

Iambic Gridiron

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1 EXT - VIETNAMESE VILLAGE - DAY

1

DRYDEN CLOUGH, as he will appear to us in the present, even wearing the rumpled overcoat that we well see on the train, walks warily through the middle of the thatched roof huts, rifle at the ready. As he nears the center of the village a shadowy figure appears in one of the nearby windows and throws an object at DRYDEN's feet.

2 CLOSE UP OF THROWN OBJECT, IT IS A HAND GRENADE

2

SFX of hand grenade exploding

3 INT TRAIN - DAY

3

DRYDEN jerks awake while seated in the seat of a train that is slowing. The CONDUCTOR is tapping him on the shoulder.

CONDUCTOR
(loudly)
Sheldon. Next stop Sheldon.

DRYDEN, now fully awake, stirs and starts to get up and collect his things. All he has with him are a large coat and a battered briefcase. DRYDEN, a bear of a man in his mid-forties, is rumpled and preoccupied. As the train stops, he fumbles with his briefcase and drapes his coat across the seat. The train stops and he moves to the exit, leaving his coat on the seat.

4 EXT PLATFORM - DAY

4

DRYDEN steps down from the train, pauses a moment and sets his briefcase by his foot. He pats his torso as if looking for something. He turns suddenly and re-enters the train. We see a static shot of the briefcase just sitting there. After a few beats the train begins to move and DRYDEN steps off the moving train with a comfortable athletic movement that shows his still considerable physical skills. DRYDEN straightens and looks around to get his bearings. He is the only passenger to get off the train. Toward the end of the platform is a petite woman, bundled against the cold wind. She is SUE HASTINGS, an attractive woman in her early thirties. She approaches DRYDEN.

SUE
(pronounces the name like
"cough")
Are you Dryden Clough?

DRYDEN
Clough, rhymes with Kow-tow.

He gives her a slightly theatrical bow. She reaches out to shake his hand. She is obviously self-assured and comfortable.

SUE
You're not exactly what I pictured, Dr. Clough (slight emphases on the pronunciation), you seem... , I don't know, somewhat larger than the typical teacher of modern American poetry. I'm Sue Hastings, Dean of Instructional Development here at Sheldon.

DRYDEN
Well, Sue Hastings, forgive me, I mean Doctor Hastings, I'm really looking forward to the challenges that you've outlined in your letters.

SUE
Well, challenge is definitely on the agenda. My car is over here, do you have any other baggage?

DRYDEN
I'm having everything sent up by freight. Some of it should be here already.

He takes her arm and they move toward the parking lot.

DRYDEN (cont'd)
Why don't you fill me in on what's going on and your plans to change things? You are talking about changing some things, aren't you?

SUE
Well, yes, there are some changes that I feel need to be made, but perhaps I should show you around a little and let you get settled before I dump all my cares and woe on your head.

They reach the parking lot and get settled into a small nondescript car to drive off. As they drive through town and onto the campus we see an extremely pretty northeastern small town that surrounds an even prettier small college.

5

INT - HASTING'S CAR - DAY

5

SUE

I'll show you your office first, then your classroom, then I'll drop you off at your apartment, I'm sure you could use some rest. After that, if you'd like, we can get a bite to eat. I'd also like to have you over to my place sometime soon, for a little get together with some of your new colleagues. Nothing fancy, just a few of those who are involved in the changes we spoke of.

6

EXT - SHELDON COLLEGE - DAY

6

They exit her car and begin to walk toward some buildings in the background. The campus is deserted even though it is the middle of the afternoon.

DRYDEN

Will Mr. Sheldon be there?

SUE

Oh no. My goodness, I'm afraid we don't travel in the same social circles, Dr. Clough.

DRYDEN

Ah, I see. By the way, I'd really prefer to be called Dryden. I don't have much use for titles. I don't mind if others use fancy handles, but I've hated them ever since they made everybody call me Lieutenant.

DRYDEN looks around and notices for the first time that the place seems completely deserted.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

Where is everyone, anyway?

SUE

It's Saturday afternoon. Around here, Saturday afternoon in the fall means only one thing, football. There's a home game on right now. Listen, you can hear the cheering from the stadium over there.

From the background a figure appears on a bicycle. As he approaches we see that it is a very expensive, state-of-the-art, mountain bike, and that the rider is wearing the latest in biking apparel, the fanciest helmet, brightly colored jersey, skin tight spandex riding shorts, et al. He rides up to DRYDEN and SUE and we see it is RAYMOND DELONG.

RAYMOND
(sweating and slightly out
of breath)
SUE, how are you?

SUE
Hello RAYMOND. Nice to see you all
decked out in your riding togs
again.

RAYMOND
Aw. It is better to look the part
than be the part, I always say.

He looks pointedly at DRYDEN.

SUE
RAYMOND DELONG, meet DRYDEN CLOUGH.
DRYDEN is the new professor for the
Modern American Poets class.

RAYMOND
Aw yes. So this is the famous poet
you were telling us about. Well,
well. Now isn't it a small world
after all.

RAYMOND reaches over to shake DRYDEN'S hand as SUE continues.

SUE
DRYDEN, RAYMOND is in the English
Department too. 19th Century Lit.
He's one of a small group of people
involved in those changes we spoke
of.

RAYMOND
So, SUE's showing you around is
she? Getting you all settled in?

DRYDEN
Yes, she's...

RAYMOND interrupts. He speaks to SUE while continuing to look pointedly at DRYDEN.

RAYMOND

SUE darling, don't give away all the surprises to old DRYDEN here. We'll want to leave some drama for him to discover on his own.

There is a pause as though all three are waiting for the other shoe to drop. RAYMOND shifts his attention back to SUE and takes on an ever so slightly oily tone to his voice.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

SUE, I hope you haven't forgotten that we're doing brunch with KEVIN and STANLEY tomorrow. STANLEY would just be devastated if we're late and ruin his soufflé. *Ciao.*

He leans over awkwardly while still astride the bike and pulling SUE towards him he attempts to kiss her on the mouth. She stiffens and turns her head so that he can only give her a peck on the cheek. This little tableau is not lost on DRYDEN.

INT - SMALL RESTAURANT - NIGHT

DRYDEN and SUE are seated at a small table in a quiet corner of a warm and cozy little restaurant.

SUE

I think this is the nicest restaurant in town. Not that we have a very large selection to draw from.

DRYDEN

It looks great. Do you come here often?

SUE

No, actually just a few times. Why?

DRYDEN

Oh, no reason. Just wondering how you spend your time when you're away from school.

SUE

If you're wondering about my social life, I can tell you the whole story in three words. "There ain't none."

DRYDEN

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to pry.

SUE

That's OK, I'm only half serious anyway. The big problem for me is that I'm fairly new here also. That and the fact that it's just a small town, a small campus.

DRYDEN

Do you come from a big town?

SUE

New York, is that big enough?

DRYDEN

Funny, you don't look New Yorkish.

SUE

(in a mock Brooklyn accent)

You were expecting maybe a Brooklyn accent and some gum?

DRYDEN

(laughing)

Well, the gum would be a nice touch.

There's a BEAT while the waiter approaches the table with menus.

WAITER

Good evening. We have a very nice Colonial Pot Roast tonight, it comes with all trimmings and is \$10.95 which includes your beverage.

DRYDEN

That's fine with me. SUE, would you like some time with the menu?

SUE

No, the Pot Roast is fine. I'd like some water with the meal and some coffee after.

DRYDEN

The same for me, please.

WAITER

Very good.

During this entire exchange, DRYDEN and SUE have gazed steadily at each other. They have not looked up to the waiter at all. The waiter smiles knowingly as he leaves.

DRYDEN

What brought you here to Sheldon anyway?

SUE

The chance to be a Dean of Instructional Development that actually has something to develop. You see, Sheldon really needs to raise its standard of instruction or else it may have trouble from the accreditation authorities. For years now it has been a kind of football factory. It has brought in these young jocks from all over and used them in the football program to generate money and prestige. There has been incredible pressure from the coach, a Neanderthal with the amazing name of "RED DOG," to give passing grades to the team members, irrespective of the caliber of work done.

DRYDEN

How does the rest of the faculty feel about all this? Do they go along with the coach?

SUE

Most have pretty much been cowed by him. He's a pretty intimidating fellow. A few have gotten together to try and figure out some methods of countering all this.

DRYDEN

Are you a part of that group?

SUE

I'm trying to get some focus and moderation into it. Some of them, led by RAYMOND DELONG, the fellow you met today on the bicycle, take what I feel is a pretty extreme position. They want to shut down the whole athletic department.

DRYDEN

That seems a little surprising to me in light of Professor DELONG's apparent passion for biking. I mean, he seemed to have all the accoutrements that a really avid bike racing enthusiast would have.

SUE

On, he an enthusiast alright. That's part of the problem. Once he got up a a faculty planning meeting and suggested that we start a bicycle racing team and the coach stood up and ridiculed him. Called him names, the usual stuff having to do with a cat, you know. Really childish stuff, but RAYMOND really hates him for it. He'll do just about anything to get back at him.

