The Mighty Casey

by Rod Serling, 1924-1975

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There is a large, extremely decrepit stadium overgrown by weeds and high grass that is called, whenever it is referred to (which is seldom nowadays), Tebbet‘s Field and it lies in a borough of New York known as Brooklyn. Many years ago it was a baseball stadium housing a ball club known as the Brooklyn Dodgers, a major league baseball team then a part of the National League. Tebbet‘s Field today, as we‘ve already mentioned, houses nothing but memories, a few ghosts and tier after tier of decaying wooden seats and cracked concrete floors. In its vast, gaunt emptiness nothing stirs except the high grass of what once was an infield and an outfield, in addition to a wind that whistles through the screen behind home plate and howls up to the rafters of the overhang of the grandstand.

This was one helluva place in its day, and in its day, the Brooklyn Dodgers was one rip-roaring ball club. In the last several years of its existence, however, it was referred to by most of the ticket-buying, turnstile-passers of Flatbush Avenue as „the shlumpfs!“ This arose from the fact that for five years running, the Brooklyn Dodgers were something less than spectacular. In their last year as members of the National League, they won exactly forty-nine ball games. And

by mid-August of that campaign a „crowd“ at Tebbet‘s Field was considered to be any ticket-buying group of more than eighty-six customers.

After the campaign of that year, the team dropped out of the league. It was an unlamented, unheralded event pointing up the fact that baseball fans have a penchant for winners and a short memory for losers. The paying customers proved more willing to travel uptown to the Polo Grounds to see the Giants, or crosstown to Yankee Stadium to see the Yankees, or downtown to any movie theater or bowling alley than to watch the Brooklyn Dodgers stumble around in the basement of the league season after season. This is also commentative on the forgetfulness of baseball enthusiasts, since there are probably only a handful who recollect that for a wondrous month and a half, the Brooklyn Dodgers were a most unusual ball club that last season. They didn‘t start out as an unusual ball club. They started out as shlumpfs as any Dodger fan can articulately and colorfully tell you. But for one month and one half they were one helluva club. Principally because of a certain person on the team roster.

It all began this way. Once upon a time a most unusual event happened on the way over to the ball park. This unusual event was a left-hander named Casey!

It was tryout day for the Brooklyn Dodgers and Mouth McGarry, the manager of the club, stood in the dugout, one foot on the parapet, both hands shoved deep into his hip pockets, his jaw hanging several inches below his upper lip. „Try-out days“ depressed Mouth McGarry more than the standing of his ball club, which was depressing enough as it stood, or lay—which would be more apt, since they were now in last place, just thirty-one games out of first. Behind him, sitting on a bench, was Bertram Beasley, the general manager of the ball club. Beasley was a little man whose face looked like an X-ray of an ulcer. His eyes were sunk deep into his little head, and his little head was sunk deep in between two narrow shoulder blades. Each time he looked up to survey McGarry, and beyond him, several gentlemen in baseball uniforms, he heaved a deep sigh and saw to it that his head sank just a few inches deeper into his shoulder blades. The sigh Bertram Beasley heaved was the only respectable heave going on within a radius of three hundred feet of home plate. The three pitchers that scout Maxwell Jenkins had sent over turned out to be pitchers in name only. One of them, as a matter of fact, had looked so familiar that McGarry swore he‘d seen him pitch in the 1911 World Series. As it turned out, McGarry had been mistaken. It was not he who had pitched in the 1911 World Series but his nephew.

Out on the field McGarry watched the current crop of tryouts and kept massaging his heart. Reading left to right they were a tall, skinny kid with three-inch-thick glasses; a seventeen-year-old fat boy who weighed about two hundred and eighty pounds and stood five-foot-two; a giant, hulking farm boy who had taken off his spike shoes; and the aforementioned „pitcher“ who obviously had dyed his hair black, but it was not a fast color and the hot summer sun was sending black liquid down both sides of his face. The four men were in the process of doing calisthenics. They were all out of step except the aging pitcher who was no longer doing calisthenics. He had simply sat down and was fanning himself with his mitt.

Beasley rose from the bench in the dugout and walked over to McGarry. Mouth turned to look at him.

„Grand-looking boys!“

„Who were you expecting?“ Beasley said, sticking a cigar in his mouth. „The All Stars? You stick out a tryout sign for a last division club—“ he pointed to the group doing the calisthenics, „and this is the material you usually round up.“ He felt a surge of anger as he stared into the broken-nosed face of Mouth McGarry. „Maybe if you were any kind of a manager, McGarry, you‘d be able to whip stuff like this into shape.“

McGarry stared at him like a scientist looking through a microscope at a bug. „I couldn‘t whip stuff like that into shape,“ he said, „if they were eggs and I was an electric mixer. You‘re the general manager of the club. Why don“t you give me some ballplayers?”

„You‘d know what to do with them?“ Beasley asked. „Twenty games out of fourth place and the only big average we‘ve got is a manager with the widest mouth in either league. Maybe you‘d better get reminded that when the Brooklyn Dodgers win one game we gotta call it a streak! Buddy boy,“ he said menacingly, „when contract time comes around, you don‘t have to.“ His cigar went out and he took out a match and lit it. Then he looked up toward home plate where a pitcher was warming up. „How‘s Fletcher doing?“ he asked.

„Are you kidding?“ Mouth spat thirty-seven feet off to the left. „Last week he pitched four innings and allowed only six runs. That makes him our most valuable player of the month!“

The dugout phone rang and Beasley went over to pick it up. „Dugout,“ he said into the receiver. „What? Who?“ He cupped his hand over the phone and looked over at Mouth. „You wanta look at a pitcher?“ he asked.

„Are you kidding?“ Mouth answered.

Beasley talked back into the phone. „Send him down,“ he said. He hung up the receiver and walked back over to Mouth. „He‘s a lefty,“ he announced.

„Lefty Shmefty,“ Mouth said. „If he‘s got more than one arm and less than four—he‘s for us!“ He cupped his hands over his mouth and yelled out toward the field. „Hey, Monk!“

The catcher behind home plate rose from his squat and looked back over toward the dugout. „Yeah?“

„Fletcher can quit now,“ Mouth called to him. „I‘ve got a new boy coming down. Catch him for a while.“

„Check,“ the catcher said. Then he turned toward the pitcher.

„Okay, Fletch. Go shower up.“

Beasley walked back over to sit on the bench in the dugout. „You got the line-up for tonight?“ he asked the manager.

„Working on it,“ Mouth said.

