

THE DAGOS OF BASEBALL

Written by

D. C. Murphy

Based on
Many autobiographies

EXT. LACLEDE-CHRISTY CLAY CO. - DAY

PIETRO BERRA, a sun worn, stout, muscular man in his early twenties, is tending to an outdoor kiln under the hot Summer sun of 1912.

The foreman approaches with new employee GIOVANNI GARAGIOLA and introduces the two. Giovanni is cut from the same cloth as Pietro. Pietro, sweat in his eyes, is facing the sun and cannot see Giovanni.

FOREMAN

Berra! Pietro Berra, I've got a new man here. I want you to train him. He'll be working with you. I found someone who speaks your lingo, I think. What was your name? Anyway, he sounds like you.

GIOVANNI

(broken English, heavy
Italian accent)

Pietro, Pietro Berra, is that you?

Pietro Berra gets a big grin on his face as he hears Giovanni speak.

PIETRO

(same, heavy Italian
accent)

I know that voice. That is a voice from Malvaglio.

He shades his eyes struggling to see. Sweat running down his face.

FOREMAN

There you go, I thought so the same Dago language. Show him how we do things around here.

PIETRO

(broken English)

Yes, sir.

FOREMAN

He needs to fill out his forms, you help him.

PIETRO

Yes, sir.

The foreman departs leaving the two men to get acquainted.

GIOVANNI

(Italian)

Pietro, it's me, Giovanni, Giovanni Garagiola!

The two men greet with the hugs and much joy of two old friends. The two men start speaking their native language.

PIETRO

Giovanni, my friend from Malvaglio, you've arrived! So good to see a familiar face.

GIOVANNI

I've made it, I've arrived too my new life!

PIETRO

My Paulina, Have you seen my Paulina, any word?

GIOVANNI

Yes, she is beautiful as ever and she sends her love along with many letters for you. I have them in my room. You've been here a long time.

PIETRO

Two years. When did you arrive?

GIOVANNI

We were at Ellis Island for a week until my uncle could come and sponsor us. He had to show that I was a good person and had a job here. He works driving a truck here and he got me a job.

PIETRO

(broken English)

Speak English whenever you can.

(MORE)

PIETRO (CONT'D)

The bosses like that and you will learn it faster. Remember you are an American now! Proud Italian but American! Do you live in Dago Hill?

GIOVANNI

(attempts English)

Yes, with my uncle and his family. I hope to get my own house someday.

PIETRO

We have reached the American dream. Now, all we have to do is work hard. Someday we too will have a family and our own houses!

GIOVANNI

Don't you miss home?

PIETRO

Sure, but Dago Hill is the closest you will come to home. In a few years, I will have enough to buy my own house there and then I can bring Paulina over and we can be married and start our family.

GIOVANNI

I too will bring my Marie and start a wonderful life here in America. . . . As soon as I can earn enough money.

PIETRO

I've been here for two years, never been out of work. Such a great country! My bank account is growing. I will have a house and send for my Paulina soon.

GIOVANNI

Everything is so different from our village.

PIETRO

We are Americans now! . . . There are many things you must learn. First, you must learn your job. Now we are to load and unload the kilns this way.

Animated, Pietro begins to show his old friend his job loading the kiln and pausing to explain the ways of America as they work.

PIETRO (CONT'D)

Always stack them this way and make sure the door is shut tight. Make sure no plates touch. . . Always be respectful to the bosses even if they are not fair. Mostly they are as long as you work hard.

EXT. A CHURCH - DAY

On a sunny day, Pietro and Paulina are a married couple leaving a church to a small but enthusiastic crowd.

Giovanni, his uncle, and his family are in attendance.

They stop and pose for pictures.

EXT. "DAGO HILL", ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI - DAY

Dago Hill is a working-class neighborhood dominated by brick row houses interspersed with barbershops, shoe shops, fish, and produce markets along with bars, restaurants, and grocery stores. Italian pride is on display. The buildings are well cared for as are the yards.

PAULINA BERRA is out in her front yard planting flowers along with three-year-old ANTHONY. She is noticeably pregnant. An older cattle truck loaded with furniture stops at the curb across the street. Giovanni Garagiola is driving with Uncle Garagiola and MARIE, Giovanni's wife. All have smiles of excitement as they arrive. Paulina rises to greet them, calling to her husband.

PAULINA

(Italian)

Peitro, Peitro, they are here!

Pietro Berra races out of the house carrying MICHAEL. Paulina picks up ANTHONY and joins him rushing to greet the truck.

PIETRO

(English)

Ha, ha, it's more like home now!
The Garagiola's are here!

PAULINA
(Italian)
More friends from the old country!

They greet like old friends.

GIOVANNI
(Italian)
This feels just like home! Our new
home, Marie, and our new neighbors,
the Berra's!

PIETRO
(Italian)
My good friend, Giovanni, my new
neighbor, how wonderful! Let's get
the truck unloaded so you can start
your new life!

EXT. GARAGIOLA FRONT YARD - EVENING

The truck sits empty. A table and chairs remain in the front
yard under a tree.

Several ladies are preparing a meal on a cloth tablecloth.
Neighbors can be seen carrying pots of food to the feast.

The men are standing about talking as dozens of children of
all ages are running about playing.

PIETRO
(Italian)
Just like home.

GIOVANNI
(Italian)
Yes, but our children can grow up
to be anything they want! They can
have great lives!

PIETRO
So hard to leave our homes behind
in Italia. . . This is home now.

GIOVANNI
(proudly)
Yes, now that I have my Marie here
and we have our new home!

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Paulina is in her hospital bed holding her new baby. Pietro is proudly standing next to the bed. Standing next to him are Giovanni and a slightly pregnant Marie. Peering over the foot of the bed are the three Berra children, eight-year-old, ANTHONY, seven-year-old, MICHAEL, and five-year-old, JOHN. Everyone's English has improved.

PAULINA

What should his name be?

PIETRO

His name, his proud American name
will be Larry, Larry Pietro Berra,
a strong American name.

With his heavy accent, Larry sounds like Lawdie.

GIOVANNI

(Italian)

Lawdie?

ANTHONY

He's saying, Larry, It's Lawrence,
really.

GIOVANNI

Oh.

PIETRO

That's right, Lawdie.

Paulina looks into her baby's eyes. Her attempts to say Lawrence make it Lawdie.

PAULINA

Lawdie Pietro, that will be his
name.

PIETRO

(proud)

Lawdie.

GIOVANNI

(proudly)

It is good to have a strong name
for a son. That's why we will name
our first, Joseph!

Marie smiles broadly.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Marie Garagiola is in bed proudly holding her newborn.
Paulina and Pietro are at the foot of her bed.

Pietro is proudly holding nine-month-old Lawrence. Giovanni
picks up JOSEPH.

GIOVANNI

I would like to show the world, my
friends, Joseph Henry Garagiola!

The two fathers proudly display their newborns.

PIETRO

The future of our families.

PAULINA

Such a great country! Our babies
have good health because of the
abundance, such a great country.

MARIE

(proud)

And to have our children in a
hospital, so much better. The start
of our family.

GIOVANNI

Our wonderful family!

EXT. ELIZABETH AVE. - DAGO HILL - DAY

It's a Sunday morning and Dago Hill is coming alive as the
Berra family, along with several others, are walking home.
All are dressed in their Sunday best. Lively chatter and
children's screeches fill the air on a warm Summer morning.
Paulina is pushing a stroller.

ANTHONY

I call first up for baseball!

JOHN

Okay, but I get to pitch!

PIETRO

Baseball, baseball, always playing
this baseball, it's a bums game.
Soccer is a man's game. . . You,
kids, are getting old enough to go
out and earn some money, I did at
your age. Always playing baseball.
You can't make a living playing
baseball!

The Berra children run ahead of their parents into the house.
Paulina calls after them.

PAULINA

Put your good clothes away! And
stay close for lunch!

Children flow from their houses and take over the streets.

One-by-one the Berra children emerge from the residence,
clothes changed with balls and bats in hand.

A ball game is set up on the street, hopscotch is being
played. Mothers are talking to mothers. Children's chatter
echoes up and down the street.

Six-year-old Larry is up to bat. Joe is catching.

ANTHONY

Come on, Lawdie hit it!

The pitch, a swing, and a miss.

JOE

Almost, Lawdie!

The pitch, a swing, and Larry slugs it down the street and
runs to first base.

MICHAEL

Grab it! Throw to first, he's so
slow!

BOY 1

(teasing)
He runs like a turtle!

BOY 2

(teasing)
His ears slow him down!

Larry makes it to first base just before the throw.

LARRY
(out of breath)
Ha! Beat you!

Later in the game, Joe is up to bat and Larry is catching.

A pitch and Joe gets a solid hit over the second base.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Good one, Joey!

The sun is high and mothers start calling their children in for lunch.

PAULINA
(Italian)
Antonio, Michael, Jonathan, bring
Lawdie in for lunch.

MARIE
(Italian)
Joseph, take your brother over to
the Berra's! We're having lunch
over there!

JOE
Okay, mamma.

Mother's voices echo down the street.

In seconds the street is cleared.

