop--Wet Willie! Wet Willie!

EDDIE

All right, all right, just quit!

MOE

I'm just having a little fun. I wanna hear all about your big embarrassment.

EDDIE

Okay. I just, I-I...forgot the name of our boys' high school. Happy now?

MOE

That's it?

EDDIE

That's it.

MOE

Dope.

(He gives Eddie an affectionate whack on the arm.)

You of all people. You were right next to me at the PTA meeting when they took the vote.

EDDIE

What vote?

MOE

To name the school.

EDDIE

And what did we name it?

MOE

Reagan High.

EDDIE

Of course. The Reagan High School Eagles. Who's the visiting team?

MOE

Who gives a shit?! Bunch of pussies! Look. Here comes that ball.

(They both fix their eyes on the kicked ball as it plummets earthward.)

And...it's...

...gonna be...

EDDIE

TOGETHER

CAUGHT BY MY BOY!

(They look at one another.)

EDDIE

I mean, I think...

MOE

No, you're right, it's your boy.

EDDIE

You sure?

MOE

Of course I'm sure!

EDDIE

Oh, uh, uh, good catch, son! Go, go go! He's to the fifty...the forty-five...the--

MOE

TACKLED at the forty!

EDDIE

Tackled?

MOE

(To the Field)

Hey, nice try, Little Eddie!

(Gives the thumbs up sign. Then, to Eddie:)

Good effort. He gained a good fifteen yards.

EDDIE

How did that happen? I swear he was covered.

MOE

Look a little harder next time.

EDDIE

Maybe next time he'll just let Little Moe catch the ball.

MOE

If you think that just 'cause you're kid catches a ball, he's gonna score, you're being arrogant.

(Points to the field)

Now look at that. That's beautiful.

EDDIE

What?

MOE

My boy is helping your boy to his feet. That's the kind of teamwork I like to see. ATTABOY, LITTLE MOE!!!

EDDIE

My boy would do the same thing.

MOE

Ha! My boy can do just fine on his own, thank you very much.

EDDIE

And my boy can't?

MOE

I'm not talking about your boy. Your boy is whatever you say. Now just sit back and let me call the plays.

EDDIE

Moe, if we're gonna sit here, if we're gonna watch this game together, don't you think, I mean it seems only right, that we take turns calling the plays.

MOE

Nah, let me take care of it. Now how about a little yell for the boys!

(To the field:)

HEY, GUYS! WAY TO GO!

(Eddie cups his hands around his mouth.)

EDDIE

Good job, son! Hang in there!

MOE

Eddie. Say it like you mean it. He's gonna think you'd rather see him in a tutu than a jersey. COME ON, BOYS! LET'S KICK SOME TAIL!

EDDIE

(Louder)

Let's go, guys! Show 'em what you're made of!

MOE

(In a building frenzy)

COME ON, GUYS! THEY CAN'T HURT YA! MOW 'EM DOWN! FUCKIN' WEEDS IS WHAT THEY ARE! FUCKIN' CRABGRASS!

EDDIE

Stay focused! Win this one for Dad! All the Dads!

MOE

THAT'S YOUR HOME OUT THERE! HOSTILE INVADERS ARE MARCHING RIGHT INTO YOUR LIVING ROOM!

EDDIE

Uh, Moe?

MOE

THEY'RE GONNA RAID YOUR 'FRIDGE! STEAL YOUR TV! SODOMIZE YOUR WOMAN! WHATCHA GONNA DO ABOUT IT?!

EDDIE

Watch the language.

MOE

THAT PIGSKIN'S YOUR MOTHER AND THEY'RE GONNA GANG-BANG HER!!!

EDDIE

Moe, shut up, for chrissake!

(Moe turns sharply to Eddie, red-faced, snarling and out of breath.)

MOE

Who the fuck you telling to shut up?! Huh?!

(He grabs Eddie's collar.)

You telling me to shut up?! I'll rip your fucking heart out and feed it to the squirrels!

(Pause. Moe does not let go. They stare at each other. Finally, Eddie shifts his focus to the field.)

EDDIE

(Evenly)  
Reverse hand-off. Your boy's got the ball.

MOE

Huh?!

EDDIE

There he goes! He's to the thirty! The twenty-five! The twenty!

MOE

(Momentarily confused)  
Uh, go! GO!

EDDIE

TACKLED at the eighteen!

