**What?**

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Based upon the novel *Swap* by Sam Moffie

**Dedicated:**

**To the Frank Capra in all of us**

EXT: Camera from above zooms around the city of Youngstown and Mahoning County. Shots of: Welcome to Youngstown sign, Decaying neighborhoods, vacant small houses, boarded up storefronts, empty old steel mills, pothole covered streets, the jail, courthouses and a minor glimpse of downtown. The kids are playing baseball, Mill Creek Park, Fellowship of Rose Gardens, Youngstown Playhouse, Powers Theatre shops and stores 224, Poland Village and Canfield City, YSU and then back to older kids playing baseball.

Music while credits and shots play: Stephen Stills ‘Change Partners’.

Then a Google earth shot over Bills Place and the camera falls right onto the top of the building as the movie begins.

INT: A typical neighborhood bar. Dark with lots of neon’s on. People playing pool tables, TV sets on to news and sports. Jukebox playing in the background… softly. People scattered around a rather large rectangular bar. Camera goes to pictures on the wall of what looks like a collage of regulars and then stops on two: two handsome men in their military uniforms obviously taken at a remote outpost during the past war on terror. The camera pans to the corner of the bar where there is a zoom on a beer bottle, a half-finished shot glass and a laminated sign that reads: “Don’t touch The Ralph’s drink. He is taking a leak”.

INT: A bathroom. A man is taking a very loud piss. He is in the bathroom by himself.

The Ralph

Ahhhh, nothing like a great piss after some good booze.

INT: The Ralph really takes his time shaking his cock dry. Zips up his fly. Walks over to the bathroom sink and washes his hands and then looks in the mirror. He is the spitting image of ‘Donald Trump’, hence the nickname ‘The’ in front of his name. He combs his hair a few times to make sure the comb over is perfect. Turns of the faucet and exits the bathroom and returns to his seat at the bar. Flips the card down. Takes a sip of his drink and looks at his watch.

**The Ralph**

Where are those guys?

INT: a bartender who has a face that shows she has been around the block, big boobs with a cleavage that shows tattoos

Michelle

The rookies will be here. You telling them one of your stories?

The Ralph

I’m telling them my *best* story.

INT: Michelle pours him another shot and gets him another beer. The side door opens up and in walks the three ‘rookies’

**The Ralph**

Welcome the three wise men.

A customer (not seen, but heard)

No its not. It’s Mannie, Moe and Joe!

(Good natured laughter from the dozen or so regulars scattered around the bar. The camera pans them all, and from their appearances, they are blue-collar types, retired and of ever race, color and creed and sexual orientation. This pan shows the bar is solid and diverse).

**Michelle**

(Under her breath, while pouring a pitcher of beer for the three men who just walked in). More like Moe, Larry and Curly she says, as she walks over to them and puts a bev napkin down in front of each of the customers, places an empty pilsner glass on each napkin and sets down the large pitcher of beer with a good foamy head on top in the center of the three men.

**The Ralph**

Where was I?

**Listener #1 (African American male wearing GM Jacket and hat. He and the other two have just come from their shift at the Lordstown Plant)**

Telling us the story of Sheldon and Tom.

**Listener #2 (White American male wearing exact same clothing)**

That’s right.

**Listener #3 (Latin American male wearing the exact same clothing)**

We couldn’t wait to get here to hear the story!

**The Ralph**

Good homophone.

**Listener #3**

I’m Hispanic!

**Listener #2**

He’s not queer the Ralph!

**Listener #1**

I would know if he was gay. I’m bent over him 8 hours a day.

**The Ralph**

Nice outfits.

**Michelle:**

I was thinking the same thing the Ralph. Be nice and tell them what a ’homophone’ is before you tell them about Sheldon and Tom, after all they are rookies (rookies is said in a good natured loud tone, that makes those in the general vicinity laugh and the three listeners smile, because they know they are being accepted).

The Ralph

Okay rookies listen up. A ‘homophone’ has nothing to do with one’s sexual orientation (he rolls his eyes). It is simply two words that sound alike but are spelled differently and mean something else. I heard you (he points at the Latin-American autoworker say ‘here and hear’. Perfect example of what I am describing. But my favorite is ‘rain and reign’.

