

# REALMATTER



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#17

# Cuban Baseball



REALMATTER



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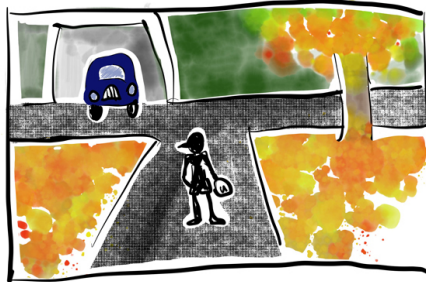


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# 1. Cuban Baseball

I WAS OUT  
IN THE  
DRIVEWAY,  
PLAYING THE  
7<sup>th</sup> GAME OF  
THE WORLD  
SERIES

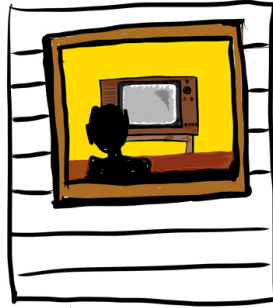


I COULD STILL HEAR  
THE ROAR FROM  
THE RADIO AS  
BOBBY RICHARDSON  
GRABBED MCCOY'S  
SCREAMING  
LINE DRIVE

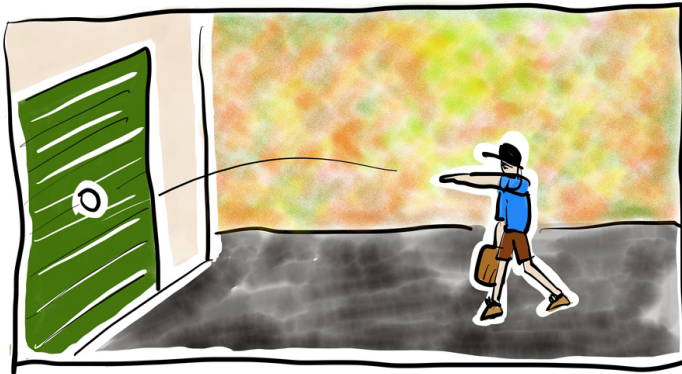


IT  
WAS  
MY  
RITUAL





THE BALL KEPT  
ME FROM  
THINKING  
ABOUT THAT  
DAMN TV

A light blue rectangular panel with a black border containing the text: "THE BALL KEPT ME FROM THINKING ABOUT THAT DAMN TV".

ONCE IN A  
WHILE I'D  
GET THIS  
FEELING

LIKE COLD  
WATER  
IN MY  
STOMACH



DAD ALWAYS  
SAID IT WOULDN'T  
BE LIKE THE  
LAST WAR.

IT'D BE  
SHORT  
AND  
SWEET!!



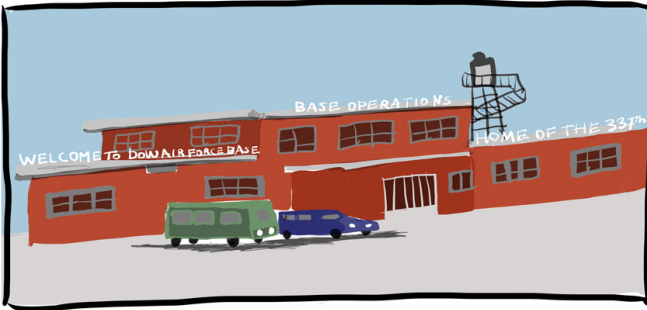


ALL THE PRACTICE  
DRILLS WE HAD  
AT SCHOOL WOULDN'T  
AMOUNT TO A  
TINKER'S DAMN



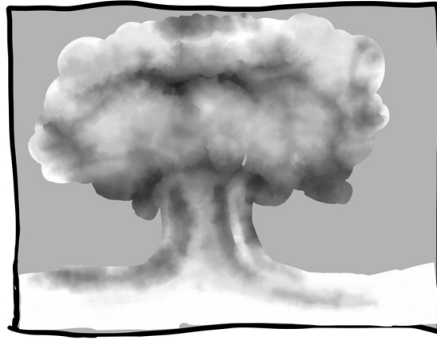
KNEEL DOWN, PUT YOUR  
HEAD BETWEEN YOUR LEGS,  
AND KISS YOUR ASS GOODBYE.

LIVING 20 MILES  
AWAY FROM DOW  
AIR FORCE BASE  
ADDED TO THE  
ANTICIPATED DESTRUCTION



DOW WAS WHERE ALL THE TROOPS  
WOULD BE LEAVING IF WAR  
BROKE OUT IN EUROPE.  
THEY'D BE SURE TO BLOW  
IT ALL TO HELL AND HALF  
OF MAINE WITH IT.