„Who starts?“

„You mean pitcher? I just feel them one by one. Whoever‘s warm goes to the mound.“ He spat again and put his foot back up on the parapet, staring out at the field. Once again he yelled out toward his ballplayers. „Chavez, stop already with the calisthenics.“

He watched disgustedly as the three men stopped jumping up and down and the old man sitting on the ground looked relieved. Chavez thumbed them off the field and turned back toward the bench and shrugged a what-the-hell-can-I-do-with-things-like-this kind of shrug.

Mouth took out a handkerchief and wiped his face. He walked up the steps of the dugout and saw the sign sticking in the ground which read: „Brooklyn Dodgers—tryouts today.“ He pulled back his right foot and followed through

with a vicious kick which sent the sign skittering along the ground. Then he went over to the third-base line, picked up a piece of grass and chewed it thoughtfully. Beasley left the dugout to join McGarry. He kneeled down alongside of him and picked up another piece of grass and began to chew. They knelt and lunched together until McGarry spit out his piece of grass and glared at Beasley.

„You know something, Beasley?“ he inquired. „We are so deep in the cellar that our roster now includes an infield, an outfield and a furnace! And you know whose fault that is?“

Beasley spit out his own piece of grass and said, „You tell me!“

„It ain‘t mine,“ McGarry said defensively. „It just happens to be my luck to wind up with a baseball organization whose farm system consists of two silos and a McCormick reaper. The only thing I get sent up to me each spring is a wheat crop.“

„McGarry,“ Beasley stated definitely, „if you had material, would you really know what to do with it? You ain‘t no Joe McCarthy. You ain‘t one half Joe McCarthy.“

„Go die, will you,“ McGarry said. He turned back to stare down the third-base line at nothing in particular. He was unaware of the cherubic little white-haired man who had just entered the dugout. Beasley did see him and stared wide-eyed. The little old man came up behind Mouth and cleared his throat.

„Mr. McGarry?“ he said. „I am Dr. Stillman. I called about your trying out a pitcher.“

Mouth turned slowly to look at him, screwed up his face in distaste. „All right! What‘s the gag? What about it, Grampa? Did this muttonhead put you up to it?“ He turned to Beasley. „This is the pitcher, huh? Big joke. Yok, yok, yok. Big joke.“

Dr. Stillman smiled benignly. „Oh, I‘m not a pitcher,“ he said, „though I‘ve thrown baseballs in my time. Of course, that was before the war.“

„Yeah,“ Mouth interjected. „Which war? The Civil War? You don‘t look old enough to have spent the winter at Valley Forge.“ Then he glared at him intently. „Come to think of it—was it really as cold as they say?“

Stillman laughed gently. „You really have a sense of humor, Mr. McGarry.“ Then he turned and pointed toward the dugout. „Here‘s Casey now,“ he said.

Mouth turned to look expectantly over the little old man‘s shoulder. Casey was coming out of the dugout. From cleats to the button on top of his makeshift baseball cap there was a frame roughly six feet, six inches high. The hands at his sides were the dimensions of two good-sized cantaloupes. His shoulders, McGarry thought to himself, made Primo Carnero look like the „before“ in a Charles Atlas ad. In short, Casey was long. He was also broad. And in addition, he was one of the most powerful men either McGarry or Beasley had ever seen. He carried himself with the kind of agile grace that bespeaks an athlete and the only jarring note in the whole picture was a face that should have been handsome, but wasn‘t, simply because it had no spark, no emotion, no expression of any sort at all. It was just a face. Nice teeth, thin lips, good straight nose, deep-set blue eyes, a shock of sandy hair that hung out from under his baseball cap. But it was a face, McGarry thought, that looked as if it had been painted on.

„You‘re the lefty, huh?“ McGarry said. „All right.“ He pointed toward the home plate. „You see that guy with the great big mitt on? He‘s what‘s known as a catcher. His name is Monk. Throw a few into him.“

„Thanks very much, Mr. McGarry,“ Casey said dully.

He went toward home plate. Even the voice, McGarry thought. Even the voice. Dead. Spiritless. McGarry picked up another long piece of grass and headed back to the dugout, followed by Beasley and the little old man who looked like something out of Charles Dickens. In the dugout, McGarry assumed his familiar pose of one foot on the parapet, both fists in his hip pockets. Beasley left the dugout to return to his office which was his custom on days the team didn‘t play. He would lock himself in his room and add up attendance figures, then look through the want ads of *The New York Times*. Just Stillman and Mouth McGarry stood in the dugout now, and the elderly little man watched everything with wide, fluttering eyes like a kid on a tour through a fireworks factory. McGarry turned to him.

„You his father?“

„Casey‘s?“ Stillman asked. „Oh, no. He has no father. I guess you‘d call me his—well, kind of his creator.“

Dr. Stillman‘s words went past McGarry the way the superchief goes by a water tank. „That a fact?“ he asked rhetorically. „How old is he?“

„How old is he?“ Stillman repeated. He thought for a moment. „Well, that‘s a little difficult to say.“

Mouth looked over toward the empty bench with a see-the-kind-of-idiocy-I-have-to-put-up-with kind of look. „That‘s a little difficult to say,“ he mimicked fiercely.

Stillman hurriedly tried to explain. „What I mean is,“ he said, „it‘s hard to be chronological when discussing Casey‘s age. Because he‘s only been in existence for three weeks. What I mean is—he has the physique and mind of roughly a twenty-two-year-old, but in terms of how long he‘s been here—the answer to that would be about three weeks.“

The words had poured out of Dr. Stillman‘s mouth and McGarry had blinked through the whole speech.

„Would you mind going over that again?“ he asked.

„Not at all,“ Dr. Stillman said kindly. „It‘s really not too difficult. You see I made Casey. I built him.“ He smiled a big, beatific smile. „Casey‘s a robot,“ he said. The old man took a folded and creased document from his vest pocket and held it out to Mouth. „These are the blueprints I worked from,“ he said.

Mouth swatted the papers out of the old man‘s hand and dug his gnarled knuckles into the sides of his head. That goddamn Beasley. There were no depths to which that sonofabitch wouldn‘t go to make his life miserable. He had to gulp several times before he could bring himself to speak to the old man and when finally words came, the voice didn‘t sound like his at all.

„Old friend,“ his voice came out in a wheeze. „Kind, sweet old man. Gentle grandfather, with the kind eyes, I am very happy that he‘s a robot. Of course, that‘s what he is.“ He patted Stillman‘s cheek. „That‘s just what he is, a nice robot.“ Then there was a sob in his voice as he glared up at the roof of the dugout. „Beasley, you crummy sonofabitch!“ A robot yet. This fruity old man and that miserable ball club and the world all tumbling down and it just never ended and it never got any better. A robot!

