

# EMPTY TIGERS



THEY'RE LEARNING



**EMPTY TIGERS**

**OVERVIEW  
NEXT TURN**



# EMPTY TIGERS



Aberdeen, quintessential small-town America. Though big dreams aren't encouraged here, people allow themselves to believe the high school football team can win the county championship for the first time in thirty years. But in the first game, the coach has a heart attack screaming at the ref, and hope dies again.



Hugh Carver is a new English teacher who's moved to his wife's hometown to deal with the grief her sudden death has caused him. Desperate, the school turns to Carver to take over the team. But Carver has his own ideas about what young men learn from football.

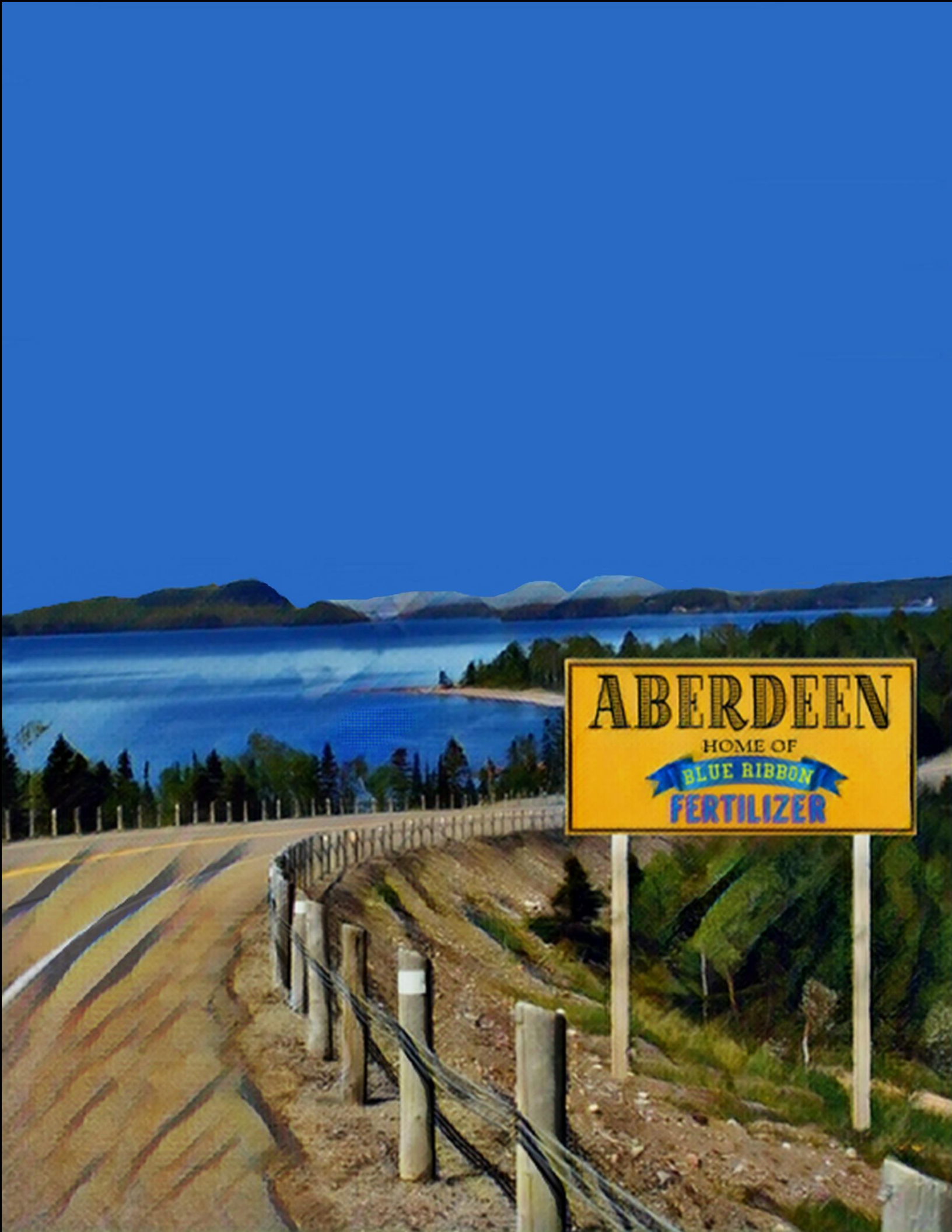


Instead of just drills, he requires them to read good books, he makes them learn manners, ask a girl to the prom, dance, even attend the school's production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Armed with new skills – both athletic and social – the players start to have fun – and even win games.

