

# TOUCHING 'EM ALL

by Jerry Miccolis

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BIO: Waggish wordsmith, cunning crossword constructor, serious senior softballer, slavish stage and set structurer, staunch science sycophant, bold boogie-boarder, annoying alliterator. Retired actuary/risk management consultant/wealth manager/Chief Investment Officer/hedge fund creator. Published works include *Asset Allocation For Dummies*<sup>®</sup>, various crossword puzzles for the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, and his recent memoir *The Boys of Late Summer*, wherein he recounts his own experience with quantum tunneling on the field of play. This is Jerry's first script.

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WHAT'S KEEPING YOU POSITIVE? My passions and pursuits, pandemic or no.

CAN WE PUBLISH THIS? Yes. [Note that, as I previously informed the Bake-Off Committee, while the play is my original creation, the characters and some snippets of dialogue are not, and I have not sought permission or release from the creator(s) of these characters, as it was indicated that such permission or release is not necessary for current purposes.]

## CHARACTERS

YOUNG ANNIE. Age: mid-30s. Occupation: “baseball Annie” and part-time schoolteacher. Well-read in the classics, particularly the French classics, and in advanced physics. Garrulous, nonconventional thinker who loves to spout original theories on religion, science, and baseball. Sexy North Carolina twang. Susan Sarandon type.

YOUNG CRASH. Age: late 30s. Occupation: baseball player at the end of his career, predominantly in the minor leagues. Reserved but articulate for a ballplayer. Flat, non-specific Midwestern accent. Kevin Costner type.

ANNIE. Age: mid-60s. Long retired “baseball Annie” and recently retired schoolteacher. Married to CRASH since 1989.

CRASH. Age: late 60s. Retired baseball manager, exclusively in minor leagues.

JIMMY. Age: mid-50s. Former teammate of CRASH’s. Strait-laced, seemingly naïve. Became founder and pastor of local church following his playing days. Halting Southern accent.

## TIME

Alternately:  
Early fall, 1988. Late afternoon.  
Early spring, 2019. Early evening,  
and again, three days later.

## PLACE

A porch swing in Durham, North Carolina.

Sounds of steady rain and distant thunder.

Fade in on two characters sitting on the front porch swing of a modest wood frame house in Durham, NC in early fall, 1988. YOUNG CRASH, downstage, is dressed in stylish pleated khaki pants, light-colored open-collared shirt, light-weight tan bomber-style leather jacket with fashionable gray scarf, beige socks and brown loafers. He has the lithe body and bearing of an athlete, but looks worn and weary at the moment. YOUNG ANNIE is seated to his right (diagonally upstage) and is dressed in a smart form-fitting grey skirt, white blouse, pale blue satin warm-up jacket of the Minor League Durham Bulls, white socks and white sneakers. A wet umbrella is at her feet. Her long black perm-curved hair is still damp from the rain. She looks gorgeous, radiant, and still surprised at finding YOUNG CRASH on her porch moments earlier.

YOUNG ANNIE

What happened?

YOUNG CRASH

I quit. Hit my dinger and I hung ‘em up.

YOUNG ANNIE

(After a pause to let that soak in) I’m quitting too. I mean boys, not baseball.

Faint sounds of thunder in the background

YOUNG CRASH

You know, there might be an opening for a manager at Visalia next spring. You think I could make it to The Show as a manager?

YOUNG ANNIE

(Gasping a bit) You’d be great! (Pause) You’d be great. (Now rattling quickly) I mean because you understand about non-linear thinking even though it seems like baseball is a linear game ‘cause of the lines and the box scores an’ all...

YOUNG CRASH

(Interrupting) Annie.

YOUNG ANNIE

...but the fact is that there’s a spacious non-time kind of time to it...

YOUNG CRASH

(Interrupting) Annie!

YOUNG ANNIE

What?

YOUNG CRASH

I got a lotta time to hear your theories and I wanna hear every damn one of ‘em...but right now I’m tired and I don’t wanna think about baseball and I don’t wanna think about quantum physics...I don’t wanna think about nothing... (beat) I just wanna...be.

YOUNG ANNIE

(Sweetly) I can do that, too.