INT. BERRA HOUSE - DAY

A chaotic scene as mother Berra and mother Garagiola feed the children. Gathered around the table are the Berra children, Joe and Mickey, and several friends. The children are loud and active as mother Berra clangs a pot of spaghetti as she serves them. The children down the spaghetti in gulps along with chunks of bread and salad.

PAULINA
Everyone, clean hands?
Eat-up! There's plenty!

MARIE
Settle down, there's plenty!

MICHAEL

Hurry, we've got to get back out
and beat the Cabrasa's and the
Pepitone's.

PAULINA

Slow down and enjoy your meal.
Playing can wait.

EXT. BERRA HOUSE - DAY

The children, in a mad scatter, run out of the house. Mother Berra stands at the door. Ball games are resumed. Hopscotch is picked up. The neighborhood comes alive.

PAULINA

In at dark!

ALL

Yes, mother!

JOHN

Let's play soccer!

ANTHONY

Okay, let's pick sides!

LARRY

I'm the goalie!

MARIE

Watch out for your brother, Joseph.

JOE

Yes, mamma.

EXT. ELIZABETH AVE. - DAGO HILL - NIGHT

Lights are coming on as the sun is setting and the children drift inside.

Italian mothers can be heard calling the children in.

The Berra children are the last to go in.

Pietro and Giovanni are standing in the street, talking out of our earshot.

INT. BERRA HOUSE - NIGHT

Pietro is at the head of the dinner table. Not like lunch, dinner is orderly. The children are cleaned up and quiet.

PAULINA
More bread, Papa?

PIETRO
Yes. Some butter too. The children are quiet.

PAULINA
All played out. They play so hard.

MICHAEL
No, we're not! We're just hungry.

TONY
We want to go to the "Y" to swim.

PAULINA
It is a free night?

MICHAEL
Yes!

PAULINA
All right with me. I will see if Marie wants to go, Papa?

JOSIE-LARRY-MICHAEL
Please, Papa!

PIETRO
Better than having them run around the house, fine. If it gets me a quiet house to myself.

PAULINA
I'll take you. Tony, when you're done, run over to the Garagiola's and see if Marie and the children want to go.

TONY
Yes, ma'am.

EXT. YMCA - NIGHT

The YMCA is alive with children and mothers. Paulina and Maria are bunched together with the other mothers, chatting and knitting. Newborn Josie is in a stroller.

The loud, lively, children are everywhere.

The boys are playing organized basketball. A younger Larry, although not very agile, is able to compete with the older boys.

Running the facility is JOE CAUSINO, a thirty-year-old, respected, ex-athlete, and member of the local church.

With Mr. Causino, the ladies speak broken English.

MARIE

There's Mr. Causino.

PAULINA

(yells)

Mr. Causino, oh, Mr. Causino!

PAULINA (CONT'D)

He's great with the boys.

Paulina waves Mr. Causino over.

JOE CAUSINO

Hi ladies, full house tonight.

MARIE

Hello, Mr. Causino.

PAULINA

Yes, it is, Mr. Causino.Mr. Causino, nice to see you away from the church. You must come to the house for supper some time.

JOE CAUSINO

I would love too. . . Your boys are here a lot, I've watched them develop into pretty good athletes. They do like their sports.

PAULINA

They are good boys. I do wish I could get my youngest interested in school. He plays, sports all the time, like his brothers. . . They do good in school.

MARIE

My boy plays that baseball all the time too. But he does good in school.

JOE CAUSINO

Well, yes, I'm sure they will find their way. They are good boys, sports keeps them out of trouble. Larry is just a little more intense. Maybe I could talk to him.

PAULINA

That would be helpful, I'm sure. He respects you. He says you played ball.

JOE CAUSINO

Yes, I played briefly in the minors. And see, I turned out to have a good job here. I wouldn't want to do anything else but teach the kids.

PAULINA

Well, I guess so, but you are not married.

JOE CAUSINO

I'll talk to the boys.

PAULINA

Come over for supper soon.

EXT. BERRA HOUSE - DAY

The Berra children, nicely dressed and carrying school books, emerge from the house.

JOSIE

Bye, mother.

PAULINA
Study hard and walk together.

JOHN
We will.

PAULINA
Lawdie, I don't want to hear from
your teacher!

LARRY
Yes, ma'am.

INT. SCHOOLROOM - DAY

Larry is sitting at his desk, fidgeting and staring out the window. His teacher is lecturing. She pauses to address Larry's fidgeting.

TEACHER
Lawrence Berra, do you have ants in
your pants!

LARRY
No, ma'am.

TEACHER
(getting tense)
Stop staring out the window and pay
attention! Can you answer the
question?

LARRY
Yes, Ma'am, I mean no ma'am.

TEACHER
Lawrence Berra, don't you know
anything!

LARRY
Ma'am, I don't even suspect
anything.

The class chuckles.

TEACHER
(angry)
Lawrence Berra!

The class breaks out in full laughter. The teacher glares.

EXT. WALSH STADIUM - ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY - DAY

The Berra children are among several others from the neighborhood who have gathered outside the college football field. Football, soccer ball, baseballs, bats, and gloves in hand, they pass the time until through a gate comes a school official.

OFFICIAL

Do all you kids want to see the game?

ALL

(yelling)

Yeah!

OFFICIAL

Okay, go grab some sticks and knock some of those rabbits off the field! Damn things are everywhere!

The children start to scatter through the gate.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Three rabbits each gets you into the game!

EXT. WALSH STADIUM - ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY - DAY

A chaotic scene as a dozen boys and girls are attacking rabbits with sticks and rocks on an over-run football field.

Larry holds two dead rabbits and takes aim at another, hitting him dead center.

MICHAEL

Dead shot, Lawdie!

JOHN

Hit one for me, Larry! They're too fast for me.

Children are chasing rabbits with sticks. Larry takes aim and beans another one. The others cheers.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You're the best shot, Larry!

MICHAEL

He sure is.

JOE
Okay, watch this one!

Joe takes aim and nails one. The rabbit jumps around injured. Another kid runs up and clubs the rabbit.

JOE (CONT'D)
Got another one!

Larry takes aim.

EXT. WALSH STADIUM - ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY - DAY

The children are sitting in the stands with several rabbits stuffed under their seats.

A college football game is underway and the boys are loud and active.

The game is ending. The boys grab their rabbits and depart.

JOE
Come on! Go state!

ANTHONY
I'm going to play big-league ball when I get out of school! Football or maybe baseball.

MICHAEL
Sure you are. If we drop out of school, we are either going to have to go to work or join the service.

JOE
I don't mind school, I like Miss Clark.

LARRY
Ick, I hate school!

JOHN
You just don't try. It's not that hard. You just have to pay attention.

ANNOUNCER

With St. Louis winning a close one,
we sign-off. Drive safely and see
you next week.

ANTHONY

Let's go play baseball at the park.

LARRY

I'm hungry.

ANTHONY

Yeah, I'm hungry too.

MICHAEL

Okay, time to eat.

The Boys are sitting under a tree.

Michael unties a canvas bag and passes out their lunch.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What did mom make? Let's see.
Here's Lawdie's shit sandwich!

JOHN

Uhg! Bananas and mustard. That's
sick.

LARRY

Is not! It's my favorite! And
besides, it's Friday, no meat.

Larry chomps a mouthful, mustard, and banana squirts out.

JOE

That looks like duck poop.

JOHN

Ick!

LARRY

Ummmm!

JOHN

Gross, Larry!

EXT. CITY PARK BALLFIELD - DAY

A baseball game is underway. Larry is at the bat, Joe is pitching and John is catching.

Larry hits the ball into the outfield.

JOHN
Good hit, Lawdie!

JOE
That was my hardest throw.

MICHAEL
He sure can hit, for a little guy.

JOHN
He has to hit it far, it takes him
forever to get to the base.

Larry runs as only he can, slow and cumbersome.

MICHAEL
Any day now, Larry.

JOE
How does he not trip?

INT. BERRA HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Berra children, dirty and sweaty, enter the kitchen, rabbits in hand.

Paulina is standing at the sink.

The boys plop the rabbits into the sink.

MICHAEL
(proudly)
Look what we got mom, supper!

PAULINA
What good sons!
(beat)
Did you go to the college?

MICHAEL
Yeah! We saw a game and then went
to the park and played ball.

PAULINA

You boys take those rabbits out back and clean them, we'll have them tonight. Papa will be home soon. . . And clean yourself up!

ANTHONY

Okay, momma.

The boys grab the rabbits and disappear out the back door.

PAULINA

(to Josie)

You go get washed up and help with the salad.

JOSIE

Yes, Ma'am!

EXT. YMCA BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

As the game ends, The Stags, Larry, and Joe's neighborhood baseball team are coming off the field. The scoreboard reads Stags 8, Bluebirds 3. The opposing team is dressed in uniforms as the Stages are dressed in overalls and dirty T-shirts.

COACH

Good game boys! You may not look like much, but you sure can play! Nice hitting, Joe. Good hustle team!

JOE

Coach, we win games but still don't get shirts like the other teams, why?