(The three ‘rookies’ look at The Ralph like the proverbial deer stuck in the headlights and he rolls his eyes again.)

Listener #1

I get it. Like that song from Led Zeppelin

Listener #2

Right. From ‘Stairway to Heaven’ I think.

Listener #3

Yeah. Something about words having different meanings.

**Michelle**

Better stick to the story The Ralph. English 101 isn’t going over well (she refills all four men’s drinks, rearranges her breasts in front of them and goes to another part of the bar. Camera zooms in on the tips the three ‘rookies’ leave. The tips are generous and The Ralph laughs at what he just witnessed). Remind to play that song after the story is told, because you know sometimes words have *two* meanings

**The Ralph**

This is the greatest story you will ever hear. Better than the Bible. Better than any reality TV show. Hell, the more I think about it, it is the *Bible* and a reality TV show all rolled into one (he shakes his index finger to prove his point). It’s true and nothing has been changed. This is the story about two young men who were as different but yet as close as peanut butter and jelly. Sheldon Marsh and Tom Easterbrook.

**INT: as the Ralph is speaking in V.O. the camera pans the wall of picture in the bar. It stops on a picture of two young boys playing baseball. Then a picture of them as baseball players in little league. Then as high school baseball players and then settles on the pictures of them in full dress military uniform and the chest full of medals on both of them ( Stills music plays, but not ‘Change Partners’ while the camera pans the montage of pictures.**

**The Ralph**

Before I get into the story of the boys, let me first tell you about Sheldon’s mother.

**INT: At the utterance of the two words ‘Sheldon’s mother’, the Ralph, Michelle pours herself a shot and everyone in the bar BUT the three listener’s stand up and hold their glass, cans, bottles out in a toast of obvious respect.**

**Michelle**

To Sheldon’s mother (throws back the shot)

**Everyone else but three listener’s to the Ralph**

To Sheldon’s mother (in unison with a tone of deep respect)

**INT: Michelle walks over to the three ‘rookies’**

**Michelle**

You have now been baptized. Whenever anyone’s mentions you know whose mother those in the bar stand and toast her. The person who utters the name picks up the tab for the round (she goes over to the cash register and punches in the numbers of the customers and gives the bill to the Ralph, who nods in approval.

**The Ralph**

She built this place (turns around very slowly pointing at everything). She made this bar what it is today and that my friends isn’t easy to do in a town like this. She was a real movie maven. Had an answer for everything that was always a quote or a scene or even a character from a movie. And it always made sense. When she died…. (Voice fades out… obvious flashback)

**EXT: There is shot of a stretch limousine slowly snaking its way through a cemetery. The camera pans the crowd. Everyone is dressed in some sort of a movie costume. There are 3 male pallbearers dressed as Clark Gable from his role in ‘Gone with the Wind’, John Wayne from his role in ‘True Grit’ and Humphrey Bogart from his role in ‘Casablanca’ There are 3 female pallbearers dressed as Bette Davis from her role in ‘All About Eve’, Kim Novak from her role in ‘Vertigo’ and Liz Taylor from her role in ‘Cleopatra’. Sheldon and his wife Eleanor are greeting people as they file by the coffin and put a rock on the coffin.**

**Eleanor (whispering into Sheldon’s right ear. She is a striking looking young woman with thick black hair and blue eyes. But her face is sad, not because of the death of her mother-in-law- but, because she is always sad).**

What does the rock on the coffin mean?

**Sheldon (turns from her whispering into his right ear where the camera shows a scar and part of his ear missing. He is muscular, with a square jaw, big nose, brown hair, and brown eyes. He turns his good ear to her and she steps back with an annoyed look).**

What?

**Eleanor**

Why do Jews put rocks on coffins?

Sheldon

Why do Irish people have open caskets and party around the dead?

Eleanor (mocking)

What?

**Sheldon**

The rocks are a monument of respect. A personal tombstone from the one who places the rock on my mom’s coffin. I’m going to have to drop Mount Everest on it.

Eleanor (eyes wandering and looking around at the crowd dropping rocks on Sheldon’s mother’s coffin). **VO:** Who cares?

**INT: Back at the bar**

**The Ralph**

Sheldon and Eleanor started out great and most people around here will tell you that they ended up even greater… just not with each other.