But with a chance to play for the championship, the previous coach gets well enough to come back, so the team must decide who will lead them to victory – and manhood.

In the touching tradition of *Dead Poets Society* and *Rudy*, *Empty Tigers* examines the schoolyard journey from boyhood to manhood. Carver teaches every Tiger to be a winner – not just a champion – and with the help of the team and a new love interest, Carver himself learns to live again.





**ABERDEEN**

HOME OF

**BLUE RIBBON**

**FERTILIZER**

# GENRE



\$235,900,000



\$51,500,000



\$22,000,000



\$32,000,000



\$61,950,770



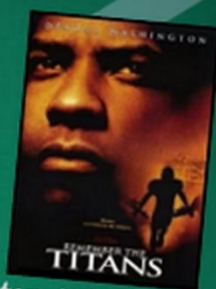
\$76,669,554



\$131,095,990



\$33,384,127



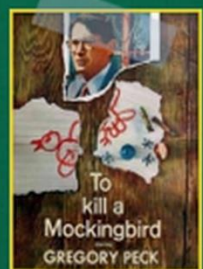
\$136,771,683



\$54,000,000



\$179,519,401



BEST  
PICTURE 1963

In perhaps the most beloved and reliable genre in cinema, *Empty Tigers* chronicles one of the most powerful experiences in all of human existence.

The coming of age. That moment, that incident, that challenge that forces a character to consider all the things life has taught him so far - and, under pressure, to finally accept the responsibility of his own worth. To actually define his own values and take a stand - and then to face the consequences. It's a moment everyone has faced on their own.

Those who would bring the light must also endure the burn.

Great movies like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Summer of '42*, *Dead Poets Society*, and others deliver some of the most powerful moments ever achieved in cinema. Moments so moving people can feel their impact for the rest of their lives. Great cinema can actually change people for the better.

*Empty Tigers* strives to be one of those stories. It's about small towns and modest dreams, but it's also about immeasurable human longing and unlimited human potential.

An empty tiger is a hungry tiger, and a hungry tiger will find a way to eat. *Empty Tigers* is about hungry hearts, and those empty tigers will find a way to live.



MR. CARVER



ABERDEEN HIGH SCHOOL



BEST VIEW IN TOWN!



UNCLE HENRY'S AND HUNT EDIT'S



MS. WEATHERS



MEET ME AT MOLLY'S!



DUMAS HOUSE



TODD



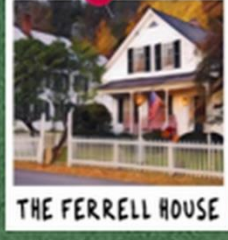
SATURDAY AFTERNOONS!



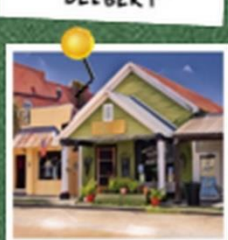
MR. CARVER'S HOUSE



JACKIE



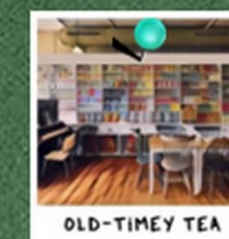
THE FERRELL HOUSE



THRIFT STORE



FIRST BAPTIST



OLD-TIMEY TEA



FILL 'ER UP!



HORSE POWER



1ST PRESBYTERIAN



GOOD EATS!



BLUE RIBBON FERTILIZER



BEST WAFFLES EVER



WE NEED SOME NEW CLICHES!



AT THE DRIVE-IN

## THE SETTING

*Empty Tigers* follows a season of football in a flyover city called Aberdeen. It's the quintessential hometown, the cradle of American tradition. In Aberdeen, people know each other from grade school, and strangers say hello. Children say 'ma'am and 'sir,' and people relish shared memories of parades, or Little League baseball, of births, weddings, graduations, and funerals.

Every day's an adventure, and every night's a gift.

Or is that just the way we want to remember it?

Some of the greatest stories ever written happen in places like this - *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Field of Dreams*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and countless others.