MOE

What?! What just happened?!

EDDIE

You lost your cool. Your kid went down. You missed it. That darn Safety came out of nowhere. Your boy is fine, though. He's getting right up. HEY!

(He waves, winks and gives the thumbs up sign.)

MOE

What'd I say about letting me call the plays?

EDDIE

I got the hang of it. Buddy.

MOE

I mean it.

EDDIE

That safety was just lucky.

MOE

It won't happen again.

EDDIE

You must be proud of that boy.

MOE

Damn right.

EDDIE

I don't blame you.

(Beat.)

And for a kid that used to play with Dressy Bessie dolls, you've really worked wonders.

MOE

The hell you talkin' about?! He came out of his mama's belly kickin' and screamin' like the Tasmanian Devil. Or have you forgotten?

EDDIE

Forgotten? I was there. I came with you.

MOE

But you were out in the waiting room with a copy of Ranger Rick. I was in with the doctor when Baby Moe came flying outta my little Doreen.

EDDIE

Your little Doreen?

MOE

I'll never forget that moment. The kid took one look at me and the doc, then ripped the umbilical cord out with his own mouth. We made a little mobile out of it. Hung it right over the crib.

EDDIE

Right. Didn't he used to teethe on it?

MOE

If you want to know the truth, your kid's the one I used to worry about.

EDDIE

Oh? How's that?

MOE

Ever since they started playing together, your kid's always struck me as...well, kind of whiner. You know? A little too soft and pink.

EDDIE

Well, I'll tell you one thing. He's brighter than most of the guys on that field. He's just sensitive, too.

MOE

My boy's sensitive. He's also one hell of a warrior. I'm not so sure about your boy.

EDDIE

He's just a kid, for chrissake. He's not out there to kill and maim. He loves the camaraderie as much as the competition.

MOE

Oh yeah? If he likes the camaraderie so much, maybe he's in the wrong game. Maybe he oughta try some other "contact" sport.

EDDIE

I wouldn't worry about that.

MOE

You sure?

EDDIE

This is his game, all right.

MOE

If you say so.

(Uncomfortable pause. Eddie is stung by the general direction of Moe's banter. They stare out at the Field.)

MOE

Okay, first and ten at the uh...

EDDIE

Eighteen.

MOE

You sure? We were just there.

EDDIE

And here we are still. Try third and ten.

MOE

What?!

EDDIE

Your kid flubbed two passes. I think he's falling apart 'cause you're talking so much.

MOE

Fuck you.

(Moe rises, watches the field excitedly as he narrates the following:)

MOE (CONT.)

Okay, enemy's eighteen-yard line. SNAP! Triple reverse bypass jackknife thrust! My boy's got the ball! He ducks left. He spins right. He's Teflon! He's running, running, TOUCHDOWN! WAY TO GO, KIDDO!!! D'ya see that, Eddie?!

EDDIE

I saw the whole thing.

MOE

That's my boy!

EDDIE

(Flatly)

Congratulations, Moe. You must feel a very special thrill right now.

MOE

Hey, sourpuss. Your kid was in it, too. He was right behind him, keeping the field safe for Democracy.

EDDIE

Like you said. A team within a team.

MOE

And here comes the extra point! It's...(follows trajectory of ball)...good! YAAAAAY EAGLES!!! Come on, Eddie, get excited.

EDDIE

Siss-boom-bah.

MOE

Where's your spirit?

EDDIE

Oh, you know me. Always storing nuts for the winter.

MOE

Nuts, huh?

EDDIE

That's right. You never know when they might come in handy.

MOE

Ooooooh, I know what's on your mind. You're gonna do Donna after the game.

EDDIE

Hm. Now that you mention it...

MOE

Whatcha got in mind? You gonna sneak up behind her while she's setting the table.

EDDIE

Maybe. Or I could jump her in the kitchen while she's checking the oven.

MOE

Or lay her on the coffee table and as an hors d'oeuvre.

EDDIE

It's glasstop. We cracked it last week.

MOE

Hell, just force her up against the wide screen TV during Oprah.

EDDIE

(Checks his wrist)

Oprah's over. We'll have to settle for Dr Phil.

MOE

Yeeach! That's a freak show!

EDDIE

Oh, right. Not very conducive to a little spontaneous, goopy afternoon delight.

MOE

Better just settle for that dining table.