Michelle

You’re way ahead of yourself the Ralph.

Listener #1

What happened to Sheldon’s dad?

The Ralph

No one ever saw him alive or had the guts or balls to ask Sheldon’s mother.

Listener #2

What about Tom’s parents? Did they know Sheldon’s mother or father?

Listener #3

Yeah, usually children that play together parents all know each other.

The Ralph

Just what I need, a competing philosopher!

Michelle

He’s right.

The Ralph (to Michelle only).

I know. The only thing I hate more than someone who can compete with me is someone who interrupts me while I’m busy interrupting.

INT: Michelle smiles at what the Ralph just said and heads down the bar to wait on others.

The Ralph

They knew of each other, but they didn’t socialize. Let me clear the deck on Tom’s folks and then get back to the story about Sheldon and Tom. Tom’s father was a gambler… a very bad one, until he hit the big one for him. Down to his last $500 he bet it all on Mooney covering the spread against Ursuline.

Listener #2

Who are they?

Int: Michelle and others all turn to the four and glare. It is a ‘how dare you don’t know who THEY are look’

Listener #3

I heard someone at the plant mention those names.

Listener #1

I’ll tell you one thing, if we don’t find out and then remember we may never make a Cruze again.

The Ralph

You guys are a lot smarter than you dress. They are the two top dogs when it comes to high school football. And boys, NOTHING is bigger than high school football in northeast Ohio.

Michelle

Except baseball when it comes to Sheldon and Tom.

The Ralph

I stand corrected and that doesn’t happen… much.

INT: Michelle smiling as she waits on the others.

The Ralph

Tom’s father won like twelve grand and guess what happened to him the very minute the bookie gave him his winnings?

INT: The three listeners all look at each other, then Michelle hoping for a hint and then at the Ralph and shrug their shoulders all at the same time

The Ralph

The very second… the second he recounted the cash, he dropped dead of a massive heart attack. What are the odds of that happening?

Michelle

For him, it was the perfect ending.

Listener #1

He is in a better place.

INT: Both his friends nod in agreement and they signal Michelle for another round for the four of them.

The Ralph

There is no ‘better place’ than above ground. Besides, dying fucking is better than dying not being able to spend your money.

Michelle

That’s something Tom would say.

The Ralph

He learned that pearl of wisdom from me (then laughs like a demented man).

Listener #2

And Tom’s mother?

The Ralph

Tom’s mother was not upset about her husband’s death. As a matter of fact, it was a get out of ‘jail free card’.

Michelle

The hell it was!

The Ralph

Well… it did get her out of jail, but at a cost.

Listener #2

Jail? What happened?

The Ralph

Figure of speech. You guys do know *what* that means don’t you?

INT: camera pans the three listeners. They are clueless and The Ralph knows this.

The Ralph

I’ll make it easy. In honor of Sheldon’s mother (camera pulls back and everyone at the bar rises, raises their glasses, bottles or cans and shouts in unison ‘to Sheldon’s mother’ and downs their drink. Michelle tally ups, presents bill to The Ralph who nods and Michelle pours everyone another drink). A figure of speech is used in a *figurative sense*. Sleeper is my word choice. It means an unexpected hit of a movie. Got it?

Listeners #1-#3 (in unison)

No

The Ralph

Good (sarcastically). Since Tom’s dad never had any consistent money coming into the house, Tom grew up to be cheap. He blamed being cheap mostly on his dad, but his mother didn’t escape his wrath. After Tom made some money, his mother wanted to go to nursing school. Tom didn’t *give* her the money, he *loaned* it to her and made her sign a personal note that she would pay him back with interest!

Listener #1

Did she graduate?

The Ralph

Yes. She also paid off her loans to him and last I heard was working as a nurse somewhere in the Pittsburgh area.

Listener #2

What about Sheldon and Tom?

Listener #3

Yes, we want to learn about the two boys.

VO: (The Ralph). Remember how I told you that this is a football town? Well… after a bout with pee-wee football to Sheldon and Tom it was and will always remain a baseball town.

