

OPENING DAY

by Sean Matthew Pomposello

Sample Pages 1-10

FADE IN:

SERIES OF SHOTS

A spreader lays a thick, puckered line of lime down an amber stretch of soil...

DISSOLVE TO:

An edger prunes around a carefully arced section of turf...

DISSOLVE TO:

Amid an expansive field of thick, green lawn, A MEMBER OF A GROUND CREW pilots a ride-on mower, completing a tidy cross-hatched pattern.

A man's voice--*quintessentially New York in cadence and rhythm*:

BILLY

It's designed to break your heart...

DISSOLVE TO:

A template is swiftly lifted from the ground revealing a lime-lined batter's box...

BILLY (cont'd)

...The game begins in the Spring...

DISSOLVE TO:

Home plate is whisked...

BILLY (cont'd)

...when everything else begins again...

DISSOLVE TO:

The American flag inches its way up a flagpole before a sky painted with the first hints of dawn.

DISSOLVE TO:

BILLY (cont'd)

...And it blossoms in the Summer

A crush of vending carts and catering vans are filing in through the outer gate leading to the stadium...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY (cont'd)
...filling your afternoons and
evenings...

DISSOLVE TO:

Bottles of beer are thrust into a cooler of ice...

BILLY (cont'd)
...And then, as soon as the chill rains
come...

DISSOLVE TO:

A lump of roped papers lands beside a news stand. Headline in
bold, condensed helvetica:

"PLAY BALL!"

FADE TO BLACK.

BILLY (cont'd)
...It stops and leaves you to face the
Fall alone.

FADE IN:

EXT. QUEENS, NEW YORK - FROM ABOVE - DAY

The morning rush in the busy borough of Queens from above. A
handful of major arteries are knotted, encircling

SHEA STADIUM

with cars and trucks of every variety. From this altitude the
busy cars look more like ants in an ant farm.

We hear a TINNY CAR RADIO being swiftly tuned to an all-
sports program. A bed of "TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME" kicks
in behind the DJ.

DJ (VO)
Dennis from Bayside, you're on.

CALLER (VO)
Hank? Hollerin' Hank? Hello?

DJ (VO)
Lower your radio, Dennis. (Beat) Do you
have the answer for me, Dennis?

CALLER (VO)
C..can you restate the question?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DJ (VO)

It's a theme question, Dennis, on this
the opening day of our national pastime--

CALLER (VO)

Yeah, all right, okay...

DJ (VO)

Think, Dennis, think: what pitcher has
the most opening day starts--

CALLER (VO)

Uh...Lemme see...Don't tell me...

PUSH IN

on one car amid the thousands of anxious motorists...

INT. CAR - DAY

At the wheel is BILLY BURROUGHS, 26, our narrator. His
girlfriend, AMANDA BITTERMAN, severe and pensive, sits beside
him in the passenger seat.

BILLY

Sixteen, you fool, sixteen. Tom Seaver
holds the record for most opening day
starts - 16. Eleven for the Mets, three
for Cincinnati, and two for the White
Sox. Won seven, lost two, with seven no-
decisions and...

Amanda reaches over and tunes the radio to a prosaic ADULT
CONTEMPORARY STATION. Think of Kenny G. transitioning in
here.

BILLY (cont'd)

Amanda! Why'd you...I was listening to
that. Turn it baa--

AMANDA

Shhh!

BILLY

But--

AMANDA

This is the one, Billy. The one you've
been waiting for...

BILLY

The one I've been waiting for.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMANDA

That one that separates you from the pack, defines you as a man. Gets you to that next level.

BILLY

That next level, yes.

AMANDA

Gives you a...uh, gives us a chance to start our life anew.

BILLY

Start life anew, yes.

Amanda smiles. Billy smiles. Beat.

BILLY (cont'd)

What exactly are we talkin' about here?