EDDIE

There's only one problem. You said Donna. Donna is your wife. I'm married to Diane. Remember? And I wouldn't dream of fucking Donna on that sheet of plywood you call a dinner table. I'd be pulling splinters out of her ass until dawn...

MOE

Wait a minute, my wife is, is...

EDDIE

...of course, I could always make a game of it and pull them out with my teeth...

MOE

(Lunging for Eddie)

I'm gonna--!

EDDIE

(Dodging Moe)

TOUCHDOWN FOR THE--the-what-did-you-say-their name-was-the PUSSIES!

MOE

What?!

EDDIE

Gotta pay attention.

MOE

I am!

(He gets up, redirecting his rage at Eddie out toward the "Referee" on the Field.)

TOUCHDOWN?! Bullshit! He was out of bounds!

(Pause.)

Go to hell! No you go to hell!

(Turning to Eddie.)

Are we gonna let this meathead talk to us like that?!

EDDIE

(Uneasily)

No, no, of course not.

(Moe strips off his windbreaker. Eddie joins him hesitantly, walking with a slight limp.)

MOE

(To the "Referee")

I oughtta kick your sorry ass over the goalpost, dumbshit! Wouldja like that?!

Huh?!

(To Eddie)

C'mere.

(He grabs Eddie and gives him a not-so-gentle kick in the rump with his knee.)

Look like fun?!

(Kicks Eddie again.)

Huh?!

(Kicks Eddie again.)

I'd be out there making your day right now if it wasn't for my buddy's leg!

EDDIE

That's very thoughtful, Moe.

(Moe lets go of Eddie, keeping an eye on the  
 “Referee.” Eddie can barely stand up unsupported.)

MOE

You okay?

EDDIE

Hangin’ in there.

MOE

Some of these refs need to see a little assertiveness.

EDDIE

Sure. Help me to the bench?

(Moe helps Eddie back to the bench. They sit for a  
 moment, regrouping, studying the Field.)

What’s the score now? Seven to six?

MOE

Still seven-zip.

EDDIE

What?

MOE

You heard me. The runner was out of bounds.

EDDIE

It was a touchdown. I saw it.

MOE

Read the scoreboard, numbskull. Still seven to zero, Eagles.

EDDIE

But I saw it. I called it. You can’t change a play.

MOE

I didn’t change a thing. You called it before the Referee called it. That’s your  
 mistake.

(To the Referee)

Sorry for the fuss!

(Small pause. Then, to Eddie)

You don’t like it, go talk to him yourself.

EDDIE

No wonder the Eagles are doing so well.

MOE

It's just teamwork.

EDDIE

And it's only the first quarter.

MOE

We're in the second.

EDDIE

My, my. Time really flies when your leg is rotting at the hip.

MOE

It's just a pulled muscle. Relax.

EDDIE

Maybe we should go over the rules here. They're a little...ill-defined.

MOE

There are two rules: you're ill; I'm defined.

(Pause. They stare out at the Field. Moe smirks, pleased with himself. Eddie is irritated. Moe starts chuckling to himself.)

That was kinda funny, huh?

EDDIE

What?

MOE

What I just said. That...quip? Was that a quip?

EDDIE

Yes, Moe. It was. You made a quip. In answer to you query. You made a quaint little quip in the second quarter.

MOE

Wanna know something?

EDDIE

Quite possibly.

MOE

You're a gloomy fuckin' know-it-all with no sense of humor.

EDDIE

And you're the Queen.

MOE

Knock it off. You're ruining everything. Let's just watch the game.

EDDIE

I'm trying, believe me.

(They return their attention to the Field.)

MOE

Okay, first and--

OFFSTAGE VOICE

(Weakly)

Hey...

(They look at one another.)

EDDIE

What was that?

MOE

Wait.

(They listen, but there is only silence.)

Nothin'. Maybe a little static on the PA system.

OFFSTAGE VOICE

Egghead...!

EDDIE

There it is again.

MOE

Stay cool.

OFFSTAGE VOICE

(Closer)

Moe...Egghead...

EDDIE

(Rising)  
That sounds like Lance!

MOE

Hey, hey, hey. Sit down.

EDDIE

Moe, Jesus.

MOE

Hey, hey, relax. The game's not over.

EDDIE

(Stepping forward unsteadily)  
Time out!

(To the Field)

Hey! Time out! Time out, everyone!