Dr. Stillman scurried after Mouth who had walked up the steps of the dugout and out on to the field. He paused along the third-base line and began to chew grass again. Over his shoulder Casey was throwing pitches into the catcher at home plate, but Mouth didn‘t even notice him.

„I dunno!“ he said to nobody in particular. „I don‘t even know what I‘m doing in baseball.“

He looked uninterested as Casey threw a curve ball that broke sharply just a foot out in front of home plate and then shrieked into the catcher‘s mitt like a small, circular, white express train.

„That Beasley,“ Mouth said to the ground. „That guy‘s got as much right in the front office as I‘ve got in the Alabama State Senate. This guy is a nothing, that‘s all. Simply a nothing. He was born a nothing. He‘s a nothing now!“

On the mound Casey wound up again and threw a hook that screamed in toward home plate, swerved briefly to the left, shot back to the right, and then landed in the catcher‘s mitt exactly where it had been placed as a target. Monk stared at the ball wide-eyed and then toward the young pitcher on the mound. He examined the ball, shook his head, then threw it back to him, shaking his head slowly from side to side.

Meanwhile Mouth continued his daily analysis of the situation to a smiling Dr. Stillman and an empty grandstand. „I‘ve had bum teams before,“ he was saying. „Real bad outfits. But this one!“ He spat out the piece of grass. „These guys make Abner Doubleday a criminal! You know where I got my last pitcher? He was mowing the infield and I discovered that he was the only guy on the club who could reach home plate from the pitcher‘s mound on less than two bounces. He is now ensconced as my number two starter. That‘s exactly where he‘s ensconced!“

He looked out again at Casey to see him throw a straight, fast ball that landed in Monk‘s glove and sent smoke rising from home plate. Monk whipped off the glove and held his hand agonizedly. When the pain subsided he stared at the young pitcher disbelievingly. It was then and only then that picture and sound began to register in Mouth McGarry‘s mind. He suddenly thought about the last two pitches that he‘d seen and his eyebrows shot up like elevators. Monk approached him, holding his injured hand.

„You see him?“ Monk asked in an incredulous voice. „That kid? He picks up where Feller left off, I swear to God! He‘s got a curve, hook, knuckler, slider and a fast ball that almost went through my palm! He‘s got control like he uses radar. This is the best pitcher I ever caught in my life, Mouth!“

Mouth McGarry stood there as if mesmerized, staring at Casey who was walking slowly away from the mound. Monk tucked his catcher‘s mitt under his arm and started toward the dugout.

„I swear,“ he said as he walked, „I never seen anything like it. Fantastic. He pitches like nothing human!“

Mouth McGarry and Dr. Stillman looked at one another. Dr. Stillman‘s quiet blue eyes looked knowing and Mouth McGarry chewed furiously down the length of a piece of grass, his last bite taking in a quarter inch of his forefinger. He blew on it, waved it in the air and stuck it in his mouth as he turned toward Stillman, his voice shaking with excitement.

„Look, Grampa,“ Mouth said, „I want that boy! Understand? I‘ll have a contract drawn up inside of fifteen minutes. And don‘t give me no tough talk either. You brought him here on a try-out and that gives us first option.“

„He‘s a robot, you know,“ Stillman began quietly.

Mouth grabbed him and spoke through clenched teeth. „Grampa,“ he said in a quiet fury, „don‘t ever say that to nobody! We‘ll just keep that in the family here.“ Then suddenly remembering, he looked around wildly for the blueprint, picked it up from the ground and shoved it in his shirt pocket. He saw Stillman looking at him.

„Would that be honest?“ Stillman said, rubbing his jaw.

Mouth pinched his cheek and said, „You sweet old guy, you‘re looking at a desperate man. And if the baseball commissioner ever found out I was using a machine—I‘d be dead. D-E-D! Dead, you know?“ Mouth‘s face brightened into a grimace which vaguely brought to mind a smile when he saw Casey approaching. „I like your stuff, kid,“ Mouth said to him. „Now you go into the locker room and change your clothes.“ He turned to Stillman. „He wears clothes, don‘t he?“

„Oh, by all means,“ Stillman answered.

„Good,“ Mouth said, satisfied. „Then we‘ll go up to Beasley‘s office and sign the contract.“ He looked at the tall pitcher standing there and shook his head. „If you could pitch once a week like I just seen you pitch, the only thing that stands between us and a pennant is if your battery goes dead or you rust in the rain! As of right now, Mr. Casey—you‘re the number one pitcher of the Brooklyn Dodgers!“

Stillman smiled happily and Casey just looked impassive, no expression, no emotion, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. He just stood there. Mouth hurried back to the dugout, took the steps three at a time and grabbed the phone.

„General Manager’s office,“ he screamed into it. „Yeah!“ In a moment he heard Beasley‘s voice. „Beasley?“ he said. „Listen, Beasley, I want you to draw up a contract. It‘s for that left-hander. His name is Casey. That‘s right. Not just good, Beasley. Fantastic. Now you draw up that contract in a hurry.“ There was an angry murmur at the other end of the line. „Who do you think I‘m giving orders to,“ Mouth demanded. He slammed the phone down then turned to look out toward the field.

Stillman and Casey were heading toward the dugout. Mouth rubbed his jaw pensively. Robot-shmobot, he said to himself. He‘s got a curve, knuckler, fast ball, slider, change of pace and hallelujah—he‘s got two arms!

He picked up one of Bertram Beasley‘s cigars off the ground, smoothed out the pleats and shoved it into his mouth happily. For the first time in many long and bleak months Mouth McGarry had visions of a National League pennant fluttering across his mind. So must John McGraw have felt when he got his first look at Walter Johnson or Muller Higgins, when George Herman Ruth came to him from the Boston Red Sox. And McGarry‘s palpitations were surely not unlike those of Marse Joseph McCarthy when a skinny Italian kid named DiMaggio ambled out into center field for the first time. Such was the bonfire of hope that was kindled in Mouth McGarry‘s chest as he looked at the blank-faced, giant left-hander walking toward him, carrying on his massive shoulders, albeit invisibly, the fortunes of the Brooklyn Dodgers and Mrs. McGarry‘s son, Mouth!