AMANDA

(peevied)

Get your head screwed on, Billy. I'm talking about this. Today. Remember? Your first day of your new job?

BILLY

Oh, yes, right

Beat.

BILLY (cont'd)

Any chance in getting Total Talk Sports back?

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A room cluttered with Mets baseball paraphernalia... pennants...posters...autographed photographs...etc.

A SERIES OF SHOTS OF SOMEONE DRESSING

- a) An arm is thrust into a royal blue, silk Mets warm-up jacket.
- b) A watch band emblazoned with Mr. Met graphics is secured upon a wrist.
- c) Blue and orange laces imprinted with the Mets logo are knotted on a pair of well-worn Chuck Taylors.
- d) A commemorative 1969 World Series pin pierces the jacket collar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

e) An official Mets cap is lovingly placed upon a head...

BACK TO SCENE

Witness STU SCHWERTZEL gearing up for his high-holy day-- opening day. He carefully works the rim of his cap and admires himself in a mirror rimmed with old ticket stubs and baseball cards.

STU'S MOTHER (OS)

Stuart! Come, eat, your Farina's gettin' cold.

INT. CAR - DAY

Things are getting heated between Billy and Amanda.

AMANDA

I guess I can't hold it against you, Billy. You're just a boy...

BILLY

Amanda, do we hafta do this now; In the car, on the way to work.

AMANDA

A boy who is just too dim to appreciate the strings Daddy had to pull get you this job.

BILLY

Seriously, Amanda--

AMANDA

Handed to you on a silver platter. Management in like two years, tops four. No sweat. All just 'cause my Dad took pity on you and your rocky career path.

BILLY

Listen, I told you a million times. I'm thankful to your Dad for the hook-up. I am, truly--

AMANDA

This is your ticket outta that dump apartment of yours. Are you too blind to see that? Away from that creepy neighborhood you grew up in. Finally you can move into the city and away from those adolescent bums you grew up with. (Pause.) Right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Billy glances impassively over to Amanda.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Right?

EXT. DUCKWORTH COLLECTIBLES - DAY

Meet DUCKWORTH (26). That name, the only one he goes by, is prominently embroidered across his jersey back, set upon his sloping shoulders.

Wrenching up a metal gate protecting the window to his shop, Duckworth notices that a bulb is failing over his entrance. Stealthily, he creeps over to a neighboring shop front, steals a working bulb, returns, and replaces the bulb. He peers around the perimeter to ensure that his theft went unnoticed.

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Billy pulls up beneath the el as Amanda gathers a bag lunch from her briefcase and hands it to him.

BILLY

Lemme guess: Baloney on white with mustard, right? My favorite.

AMANDA

I wish someone could tell me why I put my faith in such a loser. It's grilled vegetables on focaccia.

BILLY

(distastefully)

Grilled--?

AMANDA

You really are a lost cause, Billy. Thanks for the lift.

She goes for her door handle and Billy stops her.

BILLY

Hey, before you go. What time you think quitting time is at this place?

AMANDA

Oh, no.

BILLY

I'm just saying, if the game starts at 1:05...let's see, the first three innings always last an hour...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMANDA

Promise me you'll work a full day, Billy!

A beat elapses and Billy appears to be mulling over Amanda's comment.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Billy, promise.

BILLY

Whaddaya want express written consent?
Okay, all right, I promise you *I will not*
leave work early.

She air-kisses Billy and leaves for her train. After a thoughtful moment, Billy throws it into gear and takes off.

INT. DUCKWORTH COLLECTIBLES - DAY

A couple PIMPLY PATRONS amble about, peering at trading cards in glass cases as Duckworth mans the counter.

Stu arrives at the door with his arms brimming with tailgate accoutrement. He taps the door with his head to get Duckworth's attention. Duckworth lets him in, flips the sign on the door to "CLOSED" and addresses the store:

DUCKWORTH

All right everyone--out! C'mon out.

STU

(straining)

Duck, remember my hernias?

