

WITNESS TO GLORY
- The Grantland Rice Story
& The Golden Age of Sports
WRITTEN BY DIRK BURLINGAME
FINAL FINAL EDITED DRAFT - DATED Oct. 3rd, 2013

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Oct. 3rd, 2013



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Witness to Glory - The Grantland Rice Story

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. POLO GROUNDS, N.Y., STADIUM - DAWN - OCT. 19, 1924

As dawn breaks over the stadium, We HEAR thundering hooves and manual typewriter SOUNDS. The words appear - Black on white, on a newsman's copy sheet, a few letters at a time, being typed on a portable and well worn typewriter.

SUPER - (typed words) - Outlined against a blue-gray October sky the Four Horsemen rode again. In dramatic lore they are known as famine, pestilence, destruction and death. These are only aliases. Their real names are: Stuhldreher, Miller, Crowley and Layden.

WE SEE it getting lighter and lighter, in a layer of misty fog, and four Notre Dame football players on horseback. The horsemen are now visible through the grayish daylight as they come to a stop. Change color of super to be read over the scene. Change - Brilliant color shot of 20s Collage Football Game - site resembling Polo Grounds - 1924, including action of players, fans, including Army Cadets.

SUPER: FOR WHEN THE ONE GREAT SCORER COMES TO MARK AGAINST YOUR NAME, HE WRITES - NOT THAT YOU WON OR LOST. BUT HOW YOU PLAYED THE GAME.

SUPER: Witness to Glory - The Grantland Rice Story & The Golden Age of Sports.

Run credits over next scenes.

CUT TO:

INT. RICE HOME STUDY -- NIGHT

SUPER: THE RICE HOME - 1953

GRANTLAND RICE, in his 70s sits at his old typewriter, but not moving. He's pensive and distracted. KIT - Katherine Rice - still a handsome woman in her late 60s, early 70s - ENTERS with a cup of coffee. She puts it down beside him and sits with him.

KIT

Grant, what's wrong?

RICE

I don't know if I can do this.

KIT

Do what? You've written millions of words in your career, what's a few more?

RICE

This is different. I don't know where to even start.

KIT

You know where to start. It's always the same. You start at the beginning. It's where you always start.

RICE

I'm not used to writing about me. I don't write about me. I'm not important. Those guys and gals I spent my life writing about, they're what's important.

KIT

But if it weren't for you and your words, would any of them be the men or women America knows today? No. I don't think so. Does the beginning have to mean timelines? Or can it mean people. Take each person as they come. Who was first?

RICE

Ty Cobb. Oh yes, The Georgia Peach, he was first. He made it happen.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTA JOURNAL BULL PEN -- NIGHT

A young, Grantland Rice is playing poker with DON MARQUIS and two other reporters. A MESSENGER BOY ENTERS with a telegram.

SUPER: ATLANTA JOURNAL

MESSENGER

Telegram for Mr. Rice. They said Mr. Grantland Rice would be in here.

RICE

I'm Rice.

The messenger hands him the telegram. Rice tips him off the poker table. The messenger EXITS. Rice opens the telegram.

MARQUIS

Telegrams are never good news,
Grant. What does it say?

RICE

It's from Royston.

MARQUIS

A person or the town?

RICE

The town. I declare..."Tyrus Raymond
Cobb, the dashing young star from
Royston, has just started spring
training with Anniston. He's a
terrific hitter and faster than a
deer. At the age of 18, he is
undoubtedly a phenom."

The reporters all laugh.

MARQUIS

Is he now? What are you going to do
about that, Grant?

Rice rips up the telegram and sits back down.

RICE

The regular mail is fast enough for
Cobb. Who's deal?

KIT (V.O.)

That was your first introduction to
Ty? Really?

RICE (V.O.)

If I'd known then what I know now,
I'd have had a special edition put
out, but as it was, that was just
the first one.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANNISTON BALL PARK - ALABAMA -- DAY

Rice ENTERS the ball park with his typewriter case. He SEES
a young TY COBB warming up. Rice approaches.

SUPER: ANNISTON, AL -

RICE

You Cobb?

COBB

Who's askin'?

RICE

My name's Rice, I write baseball for the Journal.

COBB

That so? I've heard of you.

RICE

Somehow I don't think you've been gettin' telegrams twice a week about me, though.

COBB

No, sir. Just the paper. You been getting telegrams about me?

RICE

I have, and that's why I'm here. I'm going to write a column about you - once I see you play. Can't just take a telegram's word for it.

COBB

You won't be disappointed, Mr. Rice. You won't.

Cobb runs to the field.

RICE

I hope so, son. I hope so.

KIT (V.O.)

So that was the beginning?

RICE (V.O.)

That started a 22 year career with the Detroit Tigers, a few years with Athletics. Not even Babe Ruth could tarnish what Ty accomplished.

KIT (V.O.)

Who sent the telegrams?

RICE (V.O.)

He did Cobb. I didn't know that until just a few years ago. But that's not what I remember about Cobb.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- MORNING

SUPER: COMMODORE HOTEL - NEW YORK CITY - 1920

A 1920s hotel room. Cobb is in bed, bandaged and injured legs, surrounded by newspapers. We HEAR a knock on the door.

COBB

Come in!

Rice ENTERS. He seems concerned.

COBB (CONT'D)

Grant! Great! You're here. I need your help.

RICE

Well, the first thing you need is a doctor. You look like hell. Are you running a fever?

COBB

(Waves Rice off)

Just 102. But never mind the doc. I've got to be at the game tomorrow and face the wolves. Your New York papers are sure steaming things up for me.

RICE

Well, can you blame them after that interview you gave? You told reporters Mays hit Chapman with that crazy pitch on purpose. Chapman died. You basically called Mays a murderer in the press.

COBB

Grant, I swear to God and my glove that I never gave any interview. I never said that. Heck, I didn't even know what happened until it was all over. You know me, Grant. I'd never say something like that, not to the press. Not ever.

RICE

I believe you. So what do you want to do about it?

COBB

We're doing it. This is my interview. I'm telling you. You write it. Tell the truth. It's what you do. People will believe you.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- MORNING

Very early morning, still dark. We SEE a newsstand. The STAND OWNER is opening up. A truck drives by and a stack of NEW YORK TRIBUNES hit the sidewalk. The stand owner picks up the bundle, puts them in place, and cuts the twine. He holds up the top copy. We SEE the headline: "TY COBB CLAIMS "INNOCENCE" followed by a sub headline "COBB TALKS WITH GRANTLAND RICE".

STAND OWNER

Well, if Rice says Cobb didn't say that thing, that's good enough for me.

OFF on the owner putting down the paper.

CUT TO:

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Rice and Kit sit and talk.

RICE

And that's what I did. He was booed the first game and cheered a hero the next.

KIT

I remember. So if Cobb was the first, who was the best?

RICE

Which sport? Which decade? There were so many...

KIT

Well, we've been talking about baseball. So stick with that.

RICE

Easy. The Babe. Ruth was the greatest. The greatest player in the greatest decade of sports. I never saw anyone like him.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAMPA BALLPARK -- DAY

Rice is standing by the fence with ED BARROW, the Red Sox team manager. BABE RUTH is at the plate. He hits one out of the park, and then does it several more times.

SUPER: RED SOX TRAINING CAMP - TAMPA - 1919

RICE

Impressive. Had to be 500 feet.

BARROW

Yup. Ruth was our main hold out. Not anymore. We got a three year contract on him.

RICE

So long?

BARROW

He's only 24, and at that age this fellow can become the greatest thing that's ever happened to baseball. He's a fine pitcher, sure enough. Maybe could even be a great one, but the day I can use him in the outfield and take advantage of that bat everyday, well, they'll have to build parks bigger. Just for Ruth.

Ruth jogs the bases and heads over to the fence, wiping his face.

BARROW (CONT'D)

Babe, this is Grantland Rice, the newspaperman. Grant, Babe Ruth.

RUTH

Nice to meet you, sir.

RICE

Same here.

RUTH

You sound like you have a cold.

RICE

I do...sort of.

Ruth pulls a large, red onion out of a pocket and gives it to Rice.

RUTH

Here, gnaw on this. Onions are cold killers.

Rice takes a bite and REACTS.

RICE

Babe, I was watching your swing. You swing like no pitcher I ever saw.

RUTH

Well, now, I may be a pitcher, but first off, I'm a hitter. I copied my swing off Joe Jackson's. His was the most perfect swing I'd ever seen.

RICE

Really? How so?

RUTH

Joe, he aims his right shoulder square at the pitcher, with his feet about twenty inches apart. But that's where I differ. I close up my stance to only about eight-and-a-half inches.

RICE

Why is that?

RUTH

I pivot better with it closed. Then, once committed, once my swing starts, I can't pull up or change it. It's all or nothing.

RICE (V.O.)

And he was right. That was Ruth. All or nothing. In the 20 years he played, I never once saw him change that. He was the greatest. At baseball. At golf, he was just...okay.

Show this over the voiceover. Babe Ruth in a Red Sox Uniform at bat hits huge homer out of the ball park.

CUT TO:

EXT. BELLAIRE GOLF COURSE -- DAY

SUPER: BELLAIRE GOLF COURSE - CLEARWATER, FL - 1933

Rice and Ruth head toward a tee. DIZZY DEAN is ahead of them.

RUTH

I've got a bushel of bets riding with Dean. I'm giving him strokes on ten different bets. From one to ten shots. I expect to collect on them all.

RICE

Be careful, Babe. Diz may be wild, but he's not that wild.

Babe looks beyond Rice. He SEES PAT DEAN, Dizzy Dean's young wife.

RUTH

Pat!

RICE

Babe? What're you doing?

Pat Dean comes over. She's unsure.

PAT

Babe. Grant. Good morning. What's going on?

RUTH

Pat, you should come out with us this morning.

PAT

I don't play. That's Diz's thing.

RUTH

You don't have to play. Just walk with us. It's a beautiful morning. The walk will do you good.

RICE

Babe...

PAT

Okay...thanks...that does sound like
a good idea.

They go to the tee. Dizzy Dean hits but not well.

PAT (CONT'D)

Dear, you're ducking.

DIZZY

Ducking, hell! Who invited you on
this rabbit shoot anyhow?

PAT

If you didn't want me along, you
should've said something when Babe
invited me.

Babe starts laughing - hard and loud. Rice realizes what
Ruth's done.

RICE

You set that up.

RUTH

How else do you think I planned on
winning today, Grant? This is the
easiest bet ever. He won't hit a
shot the rest of the day.

KIT (V.O.)

Babe always was a character.

RICE (V.O.)

That he was. I remember a strange
incident in Atlanta 1934.

EXT. ATLANTA BASEBALL STADIUM -- DAY

SUPER: ATLANTA 1934

Ruth comes off the field toward
Rice.

RUTH

I have a hankering for chicken -
Georgia style. You know where I can
get that, Grant?

RICE

It's been a while, but there's Bob
Woodruff. Let's ask him.

(Calling out)

Hey, Woodruff. Got a question for
you!

BOB WOODRUFF comes over.

WOODRUFF

What can I do for you, Grant?

RICE

It's more what you can do for Babe, here. He's looking for Georgia-style chicken.

WOODRUFF

I know a couple places. I'll make a list. I'll send it over with my car. You can pick one and enjoy it.

EXT. SMALL RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

The car pulls up in front of a small, hole-in-the-wall family restaurant. The OWNER comes out as Rice, Ruth, and CLAIRE RUTH get out of the car. Rice heads over to the owner. The Ruth's notice some flowers nearby.

OWNER

Welcome. We have the Babe's chicken ready. We've prepared four of Georgia's finest hens for the Great Babe Ruth.

Ruth picks a flower and gives it to Claire.

RUTH

They're pretty daisies.

CLAIRE

Babe, I think they're daffodils.

RUTH

They're all daisies to me.

RICE

Babe, your chicken is ready.

RUTH

Chickens! Hell, I don't want chicken, I want beefsteak.

OWNER

We can have that ready in minutes. Anything for Mr. Ruth. Come with us.

RICE (V.O.)

I still don't know how he could get people to change directions like that, but people would do it. Babe

got what he wanted. But he'd give it all away for kids. He was great with kids. In a way he was a big kid himself.

INT. CHICAGO HOTEL ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON OCT. 1 - 1932

SUPER: BABE'S HOTEL ROOM - CHICAGO, LATE AFTERNOON BEFORE THE CUBS/YANKEES WORLD SERIES 3rd game - 1932

Ruth and Rice eat an early dinner in Ruth's room.

RUTH

Thanks for understanding, Grant.

RICE

What's to understand? I've seen you mobbed before. If you want to eat in peace, there's no going to the dining room.

RUTH

Especially not tonight.

RICE

What's tonight?

RUTH

I've got to go on a short trip, Grant.

RICE

Where are you going now, before your first game in Cubs Territory, you have to be at Wrigley in an two hours.

RUTH

I'll tell you, but if you print it, I'll shoot you.

RICE

Sounds serious. What's going on?

RUTH

I'm going to take a baseball to a sick kid on the other side of town.

RICE

Really?

RUTH

Really. I promised his mother and father. The kid's really sick. You

can come if you promise nothing
shows up in the papers.

RICE
You have my word.

CUT TO:

INT. KID'S ROOM -- DUSK

Rice stands in the doorway to the sick kid's room. Ruth sits by the bed showing the boy how to hold the ball and some throwing technique. MOTHER and FATHER are in the doorway with Rice.

MOTHER
I can't believe he's here.

FATHER
When we wrote to him, we never
expected him to come out personally.
We never thought to have Babe Ruth
in our home.

RICE
Babe's that kind of guy. Full of
surprises.

Ruth gets up and comes over to them.

RUTH
Remember our deal. No word to the
press. This is just between us. It's
not about the publicity.

MOTHER
Of course, Mr. Ruth. Of course.

RUTH
(To Kid)
You get better, now, son, and I'll
come back. We'll have a catch. See
you remember any of what I just
taught ya.

KID
Sure thing, Babe!

**SUPER: Wrigley Field - Yankee's Locker Room - All the
players are preparing for their 3rd playoff game in Cub's
Territory - Chicago's Wrigley Field.**

YANKEE BALL PLAYER

Ruth, you've got a call, I think its long distance.

RUTH

Picks up phone, "This is Babe Ruth, who's calling me just before a big game, especially during the World Series."

GRANTLAND RICE

Hi Babe, this is Grantland Rice calling from New York. Sorry to bother you, certainly before a big game. Just wanted to see how you are and your outlook on tonights game. How are you holding up Babe?

BABE RUTH

Grantland, you son of a gun, last person I'd expect to call, where the heck are you Granny, some drinking hole I suppose.