COACH

You need a sponsor, shirts take money. That reminds me, clubhouse dues are late, twelve dollars, you guys got it?

LARRY

Not yet, but we'll get it!

The team gathers its sparse gear and departs.

ANTHONY

Where are we going to get any money?

JOE

I ain't got no money.

LARRY

I don't even have a glove. Can't play without a glove.

MICHAEL

Where are we going to get a sponsor?

LARRY

Give me some time to think. I'll figure something out.

INT. SOUTHWEST DRUG STORE - DAY

Larry looks into the store window at his reflection and straightens his hair before entering the store.

He walks to the back looking until he comes upon the PHARMACIST.

LARRY

(nervous)

Are you the owner?

PHARMACIST

Yes. How can I help you?

LARRY

Sir, I have a baseball team and we need a sponsor. We need T-shirts and some gloves and balls would be nice.

PHARMACIST

A sponsor! For baseball!

LARRY

Yes, sir.

PHARMACIST

Nobody watches baseball! Hell, boy, you should play soccer, everybody watches soccer. And all you need is a ball.

LARRY

(timid)

No, sir! We play baseball, all our friends do.

PHARMACIST

Well, I already sponsored a soccer team. I'm all sponsored out.

LARRY

Yes, sir.

PHARMACIST

Try soccer.

Larry walks out dejected.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS - DAY

Larry is pushing a rickety old two-wheel cart. Tony is walking aside with a shovel. They pause several times to pick up horse manure. Larry yells out.

LARRY

Horse manure, horse manure for sale!

A tenant exits his house and yells back.

TENANT

Over here. Do you have some dried?

The boys move the cart over.

LARRY

Yes, sir. We have yesterday's here. We let this from today dry in the sun.

TENANT 1

Getting mighty chilly at night.

ANTHONY
Yes, sir. We'll be back through
tomorrow.

LARRY
(yells)
Horse manure, stay warm tonight.

They make the sale as another tenant exits her house and
waves him down.

TENANT 2
Oh, little boy!

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS - DAY

Larry is on the busy street accosting people as they passed
by.

LARRY
Cigarette mister? One cent each.

MAN 2
Sure, give me two. Here's a nickel,
keep it.

LARRY
Gee, thanks!

Transaction complete the man continues on his way.

LARRY (CONT'D)
(yells)
Cigarettes, one cent!

MAN 3
I'll take one.

Transaction complete, the man continues on his way.

LARRY
Thanks!

INT. THE HILL BOXING CLUB - DAY

The Hill Boxing Club is a local club for boys run by Frank
Mariaina, a middle-aged, former light and middleweight with a
caring demeanor.

A well-worn ring sits in the middle of a large open room. Speed bags and weights are scattered throughout.

Yogi is sparing in the ring. Frank is refereeing.

FRANK

Okay, Mike good left. Hit the speed bag. Yogi, much improvement, lots of power on that uppercut.

LARRY

Thanks, coach.

FRANK

How would you like to be in the show next week? We're starting an amateur boxing show on Saturdays, you interested? You can make a few dollars.

LARRY

Would I!

FRANK

Good, you have lots of power. Let me show you a few things. Now footwork.

INT. THE HILL BOXING CLUB - NIGHT

A crowd has formed standing around the rink.

On one side chairs are now set up and occupied with men and their dates.

Larry is in the ring with an Irish boy who is a head taller and slender.

Larry is a bruiser. He beats on the torso of his appointment until he gives in. Frank holds Larry's arm in the air. The crowd roars.

INT. THE HILL BOXING CLUB - NIGHT

The crowd is larger. Larry is in the ring with another Irish boy. This one bigger and older than the last one.

Again Larry is the victor. Frank holds up his arm and the crowd roars.

INT. THE HILL BOXING CLUB - NIGHT

Larry is in the ring with a much older boy. Even though he is much bigger than Larry, they are more evenly matched. Anthony and Pietro are in the back of the crowd.

PIETRO

Does he always take such a beating?
That boy is so much bigger than
him.

ANTHONY

No, this guy is older than the guys
he usually fights. He's beaten
everyone his size. He can take it.
He's like a little tank.

Pietro cringes with every blow.

PIETRO

I didn't know he could do that.

ANTHONY

He's some athletic. Sports are all
he wants to do.

PIETRO

Huh.

ANTHONY

He plays baseball every day.

PIETRO

How can he make a living playing
sports?

ANTHONY

Some do, Pops.

PIETRO

He's going to box?

ANTHONY

No, no, this is just to make some
money. The club is closing down
anyway.

PIETRO

Huh.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS - DAY

Larry, Michael, and Tony are standing on opposite street corners, hawking newspapers.

LARRY
(yells)
Newspaper! Get your morning paper!

MICHAEL
(yells)
Paper, get your paper!

MAN 1
One here.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

LARRY
(yells)
Get your newspaper!

The street is busy as they make several sales.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS - DAY

On a chilly, rainy morning, Larry is the only one selling papers.

A man under an umbrella approaches. When he tilts the umbrella back, Larry sees it is Cardinals left fielder, JOE "DUCKY" MEDWICK. He freezes and stares.

DUCKY
I'll take one of those. Cold morning.

Larry does not move.

DUCKY (CONT'D)
Son.

LARRY
(shocked, excited)
You're Ducky Medwick! Left fielder for the Cardinals and part of the Gashouse Gang!

DUCKY

Yes, I am. You must know baseball.

LARRY

Yes, I play for the Stags!

DUCKY

What's your name?

LARRY

Larry, Larry Berra.

DUCKY

Well, keep playing, Larry. And keep the change.

He tosses him a nickel.

LARRY

Yes, sir!

Larry stands, staring as Ducky walks away.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS - DAY

On a sunny morning, Larry and his brothers are selling newspapers. Standing watching Larry are Joe and several of his teammates.

MICHAEL

Get your morning paper! Get the "Globe-Democrat" here!

LARRY

Over here! Get the "Post-Dispatch" here!

ANTHONY

Paper, get your morning paper!

Ducky Medwick approaches Larry. He spots the team and instantly recognizes the reason they are there.

DUCKY

Hi, Larry, nice morning. Hi boys.

The boys stare eyes wide open.

LARRY

Morning, Ducky, here's your paper.

DUCKY
Going to practice today?

LARRY
You bet, right after I'm done here!

DUCKY
Is this your team?

LARRY
Sure is, some of them anyway.

DUCKY
I hope you guys get a chance to get to the ballpark. . . . Keep playing boys, that's how I got there. See you tomorrow, Larry.

BOYS
Yes, sir!

Ducky departs. The boys become hysterical.

LARRY
(proud)
See, I told you!

BOY 1
He called you by your name!

BOY 2
He is your friend!

JOE
Unbelievable!

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS - DAY

Larry and his brothers are out selling newspapers. Larry is approached by middle-aged, well-dressed, MISS BELTRAMI. Miss Beltrami has an air of sophistication about her.

MISS BELTRAMI
I'll take one of those, young man.

LARRY
Yes, ma'am.

Miss Beltrami eyes Larry as money is exchanged.

LARRY (CONT'D)
And here's your change.

MISS BELTRAMI
Shouldn't a young man as yourself
be in school?

LARRY
(nervous)
Yes, ma'am! I mean no ma'am. School
was let out early today. Teacher
said I wasn't learning nothing
anyway.

MISS BELTRAMI
I'm sure she was kidding. . .
Making money for your mother?

LARRY
No, ma'am. Well, maybe some of it.
I'm trying to make money for our
team. We have club dues and we're
the only team without T-shirts with
our name on it.

MISS BELTRAMI
Oh, well, that can't do. What is
the team name?

LARRY
The Stags.

MISS BELTRAMI
I see. And what sport do you play?

LARRY
Baseball!

MISS BELTRAMI
(smiles)
Ah, baseball, an up and coming
sport.

LARRY
Yes, ma'am, we love it.

MISS BELTRAMI
And I bet it keeps you and your
friends out of trouble, off the
streets.

LARRY

Yes, ma'am.

MISS BELTRAMI

Haven't I seen you on the "Hill?"

LARRY

Yes, ma'am. We all live there.

MISS BELTRAMI

I thought I had seen you playing on the street with your friends.

LARRY

Yes, ma'am.

MISS BELTRAMI

I am Miss Beltrami, I live down the street from you. I've met your mother, Mrs. Berra, I believe.

LARRY

Yes, ma'am.

MISS BELTRAMI

If you are looking for a sponsor, I am sponsoring a team for the Cardinals Knothole Gang.

LARRY

(suddenly excited)

Really!

MISS BELTRAMI

Yes, and we will be attending the Cardinal's games. Would you and your friends be interested?

LARRY

Would we! We were just hoping for shirts and maybe some gloves and bats!

MISS BELTRAMI

Well, I think we can help, Mr. Rickey is very interested in up-and-coming ballplayers. There's a home game this Saturday, would you and your friends like to go?

LARRY

Would we!

MISS BELTRAMI

I will come to your house and speak
with your mother.

LARRY

Yes, ma'am!

Miss Beltrami departs as an excited Larry dashes across the
street to his brothers.