SHORT  
AND  
SWEET



THE  
GROWNUPS  
KNEW

MY  
PARENTS  
KNEW

MY  
PASTOR  
KNEW

MY  
TEACHERS  
KNEW

**BUT  
THEY  
NEVER  
TOLD  
US KIDS.**

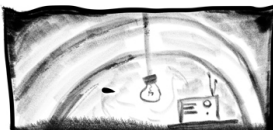
**THEY  
TOLD US  
WHAT  
TO DO:**

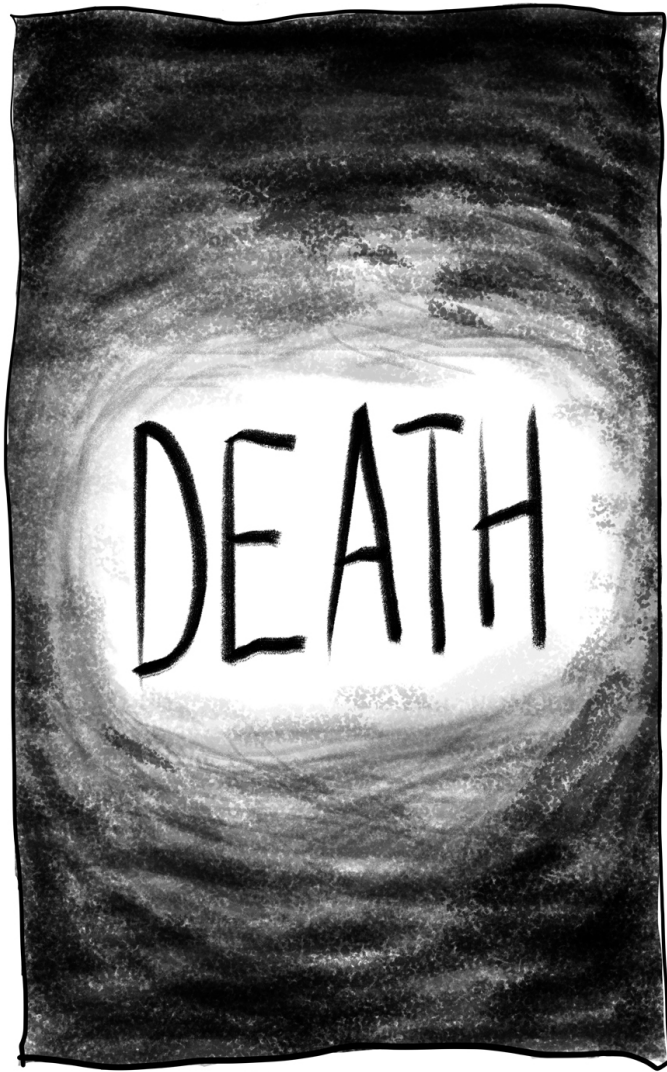
**DUCK 'N' COVER,  
JUMP OFF YOUR BIKE  
WHEN YOU SEE THE  
ATOMIC FLASH.**



**DIVE  
INTO THE  
BOMB SHELTER**

**THEY NEVER  
TOLD US WHAT  
IT MEANT.**





DEATH



THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT IT ALL MEANT.



SURE, I'D READ THE SATURDAY EVENING POST ARTICLES ABOUT FAILSAFE WHEN THE MOVIE CAME OUT

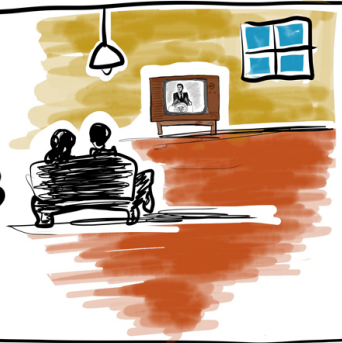


AND I SAW "ON THE BEACH"

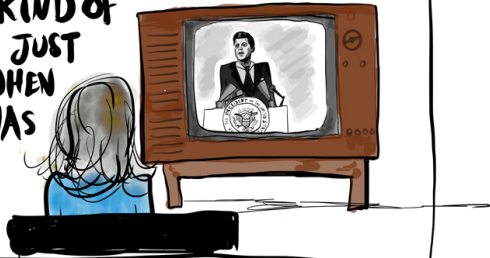
BUT NOW,  
MY MIND  
WAS GETTING  
JUST THAT  
GROWN UP

TO BE ABLE  
TO UNDERSTAND  
THE TOTALITY  
OF IT ALL.