It was a night game against St. Louis forty-eight hours later. The dressing room of the Brooklyn Dodgers was full of noise, clattering cleats, slammed locker doors, the plaintive protests of Bertram Beasley who was accusing the trainer of using too much liniment (at seventy-nine cents a bottle), and the

deep, bullfrog profanity of Mouth McGarry who was all over the room, on every bench, in every corner, and in every head of hair.

„You sure he‘s got the signals down, Monk?“ he asked his catcher for the fourteenth time.

Monk‘s eyes went up toward the ceiling and he said tiredly, „Yeah, boss. He knows them.“

Mouth walked over to the pitcher who was just tying up his shoes. „Casey,“ he said urgently, wiping the sweat from his forehead, „if you forget them signals—you call time and bring Monk out to you, you understand? I don‘t want no cross-ups.“ He took out a large handkerchief and mopped his brow, then he pulled out a pill from his side pocket and plopped it into his mouth. „And above all,“ he cautioned his young pitcher „—don‘t be nervous!“

Casey looked up at him puzzled. „Nervous?“ he asked.

Stillman, who had just entered the room, walked over to them smiling. „Nervous, Casey,“ he explained, „ill at ease. As if one of your electrodes were—“

Mouth drowned him out loudly, „You know *nervous*, Casey! Like as if there‘s two outs in the ninth, you‘re one up, and you‘re pitchin‘ against DiMaggio and he comes up to the plate lookin‘ intent!“

Casey stared at him deadpan. „That wouldn‘t make me nervous. I don‘t know anyone named DiMaggio.“

„He don‘t know anyone named DiMaggio,“ Monk explained seriously to Mouth McGarry.

„I heard ‘im,“ Mouth screamed at him. „I heard ‘im!“ He turned to the rest of the players, looked at his watch then bellowed out, „All right, you guys, let‘s get going!“

Monk took Casey‘s arm and pulled him off the bench and then out the door. The room resounded with the clattering cleats on concrete floor as the players left the room for the dugout above. Mouth McGarry stood alone in the middle of the room and felt a dampness settle all over him. He pulled out a sopping wet handkerchief and wiped his head again.

„This humidity,“ he said plaintively to Dr. Stillman who sat on the bench surveying him, „is killing me. I‘ve never felt such dampness—I swear to God!“

Stillman looked down at Mouth‘s feet. McGarry was standing with one foot in a bucket of water.

„Mr. McGarry,“ he pointed to the bucket.

Mouth lifted up his foot sheepishly and shook it. Then he took out his bottle of pills again, popped two of them in his mouth, gulped them down and pointed apologetically to his stomach. „Nerves,“ he said. „Terrible nerves. I don‘t sleep at night. I keep seeing pennants before my eyes. Great big, red, white and blue pennants. All I can think about is knocking off the Giants and then taking four straight from the Yanks in the World Series.“ He sighed deeply. „But for that matter,“ he continued, „I‘d like to knock off the Phillies and the Cards, too. Or the Braves or Cincinnati.“ A forlorn note crept into his voice now. „Or anybody when you come down to it!“

Dr. Stillman smiled at him. „I think Casey will come through for you, Mr. McGarry.“

Mouth looked at the small white-haired man. „What have you got riding on this?“ he asked. „What‘s your percentage?“

„You mean with Casey?“ Stillman said. „Just scientific, that‘s all. Purely experimental. I think that Casey is a superman of a sort and I‘d like that

proven. Once I built a home economist. Marvelous cook. I gained forty-six pounds before I had to dismantle her. Now with Casey‘s skills, his strength and his accuracy, I realized he‘d be a baseball pitcher. But in order to prove my point I had to have him pitch in competition. Also as an acid test, I had to have him pitch with absolutely the worst ball team I could find.“

„That‘s very nice of you, Dr. Stillman,“ Mouth said. „I appreciate it.“

„Don‘t mention it. Now shall we go out on the field?“

Mouth opened the door for him. „After you,“ he said.

Dr. Stillman went out and Mouth was about to follow him when he stopped dead, one eyebrow raised. „Wait a minute, dammit,“ he shouted. „The worst?“ He started out after the old man. „You should have seen the Phillies in 1903!“ he yelled after him.

An umpire screamed, “Play ball!” and the third baseman took a throw from the catcher then, rubbing up the ball, he carried it over to Casey on the mound, noticing in a subconscious section of his mind this kid with the long arms and the vast shoulders had about as much spirit as a lady of questionable virtue on a Sunday morning after a long Saturday night. A few moments later, the third baseman cared very little about the lack of animation on Casey‘s features. This feeling was shared by some fourteen thousand fans, who watched the left-hander look dully in for a sign, then throw a side-arm fast ball that left them gasping and sent the entire dugout of the St. Louis Cardinals to their feet in amazement.

There are fast balls and fast balls, but nothing remotely resembling the white streak that shot out of Casey‘s left hand, almost invisibly toward the plate, had ever been witnessed. A similar thought ran through the mind of the St. Louis batter as he blinked at the sound of the ball hitting the catcher‘s mitt and took a moment to realize that the pitch had been made and he had never laid eyes on it.

This particular St. Louis batter was the first of twenty-five men to face Casey that evening. Eighteen of them struck out and only two of them managed to get to first base, one on a fluke single that was misjudged over first base. By the sixth inning most of the people in the stadium were on their feet, aware that they were seeing something special in the tall left-hander on the mound. And by the ninth inning when Brooklyn had won its first game in three weeks by a score of two to nothing, the stadium was in a frenzy.

There was also a frenzy of a sort in the Brooklyn dugout. The corners of Mouth McGarry‘s mouth tilted slightly upward in a grimace which the old team trainer explained later to a couple of mystified ballplayers was a „smile“. Mouth hadn‘t been seen to smile in the past six years.

Bertram Beasley celebrated the event by passing out three brand new cigars and one slightly used one (to McGarry). But the notable thing about the Brooklyn dugout and later the locker room was that the ball team suddenly looked different. In the space of about two a half hours, it had changed from some slogging lead-footed, aging second-raters to a snappy, heads-up, confident looking crew of ballplayers who had a preoccupation with winning. The locker room resounded with laughter and horse play, excited shouting drifted out from the showers. All this in a room that for the past three years had been as loud and comical as a funeral parlor.

While wet towels sailed across the room and cleated shoes banged against locker doors, one man remained silent. This was the pitcher named Casey. He

surveyed the commotion around him with a mild interest, but was principally concerned with unlacing his shoes. The only emotion he displayed was when Doc Barstow, the team trainer, started to massage his arm. He jumped up abruptly and yanked the arm away, leaving Barstow puzzled. Later on Barstow confided to Mouth McGarry that the kid‘s arm felt like a piece of tube steel. McGarry gulped, smiled nervously and asked Doc how his wife had been feeling. All this happened on the night of July 1st.