EXT. SPORTSMAN'S PARK - DAY

Miss Beltrami is surrounded by Larry, Tony, Mike, Joe, and
the rest of the team in the cheap seats. All are excited and
animated as the Cardinals take the field.

LARRY

This is great Mrs. Beltrami!
Nobodies ever done this for us
before.

MIKE

Sure is!

JOE

The big leagues! That's where I
want to be!

MISS BELTRAMI

Mr. Ricky wants to nourish your
baseball interest. Maybe someday
you or your friends will play for
him.

ANNOUNCER

Taking the field for the St. Louis
Cardinal are, Spud Davis, Frankie
Frisch, Leo Durocher, brothers,
Dizzy Dean, and Daffy Dean, and
Frank Orsatti!

With every name, the crowd cheers and the boys jump out of
their seats.

INT. BERRA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Paulina and Larry are sitting on the couch as Pietro paces as he lectures Larry.

PIETRO

(tense)

Lawrence, too many times you have
skipped school! Too many times,
your teacher sends notes home
telling us you do not do your
studies!

LARRY

I know, I'm sorry.

PAULINA

(calm)

She says you don't care, you don't
try.

LARRY

It's just so hard!

PAULINA

Your brothers do just fine and your
sister is at the top of her class.

LARRY

(head down)

Well, they're smart.

PIETRO

(louder)

What is to become of you? You will
have to go to work!

LARRY

(timid)

I want to play baseball.

PIETRO

(louder)

Baseball! Baseball, you can't make
a living playing baseball!

LARRY

Ducky does. And a lot of others.

PIETRO
(louder)
Ducky, what's a Ducky!

INT. BERRA HOUSE - UPSTAIRS STAIRWELL - NIGHT

The Berra children are huddled on the stairs, listening.
Michael burst downstairs.

MICHAEL
But papa, he is really good, really
good for his age. He hits as good
as me.

PAULINA
He is too young to give up on his
education.

MICHAEL
I know, I'm just saying he's really
good and he runs our team!

PIETRO
Baseball, baseballs a bums game!

A knock on the door.

PIETRO (CONT'D)
Who's that at this hour?

PAULINA
It's Father Coester, I invited him
here to talk to Lawdie.

Paulina answers the door.

PAULINA (CONT'D)
Hello, Reverend, come in.

FATHER COESTER
Thank you, I hope you don't mind, I
asked Joe Causino from the YMCA to
come alone, he knows kids and
baseball.

JOE CAUSINO
Hi, Mrs. Berra and the kids I know
from The "Y," Mr. Berra, nice to
meet you.

PIETRO

Yes, thank you for coming.

JOE CAUSINO

I hope I can help. Larry is one of the good boys, just a little too much into sports, I guess.

PAULINA

Thank you for coming. We have been trying to talk to him. Maybe you can help? He will not even try in school!

FATHER COESTER

(to the children)

Hello everyone. Nice to see familiar faces from the church.

The children nod and smile.

PIETRO

Thank you for coming, Father. I promise the next time you will be invited at a more enjoyable time. We have a child who has given up on his studies. All he wants to do is play baseball. He does not understand the American dream!

FATHER COESTER

I see.

PAULINA

His teacher is tired. She has to put so much time into Lawdie.

FATHER COESTER

(stern)

Yes, entering the eighth grade and failing is a waste of your time and your teachers. If you are not to apply yourself, well, she has others who want to learn.

LARRY

(head down)

Yes, Father.

FATHER COESTER

Now, Larry, baseball has its place in this world. I actually like it myself, to watch, in moderation.

JOE CAUSINO

That's right, Larry, few people make a living playing sports. Sure some do, but few.

LARRY

(turns to Joe)

But, Joe, you always told us that the thing a man is most interested in is what he ought to spend his life at. I remember you said if you like something so much, you eat and sleep and think it, then that's what you ought to do.

JOE CAUSINO

Okay then, what is it you want badly enough to work at it, what's it going to be?

All eyes are on Larry.

LARRY

Baseball. Baseball is what I want.

PIETRO BERRA

(tense)

I don't understand, baseball, baseball, is not work! Every man must work. You don't want to go to school, then you will go to work! Your brothers finished school and gave up on that silliness. They got jobs and so if you are done with school, you will too.

MICHAEL

I had to give up my dream of playing big league ball. . . Most don't make it anyway.

PIETRO

This one is so stubborn! If he works and brings money home to his mother, I don't care what he does after that! Baseball, a Childs game!

LARRY

I could do that! Some of the guys work!

PIETRO

Work or school!

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Larry is behind the wheel of a Pepsi delivery truck.

He stops in front of a small corner grocery store, parks, and wheels several cases of soda into the store.

After a few minutes, he departs the store and while driving down the street he comes upon a baseball game.

Pausing to stare at the game, Larry shrugs his shoulders and pulls the truck over.

The next we see is the truck parked at the curb and Larry playing baseball.

INT. JOHANSEN'S SHOE COMPANY - NIGHT

Larry, dirty and sweaty, is sitting on a stool on a loud factory floor pulling tacks out of shoes on a production line.

Anthony walks by, stops to talk.

ANTHONY

Getting the hang of it?

LARRY

Yeah! But not liking it much.

ANTHONY

At least we can go home, get some sleep before the games.

LARRY

Yeah, I can play ball and that's what's important.

ANTHONY

As dad said, work or school.

LARRY

Are you mad at him?

ANTHONY

Dad, no, not really.

LARRY

You're a better player than me and you had a tryout with Cleveland. Michael was offered a contract with the Browns and dad wouldn't let him take it, why would he let me try?

ANTHONY

He's dead set against baseball. None of that guarantees a living and a man gotta make a living. We all have to bring in money. You want a family someday, don't you?

LARRY

I want to play baseball.

EXT. SHAW SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Traveling through the streets of St. Louis we pass vacant lot after vacant lot filled with children of all ages playing soccer, baseball, and football. We horn in on a schoolyard and a baseball game.

Joe is up at-bat. Larry is catching.

LARRY

One over the plate Billy!

Joe swings and places one in the outfield.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Still dropping your shoulder. It'll go further if you keep your shoulder up.

Later in the game. Larry is at bat and Joe is pitching.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Come on! Give me something.

A pitch, a swing, and a miss.

JOE
There's something! You better hit
better than that if The Stags are
going to beat Edmonds!

A pitch, a swing, and a hit to the outfield. The ball lands
unchallenged.

Suddenly a shrill whistle blows and the children freeze.

Instantly the ballplayers pick up their merger equipment and
scatter.

Throughout the neighborhood, children are running.

INT. BERRA HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Larry runs out of breath. His mother is waiting with a small
tin pail and fifteen cents. She hands them to Larry. Larry,
saying nothing, grabs them and runs out the door.

PAULINA
Make sure it's cold this time. Your
father gets mad if it's not cold.
And don't spill!

EXT. FASSI'S TAVERN - DAY

A chaotic scene as a line of children of all ages, holding
small tin pails, forms out the door of the tavern. Larry
reaches the line with his pail as children exit the bar
balancing pails of beer. Joe is running towards the line,
pale in hand.

EXT. GARAGIOLA BACKYARD - DAY

The Garagiola backyard is large and well cared for. Off to
one side are a Boca court and a large bar-be-cue.

A neighborhood gathering is underway and several men are
gathered around the Boca court.

The women are moving in and out of the house preparing a meal and bringing their husbands beers. The younger children are running about.

PIETRO

Good work on your new Boca court.
It looks like the one back home.

Giovanni proudly looks around his yard.

GIOVANNI

Look at our houses, look at all our
friends, this is home now. I am
happy I came.

Marie brings beers.

GIOVANNI (CONT'D)

And look at my beautiful wife, such
a lucky man!

PIETRO

I am happy I came too. My children
will always have work. They play
too much, now, but they will have
good jobs and good families.

GIOVANNI

I know, my Joseph, all he wants is
to play baseball, baseball all the
time.

PIETRO

My two eldest want to play ball in
the big league, Anthony even got
some team to let him play. I
wouldn't have it. I said no! A man
has to have a job!

GIOVANNI

Why don't they play more soccer, a
much better game? . . . We had
jobs at their age.

PIETRO

When we could find one.

GIOVANNI GARAGIOLA

America, the land of jobs!

EXT. CLAY MINES - DAY

The Stags with Larry in the lead enter the grounds of an abandoned clay mine. A large dirt parking lot dotted with rusted equipment and debris sits next to the fenced-off pit.

LARRY

(excited)

This looks great! This is the place! We can make a field here!

ANTHONY

Sure does. We just need to get it cleaned up.

STAG 1

Are you sure we can play here?

JOE

Sure is a lot of junk.

LARRY

Why not, it's closed! We can use that old building as a backstop. Nobody will care. They might even like it if we cleaned it up. . . Let's get started.

JOE

(shaking his head)

Sure is a lot of work.

Over the next several hours, equipment is moved and debris is piled off to the side making for a berm around the newly formed field.

The children, much dirtier now, map out a ball field.

With the makeshift ballfield complete, a game is underway.

EXT. YMCA BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

A YMCA tournament game between the Edmonds and the Stags of the recreation intermediate league is ending.