MOE

They can't hear you.

EDDIE

TIME OUT!

MOE

Eddie, for chrissake.

EDDIE

We've gotta help Lance.

MOE

Whoever this guy is, if we help him, I'll decide. Got it? Now let's watch the game.

(Lance crawls on from Stage Right. He is wearing torn and soiled army camouflage. He is weak, badly injured and bleeding from a head wound. He holds a small object in a clenched fist.)

LANCE

We're fucked, man, we're gone, everyone...radio's dead...

(He collapses, panting.)

Oh my god. What happened?  
EDDIE

Eddie, look at me!  
MOE

(Moving toward Lance)  
Lance...  
EDDIE

(Moe grabs Eddie and pulls him back down.)

MOE  
LOOK AT ME YOU ONE-LEG, CHICKENSHIT MEALY-MOUTH CRIPPLE!  
I'M HEALTHY! I'M STRONG! I'M IN COMMAND OF MY SENSES! I  
HEAR A LITTLE STATIC ON THE PA SYSTEM! YOU GOT A PROBLEM  
WITH THAT?! TAKE IT TO THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT!

Hey guys...  
LANCE

(Eddie starts toward Lance. Moe grabs Eddie  
roughly, sits him back down.)

You're not gonna let this homeless piece of shit spoil our day, are you?  
MOE

What are you talking about?  
EDDIE

You sap. Don't you know what's going on here? This guy's gonna try and put  
the whammy on you with some crazy tragic story...  
MOE

Moe, it's Lance! He needs help.  
EDDIE

Forget it, man. Whoever he is, he's already dead. Nothing we can do.  
MOE

Let go of me.  
EDDIE

Hey, hey, little buddy, just calm down. No one's goin' anywhere.  
MOE  
(Putting his arm around Eddie)

EDDIE

(Struggling to break free)

LET GO!

MOE

(Keeping Eddie reined in)

Hey, little fella. What's past is past. Jeez, you pull a muscle in your leg, your whole world comes apart. You need me right now, Eddie...

EDDIE

You're crazy...

MOE

...you need me. Now listen...

EDDIE

...really fucking batshit crazy!

MOE

...you know I love you...

EDDIE

Moe, please...

MOE

...and when a man feels the kind of love for another man that I feel for you, sometimes he has to do things to defend that love...

(Eddie struggles to get away. Moe easily keeps him in place.)

...difficult things...not very nice things.

(Moe takes one of Eddie's hands into both of his own.)

Now watch the game. The opposing motherfuckers missed their first down. Our boys are up again. You gonna watch?

(He takes hold of one of Eddie's fingers.)

EDDIE

Moe, let me--

MOE

Snap!

(He snaps one of Eddie's fingers. Eddie twists and cries out in pain.)

Quarterback moves back...back...look at our boys block those defensive tackles. That's teamwork. But what the hell is this?! Quarterback's running with it?! Jee-sus! TACKLED at the forty-eight. Damn! What do you think, Eddie? Think he showed enough faith in our boys? No, sir. Should have waited for an opening and tried for a pass.

EDDIE

Lance!

MOE

Snap!

(He snaps another one of Eddie's fingers.)

Everyone can tell what kind of fathers we are by watching our boys out on that field. Our spirits are there in the way they move. You can see courage. Determination. And trust. They trust each other. And they've earned the trust of their teammates. Except for that jackass quarterback--DOWN AT THE FIFTY-TWO!--shit, that puts us at second and fourteen. See, the problem is the QB's not responding to our boys. He's not paying attention. They're busting ass for him, and he's on another planet. Are you catching all this?

EDDIE

(Giving in)

Yes...enough...

MOE

Good. Okay. Now there's a change in the air. Can you feel it? A new spirit of cooperation. Watch. Snap.

(Moe releases Eddie's hand.)

Look how the Quarterback's letting our boys block for him now. No one's gonna touch him. He's got all the time he needs...he sees an opening...he throws...it's COMPLETE...RECEIVER'S RUNNING...RUNNING...TOUCHDOWN!!! WAY TO GO, EAGLES!!! How about that, Eddie? D'ya see the teamwork? The trust?!

(Eddie nods, defeated.)

LANCE

(Stirring weakly)  
Moe...Egghead...?

MOE

Hey! Buzz off!  
(Nudges Eddie.)  
Eddie, tell him to get lost.