YOUNG CRASH rises, takes YOUNG ANNIE's hand, and leads her into the house as the rain continues to fall outside. The spotlight on the porch fades and the light in the parlor, which we can see through the porch window, comes up. We see YOUNG CRASH and YOUNG ANNIE slow dance to Edith Piaf's *La Vie En Rose*.

Fade out.

Fade in to same porch swing, 30 years and a few months later. CRASH and ANNIE, now in their late- and mid-60s, respectively, occupy the same spots on the swing as before. Their clothes are consistent with what senior citizens of modest means but a contemporary fashion sense would wear in 2019. Their warm affection and mutual respect for each other is clearly evident in their body language.

ANNIE

(Opening the mail on her lap) An anniversary card from Jimmy and Millie. Can you believe we got hitched 30 years ago?

CRASH

Yes, on Opening Day in Visalia...(beat)...my first day as a manager...(beat)...we won that day.

ANNIE

(Laughing) Yes, we sure did.

They rock a while in silence.

ANNIE

I'm so glad I never sold this house. The baseball gods told me you'd be headed back to Durham before long, and so you did. Twenty-eight years as manager of the Bulls! Another minor league record! So, how's it feel, your first spring not managing?

Fade out on porch.

Fade in on front yard, downstage from porch, where we see a lone trumpeter and hear him play the last bar of the *Star-Spangled Banner*.

We hear the offstage voice of the ballpark announcer.

Announcer:

*Welcome, loyal fans, to the last game of the 2018 season for your Durham Bulls. Manager Crash Davis has led his team to another winning season, breaking his own record for consecutive winning seasons without a championship. And he still holds the record as a player for hitting 247 Minor League home runs! As you probably know, Crash is retiring for good after today's game. Crash, the entire Bulls organization wishes you and Annie the absolute best in your life after baseball. We'll sure miss you. So, everyone, please get on your feet again and let's give our Crash a rousing sendoff.*

We hear the low roar of a sparse crowd in the background as the trumpeter begins to play taps.

Fade out on the front yard.

Fade in on the porch swing, where CRASH and ANNIE remain.

CRASH

(Smiling wryly) It still feels like a part of me died that day. But I do get to spend whatever time I have left in me with you... (he gives her a squeeze; she lovingly strokes his arm) ...and spend even more time listening to your theories. Have you heard back on your latest one yet?

ANNIE

Ooh! Let's see! (Sifts through several envelopes) Here it is—from Major League Baseball!

CRASH

Read it to me.

ANNIE

(Reading) "Dear Ms. Savoy Davis. Thank you once again for the latest in your series of thoughtful suggestions to the MLB Rules Committee. Your current idea, to adjust the sabermetric statistics for fielding efficiency to reflect the potential effect of quantum tunneling, has been given appropriate consideration by the committee. While the consensus view is that it has more merit than your prior idea—to adjust the Statcast estimates of home run distance for the effects of general relativity—we concluded that this latest innovation is one whose time has not yet come. We appreciate your continued contributions to our deliberations and your obvious love of our National Pastime. Please keep your ideas coming."

CRASH

God, I still love the way your mind works.

Just then, a short, slightly pudgy gentleman in his 50s, wearing a clergyman's collar, bounds up the porch steps, still displaying the unmistakable grace of a former athlete.

ANNIE

Pastor Jim! What a pleasant surprise!

ANNIE and JIMMY embrace. CRASH and JIMMY share a warm handshake and back slap.

JIMMY

I was just in the neighborhood and thought I'd stop by. Millie sends her love, and we both wish you a Happy Anniversary! As I've probably told you a thousand times by now, you guys were the first couple I ever married. And in the first ceremony I ever performed in my own church.

CRASH

The church still doing well, Jimmy?

JIMMY

You bet! And in no small part due to the traffic you've sent my way every season, Crash. For a non-believer yourself, you sure never hesitated to recommend me to your ballplayers.

CRASH

Well, there's no accounting for superstition, Jimmy, and whatever they believed would get them out of a slump, I was all for.

ANNIE

Don't listen to that bull, Reverend! Crash sent them to you because he believed in *you*, even if he didn't necessarily believe in the god you represent.

JIMMY

I know, Annie. It was Crash, after all, who helped me decide to give up baseball back in '88 and follow my true calling.

CRASH

As I remember it, it had more to do with your 0.220 batting average.