EXT: a pee wee football practice is just wrapping up at a practice field behind a public school building. The camera zooms in on one small boy dejectedly walking with his head down, helmet in his hand. His football pants are so large on him that his thigh pads are where his knee pads are supposed to be and his knee pads are just above his ankles. He walks to his mother and whispers something into her ear. The mother picks him up and gives him a big hug and carries him to their car and gently places him down in the back seat and hands him a thermos with water in it. The thermos has pictures of baseball players on it.

Sheldon’s Mother (smiling to her son)

I have something I need to say to your ex- coach. I’ll be right back (she turns around and is not smiling at all. Rage is written all over her face. She walks in a brisk pace to where the coach is holding court with some other parents and assistant coaches, who we know are assistant coaches because they have attire that the head coach has on. She grabs him by the shoulder and wheels him around). I’d like a few words with you roach… I mean coach.

Coach (square jawed, buzz cut, Marine DI type)

Who gave *YOU* permission to touch *ME!* (As obnoxious as possible).

Sheldon’s Mother

It won’t take long coaaacch (very sarcastically)

The Coach

I’m busy.

Sheldon’s Mother

So am I. This won’t take long. Sheldon says you cut him from the team and nobody else was let go. Why?

The Coach

He’s waaaay too small to play football on MY team.

Sheldon’s Mother

Sheldon would run through a brick wall for YOU and your Team!

The Coach

And make a very smaaaall hole (making an ‘ok’ sign with right hand and holding it up to his right eye).

Sheldon’s Mother

If I owned a gun, I would wait for you to get into your car and then I would pop you, drop the gun on your lap and take the cannoli in the back seat (she smiles, pivots and walks back to Sheldon. The Coach’s jaw drops, because he knows that scene from ‘The Godfather’).

EXT: Sheldon in the back seat of his car, playing with another boy. The camera starts at the other boy’s feet and slowly goes up to his face. The boy is drop dead gorgeous.

Sheldon’s Mother

Hello. I’m Sheldon’s mother (holding out her right hand and smiling broadly).

Young Tom

(Shaking Sheldon’s mothers’ hand). Hi. I’m Tom Easterbrook. I just quit the football team because I was told Sheldon was fired. Sheldon is my bestest friend.

EXT: Shot of Sheldon’s mother grinning.

Young Tom

Besides, the cheerleaders are ugly!

EXT: Shot of the young girls and mothers wrapping up cheerleading practice. Each girl looks like Honey-boo-boo and their mothers worse!

EXT: It’s a beautiful summer day. Camera pans a middle-class neighborhood where the flowers are in full bloom, everything is green. Someone is cutting grass, a group of kids are playing kick-the-can, another group is having a water balloon fight, and some people are jumping in to pools, running thru sprinklers. Someone is BBQing on a grill, some people are sun bathing. Then comes a bike with two boys who look to be 13-14 year old. Sheldon is peddling and tom (still drop dead gorgeous) is riding on the handle bars and holding a brown paper shopping bag. They are laughing and smiling. Then it sounds like a very old motor bike is behind them, but the camera slowly pans to the spokes of the bike’s wheels and does a close up of the baseball cards stuck in the spokes making the sound. They glide down a steep street waving at everyone we have just panned with the camera. Sheldon brings the bike to a stop in his driveway. Tom jumps off before it stops and they both run to the front porch where a pitcher of ice cold lemonade, two glasses and cookies await them. There is a note from Sheldon’s mom that reads: ‘Enjoy. Had to go to the bar. Be back before dinner. Love Mom’ (Stephen Stills ‘Johnny’s Garden’ should be playing during this montage).

Sheldon

Pour them out and let’s play ball!

EXT: Tom slowly takes a drink of the lemonade (clearly enjoying quenching his thirst). He opens up the brown bag and dumps hundreds of baseball cards out in front of them both.

Tom

Where’s the gum?

Sheldon

I traded the gum for more cards. Come on, drink up and let’s flip.

Tom

I love to hate that gum. I bet it is what pussy takes like.

Sheldon

If that’s the case, I won’t like pussy.

Tom

I never everything about you and you haven’t had *any* sex yet.

Sheldon

I know everything about you and I can’t believe you *have*.

Tom

And you know what buddy (Sheldon shakes his head while he piles up the cards in two big and even piles) Flipping cards is more fun!