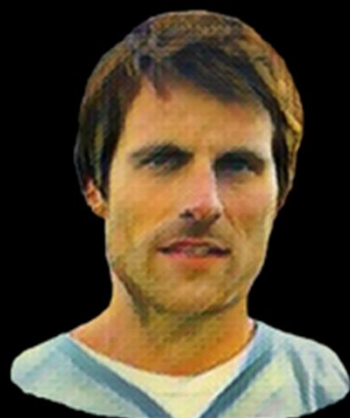
Young audiences love them because they're living it, and older audiences long for the Aberdeen of their past. The nostalgia of people's youth is a big draw for audiences. Big dreams are born in small towns, so people always want to visit. Innocence lives there and wonder and discovery, and people remember it all from before they had to leave the small town that is youth.

**ABERDEEN HIGH SCHOOL**

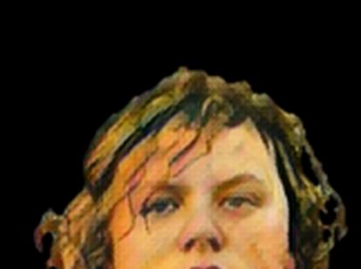


**HOME OF THE TIGERS**

# CHARACTERS



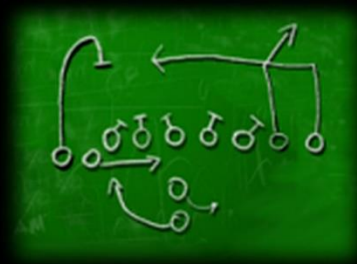
**HUGH CARVER**, the school's newest teacher, is smart, charming, and likeable, so no one suspects he's a widower who's angry and despondent. When he takes over the team, he wants the boys to learn more than just football, but it's what he learns *from* the team that allows him live again.



**DELBERT 'DUMBASS' DUMAS** is an overweight second-stringer who dreams of football heroics as the golden ticket to the respect from his peers he wants more than anything. He's awkward and clumsy and sometimes stutters, but he's got a heart as big as the sky.



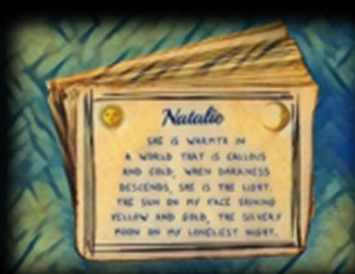
**TODD FERRELL** is the Tigers' star receiver and a shoo-in for a college scholarship. Son of the team's coach, Todd's a pit bull with rabies when dad's not around, but if he is, Todd's a Maltipoo with IBS. So he takes a perverse pleasure in passing the misery on to Delbert.



**JAKE FERRELL** has been the football coach for years, but the Tigers haven't won the championship since Jake himself was on the team his senior year. But Jake has determined that this will be the year, his son, Todd, will lead the way, and the Tigers are going to war.



**JACKIE BENNETT** is a teacher and the first to welcome Carver to Aberdeen. She's talented, beautiful, and fun, and there's an obvious chemistry between them, but Carver doesn't pursue her. Finally, she confronts him, and though painful, it's just what he needs.



**NATALIE SPENSER** is a classmate Delbert has crushed on for years but has been too shy to speak to her. With the help of Hugh Carver, Delbert shows Natalie her first football game and the first dance for them both, while Natalie shows Delbert a kindness he wasn't sure existed in the world.



JUST AHEAD  
**EMPTY TIGERS**  
THE STORY

## THE ADVENTURE BEGINS



At an electric car test-site, a Computer Consultant - part brainiac, part jet pilot - test-drives a futuristic model at high speeds. His findings for the tech team are disastrous. The car's not stable enough for a production roll-out - a multi-million dollar setback.

The Consultant was their last hope - that's how good he is - but they know he must be right. He gets a phone call from back home. It's not good news.

Suddenly somber, the Consultant, gets in his car and begins the long drive home.



## COMING HOME ...

The doleful knell of a church bell tells us why the Consultant has come back to Aberdeen, his hometown. Someone close to him is gone.

With his family in the car, he joins the funeral procession, but soon peels away and drives through streets he roamed as a boy.



## GHOSTS

Arriving at a former high school, he wanders the hallways of his youth. His tour ends at a neglected football field that he relishes like an old friend.