EDDIE

Get lost.  
(He gets up, cradling his broken fingers, and limps  
over to Lance.)

Go! You heard us! Get the fuck out of here! Go clean yourself up! Get a job.  
Find help.

(Lance is looks up at Eddie uncomprehendingly.  
Moe is facing front, watching the Field, but  
listening to Eddie. Eddie and Lance look at one  
another. Lance reaches weakly for Eddie's hand.  
Eddie touches Lance's hand gently with his fingers,  
then quickly pulls away, shaking his head. He  
returns to Moe's side.)

MOE

I'm proud of you, man.

EDDIE

Yeah?

MOE

That was beautiful. Oh, hey, we made the extra point. The score is fourteen-zip.  
It's the end of the half.

(They stare out at the Field. Long silence.)

LANCE

If anyone cares...they got us...radio's dead...

MOE

Shut up! We're watching the drill team!

LANCE

Drill team?

EDDIE

Our sons are playing football. It's half-time. Now if you want to stick around, you're gonna have to keep quiet.

MOE

Don't encourage him.

EDDIE

Look at him. He's not going anywhere. We can either kick the shit out of him, which will mean missing most of the second half, or we can try to include him.

MOE

Or set him on fire.

EDDIE

He's harmless. Just tune him out.

(Eddie and Moe stare out at the Field, watching the halftime events.)

LANCE

Bloody, fuckin', snot-runnin', messed up, shit-eatin' kid from Illinois. Just got the shit shot out of me. Hey. Builds character.

(Pause.)

You ain't gonna help me. I'm bleeding bad, Egghead. Moe?

(Pause.)

You ain't gonna help?

(Pause.)

I thought you guys got hit in the ambush. No one saw it coming. I found six of the guys. Radio's busted. 'S body parts 'n shit back there. I never seen...never seen nothin'...Raymond lost an arm. How come I knew it was Raymond's, see, I got his, his...

(He unclenches his hand, revealing a gold wedding band)

...pulled it off him. Send back to his wife. Then I got hit. Don't think I'll be making it to a post office. 'Less I'm in a box.

(Lance laughs/cries weakly for about a full minute, softly, like gentle rain. Moe and Eddie watch the game. Then a brief silence.)

The rebels are closing in, last thing I heard, but there's a way out. It'll be choked off before nightfall, but you might make it if you go now. It's a coupla miles north by those hills next to that stand of birch near the old factory east of that brook by the lake near the quarry where we saw all those trout floating under the rainbow over the marsh by those dunes west of the wheat fields with the prairie in the distance and the mountains beyond. You can't miss it. A corridor right there.

If you hurry, you might make it. Unless the stronghold fell, see, I dunno, 'cuz the radio...just go, man. Go now or you're dead. There's your game. Go.

(He dies. Silence. Moe and Eddie are still concentrating on the game. Moe glances over at the body. Slowly, he gets up and walks over. He stands over the body. Eddie watches him.)

MOE

In every little Hometown USA, the sad shape of things to come. Like a tide coming in. It's a tragedy.

EDDIE

Should we bury him?

MOE

The cops'll find him. They'll take him away. Another John Doe.

EDDIE

Cut it out. Let's bury him before we go.

MOE

I'm not touching him. Except for this.

(He bends down and takes the ring.)

EDDIE

Moe, didn't you hear him? We've got to get out of here.

MOE

You're babbling.

EDDIE

Come on. The game's over.

MOE

Relax. It's only halftime.

EDDIE

Moe. What just happened?

MOE

Who can explain these things? The Eagles scored a touchdown. The clock ran out. The players ran to the locker rooms. The sun moved west.

(Examines the wedding band.)

This could be worth something...

EDDIE

What are you going to do with it?

MOE

Sell it. Denise has a friend who does appraisals. Maybe we'll buy a boat. Take a vacation.

(To the field.)

Just look at those cheerleaders. If I were twenty years younger...

(Eddie just stares at him.)

Sorry, man. Finders, keepers.

EDDIE

This is crazy.

MOE

What are you talking about?

EDDIE

Moe, Christ, everyone is dead. I'm a mess, and I'm not talking about a pulled muscle in my leg--

MOE

Oh, hey, I'm sorry if I was a little rough on your hand--

EDDIE

We're not going to be rescued! No one knows where we are! We've got to get out here before the sun goes down and I can't make it alone.