GRANTLAND RICE

I'm still stuck at the Trib building, trying to do some work, sorry I could not be there in Chicago, but Reid insisted I stay and be ready for whatever happens, in the Series I mean. You didn't answer my question, how do you feel, what's it look like for tonight.

BABE RUTH

Granny, I feel great, never better, and we're looking to close these guys out here in Chicago, starting tonight, you fishing for a story I suppose. We've got these guys on the run and I'll be back in New York before you think.

GRANTLAND RICE

Well, that sounds promising, we'll tee it up when you get back. Win, Lose, or Tie Babe, you know I'm always in your court, you can count on me Bambino. Reid's always hounding me to stay ahead of the game, you know, headlines, but I wanted to at least call and wish you and the Yanks Good Luck. I mean that my friend. Is there anything I can think over till tomorrows deadline.

BABE RUTH

Just this Granny, Me and Lou and the rest of the guys will be playing our best ball, you can count on it, and Ruppert expects that also. You never know, there may be a few surprises, but I do know one thing, the Cubbies will lose, tonight, and the Series too. Think about that my friend.

GRANTLAND RICE

That's good enough for me slugger, thanks for taking my call and again, Good Luck and see you soon. We're rooting for you and the team, hopefully we'll see some history made over the next few days. Goodbye for now Babe. Rice hangs up phone, stares at his typewriter, thinking about the story to come.

SUPER - WRIGLY FIELD - CHICAGO -OCT. 1, 1932 - WORLD SERIES
- 5TH INNING - WRIGLEY IS PACKED WITH 50,000 CUBS FANS.

RUTH

Lou, let's shut them out and win this thing.

LOU GEHRIG

We're going pretty good, two up, two more and we've got it.
Go out there and put one on the board.

RUTH

I'll do my best Lou - you do the same.

RUTH - AT BAT

Cubs starting picher, Charlie Root looks nervous on the mound. He's already given up one homer to the Babe, he does not want another.

ROOT

Winds up and fires a low fast ball cutting the plate by inches, Strike One.

RUTH

Sick and tired of the Cub's bench warmers helicking him, looks over at the Cubbie dugout and raises his hand, and one finger.

ROOT

Blows his next two pitches, one thrown wide barely allowing the catcher to catch it. He still looks nervous, sweat is running down his face from inside his ball cap. He stares at RUTH, takes extra long to start his windup routine. Finally, he throws a fast and low slider ball, barely catching the plate, STIKE TWO.

RUTH

Yell's at ROOT then smiles, and turns around to the Chicago Dugout extending his hand, and two fingers. He turns back to the plate and starts his hitting stance setup. Unexpectedly, he pulls back and stands straight. He stares at ROOT and slowly raises his arm and bat and points it right over ROOT's head toward Center Field.

SUPER - Entire Wrigly Field jammed with Cub's fans. The entire field is suddenly so quiet you could hear a pin drop. One fan, to another way out in the center field bleachers whispers, "Did you see that Eddie, that son of a bitch is calling his shot". Eddie does not react and does not respond. He sits, stunned, and paralyzed, fixing his eyes on the mound and home plate.

RUTH

Resumes his batting setup up and grinds his cleats a bit deeper into the dirt. He looks determined and the faintest smirk can be seen on his lips. He's ready.

ROOT

Sweat is now pouring out of his hat and down his back and face. Eddie, even from his far distance can see the sweat stains now enveloping the back of his jersey. He takes off his glove and tries to mop his face with his bare hand. He's stunned as well and can't figure out what Ruth's up to, he'd witnessed the gestures to the bench, but now this guy is pointing his bat at me, is he going to try and hit one right at me. He must go on, RUTH and the crowd is waiting. The eerie silence doesn't make things any better, he'd rather have the fans hollering and yelling at the batter.

Root winds up and fires a curveball, low, but right down the center of the plate. He crouches, waiting for what comes next.

RUTH

In an instant, the ball arrives at home plate. Expecting the curve ball, Ruth has gripped his bat extra hard and lets loose his famous, and powerful swing, hitting low, but catches the ball dead center. The crack of wood hitting leather can be heard throughout Wrigley Field. The Babe gazes upwards as the ball begins its upward trajectory into the night sky. He know he's done it, and continues to watch even though he should have started for first by now.

The ball continues its upward arc in the direction of center field and the field flagpole. Slowly the ball starts its downward spiral and he knows its done. He starts his slow trot around the bases. The ball has been hit out of park and lost forever. Gehrig waits for him at at home plate.

RUTH

He trots over the plate and grabs Gehrig's extended hand. "Top that Lou" and acknowledges the erupting stadium and into baseball infamy.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

KIT

Ah, yes, Babe was one of a kind. But before that you mentioned golf. I wondered how long it would take to get to your first love. Didn't take long.

RICE

You're my first love.

Kit goes over and picks up a club.

KIT

Yeah, right. If it weren't for you, how many people would know about golf? Would you have met a President?

RICE

I'd almost forgotten about that.

KIT

You forgot about meeting a President of the United States? You're kidding.

RICE

Well, it was a busy time... The Dempsey fight had just happened, and we were getting ready to go to England.

KIT

But still, the President... Come on. You have to remember the story.

INT. TRIBUNE SPORTS OFFICE -- DAY

SUPER: SPRING 1921 - NEW YORK TRIBUNE OFFICES

Rice is at his desk typing away. His area is completely cluttered with books and newspapers. OGDEN REID, the paper's owner, approaches with an envelope.

REID

RICE!

RICE

(startled)

Sir?

REID

What did you say about the President?

RICE

Which president, sir? Baseball commission? The Series scandal is done and over.

Reid waves the envelope. We SEE the seal for the President of the United States.

REID

Of the U.S. of A., Rice, that President. What did you do? Why is President Harding writing you a letter?

RICE

I don't know. I wished him luck when he was inaugurated in my column. I wish any man in that position luck. He's going to need it.

Reid hands him the letter.

REID

Well, open it. Find out if we need the lawyers involved.

Rice opens the letter. We HEAR HARDING read the letter.

HARDING (V.O.)

I have seen your verses in the Tribune and wanted to drop you a line so that you would know of my grateful appreciation. Probably it is not important, but it will make

me feel better if I have you know about it.

REID

Huh. Good. No lawyers. You going to reply?

RICE

Sure. Harding golfs. There's got to be at least one column there. If the President will let me write about it. Can't hurt to ask.

REID

You'd talk to the President of the United States about GOLF?

RICE

Of course.

REID

I like the way you think, Rice. Do it.

INT. WHITE HOUSE DINING ROOM -- DAY

Rice waits with RING LARDNER in the White House Dining room. The table is set for four. WARREN G. HARDING ENTERS with Secret Service. Harding shakes their hands.

SUPER: APRIL 1921

HARDING

It's a pleasure to finally meet you in person, Mr. Rice. I feel like I already know you from reading your columns these last few years.

RICE

The honor and pleasure is mine, Mr. President. It's not often I discover a mutual passion with one of the most powerful men on earth. Thank you for scheduling this before I went to England.

HARDING

(waving off the compliment)

It's a job. It'll be good to play with you, sir. I do make it a habit to play three afternoons a week; it helps this official forget the problems that are mine.

RICE

I, for one, can appreciate the thought, sir. This is Ring Lardner, my friend, colleague, and mutual duffer.

Harding and Ring shake hands.

HARDING

I know Rice is here to get a story. Why did you come?

LARDNER

I have a good reason. I want to be appointed Ambassador to Greece.

HARDING

Why?

LARDNER

My wife doesn't like Great Neck.

HARDING

That's actually a better reason than most people have. Let's eat, and then we'll play. I have a standing tee time at the Burning Tree at Chevy Chase. Henry Fletcher will be joining us there. He had some duties over at State so he'll be missing lunch.

EXT. BURNING TREE GOLF CLUB -- DAY

Rice, Lardner, Harding, and FLETCHER are on the greens. Lardner is shooting.

HARDING

So, when you write about my game, what are you going to say?

RICE

I'm going to be honest and objective, Mr. President. You have a good, average game. You have a square stance on every shot, much

like Chick Evans. But what strikes me more than your use of the mashie niblick - when you're in trouble is that you're an honest player. You don't brook any alibis. Your strokes are your strokes, and that tells me more about you as a man and a leader than anything else.

HARDING

I'm flattered and humbled.

FLETCHER

Good. Focus that attention on the President. I need more practice, I know that.

RICE

Oh, no, Mr. Undersecretary. You don't get off that easily. I think the President will have to go quite a distance to find a better sportsman to team up with you, sir, are a golfer of considerable merit.

HARDING

High praise, indeed, Fletcher. I'll have to remember that, as well.

FLETCHER

(to Rice)

Please don't take this the wrong way, Mr. Rice, but, in my experience, you are one of the most accomplished diplomats I have ever met. Good luck with your trip to England.

RICE

I'm just covering Golf, Tennis, and Polo. You guys are the ones saving the world.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Kit puts down the club and picks up a picture frame.

KIT

And we left for England shortly after that. But that's not the point yet. Golf. The first name that comes to my mind is Bobby. If you hadn't

fallen in love with golf, Bobby Jones wouldn't have been in our lives. He was such a pistol when he was young. How old was he when you met him?

Rice looks at the picture with Kit.

RICE

He was three. Started playing at five. The clubs were bigger than he was, but he was determined to swing it.

KIT

And when did you know he was going to be the greatest.

RICE

1915. When he was 13.

EXT. ATLANTA GOLF COURSE -- DAY

SUPER: Atlanta - 1915 Rice is watching a teenage, BOBBY JONES, play a round. He's with ALEX SMITH and LONG JIM BARNES. Bobby's putting. He makes a decent shot, but REACTS angrily to the shot.

BARNES

Who's the kid?

RICE

His name is Jones...Bob Jones, Jr. He's the son of a good friend of mine - and a great lawyer in town. Bob, Sr. and I played baseball against each other. He was at Mercer when I played at Vanderbilt. Why? He's good. The boy, I mean.

SMITH

It's a shame, but he'll never make a professional golfer.

RICE

What makes you say that? He's got the skills.

SMITH

Too much temper in that one. You saw it. That was a good shot - for anyone, and how did he react?

BARNES

I disagree, Alex, I think that kid will be one of the world's greatest in a few more years.

(gestures toward Bobby)

Look at him. He's broad-shouldered with big, strong hands. He's got the physical goods.

RICE

No offense, Alex, but I agree with Jim. Yes, he has a temper. He's thirteen. And at thirteen he's already shooting in the low 70s. He's a perfectionist. Bobby's not satisfied with just a good shot. He wants it to be perfect stone dead. He's got the ambition to play every shot in the bag right.

SMITH

The temper, Grant. you know this game. He won't last like that.

BARNES

He does have a point.

RICE

Okay. Okay. You're right about the temper, like a fighting cock. I suppose one could argue that's his greatest hazard. And yes, if he can't learn to control it, he'll never shoot the kind of golf he's capable of.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

KIT

How long did it take him?

RICE

Seven very long years.

KIT

There are stories about him walking off the course in England. That you talked him down.

RICE

Who told you that? That never happened.

KIT

Every one of your reporter friends has wives. Wives talk. You were there, I wasn't. What really happened?

RICE

Well, that story is really about the whole trip to England...

KIT

I'll go put on the coffee. It's going to be a long night.

EXT. SHIP DECK -- DAY

Rice, KIT, and FLORENCE (FLONCY) RICE are standing at the rail of a ship. they wave to the cheering crowd on the docks. Nearby is a family with a small boy, TOBY, holding a newspaper. He approaches Rice and gets Rice's attention.

TOBY

Sir? Sir? Are you Mr. Rice? Mr. Grantland Rice. The man from the newspaper?

RICE

Why, yes, son, I am. What can I do for you?

TOBY

Do you really know Babe Ruth, sir?

RICE

I sure do. I played golf with him only a few weeks ago in Florida. It's Spring Training down there. I've known him since he was a pitcher, before he started hitting.

TOBY

Really? Wow!

Toby's FATHER approaches and starts pulling the boy away.

FATHER

Toby! What're you doing? Don't bother the gentleman.

TOBY

But, Dad, that's Grantland Rice! He knows Babe Ruth!

FATHER

I don't care if he's best friends with Ty Cobb. You don't bother strangers.

(to Rice)

I'm so sorry, sir, if my boy bothered you.

RICE

It's no trouble, and he was no bother.

The father pulls Toby away, and the family is lost in the crowd on the deck.

KIT

How is Ty doing these days, anyway, Grant? I don't remember the last time we saw him.

Rice and Kit stroll down the deck with Floncy. Kit holds her hand.

RICE

He's doing okay. Did you see what they put in the paper for my send off? My name's as well-known in sports as Babe's?

KIT

Well, it should be. If it weren't for your name in the paper, Babe's name wouldn't be in the paper, or as well-known as it is. Now, how about we enjoy the trip? It's awful nice knowing where you are for two whole weeks, even if you'll be tied to that typewriter for most of it.

RICE

We'll have some fun, too. I promise.

EXT. ROYAL LIVERPOOL GOLF CLUB - HOYLAKE 1921 - DAY

Rice approaches the clubhouse. Hoylake is not a pretty place. It's brown, dry, and old. There's a sign for The Amateur Golf Cup. Ouimet approaches Rice.

OUIMET

You look like you finally have your land legs.

RICE

I had 'em yesterday. You were busy with your match. Good luck today.

OUIMET

Yeah. We're going to need it. These Brits and Scots are tough.

RICE

They should be. They invented the game. I can't believe it's so dry here.

OUIMET

Yeah, tell me about it. I thought England was supposed to be rainy.

We SEE a couple of men throwing buckets of water on the grass.

OUIMET (CONT'D)

If it weren't for that, none of us would be shooting worth anything. The balls would never stop. I should go get ready.

RICE

Wish Bobby luck for me when you see him. He played pretty well yesterday.

OUIMET

Yeah. You've been right about that kid so far, Grant. We're keeping an eye on him.

RICE

Oh, and tell him to keep his head down and his temper in check.

OUIMET

(walking away)

Yeah, right. We tell him that all the time. The kid's a kid.

RICE (V.O.)

Then here's probably the story you heard...

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. ANDREWS GOLF CLUB -- AFTERNOON

The end of the third round. BOBBY JONES is on the course. He's playing poorly. Jones is young, temperamental, and frustrated. It's the 11th hole. Rice watches with Ouimet, Chick Evans, and others. Jones shoots badly into the Strath Bunker. He picks up the ball and walks off the course.

OFFICIAL

Bobby Jones withdraws from competition.

Crowd reacts. Rice, Ouimet, Evans, et al are stunned. Bobby walks past them. They follow him.

RICE

Bobby, what're you doing?