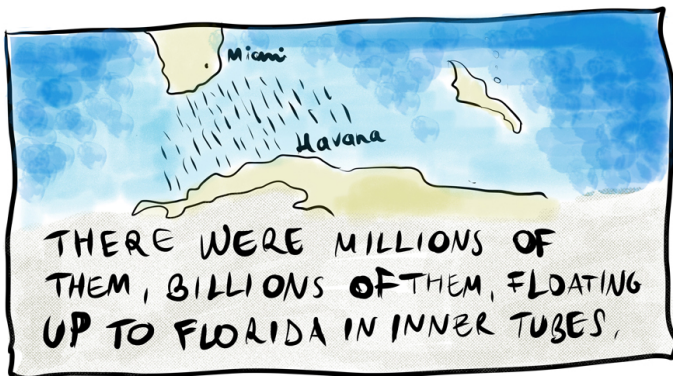
I COULD  
FEEL  
THE GROWNUPS  
WERE  
SCARED.



MOM WAS KIND OF  
QUIET AND JUST  
WATCHED WHEN  
KENNEDY WAS  
ON TV THE  
FIRST TIME



THAT NIGHT I COULD NOT  
SLEEP, AND WHEN I DID,  
I DREAMED OF THE  
RUSSIANS COMING  
UP FROM CUBA.



THERE WERE MILLIONS OF  
THEM, BILLIONS OF THEM, FLOATING  
UP TO FLORIDA IN INNER TUBES,

COMING IN ON  
THE TIDE LIKE  
A SEA OF BLACK  
PORTUGUESE  
MEN O' WAR.



MOM CAME DOWN  
TO MY ROOM  
AND HELD ME  
IN HER ARMS.



DON'T YOU  
WORRY NOW,



WE'LL CROSS  
THAT BRIDGE



WHEN WE  
COME TO IT.

WHAT  
BRIDGE?  
THE BRIDGE  
MELTED  
INTO NOTHINGNESS  
BY A BLINDING FLASH  
OF RADIATION?



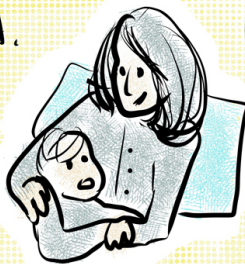
EVERY-  
THING  
GONE



I COULD TELL SHE WAS  
GETTING AS MUCH  
COMFORT FROM ME  
IN HER ARMS AS I WAS  
FROM HER BEING THERE.



"I'M ALL RIGHT, MA.  
I KNOW IT'S JUST  
A DREAM. I LOVE  
YOU, GO ON BACK  
TO BED."



AS BAD AS THAT  
WAS, TONIGHT  
WAS DIFFERENT.





DIDN'T WANT  
TO HEAR THAT  
WE HAD  
STARTED  
BOMBING THEM

THAT THEY  
WERE GOING  
TO BOMB  
US

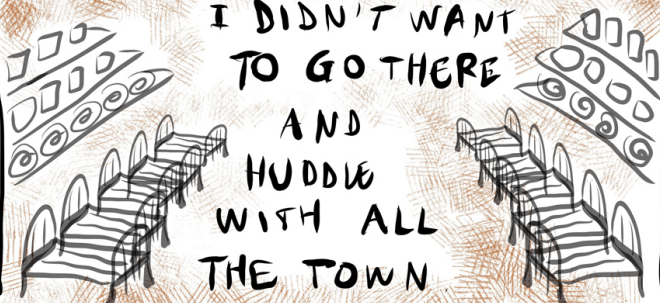
THAT WE  
SHOULD GET  
DOWN IN  
OUR CELLARS

OR GO  
DOWN TO  
THE CIVIL  
DEFENSE  
SHELTER

IT WAS IN THE BASEMENT  
OF THE MEMORIAL HALL  
WHERE I HAD  
GONE TO  
KINDERGARTEN



I DIDN'T WANT  
TO GO THERE  
AND  
HUDDLE  
WITH ALL  
THE TOWN



I DIDN'T WANT TO  
HUDDLE ANYWHERE,  
I JUST WANTED TO  
PLAY BASEBALL.

FORD THROWS IT IN THERE

**THUNK!**

AND MAYS SLAPS  
IT TO BOYER



PLAYING JUST  
OFF THE LINE  
AND PEGS IT OVER

TO PERITONE, WILLIE  
NEVER HAD A CHANCE

TO LEG THAT

ONE OUT!