The Edmonds is a well organized, attractive team with full uniforms. A stark contrast to the Stags who are now wearing matching team T-shirts over their coveralls.

The Edmonds have defeated the Stags for the title. The Stag's look on dejected at a jubilant celebration on the Edmonds side of the field.

STAG 1

(dejected)

Look at them, no wonder they beat us, they have the best uniforms, the best gloves, not fair.

JOE

Yeah, and they're bigger than us. They get all the best players.

STAG 2

Yeah, I think I gotta quit, my dad says I need to get a job.

LARRY

You can't do that, we need everyone we can get!

STAG 3

My dad says he's going to get me a job at the plant, I gotta take it.

STAG 1

This ain't getting us anywhere.

JOE

There goes the team. We need all our guys.

Across the field, the Edmonds are celebrating. MANAGER FRANK and COACH JUAN are talking among themselves.

MANAGER FRANK

(to coach Juan)

I wouldn't mind snagging a couple of those guys.

COACH JUAN

Which ones? I like that stout kid with the ears.

MANAGER FRANK

Yeah, that one, and how about that bigger kid who's hit that double in the third.

COACH JUAN
He's big enough.

MANAGER FRANK
(to the team)
Okay, everyone, across the field.

The Edmonds are slowly walking across the field to the Stags.

The teams meet to shake hands. Manager Frank and coach Juan are whispering together. Manager Frank signals to Larry and Joe. He offers his hand.

MANAGER FRANK (CONT'D)
Hi guys, I'm Frank Mertz and this is coach Juan Castrol, I like the way you play, lots of hustle.

JOE
Thank you. But we lost.

COACH JUAN
(to Joe and Larry)
That was some solid hitting. Three for five, I believe. That's not losing. And you handled that mitt behind the plate as good as I've seen.

JOE
Thanks.

LARRY
Gee, thanks!

COACH JUAN
How would you like to join the Edmonds?

Joe and Larry's eyes widen as they instantly get excited. The Stags are forgotten as they reply.

LARRY
Would we!

JOE
Are you kidding!

The rest of the Stags take notice and gather around. Joe and Larry take notice.

LARRY

Oh, we have a team.

MANAGER FRANK

And a good team it is. This would
be a step-up, better equipment,
better everything.

Larry and Joe look over at the Stags.

STAG 1

Go ahead, you have too!

STAG 3

Go ahead, I have to go to work
anyway.

STAG 1

It was okay when we were kids, but
my dad says I can't play forever.

MANAGER FRANK

Not all kids have the potential.
The Edmonds would be a step closer
to the minors.

LARRY

So, this is the end of the Stags?

Larry looks around as all shrug in agreement.

STAG 1

(solemn)

I guess so.

JOE

We're all yours.

EXT. YMCA BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The players are wearing matching workout clothes as a well-organized practice is underway. Larry is catching and Joe is batting. Manager Frank is looking on.

MANAGER FRANK

Larry, you look real natural behind
the plate, crouch a little lower,
get ready to spring. . . . Eye on
the ball, Joe!

(MORE)

MANAGER FRANK (CONT'D)

Swing all the way through.
. . .Okay, wind sprints!

The team is running wind sprints. Coach Juan approaches Manager Frank.

COACH JUAN

We've got some good looking guys
this year.

MANAGER FRANK

I think so. That Barger kid is
going to be a better pitcher this
year. And Consuelo is hitting
better.

COACH JUAN

How about the two new guys?

MANAGER FRANK

Looks like they are both dedicated
enough. The tall one, Garagiola,
can hit pretty good. The squatty
one is better behind the plate. . .
Good arm. He hits all right. . Work
with him on his stance. And get
them in better shape.

COACH JUAN

Will do.

The team is on the turf doing leg lifts.

Joe, Larry, and the other teammates are sitting on the turf
listening intently to the manager.

MANAGER FRANK

If you work really hard, some of
you may go on to bigger things. You
are with us because we see the
potential. You are where every big
leaguer started.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Larry and Joe, along with several teammates are sitting in a
movie house. The lights dim and a newsreel fills the screen.

An India scene with an Indian Fakir comes across the screen and the boys giggle.

BOBBY
(laughing)
Did you see him, he looks just like
Lawdy!

LARRY
Does not!

BOBBY
(laughing)
Does, so! Look at those ears!

LARRY
Shut up, the movies starting!

BOBBY HOFMAN
What kind of name is Lawdy, anyway?

A Tom Mix western appears on the screen and the theater erupts.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS - DAY

The boys have exited the movie house and are walking home acting as twelve-year-old boys will.

JOE
That's the best Tom Mix movie ever.

MIKE
The good guy wins! Bang! Bang!
Bang!

BOBBY
I wish we could go ride horses like
that!

BOBBY (CONT'D)
My cousin has some mules.

LARRY
Naw, let's go over to the "Y,"
maybe we can get a game going.

BOBBY

I still say Lawdy looks like that
Yogi in the newsreel! Big ears and
all!

LARRY

Do not! You look like horse shit!

JOE

Yeah, leave him alone!

BOBBY

I'm just saying, we should call
him, Yogi!

JOE

He does need a new name. What kind
of name is Lawdy for a ballplayer?

MIKE

Yogi sounds better than, Lawdy!

BOBBY

Then, Yogi, it is.

EXT. SPORTSMAN'S PARK - DAY

A game is underway between Edmonds and Browns. The score is
tied with Joe up to bat and Yogi is on third. A swing, a hit
to center field, a throw to the plate, and Yogi knocking down
the catcher to score.

EXT. SPORTSMAN'S PARK - DAY

A game is underway between Edmonds and the Archers. Yogi is
catching and Joe is playing second. A batter strikes out.
Yogi wipes the ball to first base.

LARRY

Better luck next time. Try not to
drop your shoulder.

BATTER

Shut-up!

EXT. SPORTSMAN'S PARK - DAY

A game is underway between the Edmonds and the Pirates. Joe is batting. Yogi is on the bench.

LARRY

Come on, Joey! Don't let him skunk
you!

A swing and a double to left field. Yogi cheers.

EXT. SPORTSMAN'S PARK - DAY

It is tryout day for the St. Louis Cardinals. Yogi and Joe are being evaluated. Several coaches with clipboards are moving about.

COACH PHIL and COACH BILL are with Yogi and Joe's group.

GENERAL MANAGER BRANCH RICKEY is standing in the background, smoking a cigar and watching intently.

Off to one side, wind-sprints are being timed. Joe and Yogi are in line.

COACH BILL

Okay, next up!

Joe steps up to the line.

COACH BILL (CONT'D)

Set, go!

Joe makes a good run and the coach marks his sheet.

COACH BILL (CONT'D)

Okay, next.

Yogi's turn.

Yogi runs as he always does, slow and cumbersome.

COACH BILL (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Well, he made it. Slowest time yet.
At least he didn't fall down.

The last kid runs. Coach Bill has been joined by coach Phil.

COACH BILL (CONT'D)
Everyone over to the batting cage.

COACH PHIL
Anyone stand out yet?

COACH BILL
No one is really fast. There's one
kid that looks like he's falling
when he runs.

COACH PHIL
Let's go see if we have any
hitters.

The kids are standing behind a batting cage. Coach Bill is on
the mound. Coach Phil is with the boys.

COACH PHIL (CONT'D)
Okay, everyone, ten swings, let's
see what you can do.

The first kid up strikes twice before hitting it to the
infield. Three more kids bat before Joe is up.

LARRY
Come on, Joey, show em.

A pitch, a swing, and a miss.

LARRY (CONT'D)
You can do it!

A pitch, a swing, and a long ball to center field. The
coaches and the boys watch as the ball sails past the fence.

LARRY (CONT'D)
(excited)
Do it again, Joey.

A pitch, a swing, and a hit over the second base.

COACH PHIL
(yells to coach Bill)
Put some pepper on it.

LARRY
Get ready, Joey.

A pitch, a swing, and a solid hit to left field.

COACH PHIL

Okay, not bad. You just hit off a
minor league pitcher. Widen your
stance a little. . . Next batter.

Yogi comes to the plate.

JOE

Concentrate, Yogi! He comes low and
inside!

COACH PHIL

Yogi?

A pitch, a swing, and Yogi falls down.

Coach Phil has the same look of failure he had when he saw
Yogi run.

JOE

Come on, Yogi! Stop bearing down,
that don't help.

A pitch, a swing, and a solid hit over the pitcher.

COACH PHIL

(yells to coach Bill)
Easy up a bit, let him make
contact.

LARRY

No, no, I don't need that. Give it
to me fast.

Coach Bill shrugs his shoulders and throws the pitch.

A swing and a hit past the fence.

JOE

(to coach Phil)
He hits the fast ones. He's really
good.

COACH PHIL

Okay. Try again.

A pitch, a swing, and another solid hit.

Coach Bill is bearing down.

A pitch, a swing, and a solid hit to deep left.

COACH PHIL (CONT'D)

Looks like we have two guys who can hit minor league stuff.

Coach Bill walks to the plate.

COACH BILL

(to coach Phil)

Not bad! Looks like we have some hitters.