JONES

I'm done.

OUIMET

The match isn't over.

JONES

It is for me.

RICE

In more ways than you know. This isn't going to go well for you.

JONES

I don't care.

They EXIT into the clubhouse.

KIT (V.O.)

But that's not what happened?

RICE (V.O.)

Nope. Here's the story I heard. So, it's probably the same story you heard. (Clarification)

INT. ST. ANDREWS CLUB LOCKERROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

They all ENTER.

RICE
(to the others)
Boys, give us a minute.

The golfers all EXIT.

JONES
I don't want to talk about it,
Granny.

Rice pushes Jones into the lockers.

RICE
You don't have to talk about it,
boy. You have to listen.

JONES
Granny...

RICE
NO! You listen. I've known you
since you were born. I've seen you
play since you were five. I taught
you this game. I know what you can
do, so you will sure as shootin'
listen to me right now.

JONES
Granny...

RICE
I don't care why you did what you
did out there, but you are NEVER
going to do it again. You're going
to take your lumps in the press, and
you're going to learn.

JONES
Learn what, Granny? What else do I
have to learn?

RICE
You have to learn how to be a man,
Bobby.

JONES REACTS to that. He pushes Rice away. Almost like
starting a fight.

RICE (CONT'D)

That. That's what I'm talking about. You're not five anymore, Bobby. You're a man. You can't throw tantrums anymore. Not and expect to win. That's not how this game is played and you know it. If you want a future, get your head on straight. Get your temper in check. Find some way to let the demons out that doesn't bleed over on the course. I know you; you've got the potential to be the greatest player of them all.

JONES

What if I don't want to be the greatest player, Grant? What if I don't?

RICE

Then you need to walk out of here right now and never step foot on a golf course again, because you're a disgrace to the game. And count me out; too, I won't be party to it. You can walk away from your potential if you want to, but you're not going to tarnish the game or me in the process. Your choice, Bobby. Figure it out. Figure it out, quick.

JONES

This is going to be ugly isn't it?

RICE

In ways you can't even imagine. You just pissed on the national pastime in this country, where they invented the game. You might as well have taken a dump on the Polo Grounds pitching mound when Babe was hitting.

JONES

What do I do, now?

RICE

What I just said, Bobby. You take it, and you learn from it. But you decide now. Hopefully the women are better sportsman than you. Alexa's

our best now for golf, thanks to
you.

Rice walks out, leaving Bobby behind. We stay on Bobby.

EXT. ST. ANDREWS GOLF CLUB -- MOMENTS LATER

Evans and Ouimet join Rice as he moves through.

EVANS

What did you say to him?

RICE

That's between me and Bobby.

OUIMET

What're you going to do now?

RICE

I've got to get away from this. I'm
going to watch Alexa Stirling play,
maybe that'll redeem the Americans
in golf. If not I'm going watch Bill
Tilden play. Both of those have got
to be better than what I just
witnessed here.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Kit brings in coffee. She pours.

RICE

Is that about it?

KIT

Well, yeah, except no one knew what
you would've said to him. Is that
what you would've said?

RICE

If Bobby needed it. He didn't. He
was learning his own lessons then.
He didn't do any of that, but he
didn't have a great game. And he did
come back the next day. But that's
not what I remember about Bobby. I
remember the 1923 US Open. That's
when he shone...

EXT. INWOOD GOLF COURSE -- DAY

SUPER: 1923 US OPEN DAY

The US Open Day 2. The 17th Hole. Tons of Spectators. We SEE BOBBY CRUICKSHANK on the tee. WALTER HAGEN and JOCK HUTCHINSON are nearby watching with Rice and Lardner. Cruickshank hooks the ball into the heavy rough. Spectators start to leave.

SPECTATOR

That's it. Bobby Jones is the US Open champion.

LARDNER

(to Rice)

What do you think, Grant? That true?

RICE

You've played this game almost as much as me, Ring. It ain't over till the last putt holes. Besides, Bobby was sloppy on the 18.

Cruickshank hits the ball on the green. He hits the third shot close to the pin and drops the putt. Everyone cheers and moves to the 18th hole. There's wind, but Cruickshank take it into account. He lines up his shot and the ball lands within 6 feet of the pin. The crowd roars and he drops the putt, winning the game.

LARDNER

I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it. There's going to be a play off. Think Bobby can handle it?

RICE

We'll see tomorrow. He has the ability. We'll see if he has the nerve.

Lardner looks at Rice. Rice is lost in thought.

LARDNER

I know that look. You're working on your lead.

RICE

It's going to take that boy a lot of courage to come back out here and do this again. But he's a good kid. He'll do it. He's had it in him since he was six.

EXT. INWOOD GOLF COURSE COUNTRY CLUB -- DAY

The next day outside the country club. Rice is talking to Walter Hagen when BOBBY JONES gets out of a car. Jones is rumpled and haggard. Rice excuses himself and approaches.

RICE

Bobby? You okay, son?

JONES

Will be. I couldn't sleep last night. Kept thinking about the match. Replaying the course in my head. It's got me all twisted up.

RICE

You gotta let that go, Bobby. Take some deep breaths. Relax. Just play each hole as it comes. You'll do just fine. Trust me. Have I ever steered you wrong?

JONES

Not even once, Grant. Not even once.

EXT. INWOOD GOLF COURSE -- LATER

The 18th hole. The crowd is hushed but excited. Rice is watching with Ouimet and LEO DIEGEL. The match is tied. Cruickshank hits first and hooks to the left of the green. Jones hits and lands in the rough to the right. Cruickshank hits conservatively and lands short of the green. Jones goes to the ball and looks at LUKE ROSS, his caddy.

JONES

Give me the long iron.

DEIGEL

(softly to Ouimet)

That's a mistake. He's using the wrong club.

OUIMET
He'll never make it.

RICE
I think you'll be surprised.

Jones lines up his shot and whacks the ball hard. Rice watches Bobby and the shot.

RICE (CONT'D)
That's it. That's the shot. That just proved what he could do.

The ball lands on the green near the hole. He taps it in for the win. The crowd goes wild.

INT. INWOOD GOLF COURSE COUNTRY CLUB -- LATER

The press and spectators are buzzing. In one corner is Luke Ross.

ROSS
I know we were home when I saw the look on Mr. Jones' face. Honestly, I think he'd 'a' knocked Jack Dempsey out with a punch if he'd been in the way of this championship just at that shot.

The reporters laugh. They SEE Cruickshank come through. They pounce on him, shouting questions.

REPORTER
How you feel about Bobby Jones?

CRUICKSHANK
Bobby Jones is the greatest of them all. Man! It was a bonnie shot. There never was such a golfer, and I'm proud to have stepped so close to him. He is now what Harry Vardon was at his very best - the greatest golfer in the world.

Lardner and Rice walk through. We follow them. The crowds part as if they're royalty.

LARDNER
So now what? Who do you make famous next?

RICE

I don't make people famous. I just write the stories as I see them.

LARDNER

And yet, somehow, those subjects become household names. I can't say that, so answer the question. What or who is next?

RICE

Back to boxing. The Dempsey fight is still up for grabs.

LARDNER

You think he's going to beat Carpentier?

RICE

Probably. Though I'd like to see Henry Wills in the ring with Dempsey. That's not gonna happen though. Not good business.

LARDNER

Yeah, I heard that about Rickard. Didn't think there'd be enough draw. Still thinks he's gonna have a Million Dollar gate. Come on, I'll buy you a drink.

RICE

Didn't you hear? There's this little thing called Prohibition.

LARDNER

When did that ever stop us?

RICE

You got a point. Let's go.

KIT (V.O.)

I thought we were talking about Europe. You said there was more going on there than Bobby.

RICE (V.O.)

Right, and there was. Alexa Stirling and Bill Tilden were also competing.

EXT. TURNBERRY GOLF CLUB -- DAY

Montage of Alexa Stirling playing golf and losing to Cecil Leitch.

EXT. WIMBLEDON -- DAY

We SEE parts of a Wimbledon set. BILL TILDEN plays. He's in his late 20s, a tall, solidly built man, but well dressed and groomed. He plays like a machine, never stopping until he wins. When he does win, he calmly picks up his racquets and EXITS. Rice watches.

RICE
(to himself)
That man's going to be a champion.

KIT (V.O.)
And he was.

RICE (V.O.)
That may have been one of my greater understatements. But I didn't know it then. I still had polo to cover before we came home.

EXT. POLO GROUNDS -- DAY

Shots of the Americans winning the Polo matches. Can be shown over the above voice overs.

EXT. SHIP DECK -- DAY

The Rices are on the deck of the ship as it's about to sail.

KIT
Well, we're heading home now. How do you feel?

RICE
Lucky. We're bringing home some cups. I got to spend time with you and Floncy. It's good.

KIT
What about Bobby.

RICE
Like I said in the paper, if he finds peace and serenity and get to a place where mistakes don't warp his mental poise, he has the game to get anywhere. He just has to want to get there.

KIT

He's got some growing up to do, in other words.

RICE

Yeah. I don't even get time to digest any of this. We hit the ground running just as soon as we get home.

RICE (CONT'D)

But I need to start before this with Jack. There was the Willard fight. That's the fight that set up the one you went to after Europe.

KIT (V.O.)

That poor Carpentier boy.

RICE (V.O.)

He knew what he was doing. They both did. But Jack's story started with the Willard fight.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. GYM OFFICE -- DAY

SUPER: TEX RICKARD'S OFFICE - FEBRUARY 1919

TEX RICKARD's office. Tex Rickard is a slick businessman, knows his way around a deal. He's behind a big, impressive desk. His office is decorated with photos and posters of fighters, including JACK DEMPSEY. Next to him is FRANK FLOURNOY, middle-aged Memphis cotton broker and Rickard's partner in this fight. Across from them is JACK "DOC" KEARNS, reading over a contract.

KEARNS

You really want to do this, Tex?

RICKARD

I think we have to. Put two of the greatest fighters in the ring.

KEARNS

And you're guaranteeing one hundred thousand dollars to WILLARD, just for showing up?

RICKARD

That's the deal. Willard's in for a hundred thousand, and Dempsey for twenty-seven five. Small price to pay for what could realistically be a Million Dollar gate.

KEARNS

How do you figure?

FLOURNEY

I've put up the money for the new arena.

KEARNS

The one out on Maumee Bay?

RICKARD

That's the one. It's completely enclosed. No freeloaders - no one in without a ticket.

KEARNS

(to Flourney)

You feel the same way?

FLOURNEY

Wouldn't've invested my own hundred thousand if I didn't. Let's make some money.

Kearns nods and signs the papers. He hands them to Rickard.

KEARNS

You have a deal. We'll see you in June.

INT. PULLMAN TRAIN -- DAY

SUPER: JUNE 1919

A loud, clattering train full of men who are reporters. We SEE GRANTLAND RICE pounding on a typewriter with two fingers. He's got the typewriter balanced on his lap and paper around him. He's focused. Two more reporters, HEYWOOD BROUN and RING LARDNER, stops near him.

BROUN

Hey, Grant, you about ready? The club car's open and the party's starting.

RICE

Give me a second. Just finishing up this piece. Then the drinks are on you.

BROUN

How can you not be more excited? They say Willard and Dempsey are the greatest fighting men of all time.

Rice REACTS strongly, and negatively.

RICE

Those're Tex Rickard's words, not mine.

LARDNER

You don't think it's going to be a good bout?

RICE

Oh, I think they're good boxers, and the match will be interesting. But they're not great fighting men. The boys coming out of Argonne Woods, now those are fighting men. This bout is all business.

LARDNER

So you don't think much of the fighters?

RICE

Don't go putting words in my mouth, Ring. The dope says they're good boxers. I just think we have an awful lot of fighting boys coming out of the Argonne Woods who might take offense at two men who weren't over there being called the world's greatest fighters, that's all.

(pause)

But from the business side of it, I think it's going to be very interesting.

BROUN

Oh?

CUT TO:

INT. TOLEDO ARENA BACK CORRIDORS -- DAY

SUPER: DEMPSEY-WILLARD FIGHT - TOLEDO, OHIO - JUNE 1919

Rice and Lardner are walking through the corridor towards the dressing rooms. It's visibly hot. Rice and Lardner sweat, fan themselves, etc. They pass workers in the corridor.

LARDNER

I don't remember Ohio being this hot in June. I could really go for some of that lemonade they sell.

RICE

I wouldn't do that if I were you. Not today anyway.

LARDNER

Why not?

RICE

Word around is that Gann took a bath in one of the barrels.

LARDNER

So? Surely they have more than one barrel of lemonade.

RICE

No one knows which barrel he washed in. I know we gamble from time to time, but is that a risk you're willing to take?

LARDNER

Not a chance.
(nodding down the
corridor)
Looks like we found the place. I see Rickard and Kearns.

Kearns is in the corridor between the two dressing rooms with Rickard. Rice and Lardner approach. We can SEE into the dressing rooms. Willard is in one. Dempsey in the other. Both are getting ready for the fight.

LARDNER (CONT'D)

(to Rice)
Based on size alone, this is a mismatch.

RICKARD

(overhearing and
responding)
That's what I've been telling Doc, here. When we set this thing up, the differences weren't so obvious. But every time I see Willard, he's bigger. And when I see Dempsey, he's littler.

RICE

What's Dempsey weighing in at?

RICKARD

180 - but it's muscle.

RICE

What's Willard? 225 - 250?

RICKARD

Something like. That's the problem.

KEARNS

It's only a problem if the fight's called. For you.

Kearns EXITS into Willard's dressing room. Rickard, Rice, and Lardner EXIT into Dempsey's dressing room.

INT. DEMPSEY DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

A spartan business-like place. Dempsey is in his mid-20s, in prime physical shape. Well-muscled and lean. He sits on a rub down table being checked out by the ring doctor, while a trainer bandages his hands before putting on the gloves. Dempsey is calm, business-like, and professional.

RICKARD

Look, Jack, you know Willard's got 40 pounds on you...

DEMPSEY

(snorting)
More like 70.

RICKARD

Sure. Jack, you know I like you, right?

DEMPSEY

What're you saying, Tex?

RICKARD

I don't want anything bad to happen to you. If Willard knocks you down - you stay down. Hear me?

DEMPSEY

I'm not going down, Tex.

RICKARD

Sure, Jack, sure. Just do me a favor, though, if - and I'm saying IF - Willard knocks you down, stay down. I don't want to be associated with a murder in front of thousands of witnesses.

KIT (V.O.)

But he very nearly was, right? Just not in the way he thought?

RICE (V.O.)

You're getting ahead of the story.

LARDNER

(to Rice and under his breath)
Probably not a bad contingency plan.