Three weeks later the Brooklyn Dodgers had moved from the cellar to fifth place in the National League. They had won twenty-three games in a row, seven of them delivered on a platter by one left-handed pitcher named Casey. Two of his ball games were no-hitters and his earned run average was by far the lowest not only in either League, but in the history of baseball. His name was on every tongue in the nation, his picture on every sports page, and contracts had already been signed so that he would be appearing on cereal boxes before the month was out. And as in life itself, winning begot winning. Even without Casey, the Dodgers were becoming a feared and formidable ball club. Weak and ineffectual bat-slappers, who had never hit more than 200 in their lives, were becoming Babe Ruths. Other pitchers who had either been too green or too decrepit were beginning to win ball games along with Casey. And there was a spirit now—an aggressiveness, a drive, that separated the boys from the pennant-winners and the Brooklyn Dodgers were potentially the latter. They looked it and they played it.

Mouth McGarry was now described as „that master strategist“ and „a top field general“ and, frequently, „the winningest manager of the year“ in sports columns which had previously referred to him as „that cement-headed oaf who handles a ball club like a bull would handle a shrimp cocktail.“ The team was drawing more customers in single games than they‘d garnered in months at a time during previous seasons. And the most delightful thing to contemplate was the fact that Casey, who had begun it all, looked absolutely invulnerable to fatigue, impervious to harm, and totally beyond the normal hazards of pitchers. He had no stiff arms, no sore elbows, no lapses of control, no nothing. He pitched like a machine and while it was mildly disconcerting, it was really no great concern that he also walked, talked and acted like a machine. There was no question about it. The Dodgers would have been in first place by mid-August at the very latest, if a shortstop on the Philadelphia Phillies had not hit a line ball directly at Casey on the mound which caught him just a few inches above his left eye.

The dull, sickening thud was the shot heard all around the borough and if anyone had clocked Mouth McGarry‘s run from the dugout to the mound where his ace left-hander was now sprawled face downward, two guys named Landy and Bannister would have been left in eclipse. Bertram Beasley, in his box seat in the grandstand, simply chewed off one quarter of his cigar and swallowed it, then fell off his seat in a dead faint.

The players grouped around Casey and Doc Barstow motioned for a stretcher. McGarry grabbed his arm and whispered at him as if already they were in the presence of the dead.

„Will he pull through, Doc? Will he make it?“

The team doctor looked grim. „I think we‘d better get him to a hospital. Let‘s see what they say about him there.“

Half the team provided an escort for the stretcher as it moved slowly off the field. It looked like a funeral cortege behind a recently deceased head of state with Mouth McGarry as the principal mourner. It was only then that he remembered to motion into the bullpen for a new pitcher, an eager young towhead out of the Southern Association League who had just been called up.

The kid ambled toward the mound. It was obvious that at this moment he wished he were back in Memphis, Tennessee, sorting black-eyed peas. He took the ball from the second baseman, rubbed it up, then reached down for the rosin bag. He rubbed his hands with the bag then rubbed the ball, then rubbed the bag then put down the ball, wound up and threw the rosin bag. As it turned out, this was his best pitch of the evening. Shortly thereafter he walked six men in a row and hit one man in the head. Luckily, it was a hotdog vendor in the bleachers so that no harm was done in terms of moving any of the men on base. This was taken care of by his next pitch to the number-four batter on the Philadelphia Phillies squad, who swung with leisurely grace at what the kid from Memphis referred to as his fast ball, and sent it on a seven-hundred-foot trip over the center field fence, which took care of the men on the bases. The final score was thirteen to nothing in favor of the Phillies, but Mouth McGarry didn‘t even wait until the last out. With two outs in the ninth, he and Beasley ran out of the park and grabbed a cab. Beasley handed the driver a quarter and said, „Never mind the cops. Get to the hospital.“

The hackie looked at the quarter then back toward Beasley and said, „This better be a rare mint, or I‘ll see to it that you have your baby in the cab!“

They arrived at the hospital twelve minutes later and pushed their way through a lobby full of reporters to get to an elevator and up to the floor where Casey had been taken for observation. They arrived in his room during the last stages of the examination. A nurse shushed them as they barged into the room.

„Booby,“ McGarry gushed, racing toward the bed.

The doctor took off his stethoscope and hung it around his neck. „You the father?“ he asked Mouth.

„The father,“ McGarry chortled. „I‘m closer than any father.“

He noticed now for the first time that Dr. Stillman was sitting quietly in the corner of the room looking like a kindly old owl full of wisdom hidden under his feathers.

„Well, gentlemen, there‘s no fracture that I can see,“ the doctor announced, professionally. „No concussion. Reflexes seem normal—“

Beasley exhaled sounding like a strong north wind. „I can breathe again,“ he told everyone.

„All I could think of,“ Mouth said, „was there goes Casey! There goes the pennant! There goes the Series!“ He shook his head forlornly, „And there goes my career.“

The doctor picked up Casey‘s wrist and began to feel for the pulse.

„Yes, Mr. Casey,“ he smiled benevolently down into the expressionless face and unblinking eyes, „I think you‘re in good shape. I‘ll tell you though, when I heard how the ball hit you in the temple I wondered to myself how—“

The doctor stopped talking. His fingers compulsively moved around the wrist. His eyes went wide. After a moment he opened up Casey‘s pajamas and sent now shaking fingers running over the chest area. After a moment he stood up, took out a handkerchief and wiped his face.

„What‘s the matter?“ Mouth asked nervously. „What‘s wrong?“

The doctor sat down in a chair. „There‘s nothing wrong, he said softly. „Not a thing wrong. Everything‘s fine. It‘s just that—“

„Just that what?“ Beasley asked.

The doctor pointed a finger toward the bed. „It is just that this man doesn’t have any pulse. No heart beat.“ Then he looked up toward the ceiling. „This man,“ he said in a strained voice, „this man isn‘t alive.“

There was absolute silence in the room marred only by the slump of Beasley‘s body as he slid quietly to the floor. No one paid any attention to him. It was Dr. Stillman who finally spoke.

