

CLEVELAND Indians baseball caps, somehow, did not look out of place despite McCall's suit and Beatrice's dress. "But who knows what they may have ground into the bloomin' things," complained Beatrice.

"Try not to think about it," advised McCall. "Hot dogs and beer are a part of the baseball experience."

"Should have no worry washing it down with the water and beer mixture you've given me, should I?"

"A steal at four dollars a cup. Taste that Stadium mustard?"

They had just settled back down from the seventh-inning stretch with the Indians losing, five to two, to the Orioles. In years past, it would be time to chalk up the loss, but this year was different. This year, the tribe could come from behind to win and did so, regularly. The beautiful new stadium had ignited the team. They had set a franchise-record, eighteen-game home winning streak and were threatening to go into the All-Star break on top of their division for the first time since 1959.

Albert Bell turned and ran for the center field wall. He stopped and played the rebound, and the sixth run scored.

"You're a bum, Bell," shouted McCall. Beatrice looked aghast, so he explained. "Part of the baseball experience. My Dad used to use it." When her expression did not soften he added, "It's an American expression meaning he's not a good player."

"Oh." The term "bum" had an entirely different connotation in England. She stood and shook her fist in the air. "You're a bounder, Mr. Bell," she shouted, long after the play had ended and to the amusement of the nearby crowd, many of who turned in their seats to see her. She sat down, quickly.

"I don't get it," complained McCall. "Every time I've been here, I've seen a ball hit over our outfielders' heads."

"It's hardly his fault the batsmen hit it so hard." She looked at McCall's expression of disgust. "It is?"

"He should be playing back, closer to the wall. It's his own stadium. He's supposed to have home-field advantage. He should know where to play by now. I can't figure it. It happens every game."

"Why do they let him play?"

"He'll drive in four runs and win the game."

"Do you come to many baseball games, Jonathan?"

"I've tried to, this year, with the new stadium. The old one usually saw me once every year or two. I came to the first game played here, an exhibition against Pittsburgh. I couldn't get tickets to the opener, though."

"It is a grand place . . . for a sports facility. Too bad you couldn't see the opener. I turned down tickets."

"Oh, I saw it. I just didn't have tickets." He stood up and pulled Beatrice to her feet. "See the foul line, the white line that runs from the batter all the way to the fence?" He had an arm around her and was pointing.

"Yes."

"Okay. When it gets to the wall you see that big standing area?"

"Yes," she said, totally ignoring the action on the field as a double play ended the Oriole's half of the inning and the crowd cheered wildly.

"Now, follow that back to the iron gates."

"You watched through the fence? How cute." She pushed him down and kissed him.

"Hey, it was an historic event."

"Please."

"It was. Clinton even showed up to throw out the first ball."

"President Clinton," she corrected. "Don't you have any respect for your President?"

"Respect? I'm ashamed. I'm embarrassed we elected him. I have about as much respect for Clinton as I have for O.J."

"Regardless, you did elect him."

"We won't make that mistake again. The only reason he got in was that it's been twelve years since we last had a democrat in the White House and a lot voters are too young to remember it."

She deferred to his knowledge of American political opinion and changed the subject. "Orenthal James," she said. "What a beautiful name for such a beautiful man."

He looked at her with surprise. "Don't you think O.J. did it?"

"Certainly, he did it. It's just such a shame he spoiled the romance of it by losing his nerve."

McCall chugged down the rest of his beer, inserted the hot dog wrapper in the cup, dropped it to the cement, and crushed it with his foot. He waited for her explanation.

She handed over her half-full beer. "Are you familiar with Shakespeare's Othello?" She gave him a sideways look. "Of course not. Well, Othello was struck with jealousy in the same way as Orenthal James. And he reacted in much the same way. We would see Orenthal James as the victim the way we do Othello had he not lost his nerve."

"I think I'm with you." He paused to allow crowd noise to die down and watch two Indians cross the plate. "O.J. was sloppy and left all that evidence behind because he intended to kill himself, too."

"Right. Othello admitted his guilt and, more importantly, established Desdemona's innocence before committing suicide. Orenthal James just didn't have the backbone. Such a tragedy."

"Did you see where Time Magazine has apologized for darkening his face on the magazine cover?"

"No. What do you mean?"

"They artificially darkened O.J.'s face to make him appear more sinister." He laughed. "They're apologizing to blacks for implying that dark skin equates to evil."

"Nonsense. Othello was a Moor. They're typically much darker skinned. Pale English women find Othello extremely beautiful in his vision of life and love. Those same women hate Orenthal James because he's fighting for his wretched life instead of his honor."

Carlos Bierga was on second base and represented the tying run. Albert Bell was at the plate. When the count went to three and one, the crowd began to chant, "Al-bert, Al-bert, Al-bert." McCall stood. Beatrice heard the crack of the bat over the noise and jumped up to join him. He pointed, and they watched the ball sail high up into the left-field bleachers. The crowd went nuts. McCall leaned toward Beatrice and shouted into her ear. "We win." She took the cue, jumped up and down, and cheered in a perfect

imitation of the exuberant tribe fan on the other side of McCall, who found the situation hysterical.

When the teams had left the field, the lights went quickly down for the fireworks display. The crowd "oohhed and aaawwed" at each explosion. Beatrice snuggled into McCall and "oohhed and aaawwed" with them into his ear, sending goose bumps down his spine and making him shudder. As the fireworks continued, Beatrice's "oohing and aawing" evolved into something else. Sounds he had not heard in years began to arouse him. As they grew more and more intense, so too did his desire for her. Her mouth and breath caressed his ear and neck as the sounds of female orgasm took possession and finished awakening a desire two-years dormant. He turned into her and kissed her deeply. He wanted to devour her. He wanted to make it real. They stood, urgent. They rushed through the crowd.