

# *A Fielder's Choice*

by  
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**[THE FIRST TEN PAGES]**

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EXT. TOKYO STREETS -- CRACK OF DAWN

A TRUCK speeds down an idle STREET.

A stack of BOUND NEWSPAPERS is tossed out the back of the vehicle, landing in front of a NEWSSTAND with a THUD!

HARRIET (V.O.)  
Ardent fans...

CLOSE ON: The headline of THE TOKYO SHIMBUN: **GIANTS KATCHI!**

Beneath the headline: TOKYO 11 CHICAGO 0

In the street, A BUS moves towards us.

HARRIET (V.O.)  
Last night in Tokyo, the Chicago Cubs, true to their lovable-loser persona on this side of the Pacific, fell to the Tokyo Giants on the other side of the ocean in the controversial exhibition game played during this, the eighty-sixth annual All-Star break.

INT. BUS -- CONTINUOUS

Drowsy/weary PLAYERS fill the seats, together a beaten TEAM, together the CHICAGO CUBS.

At the front of the bus we meet:

MANNY WHITMORE  
(59, coach, father-figure)  
I'm tired.

GROVER [AKA: MITCH HARGROVE]  
(48, shrewd/frank bulldog)  
Time change'll do that to you.

MANNY  
Not so much a time change as time for a change.

GROVER  
Manny...are you gonna drone on about sailing away from all this the whole way home? Again?

MANNY  
Tell me how you really feel, Mitch.

HARRIET (V.O.)

Whether or not the Cubs should have ventured to Japan for this game is a topic that has been heavily debated over the last few weeks.

EXT. TOKYO-NARITA AIRPORT -- LATER

Weary souls file off the bus, shuffle into the TERMINAL, half asleep, half alive.

HARRIET (V.O.)

Whether the game was played for the sake of public relations or for monetary reasons, I, Harriet Ardent, refrain from taking sides.

INT. TOKYO-NARITA AIRPORT -- CONTINUOUS

MARK WEER

(29, dons heart on sleeve)  
He's some architect. A fucking architect.

NOAH HEARNE

(24, amiable farm boy)  
I don't think she's doing it just to spite you, Mark.

MARK WEER

Noah. She's fucking an architect.

HARRIET (V.O.)

Today I just bring you the news. And that news is: Cubs lose. Cubs lose. Cubs lose.

INT. PLANE CABIN -- LATER

Pre-flight rituals abound -- passengers file in, luggage stored, seats claimed, bodies getting comfortable.

At the front of the plane (1D) sits HIDEKI ISHI -- 18, Japanese, a kid amongst men -- face concealed by the brim of his Chicago Cubs ball cap.

Hideki plays a MATTEL ELECTRONICS HANDHELD BASEBALL GAME.

ALBERT DYE  
 (22, green, keen, anxious)  
 Dog. Rooks don't get prime seats.

Hideki, face planted in his game, pays no mind.

ALBERT  
 Dog.

TYLER WYNN  
 (30, confident, respected)  
 He doesn't speak any English, Dye.  
 And you're not too far removed from  
 rook status.

ALBERT  
 'Hundred seven games removed, Wynn.

TYLER  
 Yeah, and you've been on the bench  
 for more than half of them.

ALBERT  
 My time will come.

TYLER  
 Well in the meantime, Playa, sit  
 there.

The duo claim two seats in the third row.

HARRIET (V.O.)  
 As the Cubs travel homeward, the  
 nation's eyes turn to AT&T Park in  
 San Francisco where the 86th Annual  
 All-Star Game will be played.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY -- CONTINUOUS

The JUMBO-JET pulls from the GATE.

HARRIET (V.O.)  
 And as our eyes move from the  
 Chicago Cubs, they will now be  
 centered on a Chicago Cub, Dale  
 Wennington, the Cub's All-Star  
 right fielder who, despite the  
 team's woes, is enjoying a  
 monstrous season.

EXT. AT&T PARK, SAN FRANCISCO -- CONTINUOUS

We approach the festive STADIUM from the air.

HARRIET (V.O.)

Dale Wennington, who finds himself five regular season homers away from a bench-mark reserved for giants in this perfect game. Dale Wennington, the grand-son of Red Wennington -- The Red Giant -- who set his own records decades ago.

Harriet's voice fades as we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AT&T PARK -- CONTINUOUS

Players are announced, high-five each other en route to lining up on the base path.

PA (O.S.)

Representing the Chicago Cubs, two-time League MVP, number ninety-eight, Dale Wennington. Wennington.