COACH PHIL

There's about six or seven I think I can work with.

COACH BILL

That Garagiola kid is a solid hitter.

COACH PHIL

Yeah, he's my pick. His friend is a pretty good hitter too.

COACH BILL

Yeah, but have you seen him run. I don't know how he doesn't fall down. He's no ballplayer.

COACH PHIL

(to the kids)

Okay, everyone, we will finish our evaluations and will be calling you if we feel you have a place in The Cardinal organization. Several of you will get a tryout so don't be discouraged. There is always another tryout.

INT. MANAGER BRANCH RICKEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Manager Rickey's office overlooks the field. This is a large cluttered room with everything baseball scattered about.

Mr. Rickey is staring out the window when the two coaches enter after knocking.

RICKEY

Come in boys.

They enter. Manager Rickey sits at his large desk.

RICKEY (CONT'D)

What have you got for me? I saw some pretty good hitters. Any pitchers?

COACH PHIL

A couple strong right-handers, no lefties. There are some strong boys in the mix. There are two pitchers, Morgan and Kelly that I would want to try and develop. Kelly has good control. Morgan I would have to strengthen his arm.

RICKEY

Okay, we'll give them an offer, anyone else?

COACH BILL

There is that Italian boy, Garagiola, I like him. He's fast and agile. Runs fast to first. Solid hitter.

RICKEY

Garagiola, is he one of those kids from, "The Hill?"

COACH BILL

I think so. We get a lot from there.

RICKEY

I like kids from there, they play hard.

COACH PHIL

I like him.

RICKEY

Okay, a contract for him. Who else?

COACH PHIL

He has a friend, kind of an awkward kid, Yogi, something.

RICKEY

Yogi! I guess I've heard worse.
What can he do?

COACH PHIL

Real good power. He can play any
position, except pitcher.

COACH BILL

They seem to be buddies, both from
"The Hill."

RICKEY

We can offer him a little
something. I can't be throwing
money away.

COACH BILL

We definitely want that Garagiola
kid.

RICKEY

Okay, we'll sign them. Now, who
else?

INT. GARAGIOLA LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Garagiola family is sitting in the living room. Papa is reading the newspaper, the kids are on the floor doing homework and Marie is moving about going in and out of the Kitchen. A knock on the door. Marie hurries to the door. Everyone's attention goes to the door.

MARIE

It's late for a visitor.

She opens the door to find a well-dressed man holding his hat.

MIKE WARD

I'm so sorry to bother you at this
hour. I've never been to this
neighborhood before. I got lost. I
tried to find a phone number for
you. There doesn't seem to be one.

Giovanni joins her at the door.

GIOVANNI

We don't have such a thing. May we help you?

MIKE WARD

I am looking for the Garagiola family.

GIOVANNI

That is us. I'm am Giovanni. What is wrong!

MIKE WARD

Oh, nothing! I represent the Cardinal organization and we want to have your son, Joe, come to Mr. Rickey's office.

GIOVANNI

For what would he do that?

Joe springs to the door followed by his brother.

JOE

(excited)

They want me! Papa, the Cardinals want me!

MIKE WARD

Yes, that's right. Mr. Rickey would like to have you and your parents in his office tomorrow morning.

JOE

(more excitement)

Papa, please, you have too.

GIOVANNI

This baseball, that's all you do. What about your studies. You can not stop school like the Berra boy.

JOE

I'll finish, I promise, I only have one year after this. I can do both.

MIKE WARD

A lot of boys do, play ball after school and they have the Summers.
(MORE)

MIKE WARD (CONT'D)

If they want to make the big leagues, they have to start early.

MARIE

Are you saying our boy can play this game and make money?

MIKE WARD

This will be his first contract. He will make some money. If he works really hard, he could make a lot of money.

JOE

Mamma, I have to!

MARIE

Such a country, this America. Grown men playing games and making money, such a country.

GIOVANNI

I don't know, I have to work tomorrow.

MIKE WARD

It will only take an hour. He is too young to sign a contract. He needs his parent's permission. One of you anyway.

JOE

Please, Papa!

Marie and Giovanni exchange a look. Marie nods approval.

GIOVANNI

Okay, I will be late for work.

Joe hugs his dad.

JOE

Thanks, Pops.

Mike Ward shakes Giovanni's hand.

GIOVANNI

You won't be sorry, the coaches really like him. . . Now, where can I find the Berra house?

Giovanni points across the street.

INT. MANAGER BRANCH RICKEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Larry and Joe are sitting in chairs in front of Mr. Rickey's desk. Paulina, Marie, and Giovanni are sitting around the boys. Mike Ward and Coach Phil are in the background. Mr. Rickey is addressing Joe.

RICKEY

Well, Joe, I've seen you hit and we think you could go far.

JOE

Thanks!

RICKEY

We would like to offer you our standard minor league contract. That comes with a five-hundred-dollar bonus. Of course, if you make the team.

Joe and Larry become excited, animated.

Paulina, Marie, and Giovanni gasp.

JOE

Wow!

RICKEY

The money is enough to get by on. The bonus is yours to be earned.

JOE

Yes, sir!

GIOVANNI

Five-hundred-dollars.

Mr. Rickey turns to Larry.

RICKEY

Now, Larry, some of our coaches see potential in you. To be honest, and it won't do you any good if I'm not, I don't. You do have power, you can hit. But you're awful awkward.

Larry turns sad. Joe has his mouth open.

JOE
(blurts)
He's as good as me, really!

RICKEY
Okay, I know, you're his friend,
that's why I'm going to give him a
standard contract.

They both get excited.

RICKEY (CONT'D)
Now the bonus will be two-hundred-
fifty. I can't take chances.

LARRY
What!

JOE
He's as good as me, maybe better!

RICKEY
He's going to get a chance, what
every kid wants.

LARRY
(calmly defiant)
No! I won't take it!

RICKEY
It's up to you, that's the offer.

Larry slowly rises, takes his mother's hand, and walks out.

RICKEY (CONT'D)
(indignant)
Well, that's never happened before!

EXT. SPORTSMAN'S PARK - DAY

Yogi is playing for the Stockham Post, a National league,
semipro-team.

The semifinals of the National American League tournament is
underway. Yogi is playing outfield.

In the stands, pen and notebook in hand, is LEO BROWNE, a local businessman and baseball enthusiast, and friend of sports reporter, BOB BURNES

A high hit to right field. Yogi chases it down and makes a diving catch. Leo writes in his notebook.

Yogi is up to bat. He swings and misses. Another swing and Yogi hit it to right field. Leo writes in his notebook.

Yogi on first, stills second. Leo writes in his notebook.

The game is over. The scoreboard reads Stockham Post, three - Burwyn Bears, seven. Leo writes in his notebook.

INT. BUSINESS OFFICE - DAY

LEO BROWNE is at his desk typing a letter - it reads:

St. Louis Globe-Democrat
St. Louis, Missouri
Attn: Bob Burnes

Dear Bob.

I am writing to tell you about a left-hander I saw on the field today. He is a seventeen-year-old and over the past year I have seen him play every position except pitcher and he can play them all. He's got short legs, but he runs good. He swings at everything in sight. His form is all wrong and the coaches can't make him wait at the plate, but he's the best hitter I've ever seen! He does everything wrong, but it comes out right. You can find him working out at Sportsman Park. His name is Yogi or something or other. Ain't that a hell of a name!

Your Friend,
Leo

INT. ST. LOUIS GLOBE-DEMOCRAT - DAY

Bob Burns is at his desk reading the letter. He chuckles to himself.

BOB
Yogi, what's a Yogi?

EXT. SPORTSMAN'S PARK - DAY

Yogi and Joe are working out with a team. Bob Burnes is behind second base speaking with a coach.

BOB
Hi coach.

COACH
Bob, looking for a story?

BOB
Always. I heard about a kid, a lefty, a Yogi, or something.

COACH
(he points)
Yogi, sure, that kid over there.

He scans Yogi.

BOB
Not much to look at.

COACH
Maybe not, but he sure can play.
Lots of desire.

BOB
I heard the Cardinals and the Browns passed on him.

COACH
I wouldn't. He plays the game his way, like no one else.

BOB
I heard he can hit?

COACH
That he can. As good as any kid I've had through here.

BOB
So, why do you think they passed on him?

COACH
(he points)
He doesn't look like a ballplayer.
(MORE)

COACH (CONT'D)

That Garagiola kid over there, now he looks like a ballplayer, he's good too. Tall and lanky. The Cardinals snagged him. Our Elizabeth Avenue boys. Yogi is every bit as good.

BOB

Okay, thanks, coach.

COACH

Spell my name right next time.

Bob laughs.

INT. ST. LOUIS BROWNS HEAD OFFICE - DAY

The Owner, Philip Ball, is at his desk. Baseball player, Tim Maguire, and Browne's scout, Lou McQuillen, have just entered.

PHILIP

Well, what do you think? Does Burnes know what he's talking about? I watched him play third, I wasn't impressed.

TIM

I've been watching him for a while, he's good. He can hit. He can hurl it in from center.