„Mr. McGarry,“ he said in a quiet, firm voice, „I do believe it‘ll have to come out now.“

Beasley opened his eyes. „All right, you sonofabitch, McGarry, what are you trying to pull off?“

Mouth looked around the room as if searching for an extra bed. He looked ill. „Beasley,“ he said plaintively, „you ain‘t gonna like this. But it was Casey or it was nothing. God, what a pitcher! And he was the only baseball player I ever managed who didn‘t eat nothing—“

Stillman cleared his throat and spoke to the doctor. „I think you should know before you go any further that Casey has no pulse or heart beat… because he hasn‘t any heart. He‘s a robot—“

There was the sound of another slump as Bertram Beasley fell back unconscious. This time he didn‘t move.

„A what?“ the doctor asked incredulously.

„That‘s right,“ Stillman said. „A robot.“

The doctor stared at Casey on the bed who stared right back at him. „Are you sure?“ the doctor asked in a hushed voice.

„Oh, by all means. I built him.“

The doctor slowly removed his coat and then took off his tie. He marched toward the bed with his eyes strangely wide and bright. „Casey,“ he announced, „get up and strip. Hear me? Get up and strip.“

Casey got up and stripped and twenty minutes later the doctor had opened the window and was leaning out breathing in the evening air. Then he turned, removed his stethoscope from around his neck and put it in his black bag. He took the blood pressure equipment from the night-stand and added this to the bag. He made a mental note to check the X rays as soon as they came out, but knew this would be gratuitous because it was all very, very evident. The man on the bed wasn‘t a man at all. He was one helluva specimen, but a man he wasn‘t! The doctor lit a cigarette and looked across the room.

„Under the circumstances,“ he said, „I‘m afraid I must notify the baseball commissioner. That‘s the only ethical procedure.“

„What do you have to be ethical about it for?“ McGarry challenged him. „What the hell are you—a Giants fan?“

The doctor didn‘t answer. He took the twenty or thirty sheets of paper that he‘d been making notes on and rammed them in his pocket. He mentally ran down the list of medical societies and organizations that would have to be informed of this. He also devised the opening three or four paragraphs to a monumental paper he‘d write for a medical journal on the first mechanical man. He was in for a busy time. He carried his black bag to the door, smiled and went out, wondering just how the American Medical Association would

react to this one. The only sound left in the room was Beasley‘s groaning, until McGarry walked over to Casey on the bed.

„Casey,“ he said forlornly, „would you move over?“

The *Daily Mirror* had it first because one of the interns in the maternity ward was really a leg man for them. But the two wire services picked it up twenty minutes later and by six the following morning the whole world knew about Casey—the mechanical man. Several scientists were en route from Europe, and Dr. Stillman and Casey were beleaguered in a New York hotel room by an army of photographers and reporters. Three missile men at Cape Canaveral sent up a fabulous rocket that hit the moon dead eye only to discover that the feat made page twelve of the afternoon editions because the first eleven pages were devoted exclusively to a meeting to be held by the commissioner of baseball, who had announced he would make a decision on the Casey case by suppertime.

At four-thirty that afternoon the commissioner sat behind his desk, drumming on it with the end of a pencil. A secretary brought him a folder filled with papers and in the brief moment of the office door opening, he could see the mob of reporters out in the corridor.

„What about the reporters?“ the secretary asked him.

Mouth McGarry, sitting in a chair close to the desk, made a suggestion at this point as to what might be done to the reporters or, more specifically, what they could do to themselves. The secretary looked shocked and left the room. The commissioner leaned back in his chair.

„You understand, McGarry,“ he said, „that I‘m going to have to put this out for publication. Casey must definitely be suspended.“

Bertram Beasley, sitting on a couch across the room, made a little sound deep in his throat, but stayed conscious.

„Why?“ Mouth demanded noisily.

The commissioner pounded a fist on the desk top. „Because he’s a robot, Goddamn it,“ he said for the twelfth time that hour.

Mouth spread out his palms. „So he‘s a robot,“ he said simply.

Once again the commissioner picked up a large manual. „Article six, section two, the Baseball Code,“ he said pontifically. „I quote: *A team should consist of nine men* end of quote. Men, understand, McGarry? Nine men. Not robots.“

Beasley’s voice was a thin little noise from the couch. „Commissioner,“ he said weakly. „To all intents and purposes—he is human.“ Then he looked across the room at the tall pitcher who stood in the shadows practically unnoticed. „Casey, talk to him. Tell him about yourself.“

Casey swallowed. „What—what should I say?“ he asked hesitantly.

„See,“ Mouth shouted. „He talks as good as me. And he‘s a whole helluva lot smarter than most of the muttonheads I got on my ball team!“

The commissioner‘s fist pounded on the desk. „He is not human!“

Again the weak voice of desperation from the couch. „How human do you want him?“ the general manager asked. „He‘s got arms, legs, a face. He talks—“

„And no heart,“ the commissioner shouted. „He doesn‘t even own a heart. How could he be human without a heart?“

McGarry‘s voice absolutely dripped with unassailable logic and fundamental truth. „Beasley don‘t have a heart neither,“ he said, „And he owns forty percent of the club.“

The commissioner pushed the papers away from him and put the flat of his hands down on the desk. This was a gesture of finality and it fitted perfectly the judicial tone of his voice. „That‘s it, gentlemen,“ he announced. „He doesn‘t have a heart. That means he isn‘t human, and that‘s a clear violation of the baseball code. Therefore he doesn‘t play.“

The door opened and Dr. Stillman walked quietly into the room in time to hear the last words of this proclamation. He waved at Casey who waved back. Then he turned to the commissioner.

„Mr. Commissioner,“ he said.

The commissioner stopped halfway to his feet and looked at the old man. „Now what?“ he asked tiredly.

Stillman walked over to the desk. „Supposing,“ he asked, „we gave him a heart? If that essentially is the only thing that makes him different from the norm, I believe I could operate and supply him with a mechanical heart.“

„That‘s thinking!“ McGarry shrieked into the room.

Beasley inched forward on the couch and took out a cigar. The commissioner sat back and looked very, very thoughtful. „This is irregular. This is highly irregular.“ Then he picked up the telephone and asked to speak to the examining physician who had sent in the report in the first place. „Doctor,“ he asked, „relative to the Casey matter, if he were to be given a mechanical heart—would you classify him as—what I mean is—would you call him a—“ Then he held the phone close to his face, nodding into it. „Thank you very much, Doctor.“

The commissioner looked across the room at Casey. He drummed on the desk top with the pencil, puckered up his lips and made smacking sounds inside of his mouth. McGarry took out his bottle of pills and plopped three of them into his mouth.

„All right,“ the commissioner announced. „With a heart, I‘ll give him a temporary okay until the League meeting in November. Then we‘ll have to take it up again. The other clubs are gonna scream bloody murder!“

Beasley struggled to his feet. The look of massive relief on his face shone like a beacon. „It‘s all settled then,“ he said. „Casey here needs an accreditation as being human and this requires a simple—“ He stopped, looking over toward Stillman. „Simple?“ he asked.