Sheldon

My mom says you’re never going to have to worry about girls.

Tom

And everyone knows that Sheldon’s mother tells the truth.

Sheldon

Except when it comes to her obsession with movies (they both laugh and each one grabs a pile of baseball cards). To tell you the truth that bubblegum that comes with the cards tastes like crap.

Tom

That’s being nice. More like my dirty socks after playing in a 20 inning game (Both boys start laughing at that comment).

Sheldon

I was winning when we finished at your house, so I have the option.

EXT: Tom nods in agreement and starts shuffling his cards… grinning while Sheldon strums his cards.

Tom

Your call

Sheldon

Best player flipped wins all rounds.

Tom

Based upon what?

Sheldon

Back of the card stats

Tom

Wild card?

Sheldon

Only one wild card… EVER!

Sheldon and Tom

Yaz!

EXT: Close up of a TOPPS baseball card of Hall of Famer Carl Yastrzemski front and back. The camera then shows baseball cards being flipped with both Tom’s or Sheldon’s hands flipping and then picking up their winnings. Both boys can be heard laughing and arguing playfully over who won by arguing stats from the back of the card (Stephen Stills song ‘Old Times, Good Times’ would be perfect here).

As the song continues Sheldon just starts on a winning streak that soon gobbles up all of Tom’s cards. Camera pulls back to tom’s beautiful face.

Tom

I am out. There’s only one thing to do now.

Sheldon

Home-Run Derby! (He throws the cards up in the air like confetti and he and Tom run from the front of the house to the back yard. Sheldon goes to the make shift pitcher’s mound. There is a huge bucket of balls next to the mound and Sheldon’s glove and hat. Tom heads to the plate which is really a rounded dinner plate where there is his hat and a few baseball bats.

Tom

You beat my brains in flipping now it is my turn to get even. Play home-run derby Sheldon!

EXT: The camera follows Sheldon’s arm motion in throwing baseballs to Tom who hits some home-runs, swings and misses and hits some grounders, fouls and pops ups (music should be typical baseball organ music).

EXT: After the camera shows Tom hammering a pitch from Sheldon it lands with a thud and the words ‘Foul ball’ are screamed out. The camera pulls back and we are now in a high school baseball stadium. It’s a beautiful day, and the crowd is small but into the flow of the game. The camera starts at the cleats of the hitter and slowly goes up until it rests on the still gorgeous face of Tom. He steps back and knocks the dirt from his cleats and his eyes spot Sheldon’s eyes in the dugout.

Sheldon (moving to the top of the dugout)

Come on Tom. Home-Run Derby!

EXT: The camera pans the sparse crowd and they are all yelling various things to ‘strike him out’ to ‘get a hit’. Camera cuts Tom

VO: TOM: Just five feet and that was a home-run. Damn, when you’re going badly, you’re going badly. Need a big hit here to get rolling again. Need one, scouts in the crowd. The camera then focuses on two obvious scouts (Want them to be Jon Lovitz and Robert Wuhl).

Scout #1 (Lovitz character turns to the Wuhl character who seems to be focusing his binoculars on everything BUT the players).

Who are you scouting?

Scout #2 (Wuhl character)

Tom Easterbrook and Sheldon Marsh

Scout #1

Easterbrook is up to bat and you’re not watching him.

Scout #2

I’m checking out his other talent

Scout #1

You heard about that, too?

Scout #2

I love finding; if you excuse the pun – diamonds in the rough in small towns where everyone knows everything about everyone who has some talent.

Scout #1

And tells you whatever they know without charging (they both laugh).

EXT: Shot of a decent looking woman in her forties sitting in the stands by herself at the far end of the stands clapping for Tom up at the plate. Tom sends another screamer home-run shot just foul.

Flashback: At a country club Tom is sitting in the lifeguard tower watching the children swim and of course checking out their mothers. He doesn’t know that he is being checked out by the woman who in the scene earlier was clapping for him at the plate. The woman says a few things to her children in the pool who are horse playing around. She gets up from her chair and seductively walks to the diving board and does a decent dive into the pool. Of course Tom catches her walking and diving. She swims over to her children in the shallow end looks at her wrist and says something to a young boy her Tom assumes is her son. She then swims back to just under the lifeguard tower.