DRYDEN

So, Professor DELONG hates the coach and wants to get rid of the entire program. What about you? Do you agree?

SUE

Well, I'm not quite sure that the whole program should be dropped. I would prefer to see the priorities shifted. I think that the number one item on everybody's mind here ought to be the intellectual and academic growth of all the students. I played hockey and ran track when I was in school and found that they were a great way to have fun, stay fit, and help me learn. But around here football often seems to be the main job. I'd rather that going to school was the main job and football came somewhere after that.

DRYDEN

As Benjamin Disraeli said, "the essence of education is the education of the entire body." You need to feed the mind and the body in order for a youngster to truly grow to his or her full potential.

BEAT

DRYDEN (cont'd)

I think you've set an interesting
and exciting course for yourself
Dr. HASTINGS. I hope you'll let me
come along for the ride.

7

INT. - LECTURE HALL - DAY

7

Medium sized lecture hall, Monday morning. The audience is composed almost entirely of very fit, athletic looking young male college students.

DRYDEN enters and, striding to the lectern, notices the students.

DRYDEN

Am I in the right place? Is this
English 141, The Later American
Poets?

There is a general murmur of amused assent.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

Well, I must say it's nice to see
such interest from so many men in a
class on this subject.

He pauses to take notes and a textbook out of his briefcase.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

I'd like to take a moment to lay
out my plans for this course. As
you know, this is the study of some
recent American Poets. The course
will be divided into roughly three
sections and there will be a mid-
term as well as a paper due for
each of the three sections.

There is a growing swell of discontented murmuring throughout the hall. One very good looking young man, GREG WATT, quarterback and team captain, finally stands up and speaks.

GREG

Say, perhaps you don't know the
routine here at Sheldon, Pops. You
see, this here is a football class.
We don't actually study in football
classes. We have to take some
classes that have real high
falautin' names so that the NC
double A will leave us alone.

(MORE)

GREG (cont'd)

Coach makes us go to 'em cause he's afraid they'll pull some kind of spot check, but we don't really have to study and stuff. Get it?

DRYDEN

Yes, I think I see. And you are?

GREG

(preening with pride)

I'm GREG WATT, the quarterback.

DRYDEN

Mr. Watt, I have some bad news for you. I like football a lot, but I don't do football classes. I only do real classes. And in this class we shall start off by reading the first two chapters of the text and bringing in a poem of your own making devised in the style of anyone you like.

A commotion begins at the back of the hall. Several of the men are attempting to restrain a very large, very surly linebacker named MEAT. As DRYDEN continues with his reply to GREG, MEAT becomes more agitated and aggressive. He breaks away from those trying to hold him and charges the front of the hall.

8

EXT - VIETNAMESE VILLAGE - DAY

8

DRYDEN CLOUGH, as he appears to us in the classroom, walks warily through the middle of the thatched roof huts, rifle at the ready. As he nears the center of the village a shadowy figure appears in one of the nearby windows and throws an object at DRYDEN's feet.

9

CLOSE UP OF THROWN OBJECT, IT IS A HAND GRENADE

9

SFX OF HAND GRENADE EXPLODING

10

INT - SAME LECTURE HALL - DAY

10

MEAT lunges forward and grabs DRYDEN in a bear hug. DRYDEN, ensuring that he keeps his arms free from MEAT's grasp jams his thumbs into the nerve ganglia located in the middle of MEAT's rib cage, causing MEAT's arms to fly apart, releasing DRYDEN and causing MEAT great shock and consternation. The surprise is not limited to MEAT alone, there is general consternation throughout the room.

As MEAT stands there dumbfounded, DRYDEN reaches up and grabs MEAT's upper lip between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand, gives it a half twist to the left. This results in excruciating pain to MEAT and he immediately drops to his knees at DRYDEN's feet. DRYDEN leans forward and speaks quietly to MEAT.

DRYDEN
Would you like me to stop?

MEAT cannot reply, never having experienced anything quite like this, he can only look up at DRYDEN with a teary, pleading look. DRYDEN continues quietly so that only MEAT can hear.

DRYDEN (cont'd)
Pay attention. I'll only tell you this once. If you ever attack me again, I'll kill you. Am I making myself clear?

MEAT still can't nod so he can only speak without moving his lips at all.

MEAT
Yeths.

DRYDEN
Do you believe me?

MEAT
Yeths.

DRYDEN releases MEAT, who remains on his knees at the front of the class. There is a shocked silence throughout. DRYDEN continues calmly, as though nothing had happened.

DRYDEN
Now, as I was saying, you should read the first two chapters in the text and then I want you to devise a poem of your own. You are completely free to base it in any style or form you choose.

DRYDEN is unpacking and arranging his new office. He shelves books, hangs pictures, and is about to hang up a framed Marine Corps Emblem in an open wall area between the door and a shelf, when the door is rudely thrust open and, uninvited, in marches a rotund, belligerent, red faced man, Benjamin "RED DOG" Curtis, the head football coach of Sheldon.

Barging into such a small space in a rush, he traps DRYDEN behind the door.

RED DOG

What in the name of all holy hell
is going on around here? What's
this I hear about some egg sucking
poetry teacher named Clock beating
the hell out of one of my players?
Not just any player, MEAT, fer
crying out loud.

DRYDEN

(from behind the door)
Excuse me, I'm the egg sucking
poetry teacher, and the name is
Clough, rhymes with wow.

DRYDEN pushes the door closed, RED DOG turns and comes face to face with DRYDEN's shirt front.

RED DOG

You teach poetry?

DRYDEN

It's even worse than that, I write
the stuff too.

DRYDEN turns and finishes hanging the framed Marine Corps Emblem. Then he turns back to face the coach.

12

INT - ROSCOE'S OFFICE - DAY

12

ROSCOE SHELDON is a tall, graying, prosperous looking man, impeccably well groomed. He wears his wealth with comfort. His office is well appointed and tasteful without being ostentatious. He is lecturing RED DOG.

ROSCOE

RED DOG, it's time we made some
adjustments. You know I've admired
you as a coach. But times are
changing and we have to change with
them.

He moves form behind his desk to where RED DOG stands, hat in hand.

ROSCOE (cont'd)

We have always tried to be a place
for youngsters to come and play
football.

(MORE)

ROSCOE (cont'd)

I know they haven't always graduated, but at least they got a look at the world outside the ghetto, or off the farm. Got a chance to see that there's more to life than pushers on the corner or cows that need to be milked.

RED DOG

Mr. Sheldon, you know me. I'm just an old linebacker. Sure I bent a few rules now and again, but damn it, the whole thing is winning. If you win, everything works.

ROSCOE

If the NCAA decertifies us, that'll mean the end of the football team. And that would mean the end of the whole college. This place needs to turn a profit or the board will subdivide it into million dollar mansions for rich stock brokers from New York. We must have the football team to draw the money and to draw the money the football team needs to win.

RED DOG

Geez, Mr. Sheldon, what do ya' want me to do? If I tell the team they gotta start really going to classes like that big chump CLOCK wants, they'll raise holy hell.

ROSCOE

RED DOG, you need to know a lot more about Dr. DRYDEN CLOUGH. He can take care of himself. You better leave DRYDEN CLOUGH alone or he'll clean your clock.

RED DOG

How come you know so much about this dude anyway?

ROSCOE turns to the window. He has a far-away look, as though remembering.

ROSCOE

Never mind about that. Let's just say that for once, Dr. SUE HASTINGS and I are on the same wavelength.

RED DOG

That woman! She drives me nuts. She and that pansy DELONG won't be happy until they completely dismantle the whole football program. Why, I bet she's behind this whole thing with this poetry guy, DRYDEN what's his name.

ROSCOE

In a way she is, at least she thinks she is. But as I said, RED DOG, it's time we made some adjustments. Times are changing and I can't afford to get left behind.

13

INT - STUDENT UNION COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

13

MEAT is seated at a table alone. DRYDEN enters and seeing him walks over to join him.

DRYDEN

Mind if I join you?

MEAT

(recoiling)

You're not planning to grab me again, are you?

DRYDEN

No, you're not planning to grab me, are you?

MEAT

Naw, come on, that was just an accident, I lost my head, that's all. I'm cool now.

DRYDEN sits across from him, there is much attention being paid to the two of them by the other student customers, a WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS

Can I get you something, Dr. Clog?

DRYDEN

Clough, rhymes with now. I'll have some coffee, and bring MEAT here whatever he's drinking.

MEAT

I was having a beer, I don't suppose you'd spring for that, would ya?

DRYDEN

Sure I will. Why not? You're old enough, aren't you? Bring Mr. MEAT here a beer.

As the WAITRESS leaves, MEAT squirms uncomfortably.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

One thing you should know, MEAT; I never hold a grudge. What happened today is old news as far as I'm concerned.

