

A Prayer for Steve Bartman
by Liam Rapple

“Again in the air, down the left field line. Alou, reaching into the stands, and he couldn’t get it! And he’s livid with a fan!”

- Thom Brennaman, October 14, 2003

2003 and you hustle through checkered cabs and cigarette smoke
Metrosexuals and their silvery cellphones
Wrigley’s alive, and you’ve got the radio on your headphones.
The Cubs are kicking the Billy Goat Curse.
Game 6, you’re there.

Late game, Cubs are up, and it cannot get better than this.

Until the ball, a white dot against a black sky
A silencer against a crowd of screaming drunks
rises above your head.
For once — just once — you will
corral the ball.
This time, it won’t thump you on your head,
knock your glasses down.
You’ll be a hero when you catch it, slick, cool.

You tell yourself you’re a hero, Steve. Be a hero.

Eyes to God, the ball, pausing at its apex, hurtles toward you and suddenly
someone pushes you
The man behind you — the one lobbing cash at the peanut man —
reaches over you.
Alou shoves you from below and
chaos falls, like a little white bomb,
on your dense pocket of the world.

Be a hero, Steve.

But you miss it. Alou misses it.

The Cubs miss the Series.

And you miss the end of the game, security escort, listening on your headphones.

In the back of some checkered cab, the cabbie talks Cubs:

You hear that some putz blocked Alou? Cost us the game!

Pressing your forehead to the cold glass window,
you plead to be forgotten.
It cannot get worse than this.