

CATCH

Written by

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The WHIZ of a baseball breaks the air.

The satisfying slap of a glove closes around it.

A television blares a Seattle Mariners baseball pre-game broadcast in a living room.

TV ANNOUNCER

Nothing but blue skies above here
at Safeco Field.

EXT. LAWN - DAY

A FATHER (52) and SON (17) play catch in the yard. The lawn, manicured and green like a baseball field, shines in the sun.

FATHER

The arm is feeling good today.

The father adjusts a Seattle Mariners cap, takes a deep breath, then winds into a pitch.

The ball whizzes through the air.

The son's mitt slaps closed. He rubs the sting out of his hand inside the glove.

SON

What the hell.

FATHER

I still got it.

SON

No you don't.

FATHER

You couldn't hit it.

SON

When I was twelve.

FATHER

You couldn't hit it now.

SON

I don't really care.

The father waves his glove to encourage the son to throw the ball back.

SON (CONT'D)
This isn't going to change
anything.

FATHER
Please, I feel good. Just a little
longer.

The son, hand still stinging, ponders a moment.

FATHER (CONT'D)
I don't get many of these.

SON
You're going to lay that one on me?

FATHER
Didn't you like baseball?

SON
I couldn't even make all-stars and
you were my coach.

FATHER
Nothing comes easy. It takes work.

The son tosses the ball back.

SON
Don't you think I know that.

The father winds, another fastball.

The ball slaps the son's mitt. The son throws the glove down
along with the ball. He winces in pain as he shakes out his
hand.

SON (CONT'D)
I'm done with this shit.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The son races into the house then to his room with a slam of
the door behind him.

The father follows. He knocks on the bedroom door.

FATHER
I'm sorry. Can we just sit and talk
at least?

The father lightly touches the door then steps away.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The bedroom is plain, seemingly temporary, with moving boxes.

The son finds a box then rummages through old photos. He finds various photos of himself at twelve, little league team photos.

In one photo the father stands proud with the team. The son, smaller than the rest of the players, rests on a knee in front of the team sign with the other runts.

The son finds another photo of them playing catch, a much happier time. He pockets the photo and turns to listen to the TV blaring the first inning in the living room.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

The father relaxes on the steps. He works the baseball in different pitch grips then snaps it into his glove.

SON

What grip was that?

FATHER

Fastball. Two seam.

The father shows the grip to his son. He hides a recent bruise and needle mark on his hand with a sleeve.

SON

I never perfected that pitch or a curve.

The father grips the ball for a curve.

FATHER

You just needed to get the edge of the seam and snap your wrist down.

The father demonstrates the action but winces in pain.

The son notices.

The father massages his arm then looks back with a grimace unable to hide it.

Silence fills the space between them.

The son, like he wants to say something, finds a step to sit. He removes the catch photo for peek but then returns it to his pocket unable to find the words to break the silence.

The father, distracted in thought, squeezes the baseball but doesn't notice the photo.

TV ANNOUNCER

King Felix is off to a great start.

SON

Who are the M's playing?

FATHER

The Rays. I still have tickets. We haven't been to a game in ages.

SON

Catch was enough baseball for me.

FATHER

We can make a day of it.

SON

I've always wondered. Why baseball?

FATHER

There's just an art to it. A history.

SON

It's just a game.

FATHER

Don't you love any sports?

SON

Not my thing.

FATHER

Soccer? Football?

SON

Playstation. Call of Duty.

FATHER

Aren't those called Esports now?

SON

Only if you can make money from it.

FATHER

You could be good at it.

SON

Just being good doesn't cut it.

FATHER
You could at least try.

SON
Why bother.

FATHER
You don't have to be great at everything.

SON
Ya right.

FATHER
I'm not great at anything and look at me.

SON
Exactly.

FATHER
You know. The difference between a hall of fame player and an everyday one isn't far off.

SON
Only millions of dollars.

FATHER
I'm serious.

SON
I don't need to hear this.

FATHER
One more hit every twenty at bats.

SON
What are you talking about?

EXT. LAWN - CONTINUOUS

The father grabs a bat from the ground and steps into an imaginary batter's box. He takes a couple practice swings.

FATHER
The average ballplayer gets five to six hits every twenty at bats.

SON
Why would I care?

FATHER

It just takes one more.

He swings like he makes contact with the ball for a homerun.
The crack of a bat echoes in the yard.

FATHER (CONT'D)

It could be the difference between
being a hall of famer or just
another guy on the team.

SON

Isn't there more to it?

FATHER

How they measure the stats have
changed. Sure. But, the game hasn't
changed.

SON

What stats?

FATHER

WAR.

SON

WAR?

FATHER

Wins above replacement.

SON

What's that mean anyway?

FATHER

It measures the value of a player
against a replacement.

SON

That sounds like they're just
making shit up.

FATHER

No. It's a real thing. It's like
what impact YOU have on a team.

SON

YOU watch it on TV.

The father reflects on his words then massages the bruise on
his wrist.

FATHER
What do you think my replacement
value would be?

The words trigger the son's emotions.

SON
You're not a ballplayer.

He rushes back inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The father watches the Mariner's baseball game on the television.

His cell phone pings a reminder about a doctor's appointment.

TV ANNOUNCER
This could be a NO-NO in the
making. The King keeps mowing them
down as the King's Court goes
crazy.