LOU

I agree he's the real thing. You have to look past the clumsiness. Somehow he makes it work. He looks slow but he's faster than it seems. I timed him going around the plate. Not a bad time. His slid needs work.

PHILIP

We can't throw money around.

LOU

You won't be sorry.

TIM

He goes all-out. I got a feeling,
he could be one of the great ones.

LOU

I agree.

PHILIP

I must be crazy. I don't see it! .
. . . . Okay, I'll give him a shot,
get him in the minors. But no
bonus! Damn bonuses are killing me!

LOU

I'm not sure where he's going to
fit in, maybe at catcher. He's
short and squatty and he can hit to
the opposite field.

INT. BERRA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Supper is over and Pietro and Paulina are sitting in the
living room listening to the radio. Josie is laying on the
floor doing her homework.

A knock on the door startles everyone.

PAULINA

It's so late.

PIETRO

Are the boys upstairs?

PAULINA

Yes, their here.

Pietro approaches the door with Josie close behind. Paulina
comes up behind.

He opens the door to find JOHN SCHULTE, a well-dressed middle-
aged man.

PIETRO

Yes.

JOHN

I am so sorry to be coming by this
time of night.

PIETRO

It is late.

The boys come down the stairs and are standing, listening.

JOHN

I'm so sorry, I was traveling all day. I was at the game yesterday.

Larry burst forward.

LARRY

(suddenly excited)

You were there! You were at the World Series?

JOHN

That's right. I'm the bullpen coach for the Yankees.

All of the boy's eyes widen and they gasp.

LARRY

Your kidding!

JOHN

Nope, that's me, John Schulte.

He offers Pietro his hand. Larry grabs his hand and shakes hard.

LARRY

The Yankees! They lost.

PAULINA

Why are you here?

JOHN

Well, ma'am, we heard of a son of yours, Larry, I believe. He plays ball.

LARRY

(excited)

Yes, yes, that's me!

JOHN

The Yankees would like to offer you a contract.

Larry stands stunned. His brothers gasp. Pietro and Paulina exchange a look.

PAULINA

What does this mean?

JOHN

It means, Ma'am, the Yankees will pay your son ninety dollars a month to come and play ball for us.

Larry is beyond excited.

LARRY

This is it! This is it!

The brothers huddle around, excited, congratulating Larry.

TONY

I knew you could do it, Larry!

MICHAEL

All the way to New York, we won't be able to see you play!

JOHN

No, not New York, at least not yet. You will start off in the Piedmont League. You will be assigned to a farm club in Norfolk, Virginia. You will report to a training camp at Excelsior Springs, Missouri.

MICHAEL

That's not far Papa. You said he could if he worked, and he is.

LARRY

I'll keep working at the shoe factory until I go!

Pietro and Paulina exchange a look. Paulina shrugs her shoulders.

PAULINA

He is our stubborn one.

PIETRO

Okay, what can I say, my son does as he pleases.

PAULINA
He is getting paid.

PIETRO
Paid to play a game, huh.

Pietro, Paulina, and John standstill as the children erupt.

EXT. BERRA HOUSE - DAY

Paulina and Larry are standing outside the front door.

A telegram arrives.

MESSENGER
Telegram for a Larry Berra.

LARRY
That's me. A telegram?

He tears it open. Paulina looks puzzled.

PAULINA
What?

Larry grins and reads.

LARRY
(slowly)
From the office of the general
manager of the New York Yankees,
Branch Rickey.
WOW!
We would like to extend an offer to
Larry Berra.

Larry starts laughing.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Too late.

Larry keeps reading.

LARRY (CONT'D)
A five hundred dollar bonus!

Larry laughs.

EXT. BLUES STADIUM - DAY

A game between the Kansas City Blues and the Richmond Knights is underway. Larry is catching.

The rowdy, half-drunk crowd goes wild, taunting Yogi as he plays catcher.

FAN 1

What the hell is that! He's too short to reach the plate. And look at those ears!

Yogi turns and glares.

The fans laugh and taunt.

FAN 2

Hey, elephant ears!

FAN 1

Are those ears or are you wearing a catchers mitt?

The fans laugh. Yogi, frustrated, misses the pitch and chases it to the backstop. The crowd roars. Yogi trips as he walks back to the plate after retrieving the ball. The crowd roars.

FAN 1 (CONT'D)

What is this a clown show?

FAN 3

He trips over his ears!

Inning over, Yogi is up at-bat.

Yogi bears down and swings and misses and strikes out. He slams his bat on the ground.

The crowd roars louder.

Yogi walks back to the dugout glaring at the fans.

Manager SHAKY KAIN meets Yogi as he reaches the dugout. He takes him aside.

SHAKY

Listen, kid, this is going to happen. More to you than others. And that's nothing, I've heard much, much worse.

(MORE)

SHAKY (CONT'D)

You gotta learn not to get mad.
Those characters pay your salary.
Let them holler all they want.
Figure they're entitled. If you
ever show 'em or show anyone, that
they're getting to you with the
needle, you're dead! That's what
you gotta do, ignore them.

LARRY

I guess. I've been hearing that
shit all my life.

SHAKY

Ignore it!

LARRY

Ignore them, I guess.

Yogi is strolling from the dugout to home plate. A big smile
on his face.

Immediately the taunts come from the stands.

FAN 1

Hey, big ears, you don't need a
bat, hit with you're ears!

FAN 2

Don't trip over those ears.

FAN 3

A face only a mother could love!

The crowd roars. Larry smiles and waves.

A pitch, a swing, and a long ball to center field. The crowd
quietens as Yogi reaches second. He tips his cap.

INT. NORFOLK NAVAL TRAINING STATION - DAY

Yogi is speaking with warrant officer Gary Bodie.

GARY

So, what are you thinking about,
Yogi?

LARRY

Well, I hear a lot of talk about this war. I think I'm going to be drafted soon.

GARY

Most of the big leaguers are getting ready to ship out. The war is heating up. . . If you sign up for the Navy, I'll see if I can get you on a team.

Larry shrugs his shoulders.

LARRY

Navy or Army, I guess it don't matter.

EXT. OMAHA BEACH - DAY

Larry is piloting a rocket boat. The LCSS was a small landing craft that sprayed rockets on the beach before the troop landing.

EXT. SOUTH OF FRANCE - DAY

Larry's LCSS is moving close to the shore and a large shelled-out hotel, fortified with German soldiers.

They start raking the hotel with machine-gun fire when a British shell, lands short, next to the craft.

Yogi and the crew are hanging onto the capsized boat.

INT. U.S. NAVAL BASE - NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT - DAY

Larry has been assigned to the Welfare and Recreation. His duty is to take care of the movie theater.

COMMANDER BARNES enters the theater with his wife. Larry approaches them and salutes.

LARRY

Commander.

BARNES

Yes, sailor?

LARRY

I don't know if you know this but I played professional ball before the war.

Barnes looks him up and down.

BARNES

Professional ball? You really don't look like any ballplayer I've seen.

LARRY

I've heard that before.

BARNES

What is it you want?

LARRY

To play baseball, sir.

BARNES

We take our baseball serious in the Navy.

LARRY

Yes, sir. I can play, I belong to the Yankees.

Barnes looks him up and down again.

BARNES

The Yankees. You, belong to the Yankees?

LARRY

Yes, sir. I was on one of their farm teams.

BARNES

I guess it can't hurt to take a look.

LARRY

Yes, sir, thank you, sir.

BARNES

Jim Gleeson is in charge over there. He played some ball himself. Go see him. He knows talent.

LARRY
(suddenly excited)
Yes, sir!

EXT. U. S. NAVAL BASE - BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Practice is in session. Larry approaches JIM GLEESON and Coach RAY VOLPE.

LARRY
Sir. I'm Yogi Berra and I play
baseball.

They both look him up and down.

JIM
I know this is the Navy and
everyone wants light duty, but we
play serious ball. And more
important, our commander takes this
serious.

LARRY
Sir, I take care of the theater,
that's about as light duty as you
can get. . . The commander said I
could talk to you.

JIM
He did. Have you ever played?

LARRY
I belong to the Yankees. I was in
the Piedmont League for a year
before I enlisted.

Jim and Ray exchange a look.

RAY
The Yankees?

JIM
The Piedmont league. Is Joe Capre
still managing over there?

LARRY
Joe Capre, don't know any Joe
Capre. It was Frankie Frisch last I
checked.

JIM
Yeah, I guess that's right.

RAY
What team were you on?

LARRY
Norfolk Tars.

RAY
That checks out. . . Let's see if
you can hit.

Larry walks to the plate and grabs a bat. Ray and Jim
exchange a look.

JIM
That is not a ballplayer.

RAY
(yells)
Hey, Johnny, pitch to this guy.

A pitch, a swing, and a solid hit to left field.

Jim and Ray exchange a look.

A pitch, a swing, and a grounder past third base.

Ray steps forward.

RAY (CONT'D)
Come on, Johnny, put something on
it!

JOHNNY
I thought I was.

A pitch off the plate, a swing, and a hit to right field.

Ray and Jim are talking to themselves as Larry keeps hitting.

RAY
Look at this guy, he hits
everything outside.

JIM
And everything off the knuckles.