JIMMY

(Chuckles) Speaking of the god I represent, your wedding is still the last time I saw either one of you in my church. What's it gonna take to get you back in there?

CRASH

Oh boy, I'm gonna leave you in Annie's capable hands on that, Jimmy, while I go check on the pot roast. (Enters the house)

ANNIE

As you know, Reverend, I've tried all the major religions and some of the minor ones. I've worshipped Buddha, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, trees, mushrooms, and Isadora Duncan. I've tried them all—I really have—and the only church that truly feeds the soul—day in, day out—is the Church of Baseball.

JIMMY

Seriously, Annie.

ANNIE

I am serious, Reverend. If there really is a god, then why has she presented herself to so many different people in so many different and incompatible versions? To the point where thousands upon thousands of lives have been lost and oceans of blood spilt by people fighting over which particular version is the right one? Is that her idea of a joke?

JIMMY

I can't speak for the other religions, Annie, but the Christian god...

ANNIE

(Interrupting) Hold on now, Rev. Are you saying you don't believe in Buddha?

JIMMY

Well, no.

ANNIE

Or Allah?

JIMMY

No, Annie, but...

ANNIE

(Interrupting) Or any of the hundreds of other gods that millions of good people have worshipped throughout time?

JIMMY

(Resignedly) No, Annie.

ANNIE

So, let's be conservative, shall we, and say that there's only 100 of them gods. And your Christian god makes 101. You don't believe in 100 of them and I don't believe in 101. Are we really all that different, you and me?

CRASH has returned to the porch by now and interjects...

CRASH

I think the roast's done, hon, but you may wanna go check. And leave poor Jimmy be.

ANNIE gives JIMMY a peck on the cheek and a playful pat on the butt, and goes inside the house.

JIMMY

(A bit flustered) You know I love Annie like a sister, Crash, but sometimes...

CRASH

Yeah, she's as feisty as when I first met her back in the day. Speaking of feisty back in the day, how's Millie?

JIMMY

(Regaining his composure. Cheerfully now) Oh, she's great, Crash. I couldn't have run the church all these years without her. You know, there's another bit of advice you gave me that year we played together that was no less life-changing than following my true calling.

CRASH

Oh yeah, what would that be?

JIMMY

When Millie and I got engaged, I knew she had a, let's say, "colorful" past. The guys didn't think I knew about it, goody two-shoes that I was, but I had a pretty good idea. I just didn't let on—to her or to them. I just knew I loved her. But you saw me stewing in the clubhouse one day, you seemed to sense I had a big decision on my mind, and you came over and sat next to me.

Fade out on the porch.

Fade in on the front yard, where we find YOUNG CRASH sitting on a bench, addressing an unseen benchmate.

YOUNG CRASH

You know, Jimmy, Nuke has gone up to the Show and Annie's fair game now. I think it's time for me to make my move, let her know how I feel. I know she's had more than her share of boys—"tutees" she calls them—up 'til now, but the way I look at it, in your 30s, your past doesn't define you yet, it simply informs you. It helps you make smart decisions as you lead the bigger part of your life going forward. When I look in Annie's eyes, I don't see her past, I see our future together. (Winks at and pats the knee of his unseen benchmate. Gets up and leaves the bench)

Fade out on the front yard.

Fade in on the porch, where JIMMY and CRASH remain.

JIMMY

I never looked back after that, Crash, and Millie has made my life a blessed one.

CRASH

(Looking squarely at JIMMY, feigning ignorance, but with a knowing twinkle in his eye) Huh!

JIMMY

Look, Crash, I better be going. Your dinner's about ready and Millie must be wondering why I'm so late. Give my love to Annie. I'm sure I'll be seeing you both in the bleachers, if not in church!

JIMMY and CRASH embrace, and JIMMY bounds off the porch.

CRASH enters the house.

Fade out.

Fade in on the porch swing, with CRASH and ANNIE in their usual spots. CRASH is more reserved than usual, and clearly introspective.

ANNIE

(After a period of uncomfortable silence) You were quiet during dinner, hon. Anything wrong?

CRASH

(After a beat staring lovingly into ANNIE's eyes, he starts tentatively, stutteringly) You know how happy I am with our life together, don't you?

ANNIE

(Apprehensively) Yessss?

