



MILES & THE MONARCHS

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Shibe Park was a steel and concrete behemoth of a stadium. Vendors walked around advertising their wares—bags of salty peanuts and the like. The crowds of fans, servicemen in uniforms, ladies in neat dresses, older men in their Sunday best, hurried their way toward their seats. An electric excitement was in the air as everyone anticipated the start of the game. The stadium was packed with people. People who looked like him. Miles had never seen anything like it. This game simply felt different. There wasn't any tension in the air, just enthusiasm. Everyone was ready to cheer on the Kansas City Monarchs or the Homestead Grays of the Negro League.

"Let's find some seats," Miles' dad said, leading them into the stadium seating area. The pair found an open spot with a great view of home plate. Miles' dad bought some peanuts and they settled in, just as the game began.

"Pitching for the Kansas City Monarchs...Joe Matchett!" the announcer called.

"Matchett?" Miles' dad questioned. "Where's Paige?"

"Satchel Paige, Dad?" Miles asked. Miles didn't know as much as his dad did about baseball, but everyone knew about Satchel Paige.

"I heard he got stopped for a speeding ticket near Lancaster," a man in front of them turned around and said.

"We need Paige." Miles' dad shook his head. Miles' dad was right. Three innings in and the Homestead Grays were leading 5-2 after Matchett gave up five unearned runs. The Kansas City Monarchs had won the first three games in the series. They could clinch the championship right here if only...

"Satchel Paige!" Miles heard someone shout.

The name moved through the crowd like a rippling wave. Satchel Paige! Paige is here!

Miles excitedly scanned the Monarchs players in the dugout until he saw him—Paige's lanky figure emerging and heading toward his rightful place on the pitcher's mound.

"Dad! Dad! It's true!" Miles yelled, pulling on his dad's suit jacket. "Satchel Paige is really here!"

"All right, Son!" his dad shouted. "Now we've got ourselves a baseball game!"

As Miles and his dad watched, Satchel Paige took over the game, shutting down the Homestead Gray's offense

completely. In the seventh inning, another two runs put the Monarchs in the lead. Miles nodded, excitedly.

"Tell me more about him, Dad."

"Cool Papa Bell once said that Satchel Paige 'made his living by throwing the ball to a spot over the plate the size of a matchbook', and it's true—Paige's accuracy is incredible when it comes to pitching. As he's gotten older his pitching has changed, but," Miles' dad nodded toward Paige, "it's no less effective than it ever was. When he was younger his pitches were more about speed. Now they're all about control. Like Cool Papa Bell said, Paige could hit a matchbox every time."

"Wow," Miles whispered. He watched Satchel Paige commanding the field, as he pulled his strong, right arm back and released the ball.

Newspaper Connection: Satchel Paige's pitches were very controlled. Find words in your local newspaper that mean control.