DEMPSEY

Tex, you got nothing to worry about.
I'm not afraid of Willard or any
other man. He may be bigger than me,
but that just makes him a bigger
target.

Rice pulls on Lardner.

RICE

(quietly)
Come on, let's go get our spots by
the rind.

LARDNER

Another good idea.

RICE

(to Rickard and
Dempsey)
We'll see you in the ring. Good
luck, Jack.

DEMPSEY

Thanks, Mr. Rice.

EXT. TOLEDO ARENA BACK CORRIDORS -- DAY

As Rice and Lardner ENTER from Dempsey's dressing room.
Kearns is in the corridor with MAN #2

KEARNS

We're close to the bell. Is the bet
down?

MAN 2

Ten thousand on Dempsey to take
Willard out in the first round, yes
sir. It's a hundred thousand payout
if he manages it.

Rice and Lardner keep going but they definitely HEAR the
exchange.

LARDNER

That was interesting.

RICE

His money. Come on. We don't have
much time.

INT. TOLEDO ARENA -- DAY

It's just before the fight. People ENTER. Rice ENTERS with his typewriter. He's stopped by two men at the door - BAT MASTERSON and WYATT EARP.

RICE

Bat? What are you doing? I thought you'd be covering the fight.

MASTERSON

Double duty. Rickard asked us to check weapons. We only want one killing here today.

RICE

Good point.

(TO EARP)

You refereeing the fight, Wyatt?

EARP

Nope. Just helping out Masterson, here. Tex has you reporter types up by the ropes.

MASTERSON

Heck, with the crowd that's not showing up, just about everyone is on the ropes.

Rice heads up to the ropes and sets up with a line of reporters. He settles in next to MCGEEHAN. McGeehan leans over.

MCGEEHAN

Rickard thought of everything.

RICE

Except the heat. I'm actually sticking to this seat. And you could light a cigar off the typewriters.

MCGEEHAN

Got that right. He's even got a woman's area. Calling it the Jenny Wren section. I swear I just saw Ethel Barrymore. Who knew she was a fight fan.

RICE

Everyone's looking for a new thrill these days. Guess boxing's the new circus for now.

MCGEEHAN

Does that make Rickard the same as
PT Barnum?

RICE

Not a bad analogy. Hey, here they
come.

Willard and Dempsey ENTER the ring. Dempsey stalks in. He's calm, collected, but controlled. He takes off his robe. He's in great condition, tightly muscled. Willard takes off his robe. He's big, but not as toned, not as good a physical condition as Dempsey. The REFEREE gestures them to the center of the ring.

REFEREE

I want a good, clean fight. Touch
gloves; go back to your corners.
When the bell rings, come out
fighting.

Willard and Dempsey tap gloves. Go back to their corners. We HEAR the bell ring. Dempsey leaps out like a tiger. They circle, and then the fight is on. Dempsey goes to the left, hits with his left. Willard fights back. Dempsey smashes Willard in the face, knocking Willard half through the ropes. Willard's down.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

One... two... three...
four...five...six

We HEAR a muffled bell - but no one else does.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

Seven...eight...nine...ten.

The Referee holds up Dempsey's hand, as the winner. The crowd goes wild. Rickard pulls Dempsey to the corner, throws the robe around him and gets him out of the ring. Kearns is with Willard. He's almost unconscious but starting to get up. Dempsey is almost out of the arena when the Timekeeper, Pecord, blows the whistle, stopping everyone.

(Note: this section can take 3 - 7 minutes or more -
depending on how long the "rounds" take in filming)

PECORD

The match isn't over! The round
ended before Willard was counted
out. The fight continues. Fighters
to your corners.

Dempsey returns to the ring. McGeehan leans over to Rice.

MCGEEHAN

Kearns doesn't look happy.

LARDNER

I wouldn't be worrying about Kearns' happiness right now. Look at Dempsey. I can't believe Pecord is letting this go. Dempsey was out of the ring.

Willard is up but disoriented. Dempsey is more than unhappy. He's angry. He's won the fight once, now he has to win it again. He's in his corner. When the bell rings, he explodes out with uncontained violence. He pounds into Willard. Even when Willard's down, Dempsey just stands over him and pounds and pounds on him. He smashes into Willard every time Willard gets a knee up all through round two and into round three. Dempsey pounds him around the head and shoulders and gut. Willard takes on the worst beatings in boxing history before the fight is called.

REFEREE

(holding up
Dempsey's arm)

The winner by knock out! Jack Dempsey!

The crowd doesn't REACT. They're quiet. Rickard pulls Dempsey out quickly and hurries the EXIT. Kearns is in the ring with Willard and the ring doctors. Willard starts to stir. Ring workers bring in a stretcher. The crowd doesn't move.

LARDNER

How much was Willard's guarantee?

RICE

A hundred thousand.

LARDNER

He earned every penny of it.

RICE

Hopefully he'll live to spend it.

Willard slowly climbs to his feet. He's mangled, bloody, and obviously hurt, but he's walking out. He is supported by the doctors.

WILLARD

(slurred by
injuries)

I walked into the ring. I'll walk out.

Willard is supported out of the ring by the doctors with Kearns hovering nearby. As he passes Rice and Lardner, we HEAR him.

WILLARD (CONT'D)

(more slurred)

I have a farm in Iowa. I have a
hundred thousand in the bank. I have
a farm in Iowa...

Rice, Lardner, and the crowd start REACTING quietly and respectfully. They salute the fallen hero. As the doctors, Willard, and Kearns EXIT, Rice and Lardner follow.

INT. TOLEDO ARENA BACK CORRIDORS -- CONTINUOUS

DOCTOR

(to Kearns)

He should be dead, Doc. You know that right? No human should take that kind of beating. No human should take that kind of beating. One of his cheekbones is broken. I know his jaw is busted, just now how bad, and I saw teeth back in the ring.

KEARNS

What are you saying?

DOCTOR

I'd check Dempsey for loaded gloves, Doc. It's almost impossible for human fists to do that kind of damage on their own.

KEARNS

His gloves are fine. He didn't rig the fight.

DOCTOR

You're sure?

KEARNS

Yeah, I'm sure. Now, let's just get everyone out of here. Let Willard rest.

(to Rice and
Lardner)

You two okay with that?

RICE

Yeah. We'll help.

CUT TO:

INT. PULLMAN TRAIN CLUB CAR -- NIGHT

The train back east. The reporters are partying in the club car. Rice is in the thick of it.

BROUN

What did you think of the fight,
Grant?

RICE

For all that it was a circus, those
boys could hit.

Lardner hands Rice a drink.

LARDNER

We know you're going to have
something poetical in the paper
tomorrow, let us hear it first.

The reporters cheer. Rice takes a drink then hoists his glass.

RICE

Okay. Here it goes...
(pause)

O jab and upper cut and punch, O
Jess and Jack - O phrases deary -
I've had them now for breakfast,
lunch and dinner till I'm overweary;
I've heard them stand around and
guess until my brain began to caper;
who knows where there's a game of
that I can cover for the paper?

The reporters cheer.

RICE (CONT'D)

Now we can talk about Carpentier.
That was the first ever \$2 Million
fight. And there was so much more
going on than just that fight.
Boxing was just becoming legal in so
many states. It was a big deal.

INT. ELK'S LODGE MEETING ROOM -- DAY

SUPER: JERSEY CITY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESS CONFERENCE --
APRIL 1921

Tex Rickard's press conference with the Jersey City Chamber of Commerce. Nearby is MAYOR HAGUE, a rich, well-dressed politician who oozes charm and power. They are surrounded by the rest of the members of the Chamber as well as members of the press. Rice is off to the side, watching the whole thing.

RICKARD

Thank you for coming gentlemen. I know many have of you have been following and covering my negotiations with various cities to host the Fight of the Century. We're here today to officially announce that we've come to a final arrangement with Governor Edwards to hold the fight here in the great state of New Jersey.

(pause for crowd

REACTION)

It wasn't easy. There is still a lot of opposition to boxing as a sport and against those who would host major bouts like this one. But we have come to an arrangement.

REPORTER #1

Has there been a decision on a city?

RICKARD

Obviously, or we wouldn't be here today. If you'd be a little patient, I could've finished the official announcement. So here it is. The Fight of the Century, the heavyweight championship of the World between Jack "The Manassas Mauler" and Georges "The Orchid Man" Carpentier will be hosted by this fine city, Jersey City, New Jersey on July 2nd, this year.

Reporters Laugh and cheer.

RICKARD (CONT'D)

There's more. We made arrangements for this fight to the first ever to be put out on the radio. We're finishing negotiations with the Radio Corporation off America to install a temporary radio transmitter. MAJOR ANDREW WHITE will be on the radiophone with H.L. WALKER on the control board.

More cheers.

REPORTER #2

Where will the fight be?

RICKARD

(gesturing to Hague)

I'll let his Honor the Mayor take that.

Hague steps forward and straightens his suit.

HAGUE

Construction has already begun on a new outdoor arena. It's going to be eight-sided, and, when completed, will hold over ninety thousand spectators. No one will have to worry about loss of life and limb to see this fight.

REPORTER #2

Really? what's it going to be called?

HAGUE

We're calling it Boyle's Thirty Acres. And we're very excited. And, to make it easier for people to witness history, we have very affordable tickets starting at just fifty cents.

RICKARD

We want to give everyone a chance to come if they want to.

HAGUE

(holding up
brochure)

Now, to make sure everyone has the correct facts, we've made up these brochures with everything spelled out. We have them available outside if you didn't pick one up already. These are free to anyone who wants them. That's all for today. Thank you for coming. We'll see you at the fight.

The reporters and Chamber of Commerce members start filing out the EXIT. Rice has a brochure and heads for Rickard against the crowd. Rickard SEES him coming and gestures for him to come over.

RICKARD

Granny! I thought I saw you over there. I didn't think press conferences were your beat.

RICE

They are when they're about the biggest fight in history. I wanted to hear it first hand.

(gestures with the
brochure)

Jack seen this yet, Tex?

RICKARD

(shrugging)

He doesn't need to. What's the problem?

RICE

You're really going to bring the war into this? Is that wise? There's still a lot of raw feelings out there about the war.

RICKARD

It's promotion, Granny. Every fight needs a hero and a villain. It makes this a Good vs. Evil fight. Besides, you've brought up the war before.

RICE

In a tighter context. I only challenged calling someone who didn't fight in the War "The Greatest Fighting Men", and that applied to both Dempsey and Willard then. This is different, Tex, and you know it.

RICKARD

Come on, Granny. It's simple business. He'll get that. I'm giving people what they want.

RICE

I'm not so sure, but if you're wrong, it's your funeral. Good luck. I can't wait to see how this plays out.

RICKARD

You'll see it at the fight. Oh, and bring you wife. I hear the new Jenny Wren section is going to be lovely. Take care, Granny.

Rickard EXITS. Rice watches him. OFF on Rice's reaction.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOYLE'S THIRTY ACRES -- DAY

SUPER: BOYLE'S THIRTY ACRES, JERSEY CITY -- JULY 2, 1921

Jersey City, Boyle's Thirty Acres is a large oak arena. The crowds are thick. People are coming by every means imaginable: car, foot, trolley, and jitney. Outside the arena are religious groups protesting the fight. The sky is overcast and threatening rain. Rice and Kit move through the crowds with Broun and SOPHIE MCGEEHAN.

KIT

I'm amazed by how many people are coming to this, Grant.

RICE

It's a big event.

SOPHIE

Are you kidding? That's an understatement. This is the social event of the year. Of course everyone's here. That's why I'm here after all.

BROUN

(to Rice)

You ready for this? Dempsey's going to slaughter the Frenchman.

RICE

We'll see. Carpentier might surprise us all.

KIT

What're they going to do if it rains?

RICE

Get wet. There's no way they're going to postpone this.

BROUN

You ladies ready for the fight?

KIT

I know I am. But I'm the only one here not working. You're all covering this for the papers, I'm just a spectator.

SOPHIE

You're my other set of eyes. Come on, let's mingle.

We follow the women. It starts to rain.

INT. BOYLE'S THIRTY ACRES DRESSING ROOMS -- LATER

Kit and Sophie duck into the room. They're slightly wet from the rain. A POLICEMAN SEES them and comes over.

POLICEMAN

Excuse me? Ladies? Where do you think you are?

KIT

I'm sorry, Officer, we were just trying to get in out of the rain.

POLICEMAN

Well, you've got to leave; you're in the Frenchman's locker room.

The officer escorts them out. They pass Carpentier in the hallway. Carpentier looks scared. He EXITS into the dressing room.

KIT
(to Sophie)
That poor French boy. He'll be
murdered!

INT. BOYLE'S THIRTY ACRES PRESS BOX -- CONTINUOUS

Broun and Rice ENTER the press box. It's full of radio equipment and telegraph equipment and men scurrying. We can SEE the preliminary fights going on and some rain. Rickard is standing with White and Walker. Both are slightly older, White has a radiophone, Walker with headphones. Rickard hands White a piece of paper.

RICKARD
I know what the signs say, but no
one's going to read. They'll believe
you if you say it on the radio. Will
you do it?

White and Walker read the paper. Walker shrugs.

WHITE
Sure. We can do it now.

RICKARD
Please.

White and Walker go the radio board. Walker brings up White's microphone and gives him a nod.

WHITE
Good afternoon, ladies and
gentlemen. This is Major White high
atop Boyle's Thirty Acres. It is
drizzling rain while Packey O'Gatty
and Frankie Burns are battling. It's
the eighth and last round and Tex
Rickard has just announced that Jack
Dempsey and Georges Carpentier will
fight at 3 p.m., rain or shine for
the world's championship. We'll be
back for the blow by blow action
just before 3 p.m.

Walker cuts the connection. White looks at Rickard.

WHITE (CONT'D)
Good enough?

RICKARD
Perfect.
(seeing Rice and
Broun)

You better get ring side. You won't want to miss the bout.

Rickard EXITS. Rice and Broun follow.

INT. BOYLE'S THIRTY ACRES -- LATER

Rice and Broun are ringside. Dempsey ENTERS and climbs into the ring. There's a cautious approval crowd noise Carpentier ENTERS. La Marseillaise, the French National Anthem, plays. The cheering is overwhelming. Dempsey gets angry at this. They come out to the center of the ring each man shakes hands with Mayor Hague and Governor Edwards. They do not shake hands with each other. They go to corners. In the first round it seems obvious that Dempsey can put down Carpentier at any time. But he doesn't.

BROUN

Is it my imagination or is he just playing with the French kid?

RICE

It's not your imagination.