FORD LOOKS INTO  
BERRA TO GET THE  
SIGN AND THEN GOES  
INTO THE WINDUP

**THUNK!**

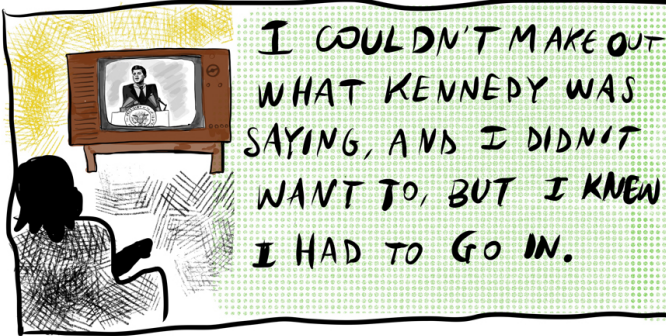
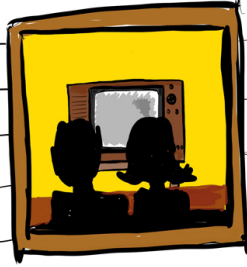
IT CAME OFF CEPEDA'S BAT  
HARD AND QUICK BUT MARIS  
RUNS BACK AND GETS IT  
JUST IN FRONT OF THE  
360 SIGN!

MAN O MAN,  
FOLKS, THAT  
WAS CLOSE!



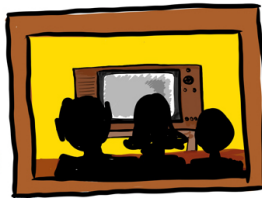


I CAME IN  
FROM THE  
COOL OCTOBER  
NIGHT INTO  
THE WARM  
KITCHEN.



I COULDN'T MAKE OUT  
WHAT KENNEDY WAS  
SAYING, AND I DIDN'T  
WANT TO, BUT I KNEW  
I HAD TO GO IN.

I WAS EITHER OUTSIDE  
PLAYING, OR  
I WAS INSIDE  
WITH MOM  
AND DAD.



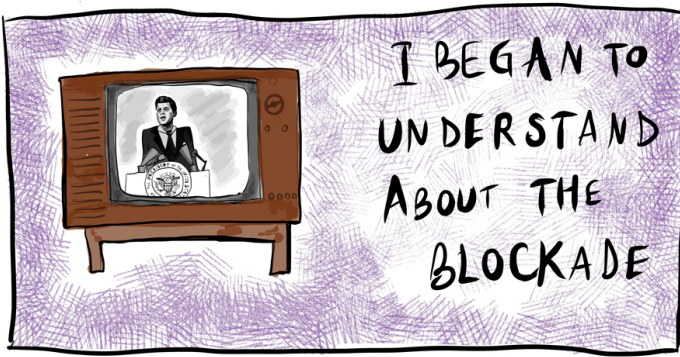


IT REMINDED ME OF  
THE MORNINGS WHEN  
I WAS VERY YOUNG  
AND I WOULD CLIMB  
INTO BED WITH THEM.



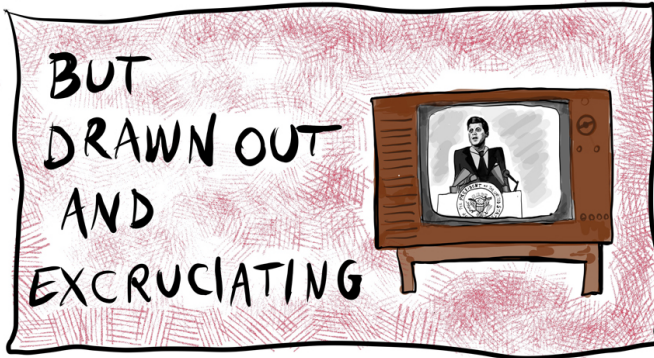
INSTANT PEACE,  
INSTANT  
SAFETY,  
INSTANT BLISS

BUT I WASN'T THAT  
YOUNG CHILD ANYMORE,  
AND ALTHOUGH I FELT  
BETTER, I DIDN'T FEEL SAFER



AND THAT  
WHATEVER  
WAS  
HAPPENING  
TONIGHT,

THIS WAS  
NOT GOING  
TO BE  
SHORT AND  
SWEET

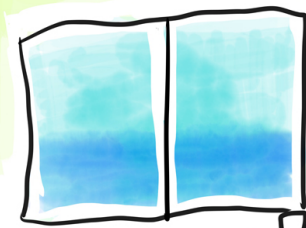


Thirty-eight years  
later, I took a  
trip to Cuba. Spring of  
2000.



There  
I met a  
couple my age;  
they had been  
living in Havana  
in October 1962.

We ate at Hemingway's  
favorite restaurant,  
we walked the Malecon  
in the evening,



and one day, at a  
baseball game, I told  
them about my  
night of Cuban baseball.  
And they told me theirs.

Their fears of an  
American invasion.

Their fears that  
when Khrushchev sent  
the missiles to  
Washington, Washington  
would bomb Havana.

They told me of their  
nights with their parents.

And there in the stands  
we cried, and washed  
away the angst of our lives.



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