

Can't  
Anybody  
Here  
Play  
This  
Game?

THE  
IMPROBABLE  
SAGA  
OF THE  
NEW YORK METS'  
FIRST YEAR


Jimmy  
Breslin



THE EPISODES




## BROKEN HEARTS

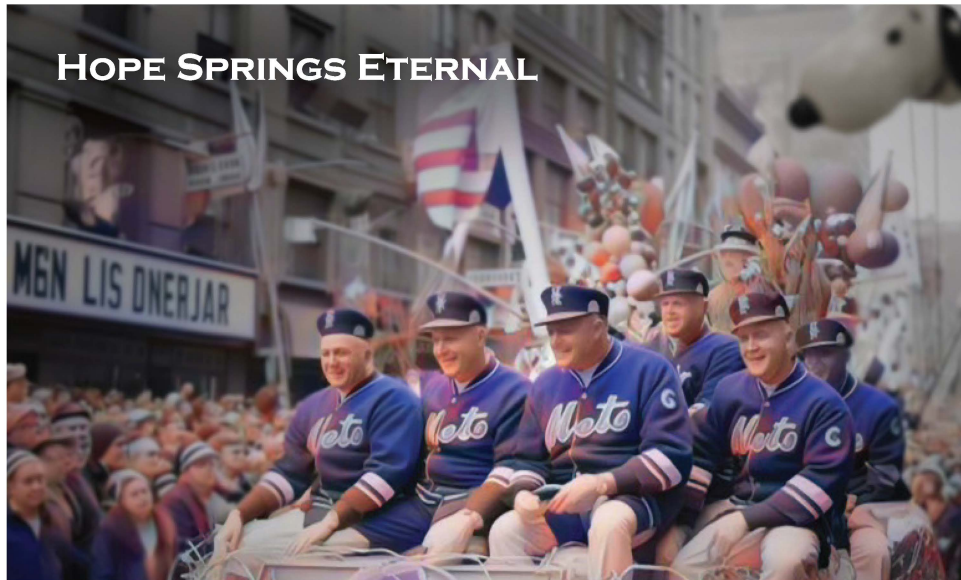


### 1st Inning: BROKEN HEARTS

- The Giants and Dodgers desert New York for the West Coast, and the city goes into deep mourning.
- Joan Payson and Bill Shea devise a scheme for a new franchise, which includes courting the legendary manager Casey Stengel.
- Breslin: "The hell with the Giants and Dodgers. Here come the Mets, to warm the hearts of baseball fans everywhere..."
- New York City needed the Mets. The Mets are a very good thing; they give everybody a job just like the WPA."



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## 2nd Inning: HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

- The Mets are introduced to New York on a float at the 1961 Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade.
- Casey Stengel takes charge as the Mets manager.
- And for the first time in five years, New Yorkers celebrate having a National League team going south for spring training.
- The roster is weak, but at least Hall of Famers Hodges and Ashburn join the club, creating the illusion of championship play, if only it were 1952 and not 1962.



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### 3rd Inning: THE STREAK

- After losing the first nine games, the Mets turn it around, winning 12 of their next 16, including a 3-game streak, that will prove to be their longest winning streak of the year.
- Richie Ashburn begins with a strong start, while Gil Hodges displays courage and glory by playing through injuries.
- Buoyed by surprise victories and a few hard fought losses, the love affair with the Mets and the people of New York City begins.




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### 4th Inning: THE SCHNEID

- Reality sets in as the Mets endure a 17-game losing streak.
  - The rag-tag roster begins to play a brand of baseball worse than has ever been seen in the major leagues.
- Errors, miscues, midfield collisions – the team's lack of talent is revealed to all, prompting veterans to contemplate retirement.
- Breslin: "It was hell to play for them, but for anybody who watched them, it was great. The whole thing came out as a great comedy. People did not follow the Mets; they loved the Mets... The Mets lose game after game, and everyone declares 'I've been a Mets fan all my life'."



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## 5th Inning: THE MARVELOUS

- In an attempt to turn the Mets fortunes around Casey trades for Marvellous Marv Throneberry.
- A player who on any given day is either hitting a clutch home run, or making some of the dumbest mistakes imaginable. Or both. . .
- Marv delivers a potential game-winning triple, but forgets to touch first AND second base. Marvellous Marv chases down a runner to tag him out, only to realize he doesn't have the ball.
- Marv: "These things just sort of keep happening to me."
- The Mets' wives and girlfriends orchestrate a chic and charitable fashion show fundraiser.



