

ABBY. I do.

MAN. So you'll do everything to . . . you'll help him. Might mean taking a back seat?

ABBY. I want him to succeed, I really do. It's just— I've always heard that a lot of really successful people are . . . I just don't know that he's selfish enough to be great.

MAN. I see . . .

ABBY. Oh, I know, another thing I love? A lot of times, when he closes the bar, we turn down the lights, have a drink, and we'll sit here for a while. And he plays, just for me. Just us. We sit here and it all goes away . . . the drunks at IHOP, the garbage on the street, the smell of kitchen grease in my hair. And pretty soon . . . it all fades and it's just . . . us. I love it . . . those late-night private concerts, how many people get those?

MAN. *(Beat.)* You love him.

ABBY. *(Beat.)* I do.

(Pause.)

MAN. Quick story . . . I knew a guy once.

(JAMIE reenters.)

JAMIE. What are we talking about?

MAN. I was about to regale Abby with a story!

JAMIE. Is this a private regale?

MAN. Not at all! Group regale! Get a drink . . . OK, here goes . . . I knew this guy.

(JAMIE goes behind the bar and gets a drink. MAN stands and sort of acts out the story.)

MAN. A baseball pitcher. I mean, he was the goods, a pitcher, lights out. This guy was going places. Drafted, first round. They started him out in the minors, like everybody . . . but he was a lock. I mean, a lock.

ABBY. And?

MAN. And he got married. Bam, pregnant! The minors don't pay much and even with his signing bonus . . . he was moving up fast but in the off-season, he got a job, loading trucks, midnight shifts for Canada Dry. Responsible, right? Good guy, right? One night, maybe he was tired, whatever, he caught his throwing hand under

a full palette, sixty cases. Smashed it. Baseball? (*Gestures like a bubble bursting.*) Poof . . .

ABBY. That's terrible.

MAN. Yeah. He got a job at a sporting goods store. And he coaches a high school team. He's even had a couple of his players go to the pros. But not him. Never him now.

(Pause.)

ABBY. But he's got a child. That's important, too.

MAN. It is. No question.

ABBY. We can't always have . . . I mean it's sad but it's not the end of the world—

MAN. No, it's not the end of the world. Not at all. No one is saying that.

(Pause. A special may fade up for the next sequence.)

But sometimes . . . at night . . . he dreams he's pitching. The stands are full, the grass is fresh cut and he's punchin' everybody out, "Stee-rike three!"

Then the catcher throws and it hits his mitt, slap, and the stands are empty. The park is deserted. He wakes up. The alarm reads 3:14 and he's got tears in his eyes . . .

He never tells his wife. Never. But it eats at him. And it always, always will. For his life, for his whole life. It'll never go away. That's all I'm saying . . .

JAMIE. That's not a real happy story . . .

MAN. Whoops, sorry, brought the room down. Hey, got to hit the john.

(MAN exits upstage right.)

JAMIE. It's right over . . .

(MAN doesn't hear him but exits easily to the bathroom.)

JAMIE. (*To ABBY:*) Is this all right?

ABBY. Fine . . .

JAMIE. You don't seem . . . want me to shut this down?

ABBY. I'm not giving back the money so we're holding up our end!

JAMIE. OK . . .

ABBY. OK.