„Relatively,“ Stillman answered.

Beasley nodded. „A simple operation having to do with a mechanical heart.“ He walked across the room to the door and opened it. The reporters, milling around, stopped talking instantly. „Gentlemen,“ Beasley called out to them, „you may quote me.“

The reporters made a beeline for the door and within a moment had filled up the room.

„You may quote me, gentlemen,“ Beasley repeated when the room was quiet once again. „The mighty Casey will be back in the lineup within forty-eight hours.“ He threw another questioning look at Stillman. „Forty-eight hours?“

„About,“ Stillman answered quietly.

Questions shot around the room like bolts of lightning and for the next few moments McGarry, Beasley and Casey were inundated by notebooks and cigarette smoke. Then the room started to empty.

Mouth McGarry took a position close to the desk, stuck a cigar in his mouth, lit it, took a deep drag and held it out away from his body, gently flicking ashes on the floor.

„Gentlemen," he announced, „As manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, I want to tell you, and since I was the man who discovered Casey—"

The reporters rapidly left the room followed by the commissioner and his secretary, followed by Casey and Stillman.

„It behooves me to tell you gentlemen," Mouth continued, wetting his lips over the word „behooves" and wondering to himself where he got the word. „It behooves me to make mention of the fact that the Brooklyn Dodgers are the team to beat. We got the speed, the stamina," he recollected now the Pat O'Brien speech in a Knute Rockne picture, „the vim, the vigor, the vitality—"

He was unaware of the door slamming shut and unaware that Bertram Beasley was the only other man in the room. „And with this kind of stuff," he continued, in the Knute Rockne voice, „the National League pennant and the World Series and—"

„McGarry," Beasley yelled at him.

Mouth started as if suddenly waking from a dream.

Beasley rose from the couch. „Why don't you drop dead?" He walked out of the room, leaving Mouth all by himself, wondering how Pat O'Brien wound up that speech in the locker room during the halftime of that vital Army-Notre Dame game.

How either McGarry or Bertram Beasley got through the next twenty-odd hours was a point of conjecture with both of them.

Mouth emptied his bottle of nerve pills and spent a sleepless night pacing his hotel room floor. Beasley could recall only brief moments of consciousness between swoons which occurred every time the phone rang.

The following night the team was dressing in the locker room.

They were playing the first of a five-game series against the New York Giants and McGarry had already devised nine different batteries, then torn them all up. He now sat on a bench surveying his absolutely silent ballplayers. There was not a sound. At intervals each pair of eyes would turn toward the phone on the wall. Beasley had already phoned Dr. Stillman's residence seven times that evening and received no answer. He was on the phone now, talking to the long-distance operator in New Jersey.

„Yeah," Beasley said into the phone. „Yeah, well thank you very much, operator."

Mouth and the rest of the players waited expectantly.

„Well?" Mouth asked. „How is he?"

Beasley shook his head. „I don't know. The operator still can't get an answer."

Monk, the big catcher, rose from the bench. „Maybe he's right in the middle of the operation," he suggested.

Mouth whirled around at him, glaring. „So he's in the middle of the operation! Whatsa matter, he can't use one hand to pick up a phone?"

He looked up at the clock on the wall then jutted his jaw fiercely, his eyes scanning the bench. „We can't wait no longer," he announced. „I got to turn in a battery. Corrigan," he said pointing toward one of the players, „you'll pitch tonight. And now the rest of you guys!" He stuck his hands in his back pockets

and paced back and forth in front of them in a rather stylized imitation of Pat O'Brien.

„All right, you guys," he said grimly. „All right, you guys!" He stopped pacing and pointed toward the door. „That's the enemy out there," he said, his voice quivering a little. „That's the New York Giants." He spoke the words as if they were synonymous with a social disease. „And while we're out there playing tonight"—again his voice quivered—„there's a big fellah named Casey lying on a table, struggling to stay alive."

Tears shone in Monk's eyes as the big catcher got a mental picture of a courageous kid lying on a hospital table. Guppy Ransack, the third baseman, sniffed and then honked into a handkerchief as a little knot of sentiment tightened up his throat. Bertram Beasley let out a sob as he thought about what the attendance record was, six weeks B.C.—before Casey—and did some more projecting on what it would be without Casey. Mouth McGarry walked back and forth before the line of players.

„I know," he said, his voice tight and strained. „I know that his last words before that knife went into his chest were—*Go up there, Dodgers, and win one for the big guy!*"

The last words of this speech were choked by the tears that rolled down McGarry's face and the sob that caught in his own chest.

The street door to the locker room opened and Dr. Stillman came in, followed by Casey. But all the players were watching Mouth McGarry, who had now moved into his big finale scene.

„I want to tell you something, guys! From now on"—he sniffed loudly—„from now on there's gonna be a ghost in that dugout. Every time you pick up a bat, look over to where Casey used to sit—because he's gonna be there in spirit rooting for us, cheering for us, yelling, *Go Dodgers, go!*"—McGarry turned and looked at Casey, who was smiling at him. Mouth nodded perfunctorily. „Well there, Casey," he said and turned back to the team. „Now I'm gonna tell you something else about that big guy. This fellah has a heart. Not a real heart, maybe, but this fellah that's lying' there with a hole in his chest—"

Mouth's lower jaw dropped seven inches, as he turned very slowly to look at Casey. He had no chance to say anything, however, because the team had pushed him aside as they rushed toward the hero, shaking his hand, pounding him on the back, pulling, grabbing, shouting at him. Mouth spent a moment recovering and then screamed, „All right, knock it off! Let's have quiet! Quiet! QUIET!" He pulled players away from Casey and finally stood in front of the big pitcher. „Well?" he asked.

Stillman smiled. „Go ahead, Casey. Tell him."

It was then that everyone in the room noticed Casey's face. He was smiling. It was a big smile. A broad smile. An enveloping smile. It went across his face and up and down. It shone in his eyes. „Listen, Mr. McGarry," he said proudly. He pointed a thumb at his chest and Mouth put his ear there. He could hear the steady tick, tick, tick.

Mouth stepped back and shouted excitedly. „You got a heart!"

There was a chorus of delighted exclamation and comment from all the players and Beasley, poised for a faint, decided against it.

„And look at that smile," Stillman said over the shouting. „That's the one thing I couldn't get him to do before—smile!"

