

Fire War

By

T.T. Michael

The Past

July 14th, 2051. 15.15 hours
Wrigley Field, Chicago, USA

The sun burnt down on the bleachers and Tom wriggled uncomfortably on his metal seat. He was hot, sweat trickling down the back of his neck, but he didn't want to ruin this – his first real baseball game. He didn't want to disappoint his father who hadn't wanted to take him until his mother insisted. He was worried that complaining would spoil the mood and end the afternoon although it was sticky, loud, and sweaty. Seven, he thought to himself, was certainly old enough to be sitting up here watching one of the biggest games of the season – the Cubs versus the Giants. Both are big names though the Cubs were going to whoop some Giant ass today; he just knew it. He glanced over at the scoreboard, smiling to himself as he read the glowing numbers. A fanfare blared so loud that he felt the music vibrate inside his chest.

“Okay, Tommy boy?” asked his father, looking down briefly and grinning at the serious look on the boy's face. Maybe he'd been wrong and Kim was right; the kid was old enough for this. The boy was doing well. He'd try to remember to pick up some flowers on the way home to make up for the yelling this morning. It could be he'd even be able to sneak in a couple of beers with the guys before they had to get back, since Tom was behaving himself so well.

“All good,” Tom said, trying to ignore the prickly feeling of drying sweat in the small of his back and a mild, but increasingly growing, urge to pee. “All good,” he repeated, as much to reassure himself as anyone else.

Up and down the aisles, vendors hawked peanuts, beer, and hot dogs, and people milled around, getting back to their seats for the beginning of the fourth inning. Tom's hand itched inside the big foam hand his father had bought him, emblazoned with the Cub's logo. He was more than sure that his beloved Cubs were going to win. A small breeze buzzed across the field, faintly carrying the scent of cut grass over the sweat and alcohol. Life was good.

The breeze tickled the hair on the back of his neck and Tommy sighed. It felt nice after the heat. Suddenly, it got stronger, and a rumbling, roaring sound replaced the metallic jollity of the baseball field jingles. Unconsciously, Tom slid closer to his father, who looked down, annoyed that the boy was asking for affection now, in the middle of a manly day. Kim spoiled the kid, and he reconsidered his idea of buying her flowers.

Tom felt his father stiffen so he pulled away, not wanting to be yelled at. However, the noises grew louder, and people stirred. Almost as one, they turned their heads to the sky. The sun seemed to have gone behind a cloud. Tommy wanted to look up, too, but he was afraid.

"Man up," he told himself. "Man up." It was what his father always told him, and there was nothing more that he wanted than to be a man. So he took a deep breath, filling his nose with the scents of baseball and looked up to the sky, squinting a little.

It was a plane, not far from the blimp he noticed earlier; that was all. Nothing to be afraid of. A tiny sigh of relief escaped his lips as he saw the familiar shape outlined over his head, wings spread out against the sky.

It was the last thing he saw before the explosion ripped his small body apart with the force of a hundred suns. The quiet of thousands of lives extinguished in the blink of a

second took over, disturbed only by falling rubble. The sun beat down again, hot and sticky, on what remained of Tom, his father, and all the others who had been unfortunate enough to be at Wrigley Field for the biggest game of the season.