

SECOND QUARTER

(The players are in the middle of a workout. Fan and 2nd Coach are watching. We hear Unseen Coach singing.)

COACH

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red and Yellow, Black and White--
(He blows his whistle.)

2nd COACH

(Acknowledging whistle from above) Take a knee. (Unseen Coach continues song by humming "Jesus Loves the Little Children".) Some of you may have noticed you were issued a color of jersey you have not previously worn before. (Humming out.) Coach wants me to make sure you learn your colors, so we're going to do a little review. Maroon--stand. You are for today and today only--first team. Kneel. White (They stand) you are for today and today only--second team. Kneel. Now, why did I say today and today only? Because in this organization--you are who you are by virtue of what you do today. At the end of this day, I won't care what you did yesterday. I won't care about what you might do tomorrow. I will care about today and today only. So, prove yourself, you stay or you move up. If you don't, Yellow, (they stand) you are a bunch of chicken rat asses. Kneel.

Wilcox. Jones. (They stand. They are both wearing yellow jerseys.) You sonsabitches are a sorry sight. We don't know which of you is worse, but today we're going to find out. Coach has a little surprise for you. Kneel. (They do.)

For the rest of you fart blossoms--gassers. (Blows whistle. Everyone runs offstage except for Wilcox and Jones.) Jones, you insulted me yesterday and, Wilcox, you threw up on my shoe. But that ain't the problem. The problem is bigger than that. Either of you turds ever take a minute to contemplate the fact that you are both arrayed in yellow--the color of sick shit? You want to know why you're wearing this very special color? I'll tell ya' why. It's 'cause neither of you have the guts to play this game. So we're going to do a little something about that. Today we're going to check your guts. (Unseen Coach begins humming song again.) See what's there--what ain't. Wilcox, when I blow my whistle, Jones is going to come at you with all he's got. You block him. You will repeat this little exercise until I blow my whistle, at which time Jones will take off and, Wilcox, you will catch him and tackle him. Ready.

(2nd Coach blows his whistle. Humming stops. Action begins. Teacher enters with a podium and begins a lecture. From time to time, players running gassers run across the stage behind Wilcox and Jones.)

TEACHER

(She checks her notes from time to time.) O.K. O.K. Why is what we're doing important? Why does it matter? Does it matter? Can anybody tell me? Anybody? O.K., well, ummm, first, as human beings, we are the only animals on earth to use language. Well, the only ones we know of. I mean, whales might have their own language, but we don't know that for sure. So, back to us and language, as human beings, with language we can talk, communicate about anything--our dreams, hopes, disappointments, joy. If, if we didn't have language, we'd be reduced to making animal noises. (Jones and Wilcox crash to the ground, grunting.) Why is this important? I mean, do we need to talk to each other? Well, we do, don't we? I mean, if we can talk to each other, we can maybe, maybe understand the differences or, or distances between us. We can tell each other how we feel. (Another crash and more grunts from Wilcox and Jones.) As human beings, we need to do that. We need to talk things out. I mean, no matter what job you get in the future, speech will be an important factor in your success and advancement and (We see Jones pushing Wilcox back a few steps--then this reverses.) and it determines how people think of us. So does that answer why we are here doing what we're doing? I mean does that answer anything? I'm saying, I'm saying that communication is important. That's what I'm saying. There, there are factors we study to affect effective communication. First: Diction. O.K. Then we have: Expressiveness, Vocal Tone and Rate of Speech. I mean, I mean if we use these factors-- Expressiveness, Vocal Tone and Rate of Speech . . . what I'm trying to say is, if, if we can use these and can communicate clearly, will our lives be better? Will we understand more? Will we know what to do? Will we? Will we? (She comes out from behind the podium. Lights begin to fade on ball players. Therapist's spot-light finds her.) Expressiveness, Vocal Tone and Rate of Speech. I told him very slowly. Using a calm tone. I don't know what my expressiveness was, but I . . . very slowly, my tone was--I told him, I told him I was pregnant. There was silence, silence from the other end of the phone line. I tried to communicate effectively. I heard nothing in return. I had a hard time speaking after that. Silence. Silence is that moment in between, anything can happen, it's magic, it's precious, it's--it's pregnant sometimes. The silence when he first held me. The silence now. Silence. Silence is communication too.

Walking across a field on a spring afternoon. Alone but not alone for once. Communing with the new self within myself. Creating a new life within and a new life without. Happy. Not worried. Happy. Silent.

It only lasts for a moment before the other silences return. I can't tell my family. I can't tell anyone after his phone silence.

You see, it was my first time, I'm 23 and that's old--old for your first time. I had tried so hard to be, to be . . . good. The old hole in the condom joke. The old vigilant wriggling, swarming sperm battling for life. My life. I felt like it was my life that they wanted. I had not lived my life. He wrote to me. He said, "Remember!! We are artists; Soon we will be great artists! Nothing can possibly stop us! God

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is guiding our careers. Every day we grow. Everyday we become more sensitive, more precise, more observant, more vibrantly alive! We will ascend to the very top of the tree!!! We will be the best damned actors in the world! The Best Actors in the world!!!" But on the phone--silence.

(Lights back up on Wilcox and Jones. They are bloody and tired now, but they continue the drill grunting still, but less often, less coherently. Jones is blocking Wilcox now.)

I walked across the field behind my house. I think it was spring. I think it was. It was spring? I was alone but not alone. And for a few minutes . . . for a few minutes I was happy. Happy and alive and at peace.

ALL GIRLS

(Off stage) AHHH!

(2nd coach blows his whistle. Lights out on Teacher. Lights up full on Wilcox, Jones, Fan and 2nd Coach.)

2nd COACH

Take a knee.

(Wilcox and Jones kneel. They can barely keep themselves upright. 2nd Coach turns to Unseen Coach. We hear mumbling from Unseen Coach.)

2nd COACH

Yes, sir. (Mumbling from Unseen Coach) Yes sir. (Mumbling from Unseen Coach) Yes, sir. (Turns to Wilcox and Jones) You got that, boys?

WILCOX

No, sir.

JONES

No, sir.

WILCOX

Not 'zactly.

(We hear louder mumbling.)

2nd COACH

He said it's a draw.

JONES

Which ones of us gets the red jersey?

2nd COACH

Nary a one of you deserves--

JONES

I do. I deserve it more than Wilcox.

2nd COACH

You don't deserve a white, much less a red, jersey! He said he ain't never seen worse. He ain't never had a worser choice for a game in his life.

(Mumbling.)

2nd COACH

He wants to see you tomorrow.

(Louder mumbling.)

2nd COACH

See this tomorrow. See this tomorrow. He wants to see . .

(Louder mumbling.)

2nd COACH

Not this! See better! Better! You got to be better tomorrow! He wants to see one of your asses whipped! Tomorrow! Tomorrow he'll see one of you gone!

(2nd Coach exits.)