Casey threw his arm around the old man. „It‘s wonderful. It‘s just wonderful. Now I feel—I feel—like—togetherness!“

The team roared their approval and Bertram Beasley mounted a rubbing table, cupping his hands like a megaphone, and shouted, „All right, Dodgers, out on the field. Let‘s go, team. Casey starts tonight. The new Casey!“

The team thundered out on to the field, pushing Mouth McGarry out of the way and blotting out the first part of the speech which had begun, „All right, you guys, with vim, vigor and vital—“ He never got to finish the speech because Monk, Resnick and a utility infielder had carried him with their momentum out the door and up to the dugout.

When Casey‘s name was announced as the starter for the Dodgers that night the crowd let out a roar that dwarfed any thunder ever heard in or around the environs of New York City And when Casey stepped out on the field and headed toward the mound, fifty-seven thousand eight hundred and thirty-three people stood up and applauded as one, and it was only the second baseman who, as he carried the ball over to the pitcher, noticed that there were tears in Casey‘s eyes and an expression on his face that made him pause. True, he‘d never seen any expression on Casey‘s face before, but this one made him stop and look over his shoulder as he went back to his base.

The umpire shouted, “Play ball,” and the Dodgers began the running stream of chatter that always prefaced the first pitch. Monk, behind the plate, made a signal and then held up his glove as a target. Start with a fast ball he thought. Let them know what they‘re up against, jar them a little bit. Confuse them. Unnerve them. That was the way Monk planned his strategy behind the plate. Not that much strategy was needed when Casey was on the mound, but it was always good to show the big guns first. Casey nodded, went into his windup and threw. Twelve seconds later a woman in a third-floor apartment three blocks away had her bedroom window smashed by a baseball that had traveled in the neighborhood of seven hundred feet out of Tebbet‘s Field.

Meanwhile, back at the field, the crowd just sat there silently as the leadoff batter of the New York Giants ambled around the base path heading home to the outstretched hands of several fellow Giants greeting him after his leadoff home run.

Mouth McGarry at this moment felt that he would never again suffer a stab of depression such as the one that now intruded into his head. He would recall later that his premonition was quite erroneous. He would feel stabs of depressions in innings number two, three and four that would make that first stab of depression seem like the after effect of a Miltown tablet. That‘s how bad it got forty-five minutes later, when Casey had allowed nine hits, had walked six men, and thrown two wild pitches, and had muffed a pop fly to the mound, which, McGarry roared to the bench around him, „could have been caught by a palsied Civil War veteran who lost an arm at Gettysburg.“

In the seventh inning Mouth McGarry took his fifth walk over to the mound and this time didn‘t return to the bench till he‘d motioned to the bullpen for Casey‘s relief—a very eager kid, albeit a nervous one, who chewed tobacco going to the mound and got violently sick as he crossed the third-base line because he swallowed a piece. Coughing hard, he arrived at the mound and took the ball from Mouth McGarry. Casey solemnly shoved his mitt into his hip pocket and took the long walk back toward the showers.

At ten minutes to midnight the locker room had been emptied. All the players save Casey had gone back to the hotel. Bertram Beasley had left earlier—on a stretcher in the sixth inning. In the locker room were a baseball manager who produced odd grunts from deep within his throat and kept shaking his head back and forth and a kindly white-haired old man who built robots. Casey came out of the shower, wrapped in a towel. He smiled gently at Mouth and then went over to his locker where he proceeded to dress.

„Well?“ Mouth shouted at him. „Well? One minute he‘s three Lefty Groves, the next minute he‘s the cousin to every New York Giant who ever lived. He‘s a tanker. He’s a nothing. All right—you wanna tell me, Casey? You wanna explain? You might start by telling me how one man can throw nine pitched balls and give up four singles, two doubles, a triple and two home runs!“

The question remained unanswered. Stillman looked toward Casey and said very softly, „Shall I tell him?“

Casey nodded apologetically.

Stillman turned toward McGarry. „Casey has a heart,“ he said quietly.

Mouth fumed. “So? Casey has a heart! So I know he’s gotta heart! So this ain‘t news, prof! Tell me something that is!“

„The thing is,“ Casey said in his first speech over three sentences since McGarry had met him. „The thing is, Mr. McGarry, I just couldn‘t strike out those poor fellahs. I didn‘t have it in me to do that—to hurt their feelings. I felt—I felt compassion!“ He looked toward Stillman as if for confirmation.

Stillman nodded. „That‘s what he‘s got, Mr. McGarry. Compassion. See how he smiles?“

Casey grinned obediently and most happily, and Stillman returned his smile. „You see, Mr. McGarry,“ Stillman continued. „You give a person a heart—particularly someone like Casey, who hasn‘t been around long enough to understand things like competitiveness or drive or ego. Well,“ he shrugged, „that‘s what happens.“

Mouth sat down on the bench, unscrewed the bottle of pills and found it was empty. He threw the bottle over his shoulder. „That‘s what happens to him,“ he said. „Shall I tell you what happens to me? I go back to being a manager of nine gleeps so old that I gotta rub them down with formaldehyde and revive them in between innings.“ He suddenly had a thought and looked up at Casey. „Casey,“ he asked, Don‘t you feel any of that compassion for the Brooklyn Dodgers?“

Casey smiled back at him. „I‘m sorry, Mr. McGarry,“ he said. „It‘s just that I can‘t strike out fellahs. I can‘t bring myself to hurt their careers. Dr. Stillman thinks I should go into social work now. I‘d like to help people. Right, Dr. Stillman?“

„That‘s right, Casey,“ Stillman answered.

„Are you going?“ Casey asked McGarry as he saw the manager head for the door.

Mouth nodded.

„Well good-by, Mr. McGarry,“ Casey said. „And thank you for everything.“

Mouth turned to him. The grin on his face was that of dying humanity all over the world. „Don‘t mention it,“ he said.

He sighed deeply and walked out to the warm August evening that awaited him and the black headlines on a newspaper stand just outside the stadium that said, „I told you so“ at him, even though the lettering spelled out, „CASEY

SHELLED FROM MOUND“. A reporter stood on the corner, a guy McGarry knew slightly.

„What about it, McGarry?“ the reporter asked. „What do you do for pitchers now?“

Mouth looked at him dully. „I dunno,“ he sighed. „I just feel them one by one and whoever‘s warm—“

He walked past the reporter and disappeared into the night, a broken-nosed man with sagging shoulders who thought he heard the rustle of pennants in the night air, and then realized it was three shirts on a clothesline that stretched across two of the adjoining buildings.