MOE

I'll drive you. We'll take the boys out for some milkshakes.

EDDIE

Am I losing my mind?

MOE

(Shrugs. Then, to the Field) Hey. The Marching Band is playing the alma mater. (Rises. Sings.) "Taah-dee-dum-duh-duhh, dum duh brave and strong..."

EDDIE

Moe!

MOE

"Ke-e-ep fighting al-l-l-lways, dah-dah-something-lo-o-o-ong..."

EDDIE

We're not going to make it out of here! We're not getting married! We're not having sons! The game's over. We lost.

(Pause.)

MOE

(Softly)

I hear you.

(Eddie sits down wearily.)

EDDIE

Thank god. We need a plan.

MOE

I got it all figured out. Tonight you'll get a good night's sleep. Dede's home right now fixing you a nice dinner. Tomorrow I'll take you to Kaiser. They can run some tests. Maybe set you up with a prescription. Now why don't you just sit back and watch the rest of the game. The third quarter is about to start.

(Eddie stares out front hopelessly.)

Some beautiful girls out there, huh, Eddie?

(Silence. They stare out at the Field.)

Hey! Our boys are coming out onto the Field. YO! HEY GUYS!

(He waves.)

EDDIE

Moe. I owe you an apology. I've been a little out of it these past few weeks, this leg thing, the mortgage, work stuff. I'm sorry if I've been rude or, or if I seem to be taking it out on you...

MOE

Hey, hey, no apologies.

EDDIE

Thanks. Okay, let's see here. Eagles are offense. Fourteen-*zip*.

MOE

What quarter?

EDDIE

Third. It's late afternoon. October. The clouds are pink and charcoal. We're at the edge of the football field of Reagan High School. I'm forty-two years old. My wife is home setting out the silverware. Oprah is over; Dr. Phil has begun.

MOE

Yeah, yeah. Shh! It's the kickoff.

EDDIE

There it goes...

(They follow the arc of the ball's trajectory from left to right.)...

MOE

And...it's...caught at the fifteen...he's running with it...GO GO GO!

EDDIE

TACKLED at the Eagles' forty-five!

MOE

Hey, I'll call the plays.

EDDIE

I got it. He carried the ball a good thirty yards.

MOE

That's 'cause our boys worked together to...

EDDIE

Your boy.

MOE

Huh?

EDDIE

Your boy.

MOE

My boy what?

EDDIE

Didn't I tell you? We had little Eddie transferred to another school last year.

MOE

You nut! Your boy goes to Reagan High and plays running back for the Eagles, same as my kid.

EDDIE

I never said that.

MOE

We've been talking about the boys all day! You said--

EDDIE

I lied. You know, you can control things like that. Truth, things like that. There's a section of the brain--

MOE

Shut up!

EDDIE

Aren't you going to ask me why we had him transferred?

MOE

No!

EDDIE

For one thing, he wanted a much tougher athletic program. Plus, he was tired of always standing in your boy's shadow. Playing sidekick to a screwball with a brain the size of a walnut can really wear you down. He needed space to grow on his own. And boy, has he! He's been spending hours and hours swimming, jogging, powerlifting. He's been on a high-protein diet since his sophomore year and the results have been staggering. To tell the truth, I think his coach has been slipping a few candy-colored supplements into his Gatorade. Not that I mind. His team is 12 and 0 this season for the first time in the high school's history, and I couldn't be prouder. Do you want to know the name of his team, Moe? Do you?

MOE

No.

EDDIE

The Pussies.

MOE

Christ...

EDDIE

And let me tell you, with a name like that, these boys have really had to bite and claw their way to the number one spot in the district. Eddie Jr. plays defense. There he is right now.

(Waves, winks, and gives the thumbs up sign.)

When's the last time you saw him?

MOE

I don't remember.

EDDIE

Then you probably don't even recognize him. He stands about two heads taller than his teammates. They had to hire a special tailor to make his uniform. The factory just doesn't make 'em that big. He's number twenty-five. That's how old I was when he was born. Remember?

MOE

No.

EDDIE

Sure you do! It was the proudest day of my life. You were at the house when the midwife came over. Don't you remember? You were on the toilet reading Hustler. After the delivery we went out for cappuccino and a scone. The sun was going down. Remember? The clouds were green and black.

MOE

Goddammit! Our boys are on the same team!