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### 6th Inning: SUN KISSED DIAMOND DOLDRUMS

- The season continues to devolve with the Mets finding new ways to lose every day.
- Casey, "I've got a catcher who can't catch. The pitcher throws wild, I'm dizzy with all the runs scored. Makes a man think. You look up and down the bench and you have to say to yourself, "Can't ANYBODY HERE PLAY THIS GAME?"
- Owner Joan Payson, who before this has never lost at anything in life, shows grace under pressure that sets a tone for the team. Morale amazingly remains high.



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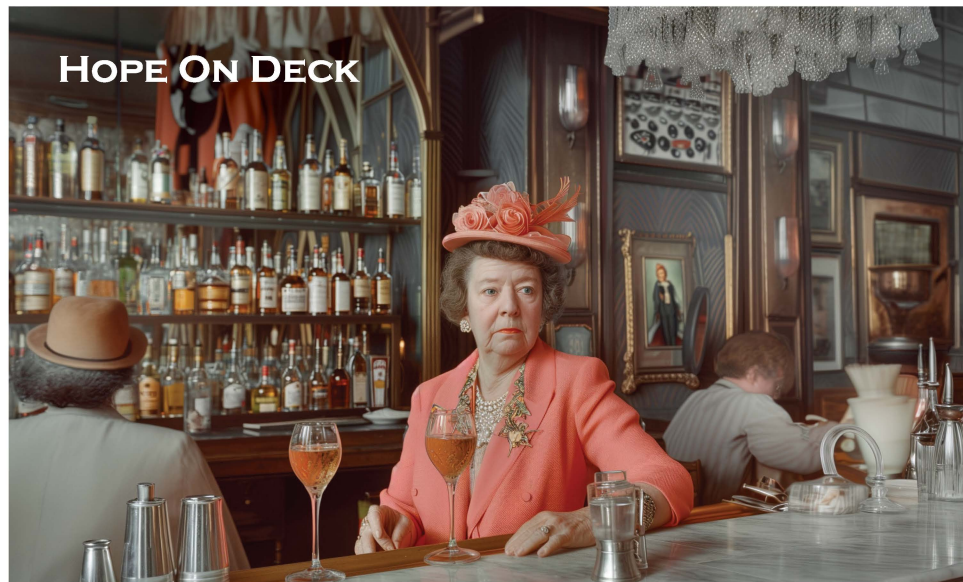
## 7th Inning: ROCK BOTTOM

- More losing streaks, more infield collisions, and when the LA Dodgers return to NY, Koufax pitches a no-hit shutout against the Mets.
- The season is turning so bad the pitchers (two of whom will lose 20 games) are afraid to come out of the dugout.
- Casey tries to trade players but no one wants them. And yet, attendance keeps climbing.
- Breslin: "People don't follow the Mets, they love the Mets. You see, the Mets are losers just like everyone else in life."



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## 8th Inning: HOPE ON DECK

- Al Jackson's surprising 1-0 shutout against Hall of Fame ace Bob Gibson sends shock waves through the city.
- The roster expands in September to 40 players, and soon the bench fills with budding prospects, including 17-year-old Ed Kranepool who will still be on the Mets in 1969 when they win the World Series.
- Joan Payson, seeing the team on a track to lose a record setting 120 games, sets a modest goal for next season, "Maybe we can lose fewer games. Even 119 would be better."
- Through it all, the fans turn out. No team has ever lost this often, and been loved so much.



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## 9th Inning: HEARTS MENDED

- Despite a staggering record-breaking 120 losses, the Mets are not just another boring winner.
- They achieve a milestone by shattering attendance records with 922,530 fans. There haven't been fans like this in baseball history.
- Joan and Casey receive acclaim for their remarkable resilience in the face of adversity.
- Marvelous Marv, "Just because you have a team, that don't mean it got to finish on top."
- Mending the hearts of the entire city, Breslin finds a home run title as he starts to write his book: "Can't Anybody Here Play This Game?"
- And as self-proclaimed #1 Mets fan Jack Semel declares, "It was the greatest summer of everyone's life- I can't wait till next year."



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