

# LOW & INSIDE

by  
Reinaldo Garcia

*Staging:* The staging may be as elaborate as the director wishes. This one act monologue takes place in a sports bar, after midnight. At the very least, what's needed is a bar, stage front, facing the audience. The bar is set up so that the audience sees it from the bartender's perspective. When the actor addresses the invisible bartender, he's addressing the audience, from "in front of" (on the upstage side of) the bar.

A speaker system will broadcast an ESPN Sportscenter-like "This Day in Baseball" summary of the day's playoff games.

*Character:* Rico LaJolla is a middle-aged Hispanic man. "Jason" and "Roosevelt" will be portrayed by the actor who plays Rico. The actor must therefore be very adept with rapid changes in voices and physical expression.

LIGHTS GO UP.

We HEAR the ESPN Sportscenter "This Day in Baseball" broadcast.

RICO LAJOLLA enters and bellies up to the bar, stage front.

RICO: Hey, Neil. *(Pause)* Little fucked up. You? *(Pause)* The usual. Seagram's Seven & Seven. *(Pause)* Hey, couldja turn off the TV? *(Pause)* I gotta give a reason? I been comin' here for what, five, six years? *(Pause)* Alright...I never wanna see. Nor hear. Nor read about baseball for as long. As I live. *(The bar goes silent. As Rico listens to the bartender, he takes out his wallet and removes a card. Rico rips the card into shreds, dropping them on the bar top.)* Free at least, free at last. *(Rico mimes receiving his Seagram's Seven & Seven, and will mime his drinking as the monologue continues. Rico downs the drink.)* And another, *por favor.* *(Rico pulls a bill out of his wallet and places it on the bar.)* No tab tonight. I'm leaving no debts. *(Rico takes the second drink, nurses it as he speaks.)* You remember Jason? Big body builder type? *(Pause)* Yeah, with the rash down his neck. You know any hit men? *(Pause)* Nah, just kidding. I think. You remember Roosevelt? Face like a badger? Fucked me over, big time. *(Pause)* You sleep upstairs, right? Mind if I stay awhile? *(Pause)* You know me, a friendly guy, right? So did professional baseball. It was in Murrieta, Georgia, pre-season sessions. Director of Officials tells me I've been elevated to Crew Chief, working the Southern League with two guys: Jason Olivetti and Roosevelt Truman. "Jason Olivetti?" I say. "I've heard he's a piece o' work." "Rico," he says, "We know you're the kind of born leader who can get along with anyone. Mentor the kid." *(Pause)* Them's my marching orders. I'm two years away from the major leagues, a lifelong dream. *(Pause)* Through Birmingham, Chattanooga, Jackson, Pensacola, Knoxville, Montgomery, Mobile, Huntsville...athletes dripping testosterone and talent...Adonises driven by a dream...and there I was, deep in the mix, benevolent...dispensing justice...witnessing brilliance! John Smoltz, Matt Holliday, Juan Pierre, a cavalcade of future stars, passing through my station, on their way to immortality! *(Pause)* A baseball field is a...a timeless Eden. And into my crew chief's Eden slunk Jason Olivetti. Dwelling in a body stocking of a rash. It even discolored his weiner—yes, I looked—don't be

naïve, Neil. Everybody looks. *(Pause)* Taking charge on a ballfield was second nature to me. I was a catcher in college. The field general. I ran the pitchers. Directed the fielders. Worked the umps. When I wasn't drafted, I went to umpire school. Dodgertown, Vero Beach, Florida. Sailed through it. Through the Rookie League, Single A. I was up for baseball every day. By my third year, crew chief. Two guys under me, in a van supplied by the majors, first class hotels, all across the South. The future World Series ump! *(Pause)* How does a guy who gets along with everybody grow to hate a man? Who the mere sight of provokes nausea and homicide? *(Rico swigs his drink.)* Jason was a strapping farm boy seduced by big city afflictions. Prostitutes. Marijuana. *(Pause)* What, you want proof? Okay. We'd check into a hotel. During dinner, Jason's flirting with the waitress. Flirting? How's this: "This is one fine meal. But it lacks some spice. Why don't you come up to my room later and let me taste your pussy?" Then he'd be at the front desk, bitching that his towels weren't white enough. *(Pause)* He'd weiner wag the maids when he'd come out of the shower. Coupla times, he came back to find his room ransacked. Well deserved, I'd say. *(Pause)* On the diamond? Okay. He's behind the dish. Guy hits a home run. As he's circling the bases, Jason picks up the bat, then leans on it like Mr. Peanut on his cane, directly over home plate. *(Pause)* No, he never smoked it in the van. But the idea of driving through the South, my protege holding grass, terrified me. *(Pause)* And his "taste" in music! We had a rule: Whoever's at the wheel chooses the tunes. We wouldn't even be out the hotel parking lot, Jason slides in his "Greatest Hits of the '70s" CD, and it'd be "Afternoon Delight," "Summer Breeze," and "One Toke Over the Line" from Mobile to Jackson. *(Pause)* No. You can't imagine what it would've done to my reputation to have reported him to the home office. *(Pause)* Jason's the reason I drink these Seven & Sevens. His official beverage of choice. I joined him "to establish rapport." Roosevelt too. Drunk in the back seat, tapping away at his fucking I-phone, watching porn, aiming the camera at the front seat, making what he called his "POV Travelogue."