EDDIE

But they're not, Moe. That's what I'm trying to tell you. They're not. Just watch the game and I'll tell you all about it.

(Moe stares out at the Field, fuming.)

The other night during a steak dinner prepared by my lovely wife Desdemona, my boy told me a funny thing. Actually, he doesn't really talk much these days, just sort of grunts and gestures, but Mommy and I understand him all right. Anyway, we were all sitting there eating dinner when he conveyed to me that he wanted to file his incisors down to razor sharp points. He felt that the taste of blood in his mouth on the field might improve his game. Well, I was sort of flabbergasted. So I said to him, "Son. Do you really think you need to improve your game?" And then he just sort of stared at me with that dead blank stare I've seen him get sometimes when he's working on an algebra problem or shoving a firecracker up a small animal's ass. And all he said was: "Fuck you, Dad. Fuck you." Then he took his steak knife, with the blade still moist, and v-v-v-v-r-r-rmp! Sliced my leg above the knee. That's the real reason I'm having trouble with this leg. I was

pretty upset at first, as you can well imagine. But I've got to hand it to the kid. The incision was clean. No major arteries were hit. I was going to dress the wound, you know, stitches, the works. But I'm just so damn proud of that boy, I decided to leave it alone. Wear it like a badge of honor; a mark of filial tenderness; a Daddy round steak marinated in love.

(Eddie removes the strip of cloth from his right leg, revealing a horrible open wound.)

EDDIE

Look, Moe. Does this look like a torn muscle to you?

MOE

You're disgusting.

EDDIE

Aren't you going to ask me what position he plays?

MOE

No.

EDDIE

He plays Safety. He looks like a linebacker, but don't let his size fool you. That kid is fast.

MOE

You're not going to win...

EDDIE

(Suddenly to the Field)

DOWN AT THE FIFTY!!! WAY TO GO, PUSSIES!!! SECOND AND FIVE!

(Stands up and does pelvic thrusts.)

WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-WHAM!!!

MOE

So what the hell are you doing over here, smart ass?! This section's for the home team.

EDDIE

I've been looking around, but all I see is you and me. Yin and yang. Opposites. The sunny optimist versus the gloomy fucking know-it-all.

(Thrusting his pelvis at Moe.)

Wham.

MOE

Cut that crap!

EDDIE

(To the Field)

DOWN AT THE PUSSIES' FORTY-FIVE! DAMN! First and ten!

MOE

COME ON, EAGLES!!!

EDDIE

Moe, look! Do you see those two plumes of steam hovering over the field?

MOE

Where?

EDDIE

Right there! Coming out of my boy's nostrils. He's really getting worked up!

MOE

Well my kid is--

EDDIE

DOWN AT THE FORTY-TWO! SECOND AND SEVEN! COME ON, GUYS!!!

(Thrusts his pelvis spasmodically.)

WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-WHAM!

MOE

GO EAGLES!!!

(Flaps his arms)

FLAP-FLAP-FLAP-FLAP--

(Eddie bursts out laughing.)

MOE

The fuck's the matter with you?!

EDDIE

You look ridicu--whoa, boy! Did you feel that?!

MOE

What?

EDDIE

The earth shook a little. It happens occasionally when my boy plays. He infuses the team with a wild, aggressive team spirit. It's sort of barbaric, really, but in a wholesome, all-American way. Kind of like Mom's apple pie with a few razor blades slipped in--

MOE

Shut up! Christ, would you shut up?! You're making me sick! What's the matter with you?! What's changing here?!

EDDIE

The balance of power. I don't think our teams ever understood each other, Moe, and this is where it's gotten them. I'm scared, Moe. I'm afraid something awful is going to happen out there. Something that neither of us can prevent. It's times like these when I question what kind of father I've been. Nurturing or too demanding? Accepting or judgemental? A role model or the antichrist? Moe, I'm scared for our sons.

MOE

Well, I ain't scared of--

EDDIE

(Leaping up)

DOWN AT THE THIRTY! DAMN! FIRST AND TEN!

MOE

(Grabs Eddie violently)

SHUT UP! JUST SHUT UP! How do you know what's going on out there?! You're fucking with my head! You're putting pictures in my head! You're killing the game! We had a chance to win this thing and you're killing it!

(He lets go of Eddie, who crumples onto the bench. Moe slowly sits back down and stares out at the field. Eddie remains lying down, face up. He is growing weaker. Silence for a moment.)