But, who is this man, and who does he grieve? His narration will guide us through the story, but we won't know which character he is in his story - or whose funeral he attends - until he finishes. Only then will we understand his pain - and joy.



## Introductions

We meet the main characters as the Consultant remembers them...



**HUGH CARVER**, the school's new English teacher



**DELBERT DUMAS**, an awkward kid who dreams of football glory



**TODD FERRELL**, The school's star running back and BMOC



**JAKE FERRELL**, the brutal football coach



**JACKIE BENNETT**, a smart, beautiful teacher



**NATALIE SPENCER**, a shy classmate Delbert crushes on

## ADULT EDUCATION

Watching Carver's first few days gives us an insight into his new world...



Carver has moved to his wife's hometown, Aberdeen, to mourn her sudden death, hoping time with her parents and visiting her grave will ease his grief.



Todd is the football coach's son, which gives him prestige and privilege, and he takes a special pleasure in humiliating Delbert.



The first person to welcome Carver is Jackie Bennett, and she does so in the ladies' rest room that Carver has wandered into. She's cool, funny, and easy on the eyes - a troubling combination for a man grieving his wife.



## WAR GAMES



Football practice with Jake Ferrell is like Marine Corps bootcamp. Brutal and sadistic, he believes boys have to be mean and tough to become young men. Todd is their star player, and he's easily college material. But Delbert is a hapless benchwarmer, and Jake Ferrell seems determined to run him off.

"Everyone knew Delbert and Coach Ferrell were two trains on the same track - and the collision would be ugly."



**SPECIAL FORCES**



**Petie Wiggins** - Kicker and smallest on the team

**Mycroft Petersen** - kickoff returner

**Philo Gregory** - running back on O, safety on D - good at both

**Dreik Abramov** - beast-mode line-backer and hardest hitter on the team

**Tyrone Ballinger** - prefers the moniker "T-Ball." Wide Receiver and fast. Very fast. And funny. And smart.

**Tyler Sampson** - offensive lineman - strong like bull, dumb like rock, don't piss him off / go-to third-down blocker and all-round good guy

## BUT THE FIRE'S GONE OUT

After another vicious practice, Coach Ferrell tries to inspire the team by trotting out the County Championship trophy his team won thirty years ago. It is a gesture he's famous for, but the Tigers have seen it too many times. Cue the crickets.



## Hmm ...



Carver runs into Jackie promoting the school's production of *Romeo and Juliet*. She urges him to attend with his students. Learning she directed the play, he promises to come and also learns something he was too flummoxed to notice in the ladies' room. This woman is cool.



## THE STRUGGLE IS REAL...



Carver's attraction to Jackie makes him miss his wife, so he decides to visit her grave. For the first time, we see Carver has suffered a great loss and he's not dealing with it nearly as well as he presents to the world. He gently places a single rose on her tombstone.



## KICKOFF



The Tigers' first game of the season. It's a nail-biter until Todd scores in the fourth quarter to take a ten-point lead. Then with seconds left, Todd intercepts a pass and scores again! But the ref waves it off - Todd stepped out of bounds. No score! Livid, Coach Ferrell cusses the ref but then stops abruptly and collapses! It's a heart attack! The stunned crowd sees Coach Ferrell loaded into an Ambulance that races away.



## The day that is different ...



Desperate for a replacement coach, Principal Emily Weathers convinces the School Board to hire Carver - he played in college and they can't afford someone from another district. Weathers and a couple of Board Members surprise Carver at home but he hesitates at their offer. Inside, he feels getting involved in society again would be leaving his wife behind, and his grief is his way to express his love for her. He'll have to think about their request.

## SHOCK AND AWFUL

Carver reluctantly decides to take the gig, so Principal Weathers introduces him to the team. He is *not* received warmly.

Carver is quick to assure the players they're still Coach Ferrell's team, so no major changes will be made. He's there to carry out Ferrell's plan for their success, and he promises to do his best.

Someone points out that Carver is merely the new English teacher, so who's kidding who - the season is effectively over. The Tigers shuffle out to practice like zombies.



## FALSE START

An excited Tiger Nation turns out for the team's second game hoping Carver can continue where Coach Ferrell left off. But the Tigers are out-played in a nasty beatdown.