The father glances at the phone and with a disappointed shake of his head. He turns off the television then steps to the son's bedroom door and knocks.

FATHER
Let's take a drive.

SON (O.S.)
Only if I can get a slushie.

EXT. CAR - DAY (TRAVELING)

The hum of the road fills the space.

The son notices as they pass the convenience store on the corner.

SON
The 7-11 was over there.

FATHER
I know.

SON
Kidnapping me?

FATHER
I just want to spend time with you.

SON
I'm at YOUR house aren't I.

FATHER
That's not what I mean.

SON
Tell me what you want.

FATHER
I just want to talk to you. Tell me about school. Something. Anything.

SON
School's fine. It doesn't start till September anyway.

FATHER
You're not excited about Senior year?

SON
I'll be excited in June.

FATHER
I loved my senior year.

SON
Of course you'd say that.

FATHER
You should enjoy the moment.

SON
We all can't be class President or Captain of the baseball team.

FATHER
I'm not asking you to be.

SON
You won't be able to relive your glory days.

FATHER
I want you to live your own.

The son listens but focuses on the hum of the highway.

FATHER (CONT'D)
I just want you to put your effort into something. It's ok to fail.

SON

So you want me to be a failure now?

FATHER

No. I just don't want you to be afraid to strike out. The thing is. In baseball, you're expected to fail. Or something happens you have no control over. Someone else makes a better play. You will lose sometimes. It's all about what you do the next time you step up to the plate.

The son scoffs.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I get that we can't be perfect. I'm not going to sit here and say I am. But, every so often, something magical happens.

SON

I'd like to see that happen.

The son turns away to stare out the window.

Safeco Field comes into view.

SON (CONT'D)

I told you. I didn't want to go to a game.

FATHER

It's almost over anyway. What's a couple of innings?

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

The brick and steel building with a wide-open retractable roof rumbles from the excitement of the crowd. The crescendo of cheers can be heard from the street.

MONTAGE:

The father shows the tickets at the entry as other excited fans scurry to get in.

They walk the main entry steps.

The son admires the chandelier adorned with white baseball bats.

The son drinks from a huge lemonade.

They walk the main level as the Sun basks the field in brightness.

The palpable murmur of excited fan.

END MONTAGE:

SON

Where are we sitting?

FATHER

One-sixteen. First row.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - SECTION 116 - DAY

They find their seats.

Other fans squeeze in with them to get closer to the field to watch.

The father notices the scoreboard with zeros across the visitor stats.

FATHER

Still intact.

The sea of yellow shirts highlights Section 148 - 149 and chant "K" with every two strike count.

SON

What's all the excitement about?

FATHER

Look at the scoreboard.

SON

So, it's one nothing.

FATHER

Look again.

SON

We're in the top of the seventh.

The son recognizes the manual scoreboard in left field.

SON (CONT'D)

Wait... They haven't got a hit yet.

FATHER

Exactly.

The crack of the bat silences the crowd but then erupts with the second out of the seventh inning.

SON
Ever seen a no hitter?

FATHER
Never. But, this is my dream come true.

SON
How so?

The father pats his son on the back.

SON (CONT'D)
Get over yourself. You kidnapped me. And, It's not going to happen. He's still got two innings left.

FATHER
This day could be perfect.

SON
You're dreaming. Nothing's perfect.

The son rushes from his seat, through the line of fans, then up the stairs.

The father turns dejected in his seat.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - MAIN LEVEL WALKWAY - DAY

The son watches a TV next to other fans.

FAN
This could be the twenty-third perfect game ever.

SON
Ever?

FAN
Yeah, over a hundred years of baseball and only twenty-two games have ever been perfect. Why are you watching it from here?

SON
Why are you?

FAN
I wish my son was here to see this.

The son removes the catch photo from his pocket.

QUICK FLASH - SON'S MEMORY

The father showing him how to throw a ball.

The sound of the ball hitting the mitt.

The awkward first catch and his amazement that the ball didn't fall out.

The sound of a chemo drip.

The father reclined onto a chair with tubes attached to his wrist.

BACK TO:

A moment of realization overtakes the son as he races back to his seat as the crowd erupts for the second out of the ninth inning.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - SECTION 116 - DAY

The son pushes back through the aisle to his father.

Standing room only as fans record the moment with their phones.

The father rises from his seat, emotionally distressed, doesn't notice the son pushing through the aisle. The father adjusts his hat that reveals his scalp with a only a few patches of hair left from chemo. The sleeve drops, his wrist ravaged with bruises and needle marks. The father glows in the daylight like his soul is piercing through.

The son reaches his father as the last out is recorded.

Players rush the field and the crowd screams with excitement.

The father and son embrace in both quiet celebration and reconciliation.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: 13 years later.

The son, now (30), admires the photo on a mantel of him and his father at the Perfect game on August 15th, 2012.

FATHER (V.O.)
One more hit.

Next to the photo of his father is another one of a young boy.

SON
I get it.

GRANDSON
Daddy!

The grandson (7), the boy from the photo, adorned in Seattle Mariner fandom rushes to hug him. With a whirl, he's lifted into the air.

The grandson reaches for the photo.

GRANDSON (CONT'D)
Is that grampa?

SON
That was him. He loved baseball.
Are you ready for your first game?

GRANDSON
YEAH!

The son sets the grandson to his feet then grabs a mitt and ball from a table.

SON
Let me teach you how to play catch.

FADE OUT.