MEAT looks a little relieved.

MEAT

Yeah, well like I said, I just lost my cool, that's all. I got a bit of a temper.

DRYDEN

What set you off this morning, MEAT?

MEAT

I thought you said that was old news.

DRYDEN

It is, but I'd like to avoid setting you off again if I can. Come on, level with me. After all, I'm the guy you tried to squeeze in half today.

The WAITRESS brings their drinks and MEAT takes that time to assess whether or not he can trust this guy. He decides he can.

MEAT

I just got nervous about all that reading and stuff you were talking about, that's all.

DRYDEN

You don't like to read much, do you?

MEAT

Hey, look! I'm a damn good middle linebacker, I'm just not so hot on the reading and book stuff, that's all.

DRYDEN

Would you like to get better at that book stuff?

MEAT

Well, sure, only I'm not all that smart, ya know.

DRYDEN

You're smart enough to be a good middle linebacker.

MEAT

Aw, that ain't no great shakes. Any dumb cluck who'll stick his head into the pile can play middle linebacker.

DRYDEN pauses for a moment looking off into the distance as if remembering long ago.

DRYDEN

I'll bet you're a lot smarter than you give yourself credit for. Do you know all the defensive plays in your playbook?

MEAT

Yeah, sure, that's my job.

DRYDEN

Not just the linebacker positions, but every position on the defense on every set, on every combination. Right? And what's more, if you're as good as they say you are, you probably know all the offensive positions for all the offensive plays too. Am I right?

MEAT look impressed that DRYDEN knows so much about football, and begins to swell up a little with some pride at this unexpected praise.

MEAT

Well, year, I guess I can. Kind of a fancy way of saying it all, but, yeah, I can do all that.

14

EXT - LECTURE HALL - DAY

14

LINDA KELSEY, an extremely beautiful young woman, GREG WATT's girlfriend, is waiting impatiently outside the lecture hall before class begins. She is agitated and upset. She peers frequently into the distance, as if looking for someone. GREG come up behind her and playfully grabs her around the waist.

LINDA
(startled)
What the...?

She starts to turn as if the throw a punch.

GREG
(ducking back)
Whoa, baby, it's just me.

LINDA
What are you doing back there? I thought you'd be over at the administration building. Did you get everything straightened out with MEAT?

GREG
There wasn't anything to straighten out.

LINDA
What the heck does that mean?

GREG
Just what it says. There wasn't anything to straighten out. They never heard anything about it. I checked it out kinda sly like, you know? Nobody over at administration heard anything about any of it.

LINDA
You mean at stand there and tell me that MEAT attacks a professor, and nobody in the old HQ building even hears about it? What gives?

They turn as MEAT approaches.

GREG/LINDA
(together)
MEAT! What happened to you?

MEAT
Whadda ya mean, what happened?

GREG

That professor, man? The one you tried to pop. Aren't they going to expel you or anything?

MEAT

Aw, no man. That's Dr. CLOUGH, he's cool. He and I had a talk last night and everything's fine?

GREG

Did you pop him last night?

LINDA

Did you threaten him?

MEAT

Threaten? No, nothing like that. Like I told you, he's cool. Besides, I got nothing to threaten him with.

GREG

Man, that's news. Not only does MEAT think a professor is cool, but he also can't intimidate him. Call the school paper, get a reporter over here.

MEAT

(scowling)

I said I ain't got nothing to threaten him with. I didn't say I ain't got nothing to threaten you with.

MEAT turns to LINDA

MEAT (cont'd)

Say, LINDA, except that ya hang out with this knothead, you're the smartest person I know. Did you write that poem we was supposed to have for this class?

LINDA

Yeah, I wrote something, I hope you can call it a poem.

MEAT

Well, I was trying to write this thing, ya know, and I'm like not sure if it's the right kind of thing or not.

(MORE)

MEAT (cont'd)
 Would you kinda look it over for me
 and tell me if it's OK?

GREG grabs his shirt front in a mock heart attack

GREG
 Oh my God! MEAT Is doing HOMEWORK!
 I gotta sit down. Give me air, call
 911.

LINDA
 Knock it off, Bozo. MEAT's not as
 stupid as you dumb jocks would like
 to think. I'd be happy to read it
 with you MEAT.

15 INT - LECTURE HALL - DAY

15

The class is just under way

DRYDEN
 Now, as you will recall, last time
 we met I asked you to prepare a
 poem of your own devising, in any
 style or form you choose. Any
 takers?

There is a moment of shy looking about. DRYDEN continues

DRYDEN (cont'd)
 Miss Kelsey? I have it on good
 authority that you have talent in
 this area. Do you have anything for
 us?

LINDA
 (blushing slightly)
 Well, yes, I did write a poem. At
 least I hope it's a poem.

DRYDEN
 May we hear it?

She stirs slightly with discomfort, then rising

LINDA
 It's called "Rose Secrets."

What secrets do roses keep? /of scent and beauty /and thorns
 a pricked finger fondles a pearl /and points at the forlorn
 moon

Aghast at the thought unspoken /we reach beyond what we know/
 and steal a kiss /to ply the rose /And the blood dries /to
 mar the pearl /as the moon sails away

There is a quiet contemplative pause.

DRYDEN

I see that my information was
 correct, Ms Kelsey, you are indeed
 talented.

DRYDEN turns to the rest of the class as LINDA sits down.

DRYDEN (cont'd)
 Anyone else like to give it a try?

GREG

(embarrassed)

Well, uh, yes. I'd like to try.
 Don't expect anything as good as
 that though.

There is a rustle around the room, as though everyone is
 expecting something outrageous or funny

GREG (cont'd)
 It's called "Sky."

The sky is not just above,/ it is here,/ all around us./ We
 are blessed - / each time we breathe,/ we touch the sky.

There is a stunned silence. LINDA looks at GREG with wonder.

DRYDEN

Well done Mr. Watt. Anyone else?

From the back of the room MEAT stands up.

MEAT

Yeah, I got something.

DRYDEN

OK MEAT, give it a shot.

The class is now in complete shock.

MEAT

(in a limerick singsong)

I am a football player/ the name I
 am called is Meat./ When I'm on the
 field/ you better watch out/ cause
 Meat just can't be beat.

At this, there is a roar of laughter. As the laughter goes on, even growing, MEAT begins to fume. He is about to storm out when...

DRYDEN

Wait a minute, MEAT. Settle down everybody. MEAT, that's a terrific poem.

MEAT

Really?

DRYDEN

Yes it is. You've used a very old and popular poetic form called the Limerick.

Turning to the board, he talks as he writes MEAT's poem on the board with chalk.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

"I am a football player/ the name I am called is Meat./ When I'm on the field/ you better watch out/ cause Meat just can't be beat."
This is a fine example of the five line spondiac trochee, with anapestic metre. It is reminiscent of Ben Jonson's protégé, Robert Herrick's *Night Piece*. From, let's see, about 1648.

He writes this on the board as well

DRYDEN (cont'd)

Her eyes the Glow-worme lend thee/ the shooting starres attend thee/ And the Elves also/ Whose little eyes glow/ Like sparks of fire, befriend thee.

There is a beat

DRYDEN (cont'd)

Shakespeare as well, *King Lear*, Act III where Edgar is disguised as the mad beggar: Swithold footed thrice the old,/ He met the night mare and her nine fold,/ Did her alight/ And her troth plight,/ and aroint thee witch, aroint thee!

There is another beat

DRYDEN (cont'd)
 As I told you MEAT, it's only when
 you believe them, that they can
 have their way. You applied
 yourself to a tough problem and you
 came through. I'm proud of you.

EXT - LECTURE HALL - DAY

There is a general buzz as the class files out into the sunlight. LINDA, GREG and MEAT stand on the steps.

MEAT
 Boy, how about that? Did I tell you
 this guy is cool, or what?

LINDA
 (ignoring MEAT, to GREG)
 That was a terrific poem GREG. I'm
 just knocked out.

GREG
 Well, I gotta try and keep up with
 the two of you stars of the class.

MEAT
 That's the first time anybody ever
 took me serious.

LINDA and GREG turn to MEAT

LINDA
 I take you seriously, MEAT. I've
 told you all along not to listen to
 these dumb jocks.

GREG
 Yeah, OK, so your poem wasn't so
 bad. Whadda ya want, a medal?

MEAT
 (pumped with pride he
 grabs each by the arm)
 Maybe there's more to ol' MEAT than
 meets the eye.

We see a moderately large, comfortably furnished living room. It is functional, well appointed but not luxurious or overly sumptuous. There are six people present in addition to DRYDEN and SUE.

Each of them is dressed comfortably, but ever so slightly out of fashion, as though being fashionable were somehow unfashionable. All but DRYDEN are relaxed and at ease with the others, as if from frequent association.

SUE

Everyone, this is DRYDEN CLOUGH. He's the new Adjunct Professor of American Poetry that we've been awaiting. He prefers to be called DRYDEN, and he comes to us with the highest possible standing in the literary and academic communities. DRYDEN, this is Edgar Mills of the Sociology Department and his wife Dorothy, a psychoanalyst.

