

DISTRICT 13

WINGS



SADDLEBACK
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING

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Angel stood in center field. “One more, boys,” he yelled. He pounded his fist into his glove.

He didn’t like the lights here. They were too bright. You could lose a ball in the sky. But Angel and the Huskies were up by one. It was the bottom of the seventh inning. They needed one more out to win the game.

Angel knew the batter. He remembered him from last year. Angel never forgot a batter's swing. This guy was pretty good. People said he was slow. That he couldn't meet the fastball. But Angel wasn't so sure about that.

"One more out," he yelled again.

Angel looked over at Roberto. Roberto played right field. The two nodded to each other. "Let's put this one to bed!" Roberto yelled. "Let's bring it in. Right here!"

Angel watched the pitch. The batter was in motion right away. "Here it comes," Angel thought. "He's starting early. He'll meet that fastball. No problem. And probably knock it deep." Angel was ready.

Crack! The ball flew into the night sky. Angel called it right away. “I’ve got it,” he thought. He felt connected to it. He had a way of judging fly balls. Coach Benson said he “had the gift.”

He ran toward the fence. He took quick looks over his shoulder. Damn these lights! It was hard to see. His heart raced. But he kept up his pace. The ball was coming down now. Angel could see it clearly again.

His body hit the fence first. Then the ball hit his glove. He caught it! Huskies win! Angel ran toward the dugout. Roberto joined him. “Nice catch, Wings,” he said to Angel.

“Thanks, Berto. I lost it for a second! It was a lucky catch.”

“That ain’t luck, Wings. I’ve seen you make too many of those,” Roberto joked.

After the game, spirits were high. But they had a long ride home. The team walked to the bus. Angel and Roberto were the last ones. They carried their bats and gear. “The sky here,” Roberto said. “It’s so black.”

“Not like the city, eh?” Angel said. “Makes the damn lights seem twice as bright.”

Coach Benson stood by the bus. He looked happy. “Great job out there. Both of you,” he said. “You’re my good guys. I’m glad I get to coach you both next year. Come on. Let’s get a move on.”

Roberto got on the bus first.

Coach Benson touched Angel's arm.
"Angel, wait. I have big news. A scout is coming next week. To the Warriors game. His name's Trent Simon. He's interested."

Angel stared at Coach Benson.
He didn't know what to say.

Coach Benson smiled. "You deserve it, Wings. No one deserves it more than you. Come on. Let's head home."

Angel walked home in the dark. He felt light and free. Once home, he called his girl, Maria. The phone only rang once. "That was fast," Angel whispered.

"I had the phone by my ear," Maria said. She was half asleep. "Did you win, baby?"

"Yeah. But get this, Maria. A scout is coming to the Warriors game. Benson said so. "

"Serious?"

"I'm gonna be ready for him too."

"I know you will, baby."

“Go back to  now. Sweet dreams, Maria.”

Angel hung up the phone. He walked to his sisters' room. The twins were sound asleep. He kissed their foreheads. Then he made his bed on the couch. He always slept there. It was his idea. He wanted Sonya and Cecilia to have their own room. Besides, he was always so tired. He fell asleep in minutes.

Angel heard his mom. It was about 4:30 A.M. “Did you win, *mijo*? My child?” she asked softly. Angel told her about his catch. “*Muy bien*,

well done,” she said. “I’m off to work. It’s Friday. Don’t let the girls forget the lunch money.”

Angel nodded. “Bye, Mom,” he said.

He got his sisters ready for school. It didn’t take much. They were seven years old now. Roberto stopped by as usual. Angel and Roberto walked the twins to school. Then they headed to the high school.