CLOSE ON DALE WENNINGTON - 36, smug, chiseled, an esteemed baseball card come to life - as he emerges from the dugout, bypasses the high-fiving of his National League teammates.

A capacity crowd shows fervid appreciation for the legend in the making, but Dale never looks up.

PRESS BOX

HARRIET ARDENT - 31, a determined, yet crestfallen reporter -- amid rows of other reporters, shakes her head, whispers...

HARRIET

Asshole.

REPORTER

Wennington? C'mon, Harry, you're being way too kind.

HARRIET

Don't call me that.

REPORTER

Whatever. And all due respect, but your dad had balls.

(MORE)

REPORTER (cont'd)  
 He would've written the truth about  
 Wennington instead of just  
 whispering it.

Harriet looks at the reporter, forces a smile.

INT. AIRPLANE -- CONTINUOUS

In flight, we slowly move up the aisle of the plane.

PA (V.O.)  
 Ladies and gentlemen, please rise,  
 take off your hats and greet Grammy  
 Award Winning Artist Adele, who'll  
 be singing our National Anthem.

Cheers for Adele abound as we view seats 7C and 7D:

NOAH  
 Whatcha' gonna do?

MARK  
 Shit, Noah. I was looking to you  
 for some advice.

NOAH  
 It needs to come from you, Mark.

5C & 5D

MANNY  
 She's a forty-eight foot cabin  
 cruiser that sleeps five, bright  
 blue spinnaker...

GROVER  
 (eyes glued to a book)  
 Sail off into the sunset, I know, I  
 know. Still sounds like a wicked  
 plan, Manny.

3A & 3B

ALBERT  
 You freaking about becoming a dad?

TYLER  
 Not at all. I was the first time.  
 But this is our second go around.  
 We lost the first.

ALBERT  
 I didn't know that.

1D. Sitting alone in the window seat, HIDEKI plays his game.

CLOSE ON the game's diamond-shaped screen as a RED DOT travels from the mound toward the plate. Hideki presses a button and the toy suddenly erupts in a series of beeps and flashes, obviously announcing a HOME RUN.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*Oh, say, can you see,*

INT. AT&T PARK -- CONTINUOUS

ADELE belts out an inspired version of the nation's theme.

ADELE  
*by the dawn's early light,*

A row of All-Stars with hands/ballcaps held to their chests.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*what so proudly*

CLOSE ON Dale Wennington, smug/determined, eyes to the sky.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*we hail'd*

In the STANDS, FANS honoring our flag.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*at the twilight's last gleaming*

Above the SCOREBOARD, a MASSIVE FLAG majestically waving.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*Whose broad stripes*

INT. AIRPLANE -- CONTINUOUS

We continue to crawl up the aisle, toward the cockpit.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*and bright stars,*

At the cockpit door we DISSOLVE INTO:

COCKPIT

Pilots doing what pilots do best. Out the WINDOW, we view DARK, SINISTER CLOUDS.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*thro' the perilous fight,*

Without warning, a crack of white lightning splits the sky  
 and SCARES THE SHIT OUT OF US.

CABIN; 1D

Lightning fills the sky. Hideki cowers, drops his game.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*o'er the ramparts we watch'd,*

The plane shudders slightly and no one except Hideki reacts.  
 He cranes his head and glances around the cabin.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*were so gallantly streaming*

A sudden JOLT startles all, fills the cabin with concern.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*And the rocket's red glare,*

THUNDER rocks the plane. Someone screams.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*the bombs bursting in air*

COCKPIT

Pilots doing their best, but failing. We watch the plane take  
 a HORRIFIC NOSE DIVE.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*gave proof thro' the night*

CABIN

A team of grown men fall prey to their worst fears, clutch  
 their seats with white knuckles and face death.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*that our flag was still there.*

EXT. AT&T PARK -- CONTINUOUS

We approach the stadium from the air.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*Oh, say, does that star-spangled*

INT. AT&T PARK -- CONTINUOUS

The flag billows in the wind.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*banner yet wave*

In the STANDS, fans brimming with excitement.

ADELE (O.S.)  
*o'er the land of the freeee...*

CLOSE ON ADELE, reaching an emotional crescendo.

ADELE  
*...eeeeee and the home of the brave.*

The final words of the song are drowned out by the frenzied crowd. Adele waves and departs to a standing ovation.

PLAYERS mill in the dugout, awaiting the start of the game.

A group of UMPIRES huddle.

COACHES and PLAYERS observe the huddle.