EDGAR bustles over. He walks using a cane to support a stiff right leg, and shakes hands with his left hand since his right holds the cane. The cane doesn't slow him much, he seems to fuss over everything.

EDGAR

My yes, good show. My yes. DRYDEN is it? Yes, good show. My wife DOROTHY, you know. We're certainly glad to have you, my yes.

EDGAR pumps his hand furiously as DRYDEN tries to nod and smile at DOROTHY.

SUE

This is HORTENSE KAPLAN. Doctor KAPLAN is from Political Science. She's a specialist in the former Soviet Union and writes extensively on balance of power issues.

DR. KAPLAN

Doctor CLOUGH. Glad you're on board. We need all the academic standing we can get around here.

Across the room, RAYMOND DELONG speaks loud enough to make sure the whole room can hear.

RAYMOND

Which is it SUE? I forget, it is academic standing? I'm sure the famous DRYDEN CLOUGH is much more widely known for his athletic standing than for his, what, literary? IS that it SUE? Literary?

SUE ignores RAYMOND and instead turns to KEVIN and STANLEY.

SUE

This is KEVIN RAINES, president of the Academic Senate, and STANLEY STILLS of Art History.

STANLEY

We are just ever so happy that you decided to join us. I mean, here at Sheldon, not just tonight, although tonight as well, of course.

DRYDEN reaches out to shake hands, first with KEVIN, who gives his hand one gruff jolt while nodding brusquely, and then with STANLEY who takes the proffered hand in both of his, almost drawing it up to his breast.

SUE finally turns to RAYMOND.

SUE

And this gentleman, who may have had more wine than he should, is RAYMOND DELONG, also of the English Department, 19th Century Comparative Literature. You met the day you arrived, the bike togs, remember?

RAYMOND

(More than slightly drunk)

No need to introduce me, SUE, not to the famous DRYDEN CLOUGH. Why, we were at Berkeley together, old DRYDEN and I. Not that we ever met, mind you. Not lowly old RAY DELONG and the famous All-America football hero. Actually, I was a bit surprised to hear that you were coming here, CLOUGH, I'd heard you were killed in Vietnam.

DRYDEN CLOUGH, as he will appear to us at the party, walks warily through the middle of the thatched roof huts, rifle at the ready. As he nears the center of the village a shadowy figure appears in one of the nearby windows and throws an object at DRYDEN's feet.

18

CLOSE UP OF THROWN OBJECT, IT IS A HAND GRENADE

18

SFX of hand grenade exploding

DRYDEN

Well, it was sometimes close, but no kewpie doll. They tried their damndest, but I managed to pull through. So we were at Cal together?

RAYMOND

Look, CLOUGH, don't try that chummier than thou attitude with me. We went to Berkeley at the same time, we were in no way at Cal together. You would not have stooped to talk to me, you were the biggest thing on that campus, star athlete, champion everything. Went off to become a war hero, while I was just a nerdy little lit major who couldn't even make water boy.

DRYDEN

So what makes you the most angry? That you couldn't make water boy, or that I was on the team?

RAYMOND

Listen, CLOUGE, we've got a big problem around here with an administration that thinks the world begins and ends with the goddamn football team. We don't need another jock coming in here telling us that the scholarship athletes can't get the grades that we think they ought to have.

DRYDEN

Well, you're right about that.

RAYMOND

What?

DRYDEN

You are right. The scholarship athletes should be tested and graded in exactly the same way as the rest of the student body.

(MORE)

DRYDEN (cont'd)

However, you have to make damn sure that being pissed off at me doesn't have any effect on how you grade them though. If you have a hang up about aging football players, don't let that interfere with the treatment that you give any student.

RAYMOND

(sputtering)

I'd never do that. And I resent the hell out of you accusing me of any such thing.

DRYDEN

I'm not accusing you of anything even remotely like that, I'm just trying to show you the players perspective on all this.

BEAT

DRYDEN (cont'd)

Sure, I got some special treatment because I could play football, but I never got graded any easier than anyone else. I've learned some lessons that I feel need to be passed on. I learned some of those lessons in the classroom, I even learned some of them in battle, but I also learned some of them on the football field and I won't discount any of that, they're all important to the totality of who I am now. You're probably right about me not talking to you back then. That was stupid of me. Believe me, that's only one tiny part of the pile of regrets that I've built up. All I ask is that you don't blame these young football players for any of the insensitive and stupid things that I did or didn't do back in the dark ages.

RAYMOND

That's a pretty speech CLOUGH. It'll be interesting to see how you stand up to the powers around here.

(MORE)

RAYMOND (cont'd)

They don't seem to care much about the lessons you may need to pass along, they only care about winning football games.

RAYMOND leaves in a huff. The rest of the room is in embarrassed silence. Finally SUE breaks the tension.

SUE

At least there's not much doubt about where you stand on all this DRYDEN.

She turns to leave the room, there is anger in her tone and in her eyes.

SUE (cont'd)

We were going to talk about raising academic standards, but it's obvious from your remarks that you're more interested in coddling football players than getting this college up to a decent level of achievement.

19

EXT - FOOTBALL PRACTICE FIELD -DAY

19

DRYDEN stands unnoticed in the shadow of an equipment shed while he watches football practice. ROSCOE SHELDON walks quietly up behind him.

ROSCOE

Still miss it, don't you?

20

EXT - VIETNAMESE VILLAGE - DAY

20

DRYDEN CLOUGH, dressed as we see at the practice field, walks warily through the middle of the thatched roof huts, rifle at the ready. As he nears the center of the village a shadowy figure appears in one of the nearby windows and throws an object at DRYDEN's feet.

21

CLOSE UP OF THROWN OBJECT, IT IS A HAND GRENADE

21

This time, instead of exploding, someone reaches in and snatches up the grenade and hurls it away where it explodes harmlessly. Pan up to the face of ROSCOE SHELDON.

22

EXT - PRACTICE FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

22

DRYDEN

(without turning)

Yeah, I miss it. (Pause) How're
doing Skipper?

ROSCOE

Skipper, I haven't been called that
in an awfully long time. (Pause)
I'm OK. You know me DRYDEN, I'm
always OK, always land on my feet.

DRYDEN

You stuck me in the middle again
Skipper.

ROSCOE

That's your lot in life DRYDEN.
You're smart and tough. Sometimes
you need smart, and sometimes you
need tough. Not only can you tell
which is which, but you're good at
it either way.

DRYDEN

That was all a long time ago
Skipper.

ROSCOE

Some things don't leave you. The
legs give out, the hair gets thin.
Smart and tough never go away.

DRYDEN

So you've managed to get SUE
HASTINGS to think she's hired some
kind of academic gun slinger who'll
come in here and wreck havoc with
the football program so that the
young minds can get their real
money's worth?

ROSCOE

Yeah, MS HASTINGS is very keen on
young minds.

DRYDEN

And since when are you not?

ROSCOE

Oh, you know me DRYDEN, ever the
pragmatist. Means justify ends and
all that.

(MORE)

ROSCOE (cont'd)

I just wanted to give some guys who wouldn't ordinarily get any breaks a chance to at least see the inside of a college. Besides, that football program pays most of the bills around here.

DRYDEN

What do you want me to do?

ROSCOE

Why, I thought that would be obvious.

DRYDEN

ROSCOE, nothing about you is ever obvious.

ROSCOE

I want you to run my football program for me.

DRYDEN

What if I'm on her side in all of this?

ROSCOE

Fine, be on anybody's side you want. Just remember, without football this place either has to charge so much in tuition that it turns into a little elitist coffee klatch, or else it goes broke and shuts down.

DRYDEN

So you want both?

ROSCOE

In a word, yeah. I lost too many kids in Vietnam who should've had a better chance than they had. I need to keep this place going to give the next crop a chance to make something of themselves, before the system chews them up.

DRYDEN

It didn't help you and me. We both got chewed on pretty good and we had college educations, pretty good ones if I remember right.

ROSCOE

We made our own choices. You and I always had options. Those kids we lost never really did. They didn't get to choose. They just got used up. I'm only interested in giving them some options, if they screw it up then, they're on their own.

DRYDEN

What about teaching?

ROSCOE

You really need that?

DRYDEN

Does a duck need a quacker?

ROSCOE

You drag this football program into the twenty-first century, and you can teach as much poetry as you can stand.

23

INT - HALLWAY OUTSIDE SUE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

23

DRYDEN leans against the wall, as SUE approaches her door laden with books, briefcase and a small sack of groceries.

DRYDEN

Hi lady, can I give you a hand?

She ignores him and opens her door with the keys that she is holding in the same hand as the sack.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

Come on SUE, can't we at least talk this over?

She goes through the door and shuts it firmly behind her. DRYDEN moves to her door and speaks loudly to the panel.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

SUE, I'm a big, loud guy. I can hold this conversation through the door if you want, but the neighbors are not going to like it.

