THE MAN WHO GAVE ALL THE DREAMERS IN BASEBALL LAND BIGGER DREAMS TO DREAM

Every dreamer out in Baseball Land dreams the same big dream
He's hurting in the dugout when he's called to save his team
In the bottom of the ninth, two outs, the count three and two
He'll step in and with one swing the impossible he will do.

'Twas the 1988 World Series, opening night
The L.A. Dodgers had a shot at global bragging rights
They faced America's greatest team and her most athletic
Canseco and McGwire made their chances seem pathetic.

Doubts grew with the great shadows cast by the broad Oakland A's
Those left in the sad Dodgers camp found nothing to do but pray
Down 4-to-3 to Oakland in their last chance at the bats
Eckersley's appearance on the mound surely meant *that's that.*

They scan the dugout for their hero, he who makes it happen
They see instead his teammates' faces, drawn tightly ashen
They know after Scoscia comes a patsy then the pitcher
This heartbreaking lineup holds not one heroic hitter.

Where was the man who saved them, O so many times before?
Vin Scully in the broadcast booth proclaims the hapless score:
The spearhead of the Dodger offense all throughout the year
Will see no action here tonight — because he's just not here.

Watching the game from the training room, legs encased in ice
He wants so badly to play but the trainer says, *No dice!*
With a torn left hamstring and a stretched right knee ligament
The Dodgers greatest slugger is in a predicament.

But hearing Vin Scully's words appearing to seal his fate
Kirk Gibson throws off his ice packs, hoping it's not too late
Set up a batting tee, get Tommy Lasorda in here!
He shouts with all bravado — heroes like these show no fear.

Gibson struggles to his feet as Scoscia pops to shortstop
The left leg goes from under him, he hears the right knee pop
Lasorda waddles up the tunnel. Kirk says, *I can hit!*
You serious? Dead serious! as he teeters a bit.

Making me sit out the game here is a fate worse than death!
Lasorda mumbles *God Almighty* under his short breath
Don't you want me? the great slugger cries, trusting all to fate
Damn right I want you, he mutters. *Just make your entrance late.*

By now Hamilton has struck out, leaving them but once chance
The second-worst hitter in the park sets into his stance
Our grievously-wounded hero now gingerly takes strides
Down the lonely tunnel, his east-and-west limps hard to hide.

In a rare moment of weakness, Eck gives Davis the walk
Down Destiny's Path our hero must stumble without balk
An impossible dream fills his mind, no bad thoughts enter in
It's down to him and Eck, *and the Dodgers are going to win.*

The crowd goes stark raving mad, welcoming their hero home
Stadium dwellers stomp and shout, as if they were in Rome
Here's the man, the only man, to save them from this peril
Even though he is stumbling in like some drunken devil.

His practice swings are herky, jerking his numb legs to life
To them it seems that each rotation stabs him like a knife
Their slugger has not faced real pitching in three whole days
But waves and waves of adulation wash his pains away.

His teammates celebrate, knowing the power of this man
To fight against impossible odds and make things right again
But after suffering his first two wincing, fouling swings
They lament the 0-2 count, and face the sad state of things.

Mike Davis steals second base, as was signaled by his coach
Lasorda's doubts that Gibson can do it prompt such a poach
Clearly he cannot come around on Eck's fast-pitched balls and
A pained run down the line proves he can't push off or land.

This is just where I want to be! all baseball dreamers think
But considering stark reality, their vain hopes sink
Wannabe heroes in the stands put childish dreams aside
It's on this broken-down warhorse all Dodger hopes now ride.

Mighty Gibson for his part goes into survival mode
If he can't hit the fast ones he will wait for something slow
Battling back with anything to avoid impending rout
With the count three and two, from the batter's box he steps out.

Amidst the pandemonium, the huzzahs, and the shouts
He remembers Mel Didier's words, that sage Dodger scout
In this situation, when Eck's facing a left-hander
As sure as you're breathing, pardner, it'll be backdoor slider!

Kirk steps back in on tenterhooks, guessing at the next pitch
Eck winds, curls, and releases the ball, all without a hitch
Gibby's swing is something ugly, an army-wristy stab
His wrenching follow-through suggests he won't survive the jab.

Somewhere baseball fans groan, while tossing peanuts in their beer
Somewhere a manager's fired for flubbing a chance so dear
Somewhere red-lighted car-fulls are pleased they left so early
Somewhere else the loyal fans are rewarded with glory.

High fly ball into deep right field — she is GONE! Scully styled
Then for a few eternities the rabid fans go wild
As the Dodgers charge the field in jumping jubilation
Kirk hobbles round the bases, pumping fists in elation.

Though the ball flew in the air three hundred and eighty feet
It might be said it rolled forever as the A's it did beat
It paralyzed their big bats and demoralized the team
And all the dreamers in Baseball Land can now dream bigger dreams.

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The foregoing tells of an actual sports event and is as accurate an account of what happened that day as poetry will allow.

With apologies to Ernest L. Thayer, author of America's most popular poem "Casey at the Bat: A Ballad of the Republic Sung in the Year 1888", upon whose form this has been so poorly rendered.

The original was first published June 3, 1888 in the San Francisco Examiner. The subject was player Brian Kavanagh Casey (1859-1946) and not famed player-manager Charles "Casey" Stengel (1890-1975), as is often thought.