In the locker room after the game, Carver tries to encourage the players, but they don't want to hear it. They *lost*.



The next day after class, Carver tells Todd his grades are slipping and accuses Todd of not trying.

That sets Todd off. He tells Carver people think he's a joke and call his class "clown college." He lays into Carver for only phoning in his coaching and not caring about the players. So don't tell him to try harder until Carver does himself.

With that, Todd storms out leaving Carver stunned - with a lot to think about.

## THINGS GET REAL

A much different Carver shows up for practice. This Carver is all business. He informs the team he knows they aren't happy, so he's changing the game.



Everyone will keep their grades at C or better, everyone will play in every game, and everyone will do what he tells them to do, or that person - no matter who - is off the team.

He calls a 6am practice the next morning, then writes "winner" on the chalkboard. When no one can define it, he tells them to think about it and walks out. The Tigers are stunned.



## GAME ON ...

Carver institutes his own brand of coaching. Practice is hard, but fair, and he works with players to improve their strengths. And no yelling or drama.

Over time, the players start to trust Carver and even have fun.



Off the field, the Tigers are improving, too. Delbert gets to know Natalie when he's able to fix her car, and Natalie encourages Delbert to enroll in the community college to one day take over his uncle's filling station.

## LIFE 101

Carver wants the Tigers to be more than just football players and master more than athletics. If he doesn't show them, it's likely no one ever will.

To play football for Hugh Carver, each player has to:

- learn the rules of social courtesies and table manners
- read good books at the library and write a book report on each
- attend the school's production of *Romeo and Juliet*
- get a date and take her to the school dance
- anyone - anyone - who does not, is off the team



## THINGS FALL APART

The Tigers win again and will play for the County Championship for the first time in thirty years. The whole town celebrates.

The next morning, Carver is called to the Principal's office. Expecting congratulations, he is shocked to find Coach Ferrell there, too - he's recovered enough to go back to work. Principal Weathers thanks Carver for his help and congratulates him for his success, but the Tigers are still Coach Ferrell's team.



Ferrell tells Carver he's pulling the team's dance cards and getting back to football, then strides out. Weathers apologizes to Carver, but the school can't afford a lawsuit and Ferrell's threatening to bring one.

Carver can only walk away.



## TIME TO BE GREAT

Coach Ferrell comes back with a sadistic vengeance, and the Tigers go back to boot camp. Then, in the locker room before the championship game, the oncoming trains of Delbert and Coach Ferrell finally collide.

The Tigers face the hardest decision of their lives: who do they want to lead them to victory - and manhood.

And like a schoolyard bully, life itself collides with the Tigers, and demands they decide who they really are, and then have the guts to declare it and not back down.

And there won't be a single person watching who doesn't know exactly how they feel.

## PANTHERA TIGRIS

The Tigers played that game for the championship and their season finally came to an end - that season that had begun so long ago the day Mr. Carver walked into their locker room for the first time.

The Computer Consultant who came back home for a funeral still stands on the old football field and remembers it all, and considers the good times and the bad, feeling an intense gratitude for them all.

But we still don't know who he is or who he came back to say good-bye to. And what happened in the big game? Did Coach Ferrell realize his mistakes and lead the Tigers to victory? Did the Tigers even win? And whose funeral was it? Was it Coach Ferrell or Mr. Carver? Or was it Todd or Delbert or T-Ball or Wiggins? It could be anyone. But before the Consultant walks off the field, we will finally know who he is - and understand who was so important to so many others.

The truth is that after that season, nothing was the same in Aberdeen, and for the Tigers - those Empty Tigers - nothing would ever be the same again.



