

Fielder's Choice

short sample

By

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MAX

(reflecting)

Thirty-five years, Lionel. Can you believe it? I can almost remember the day I decided to become an umpire, but I'd be lying if I said I remembered every game. A hundred a year.

LIONEL

One hundred forty-two, dear. Most years, that is.

MAX

That's a lot of time. No one can remember that many. And change? If anyone can mark the times it's umpires. We don't change, not really. I mean, look at me, Lionel. We have to do the same thing every year, for decades. Winters in Sarasota. Springs in Port St. Lucie. The rest of the year up here.

LIONEL

It's called life. Do you need a refill?

MAX

They're talking robots. Can you imagine? Robots making the call? How do they even figure something like that out? Robots! I know there's gonna be pushback from the union on something like this. Maybe I shouldn't retire, Lionel. Maybe I should just go back to the field. Two more years, I can do it.

(elevated)

Robots, for crissake!

LIONEL

You sound senile. And don't get worked up. You'll have a stroke.

MAX

(aside, deflated)

Robots.

(MAX gets up and paces the length of the room, pausing at the window. LIONEL stands aside, clearly having observed these after-game episodes before.)

MAX

Yeah, well, when that day happens, I'll stop watching. The game needs people like me! Honest men who have the guts to call a strike a strike! Robots don't have the passion required to be a baseball umpire!

LIONEL

(exiting to the kitchenette)

You'll never stop watching. Come and take a seat, dearest.

MAX

(crossing to the dining table)

Are you listening to me? You have to see what you're doing in order to opine. And isn't that what umping is all about? The art of seeing through the deception?

LIONEL (O.S.)

Among other things, yes. I'm putting one on ice for you.

MAX

(aside)

The game within the game.

(calling)

That's life, Lionel. The game within the game.

LIONEL (O.S.)

If you say so. I hope you still like it medium rare.

(MAX sits. HE loosens his tie, rolls his neck.
LIONEL enters, carrying an ornate roast on a
platter.)

MAX

I can't always be right, can I? I see what I see, I make a call. Players and skippers agree or disagree, that's their problem.

LIONEL

Darling, you're being asked to make a decision in the glaring sun in front of thousands of people. Why are you questioning this now? It's over. You've had your run and impacted the game. Thirty-five years. It's time to walk away. I believe the game will be just fine without Max Fielder. Here, let me serve you.

(LIONEL dishes out. MAX stares ahead then
SLAMS his fist down on the table.)

MAX

Damnit!

(HE kicks the chair out from under him and
crosses to the living room.)

LIONEL

Max, what?

MAX

(emphatic)

The game doesn't need goddamn robots or technology or any of that shit! It needs men, it needs people! It's perfect the way it is! Why do they have to go and ruin a perfect thing all the time?