EDDIE

Moe. We never had a chance. Don't you see that? We were never on the same team. We just needed each other to make a circle.

(Moe gazes out at the Field, not responding. Eddie turns his head to see the Field. He speaks slowly, as if narrating a slow motion dream.)

Third and ten at the thirty-yard line. Snap. The Quarterback fades back...back...he stops...he's looking for an opening...you can hear his heart

pounding...there it goes...it's complete! And it's your boy who caught it, Moe!  
He's running! He's to the twenty-five...the twenty...the fifteen...he's going all the  
way...congratulations...

MOE

(Rising hopefully)

Yeah?

EDDIE

He's to the ten...nine...eight...wait! Number Twenty-five bursts through! That's  
my boy, the Safety from Hell...DOWN at the second yard line. Beautiful tackle!  
Poetry in motion! But I'm so sorry, Moe. You see, Eddie Jr. goes a little berserk  
during his moments of triumph. I tell him to play by the rules, but secretly I think  
he despises them. He just can't seem to escape his brute instincts. It looks like  
he's really smashing your son to a pulp. The coaches aren't even going to touch  
him. He's throwing Little Moe around like a rag doll. Maybe I can talk some  
sense into him.

(Slowly sits up)

Hey, Little Eddie! You did real good, boy, but don't go losing your head!  
HEAD! I don't think he understood, Moe. He's making your boy give him head.  
And I think your boy likes it. He's really going down. LITTLE EDDIE! NOT  
"GIVE HEAD!" I SAID "LOSE HEAD!" Now what's he doing? Oh gosh,  
Moe. He yanked your boy's head right off. Everyone's joining in. They're  
decapitating your son. Now both teams are tossing around parts. I think they're  
starting a whole new game. Or maybe it's some weird post-game ritual. Kids,  
these days. Hey! The coach is coming out onto the field. And he's got a hibachi.  
I guess it's good we didn't bring our own meat after all.

(Silence.)

Hey, Moe?

MOE

Do not talk to me.

(Pause. Eddie is growing steadily weaker.)

EDDIE

I have something to tell you.

MOE

You may not talk to me.

EDDIE

Just let me just say this one thing, then I'll leave if that's what you want. I'll  
crawl off and hitch a ride home, but just listen to this one thing. This whole thing

out there, it wasn't real. It was just the halftime show. Special effects had us both fooled. The third quarter'll be starting any minute now...

(Moe is considering this, but doesn't regard Eddie directly.)

Hey, Moe. Look at the sky. It's so big. It even sounds big. Sky. Just goes on and on. Look at that one small cloud. It looks kind of like...Abraham Lincoln.

(Pause. Moe gradually shifts his gaze skyward.)

MOE

It's a donkey.

EDDIE

You think so?

(Small pause.)

Oh, yeah. I can see that.

(Eddie shifts his body closer to Moe.)

EDDIE

And that's the moon next to it. Right?

MOE

That's the moon.

(Eddie is calmed.)

EDDIE

Hey. Do you remember the time I was playing football at that big picnic?

MOE

Huh?

EDDIE

You and Mom were there.

MOE

What are you talking about?

EDDIE

I scored a touchdown. I saw you watching me. You didn't say anything, but I saw you watching me.

MOE

(Playing along)

Oh, yeah. I remember that day. I was proud of you.

(Pause. Eddie lies back down and shifts his body so that his head is on Moe's lap.)

EDDIE

I'm gonna take a nap.

MOE

You do that.

EDDIE

I'm pretty tired.

MOE

I bet.

EDDIE

It's been a long week.

MOE

It has.

EDDIE

Br-r-r-r-r. It's chilly.

(Moe takes off his windbreaker and lays it across Eddie.)

Thanks, Pop. Hey, can we stop for a milkshake on the way home?

MOE

If you can beat me to the car.

EDDIE

You're on!

MOE

You think you're that fast?

EDDIE

I know I am.

MOE

If you say so.

EDDIE

You'll see.

(Small pause. Eddie curls up against Moe, clutching the windbreaker like a blanket.)

Night-night.

MOE

Night-night.

(Silence. Eddie drifts off. Moe stares out at the Field. He hugs himself for warmth. Then, softly:)

Go Eagles.

(As Moe gazes out at the Field, we hear the very faint sound of sports fans cheering.)

BLACKOUT

THE END