This fight lasts for 11 minutes. It goes to four rounds. Can be time compressed if needed, The bout begins at 3:16 pm and ends at 3:27 p.m. Dempsey knocks Carpentier unconscious. The referee counts out Carpentier, awards the fight to Dempsey. The crowd roars. The telegraph guys by Broun and Rice frantically send out a message.

BROUN

Did you catch that?

RICE

I'm pretty sure it said, "Your frog flattened in the fourth."

BROUN

So much for international relations.

RICE

Diplomacy is too bloody for me. I'll stick with boxing. Come on, let's find the girls and call in our stories.

They EXIT through the crowd. Carpentier is being propped up in his corner. Dempsey is in his, watching.

RICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But the real fight was against Firpo, LOUIS ANGEL FIRPO. There was an opponent for Jack Dempsey. He almost won, too.

EXT. NEW YORK POLO GROUNDS -- DAY

SUPER: NEW YORK POLO GROUNDS - 1923

Rice is ringside with JACK LAWRENCE. They both have their typewriters. They're relaxing during a preliminary bout.

LAWRENCE

You worried about sitting here, Grant?

RICE

Should I be?

LAWRENCE

Well, they're big guys. One could come through the ropes. If one does, I hope it's Dempsey.

RICE

Why?

LAWRENCE

Firpo's a truck. Dempsey's lighter.

RICE

(looking around)

Excuse me, Jack, I see Bob Egden over there. I haven't seen him in forever.

Rice gets up and moves over four seats. He stays there. The bell rings, calling in Firpo and Dempsey. The Referee calls them in. The fight starts. Firpo gets in a couple of good, hard shots. One of shots knocks Dempsey out of the ring and onto Lawrence. Dempsey gets right back in the ring. The round ends. When the second round begins, Dempsey takes down Firpo.

RICE (CONT'D)

Lawrence got what he wished for. Dempsey put up a good fight. He really did. But there was one fighter that was really gunning for him. That was Gene Tunney.

EXT. MUNICIPAL STADIUM -- DAY

SUPER: MUNICIPAL STADIUM - PHILADELPHIA - 1927

The stadium is full. Rice and McGeehan are ringside. Rice looks like he has a cold. Dempsey and Tunney are in the ring. Tunney is full of energy. The fight goes through a couple of rounds. It starts to rain, but everyone stays. Time compresses to Round 10. Tunney knocks out Dempsey. Dempsey's hurt, can't see. Dempsey grabs a ringside person.

DEMPSEY

Take me to him. I want to shake his hand.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Rice is making notes, sipping coffee. Kit's tidying up.

KIT

I remember that. You were sick. You couldn't talk, and if it was raining you couldn't write. How'd you tell your story?

RICE

(hanging his head)

I didn't. Benny Leonard did. He talked Ring into it. I wasn't in any condition to dictate. I couldn't talk. After what Benny wrote neither Firpo nor Dempsey would talk to me. I don't blame them either.

KIT

Why?

RICE

Benny was sure there was a fix in. He put it in the paper under my byline. Everyone believed I wrote it.

KIT

OH...I...see...

(Kit finds a football)

Hey, look at this. Isn't this from Notre Dame? Knute's boys?

RICE

Yeah, it is.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. WEST POINT FOOTBALL STADIUM -- DAY

Rice and Ring Lardner are heading toward the field with their typewriters. They meet and walk with JOHN MCEWAN, the Army's assistant coach. They all fall into step.

LARDNER

I understand Rockne's coming with that kid, Gipp.

MCEWAN

Who the hell is Gipp?

LARDNER

You're about to find out. See you after the game. 1920 The game. First half montage. Just before the half, Notre Dame is down by three points. Half-time blows. Notre Dame goes to the locker rooms. Lardner and Rice follow.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

KNUTE ROCKNE isn't happy. He paces. The players around are frightened or subdued. GEORGE GIPP leans against a door, unconcerned. He bumps a cigarette from a coach.

ROCKNE

We're down. The Army is playing college ball. I don't know what you girls are playing. We should be burying this team.

(noticing Gipp)

As for you, Gipp, I suppose you don't have any interest in this game.

GIPP

Sure, I do. Listen, Rock, I've got five hundred dollars bet on this game. I don't aim to blow no five hundred. Come on boys!

OFF on Knute Rockne's REACTION.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST POINT FOOTBALL STADIUM -- DAY

The second half of the game. It's the end of the game. The Army loses to Notre Dame, 27-17. Lardner and Rice find McEwan.

RICE

How'd you like Gipp as a football player, John?

MCEWAN

He's no football player. He's a runaway son of a bitch.

KIT (V.O.)

That's not the game I was thinking of.

RICE (V.O.)

Oh, you're thinking of the 1924 team then. The Horsemen.

EXT. NEW YORK POLO GROUNDS -- DAY

SUPER: POLO GROUNDS - ARMY VS. NOTRE DAME - 1924

Rice is on the sidelines with BRINK THORNE. They're watching the game.

THORNE

Who's that? Rockne's got on the backfield?

RICE

Elmer Layden is at fullback. Jim Crowley and Don Miller are at Half. Harry Stuhldreher is quarterback. It should be a good game.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK POLO GROUNDS -- MOMENTS LATER

Rice and Thorne are on the sidelines as the game plays. Layden, Crowley, Miller and Stuhldreher head straight for them. They don't swerve. Thorne and Rice drop to the ground. Crowley and Miller jump over Rice and keep going. Rice and Thorne slowly get to their feet.

RICE

That's worse than a cavalry charge. They're like a wild horse stampede. Say...

THORNE

There's something you don't say much about guys that size. They're what? 150 each? What does Rockne do to those boys?

RICE

I hear he has them wear weighted practice gear.

THORNE

That would do it.

RICE (V.O.)

I ran into Don Miller earlier this year. He's a lawyer now. We talked about this game.

INT. BAR -- EVENING

SUPER: CLEVELAND -

Rice and Miller sit over drinks.

MILLER

Granny, it's nice catching up with you. You know, Rock put us together, but that day you wrote us up as the Four Horsemen, you conferred a kind of immortality on us no money could ever buy. We were good, sure, but we'd been forgotten in two years after graduation. Nobody would've remembered us - no matter we did more, ran faster, block better as we got older. We became younger in legend. And in business - your tag line has opened more doors - has meant more to each of us in associations, friendships, heck, revenue than you'll ever know.

RICE

Glad I could help.

MILLER

If you ever need anything, anything at all. Call on one of us. We can't repay you for what you've done for us. But we can try.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

KIT

How long after that game did Rock
come by here?

RICE

Oh, yeah, that was 1928. I'd almost
forgotten.

KIT

That's why we're doing this.

INT. RICE LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

SUPER: RICE HOME - 1928

Rice and Kit are sitting in their living room. There's a
fire in the fireplace, the radio's on. They're both reading.
The phone RINGS. Rice answers it.

RICE

Hello? Rock! It's good to hear from
you.

ROCKNE (V.O.)

Grant! The boys are tucked in for
the night. How about coming down and
sitting around with Hunk and me here
at the hotel?

Kit mouths something to Rice we can't quite make out. Rice
nods to agree.

RICE

I have a better idea. Hop in a cab
and come up here. Kit wants to see
you. We can warm our sides by an
open fire, have a spot of Tennessee
'milk' and watch the rest of the
world go to hell.

(pause)

See you then. Bye.

Kit puts down her book as he hangs up. She stands.

KIT

I'll get the drinks going.

CUT TO:

INT. RICE LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

There's a knock on the door. Rice opens it. Rockne is there. He looks thoughtful, pensive.

RICE
Come on in, Rock. Have a seat.

Kit takes his coat and hands him a drink.

KIT
Glad you could come by Rock.

ROCKNE
It was nice of you to have me over.

Kit hangs up his coat.

KIT
Well, you boys don't need me underfoot. I'll leave you two to talk. I'll be in the bedroom reading if you need anything.

Kit exits. Rockne and Rice take their drinks to the living room and sit and sip.

RICE
Rock, you look like a man with something on his mind.

ROCKNE
You recall Gipp, right?

RICE
Of course. Great kid. Great player. Always wondered what he would've done if he'd... well, if he'd lived.

ROCKNE
He died practically in my arms. Eight years ago next month. He's been gone a long time, but I still remember.

RICE
We all do. Why's he coming up now, though?

ROCKNE
I may need to use him tomorrow.

RICE
I don't understand.

Rice sips his drink while Rockne stares at his. He pauses to think. Rice lets him move on in his own time.

ROCKNE

Back then you saw Gipp on one of his better days -- insolent but better -- against Army in 1920. He got sick late that season. Then, in our final game against Northwestern, he actually got out of bed to come to the game. He still wanted to play. I didn't want to use him.

RICE

If I remember that game correctly, you didn't have to. Wasn't the final something like 33-7?

ROCKNE

Yeah, but the crowd wanted Gipp. They kept chanting his name. I put him in the last quarter for just a few plays

(takes a drink)

It was so cold. There was ice on the field, wind coming off Lake Michigan. It cut to the bone. It hurt us all, but it killed Gipp. He was burning up with fever by the time we got back. He went back to bed and never got up again. Pneumonia.

RICE

You were with him though, right?

ROCKNE

Yeah, I was.

INT. NOTRE DAME DORM ROOM -- DAY

SUPER: George Gipp's Room - 1920 Gipp is in bed, white, sick, dying. Rockne's sitting beside him, holding his hand. FATHER HAGGERTY is standing over him, finishing up the rite.

HAGGERTY

(crossing Gipp)

...in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

GIPP

Amen. Thank you Father Haggerty. It means a lot.

HAGGERTY

God welcomes you into His family,
son.

(to Rockne)

I'm sorry.

ROCKNE

Thanks, Father.

GIPP

Rock, I know I'm going...

ROCKNE

Don't talk like that.

GIPP

No, I know it. It's okay, but before
I go, I'd like one last request.

ROCKNE

Anything in my power to give, son.

GIPP

Someday, Rock, some time... when the
going isn't so easy, when the odds
are against us, ask a Notre Dame
team to win a game for me. For the
Gipper. I don't know where I'll be
then, Rock, but I'll know about it,
and I'll be happy.

ROCKNE

You have my word.

Gipp closes his eyes and dies.

INT. RICE LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Rice and Rockne are quiet. They sip their drinks.

ROCKNE

Just like that, he was gone.

RICE

Why's this coming up now?

ROCKNE

Grant, I've never asked the boys to
pull one out for Gipp. Not ever.
But, tomorrow, I might have to. What
Team?

CUT TO:

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Kit reaches for a tissue.

KIT

And did he?

RICE

He did. That game was tied 0-0 at the half. It was hard. But when the third quarter blew, it was a much different team that took the field. Notre Dame won 12-6, and I swear they had a Twelfth man on the field.

Kit dabs her eyes.

KIT

We need a lighter topic now. Girls or horses.

RICE

Horses are safer.

KIT

Safer, yes, but still... it needs to be done. I remember one they used to call "Grant's Girl". You should put her in your book.

RICE

You're the only girl who's important, Kit. You know that.

KIT

You can stop that now. I didn't mind then. I don't mind know. Besides, I liked her. What did you guys call her? "The Other Babe"?

RICE

Ah, yes, Babe Didrickson Zaharias. She kicked all kinds of holes in the feminine concept of competitive sports. I always thought it was strangely ironic that two of the greatest athletes I knew were called Babe. And it started with the Olympics.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STADIUM -- DAY

SUPER: LOS ANGELES OLYMPICS - 1932

Rice is setting up his typewriter next to WESTBROOK PEGLER and PAUL GALLICO. BABE DIDRICKSON, a tall, athletic young woman is on the edge of the field with an official. They're having an animated conversation.

RICE
(to Pegler)
What's that all about?

PEGLER
Not sure, but I think it's about the number of events she can enter.

RICE
Isn't that Babe Didrickson? Didn't she win the gold for the javelin yesterday?

GALLICO
That's her. She did a good job.

RICE
Apparently she wants to do more. How many events does she want to enter?

PEGLER
I think I heard six or seven. Rules say she can only enter three.

RICE
Really?
(studying Babe)
She definitely has the makings of a champion. Need to keep an eye on that one. You know, we could be looking at the greatest woman golfer of all time?

GALLICO
Sure, Grant. Whatever you say. You might want to find out if she's ever played before you give her the US Open cup.

RICE
You have a point. I'll go ask her.

Rice gets up and heads toward Babe. She's done talking to the officials. She sitting, checking her shoe laces. Rice sits down next to her.

RICE (CONT'D)
Miss Didrickson?

BABE

Can I help you?

RICE

Hi. I'm Grantland Rice...

BABE

The newspaperman?

RICE

That's me. Can I ask you a question?

BABE

Sure. I don't promise to answer.
Never know what's going to show up
in the papers.

RICE

That's probably smart, but the only
thing I really wanted to ask is
this... have you ever played golf?

BABE

No, sir. I've held a club before
plenty of times, but I haven't
actually played. I'm game to try.
I'll try anything.

Rice returns to Pegler and Gallico.

RICE

How would you guys like to go out to
Brentwood first thing in the
morning?

PEGLER

(looking at Gallico)

Sure. I'm game. You, Paul?

GALLICO

Sure. But who's the fourth?

RUTH

I'll bring Babe. We'll see what she
can do.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRENTWOOD GOLF COURSE -- MORNING

Rice, Babe, Gallico, and Pegler come out of the club house ready to play. BRAVEN DYER approaches.

DYER

Grant! Good to see you!

RICE

Braven! It's good to see you, too.
Who're you playing with?

DYER

No one yet. Thought I'd pick up a game. You?

RICE

You know Paul Gallico and Westbrook Pegler. This is Babe Didrickson. She just won a gold medal in the Olympics, now we're showing her golf.

(to Babe)

This is Braven Dyer. He writes for the Los Angeles Times.

BABE

(shakes hands with
Dyer)

Pleasure to meet you, sir.

RICE

We can put a fivesome together. Why don't you play with us?

DYER

Fine with me. Sounds like fun.

They all EXIT to the course.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRENTWOOD GOLF COURSE -- LATER

SUPER: THE SEVENTEENTH HOLE

The five are at the hole. Gallico tees up to hit. Babe and Rice hold back. They whisper to each other.

BABE

I'm sorry we're not doing better, Grantland.

RICE

We're not doing to terribly badly.

BABE

We are not. Your watching out for me
is messing up your game.

RICE

Babe, we're all even. We have to do
something.

Gallico drives to the green.

BABE

We're trapped, aren't we?

RICE

It makes it tough, all right.

BABE

Don't worry, Grant. I'll handle
this.

RICE

What're you going to do?

Babe approaches Gallico.

BABE

Paul, I'll race you to the green.

Babe takes off running. Paul hesitates a beat then chases
after her. She stays ahead of him the whole way. He
collapses on the green. Rice and Pegler finally join them.