SUE opens the door, leaves it standing open and turns back into the interior of the apartment. DRYDEN enters the apartment.

24

INT - SUE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

24

As DRYDEN enters the apartment, SUE disappears into the kitchen area without a word.

DRYDEN

(to himself as he removes
his coat)

Good evening DRYDEN, how've you been? Won't you come in and make yourself comfortable Why yes, I don't mind if I do, and how have you been Dr. HASTINGS?

SUE re-enters the living room and gives DRYDEN a withering look.

SUE

All right, you've made your point,
what do you want?

DRYDEN

I want to talk. I want to find out what you seem to be so mad about.

SUE

What I'm mad about? For starters, how about your making a complete fool of me in front of people who I respect and who's opinions matter to me? How about lying to me and coming here under false pretenses? How about a blatant attempt to charm me into thinking you were one thing when in fact you are the complete opposite?

DRYDEN

Whoa. One thing at a time.

SUE

I'm glad to see that you can still see the humor in all of this. I'm afraid I'm losing some of my humor about it.

DRYDEN

(sobering quickly)

All right. Look, you're right, this isn't funny, I'm just laughing because I'm uncomfortable and don't like being as awkward as a school boy. OK?

(MORE)

DRYDEN (cont'd)

Look, in the first place, I don't feel that I was the one who embarrassed you, I think that distinction should go to RAYMOND DELONG, and secondly I didn't come here under false pretenses, everything I've told you has been the truth.

SUE

What about the fact that you were an All-American football hero?

DRYDEN

All-America.

SUE

What?

DRYDEN

The term is All-America, not All-American. Like all-city, or all-state. All-America.

SUE

Well forgive me if I'm not up on all the proper jock terminology. I still say you came here under false pretenses.

DRYDEN

You were searching for someone who could teach poetry and stand up to a bullying football coach. I filled the bill. The facts of my football history never came up. What'd you expect, some skinny little Milquetoast who would wither 'ol RED DOG with his blistering intellect? 'Ol RED DOG ain't playing in that league.

SUE

Then why do I still feel as if I got used?

DRYDEN sighs and turns to stare out of the window.

DRYDEN

Because you did get used. Only not be me. You got used be ROSCOE SHELDON.

SUE

ROSCOE SHELDON? What has he got to do with this? He's been in direct opposition to all of this from the very beginning.

DRYDEN

ROSCOE has never opposed you, if he had, none of this would have even happened. Had ROSCOE not manipulated you into getting me to come here you probably would never have heard of me.

SUE

You sure seem to know an awful lot about ROSCOE SHELDON.

DRYDEN

I didn't tell you about my football playing because it never really came up. I didn't see that it was relevant. I didn't tell you that I served in Vietnam either, again it didn't seem relevant. The other, and probably much more relevant fact is that my Commanding Officer in Vietnam was none other than ROSCOE SHELDON. I probably know more about ROSCOE SHELDON than anyone ever has, including his mother. And more to the point, he knows me the same way. He decided come time ago that this football program needed to be revamped, brought into line with the times. He maneuvered you into getting me here because he knew I'd come anywhere if I thought he needed me.

SUE

You knew about this all along?

DRYDEN

No, I didn't know anything about it. As a matter of fact, I only found out about it this afternoon. I came here because you asked me. Because it wasn't ROSCOE asking me. I thought I'd made it here because I was a teacher and a poet. I didn't want to come here as an aging jock who could save the damned football program.

SUE
So he's using you too?

DRYDEN
ROSCOE uses everybody, that's just his style. He doesn't feel like he's accomplished anything unless he's maneuvering people around like chess pieces. Even if he has them doing what they really want to do.

SUE
What about all that smooth talking charm to get me to think that you were on our side in all this?

DRYDEN moves back over to the couch and sits down wearily.

DRYDEN
SUE, I've been rode hard and put away wet. I don't put smooth moves on beautiful women. I've never been any good at it and one thing I've learned in my life, never try anything that you know you're not any good at. Perhaps you need to be more comfortable with the fact that you are a beautiful, intelligent, desirable woman and just accept the fact that some of us are going to try to be as charming as we can manage.

SUE looks at him for a long moment. She moves across the room, sits beside him on the couch, reaches over and takes a double fistful of his lapels, and pulls him to her and kisses him.

25

INT - RED DOG CURTIS' OFFICE - DAY

25

RAYMOND DELONG is perched on the corner of the desk in the middle of the coach's office as RED DOG enters.

RED DOG
What are you doing here? Get your skinny butt off my desk and outta my office.

RAYMOND

Why coach, where's your
hospitality? I Came here to do us
both a favor.

RED DOG

I don't need no favors from you,
pencil neck.

RAYMOND

Oh I think you do. I understand you
like coaching here. I think this
new guy CLOUGH, is going after your
job.

RED DOG

Are you outta yor mind? He's a
poetry teacher, fer crying out
loud. What the hell does he know
about football?

RAYMOND

Does the term All-American
linebacker from Cal mean anything
to you?

RED DOG

Him? No kidding?

RAYMOND

Not only that, he's an old friend
of you buddy ROSCOE SHELDON.

RED DOG

Is that so? Well, so what? That
don't mean he's here to take over
my job.

RAYMOND

Come on CURTIS, you're not that
dumb. You can see the handwriting
on the wall as clearly as I can.

RAYMOND gets up and begins to roam around the office
fingering various items throughout.

RED DOG

So what? That still don't answer
the question. What the hell are you
doing here?

RAYMOND

Let's just say that I have reasons to see Dr. DRYDEN CLOUGH no do as well as he usually does. I don't like you, but I'd rather deal with having you strut around here than see DRYDEN CLOUGH move in on me.

RED DOG

OK, so I'm listening. What ya got in mind?

26

EXT - FOOTBALL PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

26

RED DOG is obviously upset. He is screaming unmercifully at his players and working them extremely hard.

RED DOG

This is a game we got coming up this weekend. These guys from Tech are good, and if you jerks ain't ready they are going to chew you up.

The team is beginning to drag, they are all bathed in sweat, limp with fatigue and beginning to show signs of physical exhaustion.

RED DOG (cont'd)

Come on Watt! Now that you've become the poetry teacher's pet you too good to work for the team anymore? Give me some sprints you sorry little pansy.

GREG WATT peels off from the group and starts to run sprints up and down the field.

RED DOG (cont'd)

WATT! You poetry read'n pervert! I want you sprinting.

As RED DOG's attention is focused on WATT, ROSCOE and DRYDEN approach from behind him. They both wear grim looks. Just as RED DOG becomes aware of their approach, WATT comes up to him, starts to speak and instead collapses in a heap at his feet. RED DOG looks down at him dumbfounded. Both DRYDEN and ROSCOE leap to his sides, rolling him carefully over onto his back. DRYDEN bends over his face and checks his breathing. He looks up at ROSCOE.

DRYDEN

He's not breathing, get on the phone and get an ambulance here as fast as you can.

Reaching down to WATT's chin, he places two fingers under it and tilts WATT's head back to insure his airway is clear. DRYDEN bends and gives him two quick breaths, then carefully checks his neck for a pulse. While DRYDEN starts his first aid efforts, MEAT has come over and ROSCOE turns to him.

ROSCOE

MEAT! Get over to the phone at the maintenance shed and call 911. Tell them we have a man down on the practice field.

DRYDEN

(looking up from his efforts)

He has a pulse, but he's not breathing. Tell them that.

MEAT sprints away toward a shed in the background. Meanwhile, the team has started to gather around. While they watch DRYDEN perform first aid, many of them look accusingly at RED DOG. RED DOG looks painfully distressed.

RED DOG

What's the matter with him? He was OK just a minute ago. Jeez, it happened so fast, I didn't even know anything was wrong.

ROSCOE

We saw you ridin' him RED DOG. You were unhappy with DRYDEN here, and you were taking it out on Mr. WATT.

RED DOG

No, no, honest. I was only trying to get the team ready for the big game Saturday. I wasn't ridin' him, honest. Ask the team, they'll tell you.

MEAT returns.

MEAT

Ambulance is on the way.

ROSCOE

OK RED DOG, I will. MEAT, was the coach riding GREG because of DRYDEN's class?

DRYDEN

(sitting up)

He's breathing again. And he's starting to regain consciousness.

ROSCOE stands up, glaring at RED DOG. MEAT looks angrily at the coach as well.

MEAT

You bet he was ridin' him. He was pounding him like swiss steak. He was ridin' all of us pretty good, but he was all over GREG. Like it was personal, ya know?

DRYDEN

Yeah, I do know.

ROSCOE

RED DOG, as soon as we get Mr. WATT to the doctor, I want to meet with you in my office. In my office! You hear?

