

On An Evening Meal
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After five o'clock, Cheese Outlet--a gourmet market, so the sign says --sells sandwiches for half price. A \$7.50 sandwich is \$3.75. Drive there, pick up two sandwiches--one for tomorrow--and a small bag of French onion potato chips. \$9.21 with tax.

Home. To the trash barrel in the garage. Retrieve the *USA Today Sports Weekly* to read while eating dinner. It came out Wednesday--today's Friday. The major feature this week, "The American League Spring Training Preview--Rosters and Analyses of Every AL Team." There must be things unread in it, or that could be reread.

Sit on the leather couch in the living room eating one of the sandwiches--hummus and veggies (the other is tofu and peanut salad)--and the potato chips, sipping a glass of ice water, and reading the *USA Today Sports Weekly*.

Page 32, brief reports on National League teams, not read Wednesday. The Chicago Cubs have a new manager, Mike Quade, who took over for Lou Piniella. New managers can be counted on to say they are going to stress the fundamentals, implying that the previous manager was lax in this area. Reporters never press them on exactly what the fundamentals are, although sometimes managers take it upon themselves to mention, without elaboration, hitting the cutoff man. The report on the Cubs says Quade got the team's attention by making it clear he is going to stress the fundamentals. "My thing," says Quade, "is just making sure that this group understands how important that is to us winning ballgames and how vital it is to playing for me and expecting to win." The Cubs are going to hit the cutoff man this year.

Further down the page in the report on the Milwaukee Brewers, the team's owner is reported saying that this year the team isn't going to spend money for the sake of spending money. "We've done that for the last couple of years, and it didn't really work." There you go: as appealing as it may be in concept, spending money for the sake of spending money doesn't always get you the good results you

are looking for, and sometimes it can take you two years to figure that out. Food for thought.

Next page, 33, a picture of Brian Wilson, a man who looks to be in his early thirties, in a baseball uniform, grim faced, in the act of throwing a ball, it seems clear, as hard as he possibly can. Wilson is a relief pitcher for the San Francisco Giants team that won the World Series last year. In the spring, players let it be known that they didn't slack off during the winter. Says Wilson in the report on the Giants: "I started workouts as soon as the World Series ended. I don't want to change anything, because I believe the city and the team deserve me at the apex of my fitness, and I need to come ready to throw 162 games." His teammates, and indeed the entire city of San Francisco, can rest easier in the knowledge that Brian Wilson will be at the apex of his fitness this season.

Re-fill the water glass, add a handful of ice cubes. Return to the couch and the sandwich and potato chips.

On the coffee table, a memoir by the late Swedish film director, Ingmar Bergman. Leave the *USA Today Sports Weekly* where it sits on the couch and pick up the book, randomly open it to page 151. Bergman quotes a character in a screenplay he wrote:

I have always longed for a knife. An edge that would bare my entrails. Remove my brain, my heart. Relieve me of my contents. Cut away my tongue and my sex. A sharp knife-edge to scrape out all impurity. Then the so-called spirit could rise up out of this meaningless cadaver.

"This may sound obscure," Bergman relates, "but it contains a central point. The words mirrored my longing for *pure artistry*. I had an idea one day I would have the courage to be incorruptible, perhaps even leave my intentions behind."

An image comes to mind: relief pitcher Wilson, in his baseball suit, looks straight into the camera and says Bergman's words as if they were his own. "Let me quote from a character in one of my screenplays," he begins. "I always longed for a knife. . . ." Then a

pause, and maintaining eye contact with us, "This may sound obscure . . ."

Set the book back on the coffee table. Put the sandwich and potato chip wrappers in the paper bag they came in from Cheese Outlet and take them and the *USA Today Sports Weekly* to the trash barrel. Put the now-empty glass on the kitchen counter. Go to the bathroom and spit in the sink to see if there is still blood.