RICE

That's one way to do it.

EXT. BRENTWOOD GOLF COURSE -- LATER

Rice, Babe, and Dyer head toward the clubhouse. OLIN DUTRA,
the club golf pro hurries to catch up with them.

DUTRA

(to Babe)

I heard it's your first time
playing.

BABE

It is. Why?

DUTRA

I watched a couple of your shots.
You made one long carry. It was
amazing. I saw it, but I still don't
believe it.

Olin Dutra keeps going. Babe looks at Rice.

BABE

Is he for real?

RICE

You played well for your first time
out.

BABE

Yeah, right. That was the only shot
I hit all day, Grantland, and you
know it. Even I know I was all over
the course!

RICE

Come on. You had at least a 250 yard
carry.

BABE

Please. I did not. I seldom got the
ball off the ground.

RICE

You'll do better next time, Babe.
You can do it.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

KIT

She did, too.

RICE

Babe could do everything. Did I tell
you she's competing again?

KIT

(surprised)

What? But she's been in the
hospital. You told me she has
cancer. We sent flowers.

RICE

She does, but she's out after her
surgery now. I stopped in Denver on
the way home from LA. I got to see
her and ask her.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN -- AFTERNOON

SUPER: ZAHARIA'S HOME -

Rice ENTERS the garden. Babe is tending her flowers. She gets up when he comes in.

BABE

Grantland! What a nice surprise.
What brings you here?

RICE

I wanted to see you. See how you're
doing.

BABE

I'm fine, Grantland. Really. That's
not why you're here. Ask the
question.

RICE

Why did you come back? What made you
want to come back to competition
after what you went through?

BABE

You did.

RICE

Me? How?

BABE

You wrote a piece picking the
champions for the coming year. You
selected Louise Suggs at the top of
the girl's list. That sort of took
up the slack in my game. I wanted to
prove you wrong.

RICE

How many rounds have you played
since we meet in 1935?

BABE

I haven't given it much thought. But
let's figure it this way. I've
averaged a round a day for eighteen
years. That's 265 rounds times
eighteen. Doing the math
that's...what? 6,570 rounds? That's
a lot of walking and even more
shots. I've worked, Grantland. I've
worked like hell. I've taken enough
time off.

RICE

You've been a pleasure to watch, you know.

BABE

You've always been there, Grantland. Always with you, "hello, Babe, how's your game?" on the first tee.

RICE

You always replied. "Fine, Grantland, just fine."

BABE

It's not enough! We're playing big matches on tour these days. It's torture. But when the public realizes golf's not some carnival act, they'll be bigger.

RICE

What can I do to help?

BABE

Unfortunately, not much.

RICE

Oh, why?

BABE

Your best columns come from the men's locker room after a big match. That's where us gals have the disadvantage. We don't have anyone to talk to but ourselves. We don't have someone objective like you to talk to us about what shots worked or didn't. What's going on with us that might affect our game. It's one of my only regrets. I wished I'd known you in the locker room.

RICE (V.O.)

I've been trying to figure out how to approach what she said. And she did prove me wrong - about competition. She's a better champion now than she was in 1935. Which reminds me. I almost forgot about the one encounter I had of the two Babes during the war. They did a War Bond golf match on Long Island. Hearst's papers and Bill Corum promoted it.

EXT. WHITE MARSH COUNTRY CLUB -- DAY

SUPER: WHITE MARSH COUNTRY CLUB - 1942(?)

Rice is at the first tee with Ruth, Didrickson, and Bill Corum. There are thousands of people watching.

RICE

How many people are here?

CORUM

25-30 thousand or so. The two Babes are a hot ticket.

RUTH

They're going to destroy the course.

CORUM

But for a good cause. It's for a good cause.

RICE

Who are you two playing against?

BABE

Sylvia Annaberg and someone called Mysterious John Montague.

RICE

Not the guy who shoots with farm equipment?

RUTH

That's him. Apparently he puts on a good show.

RICE

Well, good luck.

(to Ruth)

And Babe, try not to kill a spectator with your hook.

RUTH

Why'd you have to say that for, Grant? Now the thought's in my head.

RICE

You betting on shots today?

RUTH

Maybe with Montague. But you know I learned my lesson about betting with this lady here.

Rice laughs and they go toward the tee with a roar from the crowd.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

KIT

See, the girl part wasn't so hard. Now, back to horses. I know there was more going than writing when you were covering horses.

RICE

If you cover the races, you have to play the tips. No matter how weird they sound.

KIT

Sure you do. What's the logic behind that one?

RICE

If you don't play the tip and the horse wins, you hate yourself forever. And occasionally, you win.

KIT

Right. So...which horse stands out? Which horse is the animal equivalent of everyone we've talked about?

RICE

Man O' War. He was the most vicious competitor of the lot. I still remember the first time I saw him.

EXT. JAMAICA TRACK -- DAY

SUPER: STUYVESANT HANDICAP - 1920

Rice is standing by the rails watching the track. A man from TENNESSEE stands next to him.

TENNESSEE

Can you give me a winner?

RICE

Yes. A think called Man O' War in the fifth race.

TENNESSEE

But he's running 1-100.

RICE

You asked for a winner. I've talked to the trainers and breeders. He may not make you car fare home, but he'll win.

RICE (CONT'D)

And he did. But I remember the match races most.

EXT. AQUEDUCT TRACK -- DAY

SUPER: DWYER STAKES -

The match race between Man O' War and John P. Grier. It's a beautiful day. The two horses are on the track. The stands are full. The crowd is respectful but excited. The horses are walking in the infield with the jockeys in the saddle and the trainers leading them. Rice is watching. The MAN next to him starts chatting.

MAN

Who's on Man O' War today?

RICE

Clarence Kummer. Coming in at 128. John P.'s rider at 108.

MAN

That's a big weight difference. Is that going to matter?

RICE

Not to Man O' War. Not if he wants to win. Nothing will stop Man O' War when he wants to win.

The horses line up. Man O' war seems huge next to John P. Grier. The starters gun fires. The horses take off. Man O' War pulls out ahead about half a length. He stays there until about the 1 1/8 pole, John P. Grier catches up. They run neck and neck until the last furlong. John P. Grier falters or something. Man O' War lunges ahead two to three lengths and finishes easily at that length. The time is 1:29 1/5 - a new world record. The crowd goes wild.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

KIT

Yeah, good horses. Better betting though.

RICE

It's part of the culture, dear. It's the way to learn the sport from the inside.

KIT

Grant, you're going to rearrange things after you start writing, right?

RICE

Of course, this is just brainstorming. Why?

KIT

Because I just remembered something. We've mentioned Bill Tilden, but you haven't talked about him.

RICE

Or Ben Hogan. But yes. let's start with Big Bill. Bill was a gold nugget in that Golden Age of Sports.

KIT

He knew it, too.

RICE

That's true. But only on the Tennis Court. He was 100% on the court. Off the court, he was pathetic with the social scenes, well private if you know what a mean.

EXT. FOREST HILLS TENNIS COURT -- DAY

SUPER: U.S. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP - SINGLES FINALS - 1923

A match between BILL TILDEN and BILL JOHNSTON. Tilden is a tall, big bear of a man. Cocky and sure. Johnston is a small, slight man but fast and wiry. Their tennis duel has been going on since 1920, this match being no exception. Dark clouds roll in. Tilden is up two sets to one. Thunder rolls, and threatens. Tilden looks up at the weather. He fires off four serves that Johnston can't touch to win the set and the match. Then it starts pouring rain. The spectators start running. Rice pauses before taking off.

RICE

That's the way to do it.

INT. TENNIS LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

SUPER: U.S. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS SEMI-FINALS MATCH -
1930 - FOREST HILLS, N.Y.

Rice is in the locker room with Tilden just before Tilden's semi-final match against JOHN DOEG, a young, powerful, left-handed player. Tilden is carefully getting dressed, a perfectionist regarding his attire, off and on the court. Rice SEES a large red bruise on his hip bone.

RICE

What did you do to yourself, Bill?

TILDEN

It's nothing.

RICE

Doesn't look like nothing. Looks like it hurts. Seriously, are you okay?

TILDEN

I took a spill is all. I'm okay. Really.

RICE

Can you play on that?

TILDEN

Sure. It catches me whenever I push off the right foot. It's okay, Granny. I've won enough on two good legs. I want to see what I can do on one.

RICE

It's risky, experimenting here. In a nationals match.

EXT. TENNIS COURT -- DAY

Tilden and DOEG are on the court. Doeg is winning. Tilden isn't playing his best. The match is going long. Doeg is earning his win, and playing very well. He finally wins. Tilden limps off the field. Rice catches up with him.

RICE

That was some experiment, Bill.

TILDEN

Yeah, chalk that one up to a lesson learned. I won't make that mistake

again. Well, off to Broadway, see ya
Granny.

RICE
But it was still a helluva match.
What did it go? Eighty games?

TILDEN
Something like that.

RICE (V.O.)
Tilden was a machine. I remember
something ELLSWORTH VINES said about
Bill in 1930 when they were on tour.

INT. HOTEL BAR -- NIGHT

SUPER: BUFFALO, NY -

The bar is decorated for Tilden's birthday. The whole tour
plus others and Rice are there. Rice motions to ELLSWORTH
VINES, a young pro tennis player who has a drink and looks
exhausted.

RICE
Vines, you look all done in.

VINES
I am all done in, Granny.

RICE
What did you do?

VINES
I played the Old Man.

RICE
Who?

VINES
Bill! Big Bill's, he's an old man.
What this party? Forty or close to?

RICE
I'd be careful about calling that
old, son.

VINES
You know what I mean, Granny. But, I
tell you, Bill's got stamina. Enough
to kill a horse. I played him today,

and I swear, one of those sets went
17-15.

RICE

Sounds about right. So what's the
problem?

VINES

Dammit, Granny, I'm much younger
than Bill, but I was whipped at the
end. I stumbled back here and
flopped on my bed. I couldn't move
for twenty minutes.

Bill Tilden comes through looking like he just got out of
bed. He's wearing a long polo coat and has racquets under
his arm.

RICE

Going somewhere, Bill?

TILDEN

I'm pulling out, Grant. Cincinnati's
next.

VINES

It's 1 a.m. Bill.

TILDEN

What's your point, Vines?

VINES

(to Rice)

Help me out, Granny. It's the middle
of the night, and it's an eight hour
drive.

RICE

I'm not in this. Bill?

TILDEN

I'm going. I'll see you there. Just
be there... on time, boy! We should
do well in Cincinnati.

Tilden makes a sweeping EXIT out of the bar. People watch
him leave then start leaving themselves.

RICE (V.O.)

That was Bill Tilden, the
existential showman - all or
nothing.

KIT (V.O.)

I remember that other trip to Europe, the one Bob Woodruff talked us into. That was some trip, I'm not sure how I can describe those Olympic Games in Berlin, the one Jesse beat the pants off those Nazi's, and the U.S. Rowing Team, Granny it was like a dream.

RICE

Kit, you don't have to remind me about that one, I can honestly say I was proud to be an American during that trip. Bobby and talked about it and it just seemed the right thing to do, for both of us.

SUPER: Jan. 1936 New York City in the afternoon. A cold breeze is blowing in New York City, as two overcoated gentlemen enter the downtown block building of USGA Headquarters. Both men take off their overcoats and grey fedoras and hand them to the cloakroom attendant.

RICE

Whew... That's a cold gale blowing out there just now.

JONES

It's colder than Atlanta. I'll give you that. But I don't know about the gale, my Scottish caddy use to say, you know it's blowin a gale if the sheep are holding onto the heather with their teeth.

The Gentlemen head for the mens lounge where they meet RW "Bob" Woodruff, patriarch of Coca Cola.

JONES

Boss, it's good to see you anywhere, even if not Atlanta. I tursh your train had no delays.

WOODRUFF

Right Bob, we came straight up the rails, no problems.

They sit in large, overstuffed leather chairs as they are served by the USGA Butler.

GRANTLAND RICE

Well gent's, what will it be.

BOBBY JONES

I'll have that great elixir of Atlanta, Coca Cola. Also,

I'll have a Henry McKenna on the side.

WOODRUFF

That sounds good to me, except I'll take a Bacardi on the side. They mix well together.

BOBBY JONES

That's not what I have heard. I understand mixing those two is the ruination of two great beverages.

Both MEN laugh with gusto at Jones remark.

GRANTLAND RICE

Make it a Glenlivet for me, neat. Chaser of soda on the side.

USGA Butler knods and retreats to fetch their drinks.

GRANTLAND RICE

Gentlemen, its good to see you both in New York. Even if it takes an executive committee meeing of the USGA to get you here.

BOBBY JONES

It's a little chilly for golf, Granny.

GRANTLAND RICE

Oh, Bob, you've played in stuff like this in Scotland and never complained. Maybe you need a refresher over there to make you remember.

BOBBY JONES

I'd think about it in the summer, not now. I'm spoiled in my retirement, only play on sunny days.

GRANDLAND RICE

I'm going over this summer. You know the Olympics are in Berlin this year. Should be very interesting. Jesse Owens is going to win the sprints, unless of course, your man Spec Towns from Georgia Tech beats him, not likely though. Owens is real, no hype there.

WOODRUFF

I've been hearing about both of em. Towns is a good boy, we're proud of him.

GRANTLAND RICE

You two ought to show some real pride and go with me to Berlin to Cheer your man on. We could stop in Scotland for some Golf. Take the Wives. It would be great fun, and I can't wait to see Hitlers face when Owens beats his robots.

BOBBY JONES

If you're same Boss, I'll join you to take him on such a generous offer. I could think of a lot worse things than Scotland in summer.

GRANTLAND RICE

That settles it. Both of you will join me and Kit. Lets drink on it.

Glasses clink as they seal their appointment in Berlin.

SUPER: BERLIN 1936 OLYMPICS IN BERLIN, GERMANY, the 11th Olympiad.

Grandland Rice, wife Kit, and all their guests make their way towards the Berlin Stadium, passing thousands of uniformed Military Guards, including many high ranking Nazi officials.

GRANTLAND RICE to BOBBY JONES

Bob, I've never seen anything like this since the great war. Look at these fanatics. This isn't a sport for them, its about the political Nazi Machine.

SUPER: As Austria, Italy, and the mighty German Team enter the stadium they tender the Nazi Salute with one arm. 110,000 Germans in the stadium thunder their arrogance.

From the stands, Granny Rice turns to Jones and points out Hitler.

GRANTLAND RICE

There he is Bob. The puppeteer of all this show. He toots for Germany like a Yale Sophmore at a Harvard Game.

Bobby Jones simply shakes his head in disbelief at the shameless croud control being displayed by the Nazi Military, almost like Robot's as Granny had mentioned.