27

INT - ROSCOE SHELDON'S OFFICE - DAY

27

ROSCOE and DRYDEN are seated in ROSCOE's office. DRYDEN sits with a determined look, while ROSCOE jumps up and paces every few seconds. ROSCOE picks up a battered, well broken-in baseball glove with a ball tucked inside of it. As he paces the floor he continuously pounds the ball violently into the glove.

ROSCOE

God! I don't remember the last time I was this pissed.

DRYDEN

Well, get a hold of yourself. We need you thinking, and thinking clearly.

ROSCOE

I really don't understand you DRYDEN.

(MORE)

ROSCOE (cont'd)
You go from being this quivering
tower of passion and rage to this
mountain of calm and rationality.
And you seem to do it at the oddest
moments.

DRYDEN
There's nothing odd about wanting
you to get your stuff together at a
time when we need to look things
through and not make snap
decisions.

ROSCOE
Like kicking RED DOG's can all over
campus.

DRYDEN
Like kicking RED DOG's can all over
campus.

There is a timid knock at the door.

ROSCOE
(roaring)
What? Come in!

RED DOG enters with a crest fallen look about him that shows
him to be a beaten man. He has his baseball cap in his hands
and is twisting it into a knot.

RED DOG
You wanted to see me, Mr. SHELTON?

ROSCOE
Have you heard anything from the
doctors?

RED DOG
No, not yet. He's in Intensive Care
and they'll call here with any
news.

ROSCOE is still pacing, but at sight of RED DOG's defeated
demeanor, he stops pounding the ball into the glove and puts
it down on the table where he got it.

ROSCOE
What happened RED DOG?

RED DOG
It's just like you said Mr.
SHELDON.
(MORE)

RED DOG (cont'd)
I got angry about CLOUGH here
coming to take my job away, and I
took it out on WATT. My God! I
damned near killed him. That kid's
the best thing ever happened to me,
he's like my own son.

At this he plops down into an armchair and holding his head
in his hands begins to sob uncontrollably. There is an
awkward moment where no one seems to know what to say. ROSCOE
and DRYDEN exchange looks.

DRYDEN
I'm not so sure.

Both RED DOG and ROSCOE look at him, puzzled.

ROSCOE
What the hell does that mean?

DRYDEN
Just what I said. I'm not convinced
that RED DOG here nearly killed
GREG, as he seems to think.

RED DOG
(recovering slightly)
But you saw what happened. I was
ridin' him, just like MEAT said. I
was worried and scared and I took
it out on GREG.

DRYDEN
Well, that's all true, I'm just not
convinced that his passing out was
caused entirely by that. Look,
here's a kid who's been healthy and
strong for years. He's at the peak
of physical fitness. True he's been
worked pretty hard this afternoon,
but so has everybody else. He
didn't just sit down and take a
break, he collapsed and stopped
breathing. I'm afraid there's
something much more serious going
on than the coach being pissed.

ROSCOE
What the hell do you think it might
be?

DRYDEN
That I don't know. It conceivably
could be any number of things.
(MORE)

DRYDEN (cont'd)
We'll have to wait for the Doc's to
tell us exactly what it is.

RED DOG
You mean to tell me I didn't nearly
kill him?

ROSCOE
Don't get your hopes up too high
RED DOG, you're still in deep with
me.

DRYDEN
RED DOG, what did you mean when you
said you thought I'd come here to
take away your job?

RED DOG
Well, didn't you?

DRYDEN
Actually, no, I didn't. What made
you think I was.

RED DOG
Well, DELONG said you was a big-
time All-America from Cal, back in
the sixties, and that you was old
friends with Mr. SHELDON here. He
said the handwriting was all over
the wall.

ROSCOE
Most of what you say is true, RED
DOG. But I didn't want him for a
coach, I want him for Athletic
Director. I wanted him to be your
boss, not your replacement. But
after today, I'm not so sure.

DRYDEN
ROSCOE, if you want me for your AD,
one of the jobs I reserve for
myself is the selection of Head
Coaches. I think I'd like RED DOG
to stay on.

Both ROSCOE and RED DOG look amazed. ROSCOE shakes his head
and looks puzzled. RED DOG looks pitifully like a puppy in
his gratitude.

28

INT - HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

28

GREG WATT is propped up in a hospital bed. He looks healthy and fit, although at the moment somewhat agitated. LINDA KELSEY stands beside the bed, she is teary and angry.

LINDA

I don't care what you think, you have to listen to the doctors.

GREG

Linda, those quacks don't know anything. Football is everything to me, don't you see that? It's my future, it's our future. I can't go back and work the mines like my old man.

LINDA

GREG, you almost died.

GREG

Oh bull. I passed out. No big thing, I've done that lots of times before.

LINDA

But this time you stopped breathing. You haven't done that lots of times before.

GREG

Are you trying to get rid of me? Is that it? You know I can't afford to stay here if I don't play football.

LINDA

(crying openly)

You ought to know better than to ask me something like that.

She turns and runs from the room, as she jerks open the door to run through it she collides with DRYDEN who is in the act of knocking on it to ask to come in.

DRYDEN

Whoa, LINDA. What's the matter? Are you OK?

LINDA

Oh damn! Damn!

She breaks free and dashes off. DRYDEN turns his attention to GREG.

DRYDEN
Mind if I come in?

GREG
Sure, why not? Come on in. (BEAT)
I'm sorry Dr. CLOUGH, I don't mean
to be rude, especially not to you,
after what you did for me.

DRYDEN
In the first place, my name is
DRYDEN. And in the second place, I
didn't do anything that anybody
else wouldn't have done.

GREG
Well, whatever, I want to say
thanks anyway.

DRYDEN
You're very welcome.

There is an awkward moment as both men figuratively shuffle
their feet. Then they both speak at once.

DRYDEN (cont'd)
Mind is I ask what's up with LINDA?

GREG
I hope LINDA didn't upset you.

They both laugh uncomfortably.

DRYDEN
I don't suppose this is very easy
for LINDA to cope with. Do you
think it might help if SUE HASTINGS
had a talk with her?

GREG
I'm really worried about her, she
seems to be taking this passing out
thing pretty seriously. I keep
trying to tell her it ain't no beg
deal.

DRYDEN
Have you spoken with the Doctors
yet?

GREG
Naw, it's just one of those things.
I got overheated and passed out.

DRYDEN

Yeah, well, I can understand the passing out, but what about the breathing? That's never happened before has it?

GREG

Well, no. Look, I'll level with you, OK? I've got this little heart thing that I been kind of covering up. It's not anything to really worry about normally. It runs in my family, my dad says that's what keeps us out of the Army. It's called a heart valve flutter. Things get a little out of kilter once in a while. The 'ol heartbeat gets off rhythm. That's why I can't dance worth a damn, no rhythm.

DRYDEN

You've been able to hide this from all the team doctors over the years?

GREG

Yeah, I just make sure that I'm up on the medication before I get a physical and unless they know what to look for they'll miss it.

DRYDEN

What made it flare up now?

GREG

Oh, I get a little lazy about my medication and have to be reminded to take it the way I should.

DRYDEN

Well, how're you feeling now? You look OK.

GREG

I feel great. I should be outta here in no time. Once it settles back into the right beat, everything is just fine.

DRYDEN stands as if to leave.

DRYDEN

OK, let's get a report from the doc's to make sure everything is as fine as you feel, and we'll sit down over the weekend and discuss our options. Anything else I can get for you, need anything?

GREG

Naw, I'm just great. If you see LINDA out there anywhere, you might ask her if she'll come back in.

29

INT - RED DOG'S OFFICE - DAY

29

RAYMOND DELONG sits on the corner of RED DOG's desk once again. This time he is alone in the office waiting for the coach's return. The phone rings and he answers.

RAYMOND

Hello, Head Coach's office.

Listens on the phone, then responds.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

Yes, Doctor Kane, I've been waiting to hear your report on GREG.

Listens again, this time for a fairly extended time.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

Swollen heart muscle, I see. And he should not play again until we have all had a chance to meet and discuss the situation. OK, I understand fully. I concur completely, we definitely should all have the boy's best interest upper-most in our minds.

Listens again, this time shorter. He looks up to see RED DOG approaching and rushes to end the conversation.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

Thank you for the call, Doctor. You can be sure that your advice will be followed completely. Bye now.

He hangs up as RED DOG enters.

RED DOG

What the hell are you doing back here, and who said you could help yourself to my phone?

RAYMOND

Don't get into a snit. I was just checking my messages.

RED DOG

DELONG, you are a real bozo, you know that?

RAYMOND

Look who's talking.

RED DOG

You were completely off base on that CLOUGH fella. He's not here to take my job, as a matter fact he just saved it. He's going to be the new Athletic Director, not the new football coach.

RAYMOND

Well well. So you're going to work for 'ol DRYDEN? I guess that means I count on you as an ally, right?

RED DOG

The only thing you can count on me for is to throw your skinny butt outta here while I call the Doctor about my boy GREG.

RAYMOND

Oh, you don't have to call, he just called here a few minutes ago. That's what made me think to check my messages. He said he's releasing Mr. WATT from the hospital and clearing him to play tomorrow.