DUCKWORTH

On the counter with it, Stu.

PIMPLY PATRON

Where are we gonna go Duck?

DUCKWORTH

That's your problem. We always close opening day. You oughta know that by now. C'mon, beat it now, willya?

STU

(straining more)

Uh, Duck, don'tcha remember me and my brother and our matching hernias?

DUCKWORTH

I told you, drop it on the counter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the last of the patrons breezes out of the store, Stu exhaustedly drops everything on the floor. BOOM!

DUCKWORTH (cont'd)
Schwertzel, you're a panic. D'ya know that?

INT./EXT. BILLY'S CAR - DAY

Billy is droning out, stuck in traffic, listening to Total Talk Sports:

DJ (VO)
Ah, yes, it's back to baseball. The National Tonic. The Revival of Hope. The Restorer of Confidence...

SUDDENLY the passenger side door is wrenched open and in leaps a swarthy, LEATHER-JACKETED TOUGH with buffalo-thick, dark hair. He's bearing a gym bag.

TOUGH
Okay, gimme it. Up wit' the wallet.

Billy gathers his wallet from his back pocket.

BILLY
Wha? I, uh--

TOUGH
(snatching the wallet)
Now the tie. Off wit' it. Let's go.

BILLY
Seriously--

TOUGH
I said the tie!

Billy unlaces the tie, offers it, and the Tough chucks it into the back seat.

TOUGH (cont'd)
(gesturing to his clothes)
Now the rest of it. C'mon, we don't got all day.

BILLY
Here? I'm not going to undress--

The Tough glares menacingly at Billy who reluctantly complies, stripping out of his shirt. He hands everything over and sits bare-chested, staring at the Tough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Tough reaches into his gym bag and pulls out a New York Mets cap. He reaches over and plops it roughly on Billy's head. Billy cracks a wan smile. The Tough returns a sly smile. The Tough is no highwayman, but MANCINI, two parts oil, one part mafioso wannabe and one of Billy's closest buddies.

MANCINI

Yo', Babbo. We ain't lost a game yet and already you're dressed for a funeral.

Mancini gathers a crisp twenty from Billy's wallet and flings the wallet back in Billy's lap.

MANCINI (cont'd)

For the tickets.

Billy pulls a tee shirt from the bag and slips it on while Mancini studies the contents of Billy's bagged lunch.

MANCINI (cont'd)

What'd the *vegeterrorist* rustle this up for you?

He takes a whiff and disgustedly flings the sandwich out his window.

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

A leashed bull dog at curb-side tears into the sandwich as its MASTER stands a stride away, obliviously chatting with a NEIGHBOR. Suddenly, the pooch HOWLS in disgust and bolts, dragging the Master behind.

INT./EXT. BILLY'S CAR - SAME TIME

BILLY

No one likes a litterbug, Mancini.

BILLY (cont'd)

Hey, I thought we were meeting at your mom's deli.

MANCINI

Think I'd trust you to show?

BILLY

What do you mean, trust me to show? Course I'd show. I'm here, aren't I?

MANCINI

(points behind them)
Well, my mom's is back that way, Babbo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Billy considers, and spills the beans:

BILLY

To tell you the truth, Mancini: I was kinda discussing this with Amanda--

MANCINI

What'd I tell you. Do I know this guy, or what?

BILLY

I'm not saying I'm not coming altogether. It's just that, it's my first day. It's a commitment--

MANCINI

Commitment?! What about your commitment to your friends? Why don't you just once stop thinking about yourself and think about your friends?

BILLY

No, see, here's the thing, see: I go, *duck* out, and I'm there by the home half of ...what...like the 3rd inning... eighth, tops.

MANCINI

The tailgate! You know, burgers, booze, babes...

BILLY

What about it?

MANCINI

You'll miss it, *stunad*. That's what. An opening day without a tailgate is like a bachelor party without a Chinese hooker.