# PRODUCTION



**BILL FERRELL**  
PRODUCER, JAKE FERRELL

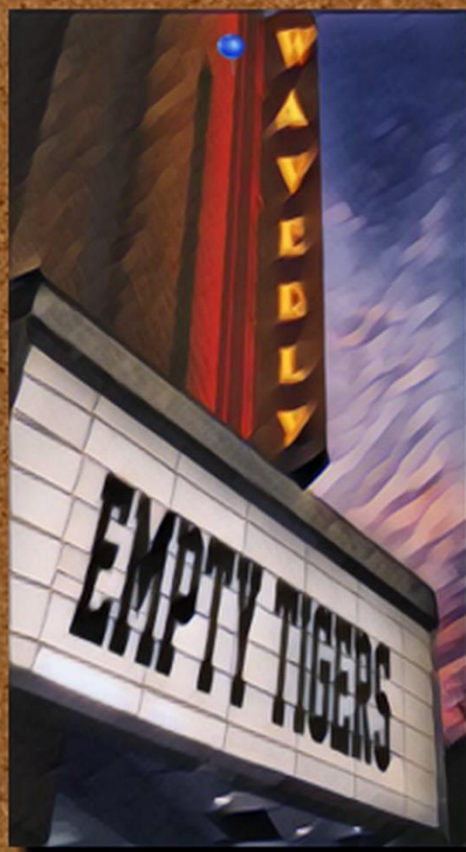
## EMPTY TIGERS

A proud graduate of New York's Tisch School of the Arts and the Lee Strasberg Institute, Bill frequently appeared in New York on stage and television and in film, including Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* and on Broadway in *Masculine* with Christopher Plummer and Glenda Jackson.

In Hollywood, Ferrell has worked in TV and films of all genres, among them the comedy of *Frasier*, *Desperate Housewives* and *Home Improvement*, the drama of *The West Wing* and *The Shield* and the fun of *Madame Place* and *The Princess Diaries* with Anne Hathaway.

As an independent film producer, Bill used his experience in front of the camera and as well as behind to work with the Governor of Maine to enable more production there, including a fifty-million-dollar fund for independent filming.

*Empty Tigers* will benefit from Bill's extensive experience both as producer and actor, as he is set to portray the story's antagonist, the team's brutal and broken-hearted coach.



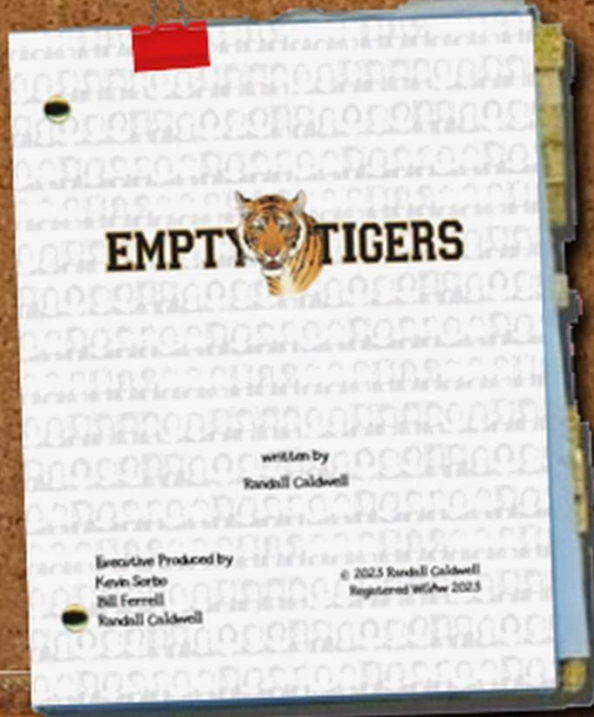
**RANDALL CALDWELL**  
PRODUCER, WRITER

## EMPTY TIGERS

As writer and producer for the hit CBS/Twentieth Century-Fox series, *Judging Amy*, Caldwell was awarded the Ark Trust's *Genesis Award for Excellence in Television* and helped keep the show consistently in the Nielsen rating's Top Ten.

He created *Dark Matter*, a limited series for the SyFi Channel, wrote teleplays *Making the Cut* and *Mr. Ruff* for Disney TV, and authored a detective novel, *In the Shadow of the Hollywood Sign*, which is available on Amazon.

Caldwell is a graduate of the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York, and a proud member of the Screen Actors Guild and the Writers Guild of America.





# Romeo and Juliet





YOU ARE NOW LEAVING

**ABERDEEN**

HOME OF THE TIGERS



FIRST, THEY IGNORE YOU.  
THEN THEY LAUGH AT YOU.  
THEN THEY FIGHT YOU.  
THEN YOU WIN.



The time and my intents are savage wild,  
More fierce and more inexorable far  
Than empty tigers or the roaring sea.

William Shakespeare  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
V.iii.37–39

# EMPTY TIGERS

written by  
Randall Caldwell

Executive Produced by

Bill Ferrell  
Randall Caldwell