

INFLECTIONS IN GREATNESS

by

Barry Eitel

CHARACTERS

REGGIE - 40s-60s, male, sports announcer

VANESSA - 20s-40s, female, sports announcer

KIRK - 40s, male, athletic

TIME

Early 2023. Daytime.

SPACE

Most of the stage is set up for a press conference - a lectern is outfitted with a bank of microphones.

Another section of the stage is a section for announcers, where REGGIE and VANESSA stand and provide commentary into microphones as if they are addressing a TV audience.

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(REGGIE and VANESSA stand away from a lectern and talk into microphones, as if they are addressing a TV audience.)

REGGIE

I'm Reggie Gargle and this is Vanessa Yuck - thank you for joining us on this beautiful day.

VANESSA

It is a fine day for competition, and it is definitely one of the most momentous days in the history of pattycakes.

REGGIE

For any fans of the sport just tuning in, you are likely processing waves of emotion.

VANESSA

I know I am -

REGGIE

And if you're a casual observer, here's the thing - Kirk DuSplat, who has defined the game of pattycakes for the past two decades, is going to address the world very soon. And in this press conference, he is expected to announce his retirement from the game that brought him fame and fortune.

VANESSA

He's done more for pattycakes than anyone in history, generations of children and professionals are going to learn from his technique -

REGGIE

And what makes it all the more poignant is that the league declared yesterday that the 2023 Pattycakes Tournament will go ahead as scheduled after three straight years of cancellations due to COVID-19.

VANESSA

If you're a DuSplat fan, your life is basically Alanis Morissette's 'Ironic' right now.

REGGIE

And if you're not with Kirk, it must be bittersweet -

VANESSA

Yes, it's not how you would want this to go -

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REGGIE

I imagine the whole pattycake bracket will be wondering, could I have beaten Kirk?

VANESSA

It essentially adds an asterisk to this year's Pattycakes Champion, after three straight years where pattycakes was officially cancelled.

REGGIE

And amateur play was frowned upon in many parts of the country -

VANESSA

It was at my local playground!

REGGIE

I don't know about you, Vanessa, but I'm looking forward to what DuSplat brings to his next venture -

VANESSA

I can't ride you with there, Reg, pattycakes is one of the purest forms of clapping-based sports -

REGGIE

Kirk, of course, is petitioning for the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles to add Competitive Clapping and there is some heat rising in that movement -

VANESSA

Honestly, it would fit perfect in LA because you can't find a more Hollywood-style sport than Competitive Clapping -

REGGIE

Let's not editorialize, Vanessa -

VANESSA

Now, wait, I'm sorry - I know I got my biases, but you learn pattycakes on your mother's knee, now they're talking about blockchain-based algorithms devising polyrhythms that can only be replicated by point-oh-three of the population?

REGGIE

You got passion and who can blame you, but it'll be like Deep Blue versus Kasparov every match. It's the evolution of handclapping -

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VANESSA

Not everything has to evolve!

REGGIE

I'll be sure to send a note to our producers that you do not want to go to Los Angeles -

VANESSA

Competitive clapping is a trash game for eggheads. It's that 'Cups' song stretched on for three hours! Absolute hell!

REGGIE

Ever since the network decided to hire based on a communitarianism versus individualism political grid, we can trust Vanessa to be the voice of those in the eighteen to thirty-five demo leaning left-of-center progressive populist.

VANESSA

I check those boxes and I cash those checks!

REGGIE

Your color commentary and tolerance for hate-watching is why you've got so many fans in that subsection of the audience...honestly, I imagine they've already booked your flight to LA.

VANESSA

Goddammit!

(KIRK, in a suit, enters. Stoic, he approaches a lectern where a bank of microphones have been set up.)

REGGIE

Here he is, and it looks like his brain is playing pattycakes with his heart.

VANESSA

However you feel about Kirk DuSplat, you have to respect his love of the game.

(An unseen stagehand gives Kirk the go-ahead to start the press conference. He pulls out a folded-up sheet of notebook paper and reads a statement.)

KIRK

Like a lot of you, I played pattycakes before I could even form memories. I didn't know who the 'Baker's man' was, how ovens worked, how to write the letter 'B.' But I clapped and made connections, first with my parents, then blood relations, then playground friends...then the world. By the time I was playing pattycakes for Duke University, I felt I was pushing beyond the limits of what a clapping game could be. Turning pro, I learned that even if a baby can nail the fundamentals, you can chase perfection for the rest of your life. I slapped hands with people who possess unimaginable talent, and, even in winning, I was humbled by the enormity of greatness the annual Pattycake Tournament brought out year after year.

(KIRK chokes back tears for a moment, but then he continues on.)

KIRK (cont'd)

As the tournament's been non-existent for three years and some have said pattycakes is a game of the pre-pandemic past, I have gone through many days and nights of prayerful reflection with my family, fellow players, and mentors. Some say pattycakes is dead. I hope this isn't the case. However, I do believe it is my time to move on.

(KIRK pauses and collects himself.)

KIRK (cont'd)

Competitive handclapping is where all my energy is invested. With the blockchain, we can clap in ways that no human ear has ever dreamed of. God has called me on crusade to bring this sport to the 2028 Summer Olympics and, if God wills it, the world will pay competitive handclapping the respect it deserves. The world doesn't need more baby games. What the world needs now is to examine the limits of the human body, to define the unknown boundaries of the universe.

(KIRK puts his notes aside. He covers his face with a hand. REGGIE and VANESSA jump in to fill the dead air.)

REGGIE

A man bent on discovering the full range of human achievement. In clapping. I think that deserves a round of applause.

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VANESSA

It appears that he just figured out that if he leaves pattycake behind, the sport will die out.

REGGIE

To have such a load on one player's shoulders...it's more than we should expect of any person, but these are unprecedented times.

VANESSA

To be fair, DuSplat is an unprecedented pattycaker.

(KIRK returns to the microphones, his passion inflamed.)

KIRK

To some people, it's just a nursery rhyme, but to me, it's the damn rules for a fulfilling life. We don't need to discover the limits of the universe - it's been all in there the whole time: pattycakes, the baker's man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can. Mark it with a 'B.' Put it in the oven for Baby and me. The whole push and pull of the human experience is right there! Who am I kidding? I can't hide from myself -

REGGIE

I think we are witnessing one of the greatest live moments in the entire history of hand-based sports!

VANESSA

Screw it, let's be legends!

(VANESSA puts her microphone down. She grabs REGGIE and gets him to put his microphone down, too. The pair play pattycakes silently while KIRK continues.)

KIRK

Put it in the oven for Baby and me. Somedays we are Baby, somedays we are me. We clap across color and creed. Just like our first games of pattycakes bond us as babes to our parents, every game bonds us as a species. Skin on skin! Smiling like newborns, brains empty. Faster and faster! That moment your hand touches my hand, flesh to flesh, even for fleeting second as we accelerate toward victory...that's what the world needs now: contact!

(The sound of camera shutters starts clicking faster and faster. Some crowd noises - whoops

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and cheers - are heard, as if a massive, joyous
mob is surrounding the building.)

KIRK (cont'd)

The 2023 Pattycakes Tournament is on, and Baby, it's gonna hit
you with the force we've been storing up for three years!
Preheat that oven - Kirk DuSplat is back to pattycake!!

(Wild applause and crowd cheering.)
(BLACKOUT.)

END OF PLAY