CRASH

(Glumly) Well, I've been thinking a lot about *my* life. With all this time on my hands lately I've had occasion to wonder whether I've really done what I should have with my life. You know, I used to think that I was a pretty smart guy.

ANNIE

You were. When Max Patkin first pointed you out to me, he told me that. He said he actually saw you read a book without pictures once. (She sympathetically smiles at him.) You're still smart.

CRASH

Yeah, but what have I done with it? Sure, I might have helped the team win a game here and there, but that doesn't seem all that important to me now. Jimmy found his calling and followed it. You followed yours in continually trying to ferret out the cosmic destiny of the universe. I love baseball, I really and truly do, but at the end of the day, my time in it was a job, not a calling. Look, in your 30s, your past doesn't define you. But in your 60s it sure as hell does. What do I have to show for all those years? What was my true calling? And how did I miss it?

ANNIE, looking intently and compassionately at CRASH this whole time, seems as if she wants to share something, but is hesitant. CRASH continues...

CRASH

And here's something else. You've been a doll this whole time—never really asked me for anything. But I know, even though you never really spoke about it, you've always wanted to go to Paris,. You love your Edith Piaf records. You never stopped reading books in French. I never took you. And now with my old catcher's knees, I just can't tolerate sitting on a plane for that long, at least in seats we can afford, let alone tour the countryside with you.

ANNIE

And I wouldn't want to go without you.

CRASH

But I could have taken you that October way back when, that first year I managed Visalia. We could barely afford it, but I could have, should have, taken you there, on a real honeymoon.

ANNIE

Honey, you had that heart attack right at the end of the season. The doctor wouldn't let you travel for months. It wasn't your fault.

CRASH

Well, there's a secret about that heart attack I never told you—and I made the team swear never to tell you, either.

ANNIE

(Apprehensively again) Yessss?

CRASH

Near the end of the season, right after you headed back to Durham to get the house ready for us, the organization brought up a young buck pitcher from the lower minors, like they'd typically do that time of year, and this guy was every bit the wild-throwing, know-nothing, cocky asshole that most of those bonus babies were every year. I got in his face in the clubhouse, like I typically would, and he eventually called me out to the parking lot, like they typically would.

Fade out on the porch.

Fade in on the front yard, where YOUNG CRASH is facing off against a strapping young stud who towers over him. The stud is actually off stage, but his size, stature, and imposing presence is implied by YOUNG CRASH's body language and angle of sight.

YOUNG CRASH

I don't believe in fighting. (Reaches into his jacket pocket for a baseball.) Here, big guy, take this. (Tosses the ball offstage to the young stud.) Hit me in the chest with it. What? You'll kill me? Hah! From what I hear, you couldn't hit the water if you fell out of a fuckin' boat. Throw it. C'mon. Right in the chest. C'mon, Meat. You can't hit me 'cause you're starting to think about it already, you're starting to think how embarrassing it'll be to miss, how all these people would laugh. C'mon, Rook, show me that million-dollar arm 'cause I'm getting a good idea about the five-cent head...

Just then, YOUNG CRASH is hit square in the chest with the baseball, thrown mightily from close range. He staggers and falls back, clutching his chest over his heart. On the ground on his back, he tries to prop himself on one elbow, still clutching his chest with his other hand.

YOUNG CRASH

(Gasping, clearly in pain, to himself.) What the fuck!? They *always* miss!

Fade out on the front yard.

Fade in on the porch swing where ANNIE and CRASH remain.

ANNIE

Oh, Crash. (She shakes her head dismissively) So? It turns out that it was just the baseball gods telling us that it wasn't the right time to go away. And you were good as new by next spring training. And a rock ever since.

CRASH

I was too embarrassed to tell you how it happened. But I guess I always really wanted you to know. I should have taken you to Paris that fall. It was my fault. And then, of course, you had the miscarriages and the years simply got away from us. Maybe those were somehow my fault, too.

ANNIE

(Sternly) Stop it, Crash. Now you're just being morose.

CRASH

You're right. You're right. We agreed that those were the workings of Jimmy's "benevolent" god. I'm sorry, I'm just in a mood right now.

ANNIE

(Looks lovingly at CRASH for a long beat, then apparently makes the decision she was hesitant about before.) Crash, I have something to show you. Wait here.

ANNIE goes into the house.