RAY
I bet he's hard to strikeout.

Finished batting, Larry runs up to the two.

LARRY

Well, what do you think?

Ray puts out his hand.

RAY

Welcome to the Raiders.

EXT. BALLPARK - DAY

A game is being played with Larry in the outfield.

His unusual style is on display as he catches several fly balls and shags several grounders.

Larry is having fun. The crowd loves his antics.

EXT. BALLPARK - DAY

A game is being played with Larry batting. He hits a double. Larry at bat again, he hits a long ball to center field for a triple. Larry at-bat again. The catcher extends his glove out signaling a pitch-out.

Larry swings reaching across the plate and hits it to right field. The catcher jumps up.

CATCHER

Hey, I called for a pitch-out.

UMPIRE

Tell him.

EXT. BALLPARK - DAY

Practice is underway. Jim Gleeson walks out to the field.

JIM

Okay, everyone, gather around.

Ray blows his whistle. The team runs in.

JIM (CONT'D)

I have some good news for you.
We're taking a trip.

(MORE)

JIM (CONT'D)

We have been authorized to travel
to Boston and play the Braves in an
exhibition game!

The team erupts led by Larry.

LARRY

We're going to a big-league park!

EXT. U.S. NAVAL BASE - BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Jim Gleeson and Giants manager Mel Ott are watching batting
practice.

MEL

Who's the guy you wanted me to see?

JIM

He's catching.

They watch for a while evaluating Larry's catching.

MEL

Strong arm. Accurate.

JIM

He knows what he's doing. Let's see
him hit.

MEL

He's stocky, reminds me of me.

JIM

(yells to Larry)
Yogi, Yogi! Swing some.

JIM (CONT'D)

(to Mel)
Watch this.

MEL

Okay.

They watch as Larry slugs some to the outfield.

JIM

He got hits like that in the
exhibition game with the Braves.

MEL

Who against?

JIM

The last pitcher was Ace Adams.

MEL

And he hit off him.

JIM

Sure did. . . .

MEL

Sure is odd looking. But, so was I when I started. Everyone tried to change my stance. . . . His swing reminds me of Johnny Mize.

JIM

He has power.

Mel offers his hand.

MEL

Thanks for the heads-up. I'll be in touch. Come up to New York sometime.

JIM

I will.

INT. YANKEE GENERAL MANAGER OFFICE - DAY

General manager Larry Macphail and Mel Ott are discussing Larry.

MEL

I've seen a little catcher I really like. We signed him. The Giants are loaded with catchers, Stoneham couldn't use him so I'm giving him to you.

MACPHAIL

Nice of you. He's a catcher? Can he hit? I already have a catcher who can't hit.

MEL

He sure can!

MACPHAIL

What's his name?

MEL

Berra.

MACPHAIL

I don't believe I know a catcher by that name. I'm going to have to talk with our scout, see what he thinks. What's the contract?

MEL

We paid fifty-thousand. He's worth more, maybe five-hundred-thousand, someday.

MACPHAIL

You do know your talent. Let me check with Paul Krichell, see what he says.

MEL

Get back to me soon.

INT. YANKEE'S FIFTH AVENUE OFFICE - DAY

Larry walks into the Yankees office dressed in his Navy blues. He shakes hands with Larry MacPhail and Paul Krichell.

MacPhail has the same look as all who don't see Larry as a baseball player.

LARRY

You wanted to see me, mister?

MACPHAIL

If you're Berra, I guess I do. Are you a catcher?

LARRY

Yes, I was playing on farm teams before the war. And I played for the Navy.

MACPHAIL

Okay. I'm Larry MacPhail, I run the Yankee front office and this is our scout, Paul Krichell.

LARRY

Good to meet you.

MACPHAIL

The Giants have your contract now.

LARRY

Yes, sir.

Time has passed and Larry is leaving, shaking hands.

MACPHAIL

You'll hear from us as soon as we decide if we have a place for you.

LARRY

Yes, sir. . Who do I see for my expenses for the trip?

MACPHAIL

What! Oh, I'll have Mary take care of you.

Larry departs and MacPhail turns to Krichell.

KRISCHELL

He sure doesn't look like a baseball player, but he talks like one.

MACPHAIL

Yeah, he wasn't going to miss out on that expense money.

KRISCHELL

Ott knows ballplayers. You want him.

MACPHAIL

Dickey is thirty-nine, how much longer can he go?

KRISCHELL

That's right.

MACPHAIL

And Robinson is thirty-five. I think he's at his peak. Looks like we have a Yogi.

INT. BERRA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A party is underway at the Berra house. A banner reads, "WELCOME HOME - THE WAR IS OVER!" A cake on the table reads, "Welcome Home - Happy Birthday Larry." Larry is among his well-wishers being hugged and congratulated. It's a warm Spring day and the door is open and neighbors are moving in and out. The party spills out onto the street.

PAULINA

I am so happy my son is home safe. And just before your twenty-first birthday. What a great day!

Pietro hugs his son.

PIETRO

I am so proud. My son fought for his country.

LARRY

Thanks pops. I'm one of the lucky ones. I made it home.

ANTHONY

So, you're going to play for the Yankees. My brother, the big leaguer.

MICHAEL

Yeah, very impressive, I knew you would make it. Hey, maybe You'll be playing against Garagiola! That would be something!

ANTHONY

When do you report for spring training?

LARRY

I don't know, I'm waiting to hear. I'll be starting off with the Bears. I'll be in Newark.

MICHAEL

Well, heck, that's just down the road from Yankee stadium.

LARRY

Nine miles. My next stop.

ANTHONY

That's their number-one farm team. So many Yankees start out there.

INT. YANKEE FRONT OFFICE - DAY

The mood is solemn as owners LARRY MACPHAIL, DAN TOPPING, and DEL WEB, along with catcher and manager BILL DICKY and manager JOHNNY NEUN and coaches, RED ROLF and JOHNNY SCHULTE are discussing the Yankee's fourth-place standings.

MACPHAIL

Nothing I hate more than a lackluster team. Seventeen games back of Boston, that's a deep hole.

DEL

Three managers and we couldn't get a spark.

DICKY

We have a few soft spots.

NEUN

Just a few.

SCHULTE

Yeah, but we have some bright spots. That Dimaggio kid is going to be a good one and Rizzuto, he's up and coming.

MACPHAIL

I'm most concerned about Robinson, I think he's at his peak. And Bill, you're still hitting but we need to get another catcher some playing time.

DICKY

Hell, I thought Aaron would go a couple more years, anyway.

MACPHAIL

It's been you two as our anchor we need to bring someone up.

SCHULTE

The catcher you want is Berra.

MACPHAIL

That's who I was thinking. He needs polishing.

ROLF

He has the numbers. Tuff little, son-of-a-bitch! He played with a broken thumb.

DEL

He's a hothead. He just got fined five-hundred-dollars for bumping an ump.

MACPHAIL

Maybe that's what we need, a little firecracker.

SCHULTE

Hell, the seasons lost, might as well try some guys out.

MACPHAIL

I agree. Pick out a handful of the most hopeful. And let's get Berra playing time. . .How the Hell can he pay a five-hundred-dollar fine with what we pay in the minors.

DEL

I doubt he can.

MACPHAIL

We better pay it.

EXT. ELIZABETH AVE. - DAGO HILL - DAY

There is a party atmosphere on Elizabeth Avenue with the homes decorated in Cardinal, American and Italian flags.

A banner across the front of the Garagiola house reads, "1946 World Champion Cardinals." "Joseph Garagiola!"

Dozens of tables are set-up on the street and in the Garagiola and Berra front yards. Neighbors are rushing about tending to a feast.

Several pockets of people are standing about, drinks in hand.

Pietro and Giovanni are in the middle of the street speaking out of ear-shot. Big smiles on their faces.

Yogi, his brothers, and several neighborhood kids are playing soccer at one end of the street. Yogi is wearing his Yankee practice shirt.

EXT. - YANKEE STADIUM - DAY

The seventh game of the 1947 World Series between the New York Yankees and the Brooklyn Dodgers.

In the stands are the Berra family dressed in their best. Pietro and Paulina are sporting big smiles.

Paulina leans over to Pietro.

PAULINA BERRA
Isn't this something, Papa?

PIETRO BERRA
It is! I never get used to this place, Yankee stadium. It's so big!

PAULINA BERRA
Who would have thought, men playing a game could make so much money.

ANNOUNCER
Welcome to this historic, exciting day. The seventh game of the 1947 World Series Between the New York Yankees and the Brooklyn Dodgers. I'm your announcer, Bill Slater!

The crowd jumps up and roars.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
And what an exciting series this has been.
(MORE)

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Not only do we get to see great baseball, but we are witness to history, the first African American baseball player, Jackie Robertson in his first season! And what a good player he is. Tied at 3 apiece. And now the starting lineup for the New York Yankees!

The crowd roars.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And catching is the veteran, Aaron Robinson. And catching back-up and pitch hitting is Yogi Berra. Yogi's pinch-hit homer in the third game was the first homer by a pinch hitter in World Series history!

The crowd erupts. The Berra family leads the way.

THE END

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