Grantland Rice rises from his seat, and mentions to Mr. & Mrs. Jones - "I'm going down to have a word with Jesse. Be

back in a flash". He is escorted by a Nazi Official off to the locker rooms.

GERMAN NAZI OFFICIAL

"I am told to take you to the African Auxillaries of the USA. You know, we beat your American white men, no problem. But you have these formidable Ethiopians, not so easy."

GRANTLAND RICE

Owens is an American, born and raised, and don't you forget it.

GRANTLAND RICE with JESSE OWENS

Big crowd, eh Jesse? You gonna show them something special today?

JESSE OWENS

Granny, I'm glad to see your friendly face. Look at this place. It looks like a training field for a war. I'm ready though. I'll make it worth your while coming all the way over here. Just watch how quiet this place gets...

GRANTLAND RICE

That's the spirit kid, take it to em. You're the best. Just show em what American's are made of.

JESSE OWENS

Granny, I can't change the world with wild words. But if I'm a gentleman and give it everything I've got, maybe I can change some people's minds.

GRANTLAND RICE

Remember this Jesse, the ease and smoothness of champions is not the property of any one race. It is the property of a champion. Good Luck Jesse.

SUPER: Jesse Owens line up for the 100 meter race. The German Nation's Cheers dissolve in silence as Owens crosses the finish line, finishing at 10.3 seconds, well ahead of his competitors.

Mr. & Mrs. Rice & Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Jones in the Berlin Stadium Stands. Rice whispers to Bobby Jones, they're seated right next to each other.

GRANTLAND RICE

Bobby, we're both from the South, did you ever imagine we'd see something like this in our lifetimes.

BOBBY JONES

Granny, quite honestly, No I did not. It makes me proud to be an American and I'm so proud of Jesse, go on down there and tell him congratulations from Bobby, go on now.

Owens meets RICE on the infield where he is unwinding from his run and shakes hands, then embrace each other.

JESSE OWENS

Well Granny, looks like the sound got turned off the radio when I crossed that finish line.

GRANTLAND RICE

You got that right champ. You just made believers out of a hundred thousand Nazi's. Now you got some more work to do. Let's see what else you have for us in you.

SUPER: Jesse Owens returns to the track. He goes onto break the world record in the 200 meter and broad jump. Hitler has had enough and storms out of the stadium, flanked by dozens of Nazi cronies. Owens finishes the games, and win's his fourth Gold Medal in the 400 meter dash. Rice waits for him in the infield.

GRANTLAND RICE

Well done my friend, that's four golds. And you ran Hitler and goon squad clear out of the stadium. I must say Jesse, the weather was against you, the crowd was against you, and the odds were against you. From my view, you just turned in the finest performance ever seen in Olympic sport. You will be remembered as the greatest Olympic artist of all time, including your sportsmanship.

Rice and Owens embrace, enjoying the moment and the victories by Owens, the stadium still quiet and in shock from what they've just witnessed.

KIT (V.O.)

Now what about Ben Hogan?

RICE (V.O.)

Ben Hogan was just all, and he was a long time coming.

EXT. MIAMI BILTMORE GOLF COURSE -- DAY

SUPER: WORLD'S FOUR BALL CHAMPIONSHIP - MIAMI, FL - 1941

Rice is at the 8th hole. GENE SARAZEN, an older golfer approaches. They shake hands.

RICE

You're playing well, Gene. Who're you partnered with?

SARAZEN

Ben Hogan. You know him?

RICE

Some. I know he came from nothing and still acts like he's broke half the time. I've seen him play some. Why?

SARAZEN

You know something? I've just found the game's toughest golfer.

RICE

Really? I would've said...

SARAZEN

(Interrupting)

I know. I know. I would've said Bob Jones. Hagen. Me. We're that group. I was wrong. There he is.

BEN HOGAN walks up the green.

RICE

I'm not sure what you mean.

SARAZEN

Wait.

(calling out)

Ben! Come on over.

Hogan joins them.

HOGAN

Yes, Gene?

SARAZEN

You know Grantland Rice, right?

HOGAN

Sure.

(to Rice)

Good to see you again, Mr. Rice.

RICE

Hogan.

HOGAN

Forgive me, I don't want to be rude,
but we've got a hole to play. We
don't have time to loaf. We have
work to do.

RICE

But didn't you win six of the last
seven holes?

HOGAN

(deadly serious)

Yes, but we halved that other one.
We can't throw holes away like that.

Hogan marches away toward the tee. Rice and Sarazen look at
each other.

HOGAN (CONT'D)

(calling to Sarazen)

You coming, Gene?

SARAZEN

(to Rice as he walks
away)

What did I tell you? Tough kid.

RICE (V.O.)

Gene wasn't the only one who thought
Ben was tough. He played with Bobby
in one of his late tournaments.

EXT. CHICAGO GOLF COURSE -- DAY

SUPER: CHICAGO GOLF TOURNAMENT - MID-1940S

Rice follows Ben Hogan and Bob Jones. Jones falls into step
with Rice.

RICE

What do you think?

JONES

I wouldn't have believed it.

RICE

What?

JONES

I thought I was a hard fighter.
Hagen and Sarazen both were.

RICE

Were? Are. What does this have to do
with Hogan?

JONES

We're not in the same class as
Hogan.

RICE

How so?

JONES

When Hogan as a ninety-nine yard
shot to play, he expects to hole it.
He's sore as a pup if his pitch is
more than a foot away.

RICE

Sounds like a lot like you at that
age.

JONES

I never expected to lay a Number 3
iron shot from 190 yards out stone
dead. Hogan does. He's fighting for
every inch, foot, and yard on a golf
course.

RICE

Will he be one of the greats?

JONES

He can't miss. He has the shots, but
he's got a better attitude than
other guys with the same shots. he's
willing to absorb that mental punch.

RICE (V.O.)

That was Hogan. That will always be
Hogan. The greatest of the
concentrators. He played - plays -
with more determination than anyone.
Even when he got older and had that
leg issue where he was all but
crippled.

INT. LOS ANGELES GOLF COURSE CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

SUPER: LOS ANGELES OPEN - 1950

The clubhouse is full of golf and press. Rice is walking through. He OVERHEARS a comment by a passerby.

PASSERBY

Yeah, I just saw him. Ben Hogan's here. I hear he's going to play.

Rice starts scanning the crowd. He SEES Ben Hogan, older now, seated at a table. He heads over.

RICE

Ben!

HOGAN

Hi, Grant. Forgive me for not getting up. Legs haven't caught up with the rest of me.

RICE

I can imagine. It's not been 18 months yet since the accident. What're you doing here?

HOGAN

Playing a little golf.

RICE

In the tournament?

HOGAN

Sure, why not?

RICE

Why not, indeed. Your doctors okay with this?

HOGAN

Doctors what do they know. They didn't think I'd walk again. I showed them. If I can walk. I can golf.

RICE

Good luck to you. Excuse me, I still need to check in. I'll catch up with you later.

HOGAN

I'll be here. And I'll see you on
the course.

Rice moves off. Shaking his head. He SEES and catches CARY
MIDDLECOFF.

MIDDLECOFF

Grant! How are you?

RICE

Great, Gary, just great. Say, is
this right? Ben's playing in the
tournament?

MIDDLECOFF

He sure is. Can't wait to see him in
action.

RICE

Really? Can he do anything? With his
legs?

MIDDLECOFF

Sure he can. Watch him, Grant. If he
can last, he'll win it.

RICE

Really?

MIDDLECOFF

Really.

EXT. LOS ANGELES GOLF COURSE -- DAY

Ben Hogan limps out on to the green to the tee. He's
obviously has something wrong with his legs. Photographers
swarm around him taking pictures and the like. He REACTS
badly.

HOGAN

Would you guys take a break? I can't
play with all you hovering around.
Beat it. Let me play.

The photographers finally fall back. Hogan goes to the tee
and after a long hesitation of looking at the shot, he hits
as well as ever.

RICE (V.O.)

It was amazing. He almost won that
tournament. But that wasn't the one
that stuck with me. It was the 1950
US Open Championship at Meridian.

INT. PHILADELPHIA HOTEL BAR -- NIGHT

Hogan is sitting at a table. Rice ENTERS and sits down with him.

RICE

How's it going, Ben? You okay?

HOGAN

I'm not going to BS you, Grant, I'm a little worried. My legs aren't back a hundred percent. In fact, they hurt. They still hurt a lot. I was probably pushing it in Los Angeles. You were right about that.

RICE

I knew you weren't giving them time to heal. This is the Open, Ben. Thirty-six holes in one day is a lot, you sure you're up to it?

HOGAN

Like I told you in LA, if I can walk, I can golf. Besides, Valerie and the doc are here to take care of me. It's not the holes I'm worried about. It's the course. This is a tough course.

RICE

How so?

HOGAN

It can't be attacked. It has to be played defensively.

RICE

What do you mean?

HOGAN

The greens are fast and hard. You can't make the ball bite. The pins are either just in front of - or just in back of - the traps. I won't play for any pin here. I'll play for the middle of the green - or away from all the traps - and then depend on two putts to get down.

RICE (V.O.)

He made it to the 14th hole of his final round before his legs gave out. Barely. He bulled through to the end. Despite the legs, he was still in a three-way tie with Mangrum and George Fazio.

EXT. MERION GOLF COURSE -- MOMENTS LATER

The last hole of the day. Everyone is watching. Silent as Hogan approaches the last tee. Rice is behind Hogan when HY PESKIN, the Sports Illustrated photographer, joins him. Camera in hand, ready.

RICE

I'd stay back if I were you, Hy.

PESKIN

Oh, I heard about California. I'm keeping a respectful distance, but I'll get the shot.

RICE

I hope it's a good one.

PESKIN

You and me both, Grant. It was hard enough talking Sports Illustrated into putting me on staff. I'd like to stay that way. Being a freelancer is tough. Hey, you're the golf expert, what's that club he's using. That doesn't look right.

RICE

It's a one-iron. It's not unheard of, but it's not typical. Good eye.

Rice notices Peskin focusing his shot.

RICE (CONT'D)

You putting his legs in the shot?

PESKIN

Are you kidding? That's the most important part. I'm stunned he's out here. I know I wouldn't be.

RICE

You know how he feels about that,
Hy.

PESKIN

Don't worry. From here, you can't
tell there are bandages under his
pants. I'm not that kind of
photographer. What does he have to
do to go on tomorrow?

RICE

Par. I'm not sure if I'm rooting for
him or the course though. But if he
wants it, one iron or no, he'll do
it.

Hogan is about to swing. We HEAR Peskin's camera start
whirring. He gets shots. This is Hogan's legendary shot. The
ball lands on the green. There's quiet, respectful cheering.

RICE (CONT'D)

Did you get that?

PESKIN

I'm almost certain. I'll know for
sure when I get into the dark room.

RICE

I would like a copy.

PESKIN

You and many thousand subscribers.
But I'll see what I can do. Think
he'll make it.

RICE

After that shot? He can do anything.
Mark my words, this Open is going
down in history.

PESKIN

Before that happens, we better hurry
and catch up. They're all halfway to
the green.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Rice pulls out a framed photograph from the clutter. It's
the famous Hy Peskin photograph. Kit takes it from him.

KIT

I remember that. You talked about it
for days.

RICE

That was the historical moment. The
one everyone remembers and talks
about. They forget what it took for
him to come back the next day to win
it.

INT. MERION CLUBHOUSE -- EVENING

Hogan limps into the clubhouse supported by Valerie. Rice is
behind them. It's full but almost silent, especially when
Hogan stops. One person starts clapping, then another, and
another until it's roaring. Hogan fights emotional reaction
but Valerie doesn't. Rice comes up with them.

HOGAN

This isn't necessary.

RICE

Yes, it is. For them. You're a hero
now, Ben.

HOGAN

I'm no hero. I'm a golfer.

RICE

To them you're a hero. Let them have
it.

VALERIE

Come on, Ben. You need to rest until
your round tomorrow. Then we're
taking a very long, very quiet
vacation.

HOGAN

(to Rice)

You see who's really the boss around
here.

VALERIE

You could do a lot worse. I'll come
check in later.

INT. HOGAN HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Rice is in the room, staying back as VALERIE HOGAN and a DOCTOR work on Hogan's legs.

RICE
You going to make it, Ben?

HOGAN
I can't leave it at a tie, Grant.
You go get some sleep. Tomorrow's
going to be a long day.

RICE
Shouldn't that be my line?

EXT. MERION GOLF COURSE -- DAY

SUPER: US OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP -- MERION GOLF COURSE -- JUNE
1950 THE FINAL ROUND

Hogan walks slowly to the tee. Rice watches. Valerie comes
over to him.

RICE
You okay, Val?

VALERIE
I will be when this round is over.

RICE
You look tired. You get any sleep?

VALERIE
A little. We worked on Ben until 4
a.m. He'll get through. Besides, you
know Ben believes golf is only
twenty-five percent mental.

RICE (V.O.)
And he did it. Came back to win. Won
more after his legs were allowed to
heal. He was an incredible player.

CUT TO:

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Rice studies the photo some more and looks at Kit.

RICE
That was the turning point for the
whole sport, you know. That's when
golfers started being athletes. They

were taken seriously after that. Ben Hogan proved golfers had guts and courage and could take whatever life gave them.

KIT

Amazing.

RICE

I saw him win two more major titles after that. A couple this year alone and another coming up.

KIT

I knew he'd fully recovered. Valerie's beyond relieved to see him playing again, but I didn't know he was still competing.

RICE

Better than ever, but never better than this.

KIT

Sounds like a fitting tribute.

(Kit stands and stretches)

So is that about it? Those are the big figures in your story?

RICE

(Thoughtfully)

It's a start. I'm sure I'm missing some, but those are the athletes. The people and events I'm forgetting will come when I'm putting things down on paper. As I flesh out the story.

KIT

Then I'm going to clean up this coffee stuff and think about heading to bed. It's getting late. We're not as young as we once were, or as crazy.

Kit picks up coffee cups and the pot and EXITS. Rice picks up a photograph of young writers. He's one, Ring Lardner, and others - including BILL PHELON.

RICE

No we are neither as young nor as crazy as we once were.

INT. POLO GROUNDS PRESS BOX -- DAY

SUPER: POLO GROUNDS PRESS BOX -- EARLY 1920s Rice ENTERS the press box and sits down with Bill PHELON and HARRY SALSINGER. Both are big, shaggy dogs of men. Rice leans on a white cigar box with holes poked in it without noticing it.

PHELON

You know, I was down on the wharf this morning and I bought a fer-de-lance.

RICE

What's a fer-de-lance, Bill?