CRASH stands at the porch railing, supports himself on straight arms, gazes into the night sky and sighs.

ANNIE returns to the porch, and places a largish box on the wooden table in front of the swing.

CRASH

What's this?

ANNIE

Well, it's *my* little secret. I've kept it in my baseball shrine room for years, since before we even met, and I've kept adding to it ever since. You never go in there, so you never noticed it.

ANNIE opens the box, revealing neatly arranged, folded pieces of correspondence, most on yellowed pages.

CRASH

Annie, what are those?

ANNIE

When I started collecting them, they were mostly letters I received from the boys I "tutored" in the finer things in life during the baseball season. Some of them still write me. Most of them have gone on to lead full and rewarding lives after baseball and they seem to want to keep me up to date on what's been going on with them and their families.

CRASH

(Confused) Okaaay. And this is supposed to help my mood somehow? I suppose there's quite a few from your prize "student" Nuke LaLoosh?

ANNIE

Only one, actually. It was right after he retired from baseball. Early, if you remember. He made a killin' in free agency a few years after he got to the Bigs, then he made another killin' in the stock market. That's actually why he wrote me. He remembered the lessons I gave him on the vastness of the cosmos, and how I introduced him to truly large numbers in the process—things like googols and googolplexes. He always thought those names were funny and they stuck with him. So when Google went public about 15 years ago, he bought in in a big way, on a hunch. He wanted me to know that, and how he thought the baseball gods I was always talkin' about were probably talkin' to *him* that day. He also wanted me to know that he had been putting his millions to good use—new Porsches every year, of course, and even a private jet. He asked me not to tell you all this. I wrote him back congratulating him and gave him *my* two cents on how he might put his money to good use. That was years ago, and I haven't heard from him since.

CRASH

(Slowly shaking his head) Nuke sure loved those Porsches. And a jet, huh? I wonder if he ever sprung for a decent pair of shower shoes. Still, I don't get it. What aren't you telling me about these letters?

ANNIE

Well, over the years, I started getting more and more letters from your old teammates and, later, from the guys you managed who, like a lot of my "tutees," went on to other, bigger things after baseball. They said they felt more comfortable writing to me than to you, because they weren't

sure you even liked them in the end. Some felt you may have resented them for getting the big breaks and the big bucks that *you* never did. To a man, though, they each wanted to know how you were doing and wanted me to know what a profound and positive influence you had been on them when they were young, cocky assholes. And here's the most interesting thing, Crash. Each, in his own way, asked me not to share our correspondence with you, you gruff son of a bitch. But they also said—again, each in his own way, some more direct than others—that there may come a time when I felt I should.

CRASH, staring slack-jawed at ANNIE throughout her explanation, says nothing.

ANNIE

Would you like to read some of those letters now, honey?

CRASH

(After several beats, during which he shows signs of tearing up) No (raspily) No. Maybe tomorrow. Just knowing what you just told me is enough to get me through the night. (Reaching for ANNIE's hand) Wanna go to bed?

CRASH and ANNIE leave the porch and enter the house.

Fade out.

Fade in on the porch swing, where YOUNG CRASH and YOUNG ANNIE are found in their usual positions.

YOUNG ANNIE

You know, Crash, for a guy as hunky as you, I still can't get over how smart you are. If you had finished your schoolin' instead of jumpin' into pro ball, you probably coulda been anything you wanted to be. Even without the schoolin', you have an innate sense about the most complex things. You're regularly calling bullshit on some of my more out-there cosmological theories and, damn it to hell, you're usually right! Ever think what you mighta become if you weren't so dang good at baseball?

YOUNG CRASH

(Absentmindedly, as he plays with the buttons on her blouse) I dunno. Sex therapist?

YOUNG ANNIE

(Playfully slapping his hands away) Seriously, Crash, it had to have crossed your mind once or twice.

YOUNG CRASH

(Gazes at ANNIE, recognizes that she's indeed serious, and slowly begins) When I was a little kid in the late '50s, I lost my mom to the Asian Flu. I was devastated. My dad and I got real close after that. He told me that, years earlier, he lost his older sister, who he had never met, to the Spanish Flu when she was just a toddler and before he was born. His aunts and uncles told him that they wished he'd known his parents before that, since they were never quite the same afterwards. Some nights, I'd cry myself to sleep thinking about my dad and the losses he suffered, both directly and indirectly, to these invisible damn killers that I could never quite

understand. It seemed so outrageously unfair. Though I couldn't have articulated it then, looking back now I guess I'd say that I would have devoted myself to *that*. To the study of that. (Trailing off) Diseases. Infectious diseases.