RED DOG

Great! That's the best news yet. You should make someone a swell secretary DELONG. Now get out of here before my natural sweet disposition take over and I throw you into the street.

30

INT - RAYMOND DELONG'S OFFICE - DAY

30

RAYMOND bustles in and rushes to the phone book, looks up a number, and dials.

RAYMOND
May I speak to the Sports
Department please?

He is put on hold and he hums happily until they come on the line.

RAYMOND (cont'd)
Sports Director, OK, just the man I wanted to speak to. Listen, I've got a tip for you. The football team over at Sheldon is planning to play GREG WATT, in spite of the fact that his doctor advises against it.

He listens, then replies.

RAYMOND (cont'd)
Oh no, I'm just a concerned fan who thinks that they are going too far just to win football games.

Listens again.

RAYMOND (cont'd)
No, but the doctor's name is KANE.
He's over a Community Hospital.

Once again he listens to the phone.

RAYMOND (cont'd)
No, that's all I've got for you. If you want any more, you'll have to dig it up for yourself. (BEAT) Oh, by the way, you wouldn't happen to have the number for the N C double A, would you?

31

INT - SUE HASTING'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

31

LINDA sits on the couch, as SUE hands her a glass of water and sits beside her. She is about to speak when there is a knock at the door. She goes to answer it and DRYDEN enters. He reaches out and takes both of SUE's hands in his. He is about to speak when she indicates that they are not alone. He sees LINDA and speaks.

DRYDEN

LINDA, how're you holding up?

LINDA

I'm doing OK Dr. CLOUGH.

SUE

LINDA's doing fine DRYDEN. She is a very bright young woman.

DRYDEN

Good, I'm glad to hear it, how's GREG?

LINDA

He feels great. That's part of the problem.

DRYDEN

How is that a problem?

LINDA

He's ready to leap out of that hospital bed, rush over and get right into the game. He doesn't even want to examine what might be behind these episodes.

DRYDEN

You don't think this was an isolated incident?

LINDA

Isolated? He's had this happen before. Only this time he stopped breathing. I hate to think what might have happened had you not been there to help him.

She starts to cry softly. DRYDEN, uncomfortable, turns to SUE.

DRYDEN

You wouldn't happen to have some coffee, would you?

SUE

Sure, I'll make some.

SUE goes to kitchen, while DRYDEN moves over to couch and awkwardly tries to console LINDA.

DRYDEN

Come on LINDA, he'll be OK. Now that we know what's going on, we can treat it. He's going to be fine.

LINDA

Thanks Dr. CLOUGH. But he won't get nay better until he gets treatment. As long as he keeps denying that the problem even exists, he won't treat it seriously.

DRYDEN

Look, now that we're all in on it, he can't possibly keep denying that there is a problem. You'll see, we'll get him some treatment, in spite of himself.

LINDA

I hope you're right. Cause he's got some other things to start worrying about now.

DRYDEN

What do you mean?

LINDA

I'm pregnant.

DRYDEN

Uh, I see. IS this, um, happy news, that is, are congratulations in order?

SUE

(overhearing as she returns with coffee)

Oh DRYDEN, must you be so male?

DRYDEN

(flustered)

Well, hell, I don't know. What am I supposed to say?

LINDA

It's OK Dr. CLOUGH, I'm very happy about it. I just don't know if GREG will be, I haven't told him yet.

DRYDEN

Do you think you might call me

DRYDEN?

SUE

DRYDEN, could you at least get rid of that bovine look and have some coffee?

LINDA and SUE laugh outright as DRYDEN shifts uncomfortably in his seat. He reaches out and starts to fix his coffee.

DRYDEN

Ha, ha. Go ahead and laugh. I'm just some dumb old jock, and a bachelor to boot. I don't know much about any of this kind of thing. Look, I do think GREG's going to be as happy as can be about this.

LINDA

Thanks Doctor, er, DRYDEN.

DRYDEN

Look, you and GREG are both Seniors. How can we work this so that the two of you can finish up your last year here and graduate?

LINDA

That's one of the things that's got GREG worried the most. He can't afford to finish here if he doesn't play football, and he's afraid that because he's kept this whole problem secret the school will withdraw his scholarship.

DRYDEN

Well, let's look at the situation and see what we've got. On the down side, we've got GREG withholding important medical information that could possibly effect his status. That could be bad.

SUE

However, he did play without interruption for three and a half seasons.

DRYDEN

That's true. So he case might be made that he genuinely felt that the condition didn't warrant that much attention.

LINDA

And while he's not in any danger of being named an Academic All-America, his grades are OK. He's never been on any kind of academic probation or anything like that. Not like MEAT.

DRYDEN

(laughing)

Please, let's not bring MEAT into this. He's a special case unto himself.

LINDA and SUE laugh as well. DRYDEN continues.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

Of course the one big thing we've got going for us in all this is ROSCOE SHELDON.

SUE

Really? How so? I would have thought that he might be more of a stumbling block.

DRYDEN

You don't know ROSCOE the way I do. ROSCOE and I lost a lot of young men in Vietnam. He really hates to lose any more. He'll do just about anything to see that a quality youngster like GREG gets to start off life on the right foot.

LINDA

Whew! That's going to be a relief to GREG. He's worried sick about losing his scholarship.

DRYDEN

Now you, young lady, you present a slightly different problem.

SUE

How so?

DRYDEN

Well, like when is the baby due, how are you feeling? How long will you be out of action?

SUE

DRYDEN, she's having a baby, not having a brain tumor removed. She'll be just fine. Even if we need to get her a little outside tutoring, or some help with the baby when it arrives, she'll manage. As I said before, she's a very bright young woman.

There is a knock at the door. SUE goes to answer it and GREG enters. DRYDEN stands as LINDA rushes over to hug him.

DRYDEN

GREG! What are you doing here? You look OK, did the doctors release you? How do you feel?

GREG

They were going to check me out the hospital first thing in the morning, so I just thought I'd give myself the night off. Anyway, I was looking for LINDA and her roommate said she had come over here to talk with Dr. HASTINGS.

SUE

Come on in GREG. Have a seat. Listen, you two. DRYDEN here promised me a romantic, candlelit dinner so that he can apologize to me for leaving me out of all this and to tell me how much he adores me.

DRYDEN

Huh?

SUE

They have things to talk over, and you have a dinner to buy. Let's grab our coats and leave these two alone for a couple of hours. LINDA, if you need anything, please just help yourself.

She grab armfuls of coats and drags DRYDEN toward the door.

SUE (cont'd)

GREG, if you're half as smart as I think you are, you'll listen carefully. Bye now. Come on DRYDEN.

32

INT - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

32

The team is beginning to come into the locker room and starting to get suited up. They are getting mentally prepared for the game, so there is very little banter or talk. Each one goes to his locker and starts his own personal ritual of getting ready. GREG sits in front of his locker, looks furtively around and quickly swallows some pills. He begins to pull on his pads. RED DOG approaches.

RED DOG

GREG! How are you boy? Ready to get it on?

GREG

Hey Coach. I'm feeling good. Ready to go.

RED DOG

Aw-right! Great. Listen, as soon as you finish getting suited up, come on over to my office and we'll quickly go over the game play. Just so's we're all fresh and on the same page, OK?

GREG

Sure Coach, right away.

33

EXT - FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

33

DRYDEN stands with SUE along the sidelines, as the stands behind them are filling with people. SUE is looking around excitedly. The teams can be seen in the background going about their warm-ups. Near by, we see a television camera and a reporter interviewing RED DOG. He is getting agitated. ROSCOE comes up to DRYDEN and SUE.

DRYDEN

Hi Skipper. How's she hangin?

ROSCOE laughs.

SUE

What does "Skipper" mean? Is that some sort of nickname?

ROSCOE

No Dr. HASTINGS, that's just DRYDEN's way of reminding me that we share enough history together that I can't get away with as much with him as I usually do with other people.

DRYDEN

"Skipper" is a mildly affectionate term that Marines apply to a Company Commander that they sort of like, or at least can tolerate.

SUE

It suits you somehow when DRYDEN says it.

ROSCOE

Why thank you ma'am. I'll take that as a compliment.

DRYDEN

(looking past ROSCOE toward the tableau in the background)

Does RED DOG usually get along pretty well with the local press?

ROSCOE

Yes, I'd say they get along really well. He loves seeing himself on TV and he's colorful enough to give them consistently good interviews.
Why?

He indicates the television reporter in the background interviewing an increasingly agitated RED DOG.

DRYDEN

I've been watching him over there. He seems to be getting pretty up tight about something.

ROSCOE

Well, let's us just mosey on over there and have us a listen.

The three of them move toward RED DOG and the reporter. RED DOG is red in the face and starting to sputter with rage.

RED DOG

Just what in the hell do you mean,
"recklessly endangering one of my
players?" Why, I ought to knock a
knot on your head the size of
Nebraska.