Finally, as both MANAGERS approach the umpires, an announcement is made on the:

PA  
Ladies and gentlemen. We ask you to  
please take your seats for an  
important announcement.  
(then)  
Officials here at AT&T Park are  
delaying the start of tonight's due  
to unforeseen circumstances...

In the STANDS, a murmur spreads through the stadium as fans talk/surf phones. A wave of concern arises as we overhear:

RADIO (V.O.)  
It's being reported that the plane  
carrying the Chicago Cubs home from  
Japan has disappeared somewhere  
over the Pacific Ocean. While  
terrorism is not suspected, no  
further information is currently  
available...

In the PRESS BOX, a swarm of reporters, including Harriet, huddles in front of a TV.

## NEWS ANCHOR

Air traffic controllers apparently lost communications with the plane a few minutes into the third hour of the scheduled eighteen hour flight...

## INT. APARTMENT -- LATER

We move through a Chicago apartment. It's cluttered/unkempt, clearly lacking a woman's touch.

Sounds of SPORTS NIGHT fill the apartment as we move to:

MILTON, 33 - obese Cubs fanatic - sits on a well-worn couch, watching intently through a pair of thick glasses.

## DAN RYDELL

...team plane disappeared from radar screens approximately thirty minutes ago. Unconfirmed reports claim the 727 flew directly into a series of thunder storms uncharted by air traffic controllers and the central weather bureau...

## EXT. TIMES SQUARE -- LATER

Traffic -- both street and sidewalk -- is halted. All eyes are on the square's video screens broadcasting CNN.

## CNN

...radio communications with Flight 643 went silent roughly forty-five minutes ago. Navy search teams from the USS Nebraska, presently located about sixty miles from plane's last charted position, have been dispatched...

## EXT. TOKYO STREETS -- LATER

Another square, an ocean away, displays an identical scene.

## CNN INTERNATIONAL

...tahatsuki keikou amerikan kyuudan *Chicago Cubs* useru kara...

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD, CORNER OF CLARK & ADDISON -- LATER

We view an empty Wrigley Field and the surrounding neighborhood as we listen to a:

RADIO (V.O.)

Fifty-two minutes have gone by.  
It's impossible to fathom and even  
harder to say, but we begin to fear  
the worst for the passengers and  
crew of Flight...

INT. MILTON'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Milton hasn't moved. Two large hands cover two plump cheeks  
as he watches:

CASEY MCCALL

...Whitmore, manager of the Cubs  
for the past eight seasons, Mitch  
Hargrove, a first-year assistant  
manager, starting pitcher and six-  
year veteran, Mark Weer, shortstop  
Tyler Wynn, catcher Noah Hearne...

INT. PRESS BOX -- CONTINUOUS

Reporters are still gathered around the TV, while others talk  
on phones. Harriet sits alone, staring out at the field.

NEWS ANCHOR

...trip to Japan, by some accounts,  
never should have happened. The  
game, touted as a public relations  
event for the game of baseball  
sparked controversy from the first  
day it was announced, until...

(an abrupt pause)

I'm being made aware that some  
critical news is coming in over the  
wire, in this the sixty-seventh  
minute of this breaking news story.

All heads turn, including Harriet's.

In the STANDS, restless fans intently watch the JUMBOTRON  
tuned to:

CNN

Yes, we are now able to confirm reports that Flight 643, the plane carrying the Chicago Cubs home from Japan, has reappeared -- repeat reappeared -- on all radar screens, and restored communications with the crew have confirmed that all aboard are safe and sound...

The crowd erupts in cheer, drowning out the Jumbotron.

INT. MILTON'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Milton, now standing, exhales dramatically.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE -- CONTINUOUS

Cheers, honking horns, and random hugs abound.

INT. PRESS BOX -- CONTINUOUS

A hurrah fills the booth.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)

And a nation breaths a sigh of relief...

Harriet looks out at the field to the DUGOUT.

The All-Stars exhale. Heads pivot to Dale Wennington, the Chicago Cub at their side. They nod, pat his shoulder.

Dale ignores them, stares intently at HOME PLATE.

UMP

PLAY BALL!

CLOSE ON Dale's face as the stadium erupts in another cheer.

A snide smile spreads across the All-Star's fair mug. He wipes it away by blowing a BIG PINK CHEWING GUM BUBBLE.

EXT. 38,000 FEET ABOVE THE PACIFIC OCEAN

A black sky. The JET roars by, racing east, heading home.

TILE CARD appears: **A FIELDER'S CHOICE**