YOUNG ANNIE

(Eyes wide in rapt attention, she eventually responds, barely above a whisper) Crash, my honey, I just know you woulda been great at it.

Fade out.

Fade in on the porch swing, where CRASH and ANNIE are found in their usual positions, but in different clothes than three days prior.

ANNIE

So, those were *some* letters, huh?

CRASH

What a bunch of pussies. Feelings, ugh! No wonder they wanted you to hide them from me.

ANNIE

(Full-throated laugh, as only ANNIE could muster) Oh, Crash, my darlin', you don't know how good it is to see you back to your old self again. You honestly didn't know how broad and how deep your influence went, did you? But I know you better than you know yourself, my darlin'. And I know that, deep down, you still wish you coulda done more with your life. I guess you'll just have to be satisfied with knowing that you've already done more than most people you and I have ever known. (Playfully musses what's left of CRASH's hair)

CRASH

(Smiling in spite of himself, and eager to change the subject) Anything besides bills in the mail?

ANNIE

(Sifting through the stack) Not much. Unless you wanna be in charge of grocery coupons this week. Oh, wait. What's this? The envelope says The Nuke LaLoosh Philanthropic Foundation. And it's addressed to both of us! Shall I open it?

CRASH

Sure, Can't imagine what they'd want with us. I'm sure they'd be disappointed to know our budget for charitable contributions.

ANNIE

It's a hand-written letter from Nuke! After all these years.

CRASH

Go ahead and read it out loud. This should be worth a few laughs.

ANNIE

(Reading) "Hey, my two favorite mentors! Remember me? Sorry I haven't been in touch much since I left Durham, but it's been a wild-ass ride, for sure. Anyway, I just want to let you know that I'll be passing through Durham on business next month and would love to see you guys. So

this is just a heads up. OK, to be honest, the reason I'll be passing through Durham is actually to ask you guys a big favor. So, let me give you some advance time to think about it. My little foundation has been doing really good and a whole lot of people have been real generous. The board decided to create a new non-profit subsidiary. It's got a real narrow scope and more bucks than we've ever thrown behind anything before. For reasons I don't really understand, it needs to have its own independent board, and most of the board members have to be what they call regular citizens or some such. Besides the fact that you guys are two of the smartest, kindest, and most honest people I have ever met, I understand you're both retired now. And, I don't know, there's something about this whole thing that just made me think of you. Anyway, that's the scoop. Want to be on the board? It doesn't pay hardly anything, but it's a real good cause. I'll have my people ("my people" Hah! Gotta love it!) reach out to you to see if you're interested and to set up a time to meet. Oh, I almost forgot, the whole purpose of this thing is to decide the right way to parcel out money to research labs around the world that are trying to address global pandemics. I'm pretty sure I know what that means, but you guys probably know more about it than me. And you are into that sort of thing, right? Anyway, hope to see you soon. Nuke."

CRASH

(For the second time in three days, he stares slack-jawed at ANNIE as she reads the letter) What?! Can I see that? (He scans the letter) There's a P.S. on the back. (Reading) "If you can make it, the official kickoff meeting is in October in Paris. A pain in the butt, I know, but I can have my jet pick you up in Durham and take you there and back home whenever you want. It's a way cool way to travel, man! And real easy on the old bones for a guy your age, Crash!" He signs it with a smiley face. (Slowly looks up and stares unbelievably at ANNIE)

ANNIE

(Smiling beatifically) What can I say, Crash? God works in mysterious ways.

CRASH

You mean the baseball gods, right?

ANNIE

I know what I said.(Gives CRASH a sly wink)

CRASH

To which I say, "May I have this dance?"

ANNIE and CRASH slowly descend the porch steps to the front lawn, where they're bathed in a white light. They dance slowly and sensuously to the gently rising strains of *La Vie En Rose*. Barely perceptible behind them, through the window into the parlor, we see YOUNG ANNIE and YOUNG CRASH, mirroring their steps.