As RED DOG seem about to step toward the REPORTER, DRYDEN
steps over to intercede as ROSCOE steps up to the camera with
an engaging smile.

34 EXT - VIETNAMESE VILLAGE - DAY

34

DRYDEN, as he is dressed on the side lines of the football
game, walks warily through the middle of the thatched roofed
huts, rifle at the ready. As he nears the center of the
village a shadowy figure appears in one of the nearby windows
and throws an object at DRYDEN's feet.

35 CLOSE UP OF OBJECT. IT IS A HAND GRENADE.

35

SFX of hand grenade exploding.

36 EXT - FOOTBALL STADIUM SIDELINES - DAY

36

ROSCOE

Hello, I'm ROSCOE SHELDON,
President of this institution. What
seems to be the problem? You're not
one of the regular Sports Reporters
are you?

REPORTER

No, I'm not a Sports Reporter, I'm
Mark Sterns, I'm an investigative
reporter. We have a report that you
are going to play one of your
players, in spite of direct orders
to the contrary from his doctor.
Wouldn't you say that this was
somewhat reckless and
irresponsible?

ROSCOE

Whoa, hold on there son. If there's
one thing we here a Sheldon would
never do, it's endanger one of our
fine young players.

(MORE)

ROSCOE (cont'd)

Why this school has a long tradition of putting the best teams of the field, without ever asking any of them to do more than is proper. Where in the world did you hear such a ridiculous charge?

REPORTER

I just came from interviewing a Doctor Robert Kane over at Community Hospital, and he informs me that GREG WATT, your star quarterback has a severe heart condition and should under no circumstances be playing football. And yet, I can see Mr. WATT, number eleven over there, warming up to play, and furthermore, when I asked Coach CURTIS here if he was planning to play Mr. WATT, he answered that he most certainly was. Care to give us a response?

ROSCOE

I'm afraid that there has been a mix up of some kind. If you'll permit me to speak with our new Athletic Director, Dr. DRYDEN CLOUGH. I'm sure this will be straightened out completely.

ROSCOE turns and taking both DRYDEN and RED DOG by the arm, he moves out of the frame of the camera.

ROSCOE (cont'd)

This is not good gentlemen. I am very unhappy about this. Can anyone tell me exactly what is going on?

RED DOG

All I know is that I got a report that said the doctors were releasing GREG from the hospital this morning and that he was cleared to play.

DRYDEN

I spoke to GREG last night and he assured me that he was indeed being released from the hospital and that he was feeling great.

ROSCOE

Well, something doesn't jibe here.
Somebody's got some wrong
information somewhere and I want to
be absolutely certain it isn't us.

DRYDEN

RED DOG, what precisely did the
Doctor say to you about GREG's
condition?

RED DOG

Gee, I didn't actually talk with
the Doctor. I was told... oh my gawd!
He wouldn't really have put GREG's
life in danger, would he?

DRYDEN

Would who put GREG's life in
danger?

RED DOG

RAYMOND DELONG, that's who. When I
got back to my office after our
meeting yesterday, he was on my
phone. He said he was just checking
his messages. I told him to get out
so I could call the Doctor for a
report on GREG, and he said that
the Doctor had called and cleared
GREG to play. It never occurred to
me that he would lie about
something as serious as that, and
besides it was the news I wanted to
hear. That rotten, no good...

DRYDEN

Let's not jump to nay hasty
conclusions. Until I get a
complete, and in-person report from
GREG's Doctor about this situation,
he will not be allowed to play.
Clear? Send him back into the
locker room to change into street
clothes.

RED DOG

OK. Boy, this puts us in hot water
for this game. Never mind. We'll
work it out. What are you going to
do about DELONG?

ROSCOE

Leave Professor DELONG to me. First I've got to deal with this reporter, then I'll have a little chat with DELONG.

DRYDEN

No, it's better if you go talk to this reporter and put a smile of this situation. I'm going to go have a talk with Professor RAY DELONG.

Turning from the two of them, DRYDEN goes over to SUE.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

SUE, I have to leave you here for a few minutes. I hope to be back before the game starts.

SUE

What's going on? Is there a problem? You have a look about you that I'm not real happy about.

DRYDEN

Not to worry. I'm just going to take care of a nagging little problem. I'll be back before you know it.

37

INT - RAYMOND DELONG'S OFFICE - DAY

37

RAYMOND DELONG is sitting at his desk, waiting. There is a firm knock at the door.

RAYMOND

Come on in CLOUGH.

DRYDEN enters. RAYMOND opens a drawer and puts his hand inside.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

I should warn you, if you plan any violence, I have a gun.

He withdraws his hand from the drawer, revealing a small snub nosed revolver. He stands up and moves to the side of the desk. DRYDEN walks right up to him.

DRYDEN

You never learn do you RAYMOND?

RAYMOND

Learn what, CLOUGH?

DRYDEN

I'm not going to hit you RAYMOND.

Seeing that the hammer on the pistol is not cocked back, DRYDEN knows that in order for it to fire, the trigger must be pulled with enough force to move the hammer back and rotate the cylinder. He quickly reaches over and grabs the gun in RAYMOND's hand preventing the turning of the cylinder and thus keeping the gun from firing.

DRYDEN (cont'd)

You see RAY, you keep putting yourself into positions that you know nothing about. You know nothing about how this thing operates and, because I do, I can keep you from using it. Go ahead, pull the trigger if you want. It won't go off. All I have to do is hold on to the cylinder to prevent the gun from firing, and since my whole hand is stronger than your index finger alone, you are once again at a disadvantage and in over your head.

RAYMOND, discouraged, lets go of the gun and clumps down into his chair. DRYDEN flips open the cylinder, empties the bullets out into his hand, put them into his pocket and drops the gun onto the desk.

RAYMOND

What are you going to do now?

DRYDEN

Why do you hate me so much? What have I done to you?

RAYMOND

It's not important.

DRYDEN

You're wrong. It is important. Important enough to risk a young football player's life. I don't dislike you RAYMOND, I don't even know you. I would really like to know why you hate me so much that you would endanger GREG WATT's life just to get at me.

RAYMOND

When we were at school together, I always envied you, guys like you. You had all the breaks that I never got. Looks, ability, the whole thing. Sure I had brains, I was smart, at least smart enough to see how much better off you were than I was.

DRYDEN

But surely now it's no longer that way.

RAYMOND

For most of the others, sure. But not for you. You had something even the others didn't have.

DRYDEN

What's that?

RAYMOND

You had courage too. Courage enough to stand up to the peer pressure and go off and learn the lessons that only the war could teach. Those lessons about honor, selflessness, real courage. Lessons that I could only read about from long dead writers.

DRYDEN

But you could have learned those lessons as well as I could. You had the same chance as I did.

RAYMOND

Don't you see? That's precisely the problem. I could have, but I didn't. I didn't have the fortitude. It's one thing to know you can't play football, to know there are just some things you don't have the tools for. The size, the good looks, the physical ability. It's entirely different when you know that you didn't do something because you only lacked the inner strength to do it.

DRYDEN

It's not cowardice to avoid something that can kill you.

RAYMOND

You have earned the right to say
that, I haven't. By brother Jimmy
earned the right to say that, I
didn't.

DRYDEN

(sighs)

Jimmy didn't come back, did he?

RAYMOND

(crying openly)

It should have been me. I was the
older, I was the one who should
have volunteered to go. I tried to.
After he was killed, I went down to
the recruiting station to sing up
but they wouldn't take me. They
said it was too late. I was the
Sole Surviving Son, and they
wouldn't take me.

DRYDEN stand and looks down on RAYMOND who has put his head
down in the desk and is sobbing deeply.

DRYDEN

So many of us were wounded by that
damned war.

He turns and exits RAYMOND's office.

38

EXT - FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY

38

The game is about to start. GREG and LINDA are standing on
the sidelines with ROSCOE and SUE as DRYDEN approaches.

ROSCOE

You OK big guy? You didn't do
anything I'm going to be sorry for
did you?

DRYDEN

Not to worry, Skipper. There's no
mess for you to clean up this time.

SUE sees him when ROSCOE speaks. She steps up to him and
putting her arms around his neck, just clings to him for a
long moment.

ROSCOE

Maybe I shouldn't have, but I been telling these folks a little about some of the messes you stirred up for me so long ago. Not too much, just enough to embarrassed you.

SUE

You all right?

DRYDEN

(looking down at her)
I am now.

GREG and LINDA are holding hands.

GREG

If the baby's a boy, we'd like to have your permission to name him Dryden.

DRYDEN

My goodness, you don't need my permission.

LINDA

Nevertheless, we'd wanted you to know.

DRYDEN

Just don't name him Clough, no one will ever pronounce it right.

SUE

Rhymes with "kow-tow."

GREG

Rhymes with "ker-pow."

LINDA

Rhymes with "how now - brown cow."

ROSCOE

Rhymes with "low-brow."

FADE TO BLACK.