*(Long pause)*

So we're in Birmingham, the Barons pitted against their arch rival Huntsville Stars, battling for the title with two games left. Two games and Jason's out of my life. *(Pause)* Yeah, Barons and Stars, huge rivals, mutual hatred. *(Pause)* So it all comes down to two outs, bottom of the ninth, bases loaded, Barons down by three. Twenty-two-year-old Cuban defector Oscar Morales is a five tool phenom. He's already tripled and stolen home when he strides to the plate with the game on the line. Huntsville pitcher launches a fastball, low and inside. Ball one. The catcher, a wisecracking Polack misfit, asks for a clean one. He says, "Gimme a ball you can see." *(Pause)* Of course I tossed him! He turns on me, the Huntsville skipper leaps out of the dugout, restraining the Polack with one arm while screaming for an explanation. I tell him what the guy said. "You're not allowed to argue balls and strikes. You know that." He turns to his catcher, says, "You say that?" "Yeah. Hey, if blue here grew an eye, he'd be a cyclops." *(Rico grabs a handful of peanuts from a bartop bowl.)* Huntsville manager nearly breaks his ribs, he's laughing so hard. The fans're goin' apeshit. Now the pitcher's in the mix. Jason and Roosevelt run up to restore order. *(Rico swigs his drink.)* Pitcher says, "Hey, blue, we know you're blind. We've seen your wife." Another guy tossed. *(Pause)* Stop checking your watch, Neil. I'll wrap this up soon enough. So a new pitcher delivers a rising fastball. Morales fouls it back, knocks off my mask. I go down to my knees. Someone in the Stars' dugout yells, "Get off your knees, blue. You're blowing the game!"

*(Rico climbs atop the bar.)*

I wobble toward the Huntsville dugout, give 'em the stink eye. That calms 'em down. Next pitch, Morales slams it down the right field line. Foul by inches. Count's one-and-two. Next pitch, a slider, outside. Morales, already what we call a "professional hitter," fouls off the next five pitches before

taking a ball millimeters off the plate. Catcher says, “Hey, blue...” I say, “One more peep outta you, you shower with your friend.” Guy says, “Peep.” I swallow it. Morales fouls off three more, too-close-to-take. *(Pause)* You better believe it. So now the Stars' pitcher hangs a curve, Morales drools, spins on it, launches the ball high into the Alabama night. The crowd leaps as one as the ball's Pensacola-bound. Walk-off grand slam. Barons win the title by a run. *(Pause)* Me and my crew had to pass the visitors' dugout to exit the field. Losing pitcher comes up behind me, says, “Lucky you don't have an ERA, blue. Those runs are yours.”

*(Long pause. Rico sits on the bar, facing the audience, legs dangling)*

We had a game the next day in Jacksonville. No time to shower. We pile into the van, Jason at the wheel. Skyrockets in flight, Jason opens up with:

JASON: “Hey, Rico. That two strike call on Morales. That was strike three.”

Jason, that pitch was so far outside it had a hat and coat on. Could you turn it down a bit? I look in the back seat at Roosevelt for some support. Roosevelt's aiming his I-phone at us. Another chapter in his on-the-road “documentary.” Jason digs in deeper.

JASON: “You Latinos look out for each other, doncha? Morales slip you some pesos? One blown call tips the championship. I thought only horses slept standing up.”

That's enough, Jason. Roosevelt says:

ROOSEVELT: “You guys have been going at it since Opening Day. Why don't you both settle this thing like men?”

*(Pause)*

I'm getting to it, Neil. Gimme another Seven and Seven. Anyway, I'm using every umpire's trick not to listen. Just one more game left. Then I notice we've been driving in a circle. I say, Jason, you do have the directions, right? Jason says:

JASON: “I ran outta rolling papers. Built a doobie from the directions. Up in smoke!”

I say, Jason, drive straight for three lights, then turn right, you'll reach the Highway 20 onramp to Atlanta. Jason says:

JASON: “A man who doesn't know his way around a strike zone, givin' me directions? Slip me some pesos, I'll consider it. Hey, Rico, next time you're behind the dish, bend over and call the game with your good eye.”

Roosevelt's breaking up in the back seat:

ROOSEVELT: “Four solid months! You two should form a comedy team!”

JASON: “Ain't nothin' funny about being caught in the wetback conspiracy, Roosevelt. Maybe Rico'd call an accurate game if home plate was shaped like a tortilla.”

*(Rico swigs from his new drink.)*

I'm staying cool.

JASON: "I'm your Daddy, Rico. Hitchhiked to Salinas once, fucked your mother in a lettuce field."

Okay, Jason, one more crack and I'll wreck your career.

JASON: "Cracks? Your mamacita's tasted like guacamole."

ROOSEVELT: "Whoa! You gonna take that, Rico?"

JASON: "I've about had enough o' you, Rico. Let's settle this like men."

Jasmine's blowin' through our minds, Jason pulls the van over under a streetlight. He leaps out the driver's side, sprints around the back of the van, and I got blood in my eyes.

*(Rico stands.)*

Jason rips open the passenger door, and before he can remove his hand, I clock him with a solid left to the jaw. Jason grabs my arm, and the Wisconsin farm boy swings me out under the streetlight. We're tussling like wildcats. Guy outweighs me by a hundred pounds. Roosevelt's taping the whole thing. Thirty seconds later, it's over. *(Pause)* We're back in the van and pull into Jacksonville just before dawn, not a word spoken the whole way. A week later, our altercation shows up on youtube. Posted anonymously. ESPN runs it. Jason and I are released. Roosevelt's on his way to the Big Show. *(Pause)* What'm I gonna do, Neil? What'm I gonna do?

BLACK OUT.

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