PHELON

It's the most poisonous snake in South America. Slender thing. Strikes quick. Got him cheap.

RICE

Where is it?

PHELON

In that box you're leaning on.

Both Rice and Salsinger REACT by leaping away as far as humanly possible and staying there. Phelon laughs hysterically for a moment then sobers up.

PHELONS

Say, Grant, you wanna make \$250?

RICE

For \$250, I'll rob a bank. What do you have in mind?

SALSINGER

Careful, Grant, this sounds fishy.

PHELON

It's not that bad. You see, I have this six-foot alligator in my apartment...

SALSINGER

On top of the Gila Monster,
squirrel, and rattlesnake?

PHELON

Yeah.

SALSINGER

Not for long...

PHELON

Anyway, there's a Dutchman down the
block who wants to bet me five
hundred dollars that his bull dog
can beat my alligator.

RICE

What makes you think the bull dog
won't win?

PHELON

I know the dog can't win.

SALSINGER

And he'll tell us why.

PHELON

I got a pit, and I matched my
alligator against three bulldogs at
different times. That gator sheared
the legs off all three dogs.

RICE

Bill, you may be a good friend and a
brilliant writer, but there's no way
I'm doing that with you. You know,
if you weren't a writer you be
locked up somewhere.

PHELON

What's the point of living if you
can't have some fun?

CUT TO:

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Kit ENTERS. She sees him looking at the picture.

KIT

What's that?

RICE

I was just remembering Bill Phelon.

KIT

That loon? I hope you find a place in your book for him. He was one of a kind.

RICE

There will be. Just like there will be for you.

KIT

(kissing his cheek)
Whatever you say, dear.

RICE

I'm serious. You always arranged things at the summer house. You've always kept things going.

KIT

Someone had to. Besides, I had help. But if you have to mention something. I suggest 1933.

RICE

1933?

KIT

September 1933.

INT. RICE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

SUPER: NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 1933

Rice ENTERS. He pulls out a suitcase and starts gathering clothes and packing. The phone rings.

RICE

Hello?

KIT (V.O.)

Granny...

RICE

Kit? Honey, what is it? It's after midnight. I was just about to get some sleep. You know I have to be in Philly for the Sharkey-Loughman fight tomorrow.

KIT (V.O.)
(Obviously
emotional)
Granny, it's Ring.

RICE
What about him?

KIT (V.O.)
Ring...Ring died a little while ago.
Young Ring came over and got me.
I've been with Ellis until just now.
I had to call you.

A long pause as Rice drops his head.

KIT (CONT'D)
Granny? Are you there?

RICE
I'm here, Kit. I'm here. I'm not
surprised really. We knew it was
coming, with his heart trouble and
that tuberculosis. I just didn't
think it would be now.

KIT (V.O.)
What do you need, honey?

RICE
Let me call you back in the morning.
I need to get something in the
paper. Let me go write up something.

KIT (V.O.)
Make it a poem. You know Ring loved
your poetry.

RICE
That's a given.

INT. RICE HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Kit hugs Rice tightly.

KIT
I still have that poem. Ring Lardner
was one of my favorites. He was
family.

RICE

I always thought so. You know, East Hampton was never the same after that.

KIT

No. It wasn't. So, how will your book end?

RICE

Kit, I'm not really quite sure, but there is one more story I'd like to tell you, then we'll call it a night. It's about Babe, not the Bambino.

KIT

I'm all ears Granny, what happened with Babe that you remember so well, I can tell its important to you.

RICE

It was just a year ago, and I visited the Babe down in Texas. I'll never forget it.

SUPER: Hotel Dieu Hospital in Beaumont, Texas. Rice enters room 201, marked Milred "Babe" Didrickson Zaharias.

SISTER DANIELS - HOSPITAL NURSE

I have a hospital cocktail for you Mrs. Zaharias and there is someone here to you. He's a reporter from Nashville, Tennessee, I think his name is Mr. Rice.

ZAHARIAS

You aint foolin me about that caster oil, Sister Daniels. I ain't crazy about takin it but I reckon I gotta do it and please show Mr. Rice in as Grantland barges through the door.

RICE enters, hat in hand, grey, but alert, but feeling like he's at the twilight of his life, and career. One last friend to visit, maybe write about.

RICE

Hello Babe, How are you? I came as soon as I heard the news from George.

ZAHARIAS

That big oaf, he can't keep a fonfidence. He'd never be a newspaper man, he'd blab all his source all over the paper and nobody would ever tell him a secret again. How do you

like that?

RICE

That's my girl. Give em hell Babe. You must be doin quite a better than I thought.

ZAHARIAS

I tell you what Granny, if you get me outta here for a while I'll tell you a big story, the biggest yet.

RICE

You got to have doctors permission to do that, besides, where do you want to go?

ZAHARIAS

You talk to Dr. Tatum, he'll let you take me. We won't be gone long, you go ask him.

RICE

Goes to the nurses station and confers with Dr. Tatum. They talk and shake hands. Rice returns to Room 201, Babe's room.

RICE

Ok Babe, you win. Dr. Tatum has given us an hour. Lets get you outta here. I feel like I just robbed a bank.

Rice helps Babe gingerly into his car then drives to Beaumont Country Club.

ZAHARIAS

Stop here Granny, the green is just over there.

Rice stops his car and carefully helps Babe out and slowly walks to the nearby golf greens. Nobody is around, the golfers have gone home for the day.

Zaharias bends down on one knee and gently begins to rub the surface of the putting green with her hand, as gentle as any caress.

ZAHARIAS

You know Granny its good to see you. You never know who your friends are until you lose. You've always been there for me Granny, thick or thin and I'm afraid right now I'm a little on the thin side, but I'll make it through.

RICE

How bad is it Babe?

ZAHARIAS

Well, Dr. Tatum says it cancer. He's gonna do a colostomy tomorrow, it don't look good. George is scared to death. I don't know what to think. I like to think I've licked worse than this. Shoot, you were there in 1932 in Los Angeles when I won those two gold medals and they took two away from me. Now everybody copies me goin over the highbar on their back. Fosbury Flop my butt, that's Babe's Flop. I started it and you know it. And you were also there when the men wouldn't let me into the LA Open.

Bunch of chickens.. They knew I could whip em. But you forced them to let me in anyway. I always love you for that. The first women ever to play the mens tour, and should have made the cut too.. Heck, I should have won if my putter old showed up, "Dang Game".

An you saw me win 17 in a row. Never been done before, or since. First American to win the British Womens, boy was that fun. You and me cancan to bagpipes at Gullanes Club House. Granny, you've been there for me at the best of times, and all those nice things you said about me in the papers. You scared everybody else to give me all those awards. They knew better than to go against you. Heck, Granny you're the Ringleader. It's easy to be there in the good Times, and look at me now. I'm at death's door and here you are to cheer me up. I hope you know no good deed ever goes unpunished.

Babe never looks up - keeps stroking the green.

GRANTLAND RICE

Babe, I'm sorry about the cancer. Honestly, I didn't know. Nobody would tell me anything. But your right about the one thing. Nobody I know would ever count you out. If I were a betting man I'd say you'd lick this cancer and go back to winning more golf touirnaments. It would take one hell of a disease to knock out the Babe. Maybe couldn't be done. It seems to me you got a long way t o go before your game is called on account of Darkness. You gott fight this like every other battle you've fought and won, Babe. Its your gift and your nature.

ZAHARIAS

Thanks Granny, I need that little pep talk. I was about to

give it all up. Maybe your right. Maybe I got a shot even
if it's a longshot.

GRANTLAND RICE

Now you know how your opponents have felt all these years
going up against the like of you. Against all odd's and you
always find a way to win. That why I call you the Greatest
Woman Athlete ever. Nobody ever won better against you.

Babe stops caressing the green and stands up.

ZAHARIAS

OK, Granny. I'm ready to go back to Hotel Dieu. I'm gonna
lick this cancer just like you said. And I'm gonna come
back and win the Open too. How about that for starters.

Babe and Rice walk gingerly back to Rice's cad and drive
off, back to Hotel Dieu.

RICE

So kind of sum up I guess. I've
written for most of my adult life.
I've played sports for more of it.
63 of my 73 years. I've seen the
good and the bad. I won't waste time
on the bad. The World Series
Corruption in 1919 is best
forgotten. Maybe I'll leave it with
a poem.

KIT

That's fitting. Ring's not the only
one who liked your poetry you know.
I have too.

RICE

Then, just for you.

MONTAGE OF ALL THE SPORTS FIGURES AND SHOTS OF RICE'S
HEADLINES AND PIECES AS THE POEM IS READ. THE POEM IS "THE
LONG ROAD" RICE READS PARTS OF POEM AS ITS ALSO DISPLAYED
ON SCREEN, OVER THE PHOTO AND FILM MONTAGE (BLACK/WHITE) OF
ALL THE LIVES AND CAREERS HE'S EVER TOUCHED.

RICE (CONT'D)

Here is my traveler's cloak, dusty
and torn. For half a century it has
known the road. Once it was clean
and new, now it is frayed and worn.
The end is near, beneath a heavy
load, But from the valley to the

topmost hill, The sky is blue, the
birds are singing still.

(pause)

Yes, I have seen my share along the
way, Ruth, Jones, and Tilden, and
the mighty Cobb, The speed of Owens
on the record job, and coming on
still driving like the surf, Milburn
and Hitchcock are ripping up the
turf.

(pause)

I've seen my share upon a busy trip,
I have seen Johnson's fast ball out
speed time. I've seen Pete
Alexander's deadly whip, And I've
seen Matty in his golden prime. And
there was Grange, the ghost, of
super rank The Four Horsemen - and
Nagurksi moving like a tank.

RICE (CONT'D)

(pause)

One by one I watch them march on by,
From vanished years they move across
the field, Sarazen, Hagen, Pudge and
Thorpe and Cy, Louis and Paddock
decked with sword and shield, The
mighty thousands who have done the
same, To leave this epitaph - He
Played the Game.

(pause)

The long line forms through life's
remembered years, The flaming heart
- cold brain and firm command Of
nerve and sinew, blotting out all
fears, The will to win beyond the
final stand, These are the factors
in each hour of need That mark the
pathway for the Winning Breed.

(pause)

But there is more than winning to
this game, where I've seen countless
thousands give their best, give all
they had to find the road to fame,
and barely fail against the closing
test. Their names are lost now with
the swift and strong, yet in the
final rating they belong.

(pause)

For there are some who never reached
the top, Who in my rating hold a
higher place Than many wearing
crowns against the drop Of life's
last curtain in the bitter race. Who
stand and fight amid a bitter brood,
Knowing the matchless gift of
fortitude.

RICE (CONT'D)

(pause)

Far off I hear the rolling, roaring
cheers. They come to me from many
yesteryears, and light the landscape
with their brilliant plays, Great
stars that knew their days in fame's
bright sun. I hear them tramping to
oblivion.

END ON SUPER SCROLL:

GRANTLAND RICE DIED OF A STROKE ON JULY 13, 1954. HE LEFT
BEHIND A LEGACY LIKE NONE OTHER. HE WAS WITNESS TO THE
GREATEST SPORTS GLORY OF ALL TIME - THE GOLDEN AGE OF
SPORTS. GRANTLAND RICE MADE ATHLETES LIKE TY COBB, BABE
RUTH, JACK DEMPSEY AND BOBBY JONES HOUSEHOLD NAMES. HE LIVED
WHAT HE WROTE:

MOVE TO BLACK SCENEN

"FOR WHEN THE ONE GREAT SCORER COMES TO MARK AGAINST YOUR
NAME, HE WRITES - NOT THAT YOU WON OR LOST. BUT HOW YOU
PLAYED THE GAME." (WHITE TEXT ON BLACK)

BLACK SCREEN - CONTINUED. - AND THEME MUSIC. LATER IN LIFE
TEXT DESCRIBING THE KEY ATHLETES RICE ENCOUNTERED.

Babe Zaharias beat the cancer and came back to win 5 LPGA
Tournaments including the U.S. Womens Open. Her influence on
Womens Golf popularized the sport for decades to come. She
died September 27, 1956 at age 45 in Galveston TX. Her
ashes were spread on Beaumont Country Clubs greens and
fairways.

Ben Hogan went on to win the 1950 U.S. Open at Merion Golf
Club barely a year after his horrific near fatal auto
accident. He continued to play Championship Golf including
his watershed season in 1953 where he won the British Open
at Carnoustie, the only Open he ever entered. The same year
he founded the Ben Hogan Company producing golf equipment
and retired in the late 50s. He passed away in 1997 in his
beloved Ft. Worth.

Jesse Owens returned to the U.S.A. after the 1936 Berlin
Olympics to capitalize on commercial offers, ending his

Amateur status forever. Franklin Roosevelt or Howard Truman never invited him to the White House in honor of his Olympic Victories but was named as "Ambassador of Sports" by Dwight Eisenhower in 1955. After working hard all his life Owens retired to Tuscon, Arizona where he passed away of cancer in 1980.

Knute Rockne is regarded as one of the greatest coaches in collage football history. After 13 years as head football coach of Notre Dame University and six National Championships Rockne was tragically killed in a plane crash enroute to participate in a film titled "The Spirit of Notre Dame" in Kansas City, KS in 1931. He is buried in South Bend, Indiana near his beloved Notre Dame University campus.

Jack Dempsey, the "Manassa Mauler" held the World Heavyweight Boxing Title from 1919 to 1926 and his aggressive boxing style set many financial and attendance records. His 1919 Heavyweight Title fight with Jess Willard's first round is considered one of the most brutal in boxing history. He retired from boxing in 1927 opened Dempsey's Broadway Restaurant in 1935 and served as an military officer during World War II. Dempsey passed away in 1983 of natural causes and is buried in Southhampton, New York.

ROBERT T. JONES JR. (Bobby) retired at the age of 28 from Championship Golf shortly after winning Golf's "Grand Slam" in 1930. Jones practiced law in Atlanta and produced a series of Golf Shorts for Hollywood. He co-founded the Augusta National Golf Club home of the Masters Golf Tournament later to become one of Golf's Majors. Battling a debilitating spinal disease for decades Jones never gave up his love for golf and passed away in 1971 in Atlanta.

George Herman (Babe) Ruth has come to be regarded as one of the greatest sports heroes in American Culture. His larger than life playing style and charismatic personality helped influence and popularize Baseball as a sport during the 1920's Golden Age.. He helped the New York Yankee's to four world series and seven pennants during his tenure in New York. Off the field the Babe's charity and poplularity with kids was legendary. He retired from Baseball in 1936 and lost his battle with Cancer in 1948 and buried in Hawthorne, New York.

THE END

BLACK SCREEN - CREDITS ROLL

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