

CHAPTER ONE

NEBRASKA JUNE 1999

SCOTT Davis sat on the bed in his room at the Omaha Hilton staring at the phone, willing it to ring. It was the day of the annual Major League baseball draft, and he'd arranged to take his call from his hotel room where he and the team were staying so he could play in the College World Series the next day at Rosenblatt Stadium.

A senior at Stanford University, Scott was the starting shortstop on the number one-ranked Stanford Cardinal baseball team. At six feet two and two hundred and fifteen pounds, Scott possessed the power and speed that had pro scouts lining up to watch him play. And they weren't the only ones watching him; his sandy brown hair and piercing blue eyes got the attention of every girl on campus. And his academic standing was just as impressive: a political science and prelaw major, Scott graduated with a 3.8 GPA.

Scott, who was considered one of the best prospects among positional players in years, was expected to be picked in the middle of the first round despite being so highly rated; he had the misfortune of being in a draft class that was unusually blessed with pitching, and pitching was always at a premium. *Baseball America*, a leading publication that annually ranks college and Minor League prospects, had suggested that as many as 18 pitchers would go in the first round and at least 14 of

them were likely to be drafted before any position players were selected. Among the 14 pitchers expected to be drafted ahead of Scott was his roommate and best friend, Doug Simons.

The scouting report on Scott was as solid as his physique. At the plate his short, powerful swing produced a .350 batting average, with twenty-two home runs and fifty-six RBIs during his senior season. His glove was equally impressive. He had superior range both up the middle and to his right, where he could throw out all but the fastest base runners from the hole, and his knowledge of the game and his natural instincts on the field were as impressive as his physical tools, the scouts raved.

Sitting in a chair across from Scott, reading the *New York Times*, was his biggest supporter: his dad, Rick Davis. Rick had invested much of his time during Scott's younger days, encouraging his son's passion for the game. He coached Scott's Little League and Babe Ruth teams and would frequently adjourn court early for the day to attend practices or games.

Suddenly the phone rang, sending Scott's pulse into overdrive. His palms began to sweat as he grabbed for the receiver. It was Pete Demarco, a West Coast scout for the San Francisco Giants, a perennial contender in the National League's Western Division.

"Hey, Scott. It's Pete Demarco with the Giants. How ya holdin' up?"

"I'm all right, I guess," Scott responded, his mouth so dry that he could barely form the words. "I just want this to be over so I can concentrate on getting ready for Georgia Tech and the championship game tomorrow."

"Well, it won't be long now," Demarco said. "We're planning on taking you with our first rounder, which is pick number seventeen. I'll call you as soon as we make the pick."

His father was beaming. "Congratulations," he said, slapping his son on the shoulder and giving him a great big hug. "You made it! You're actually going to the big— *Riiiiinggg*."

Rick's praise was suddenly interrupted by another call. Scott picked it up, expecting to hear Demarco on the other end, but instead it was Jack Byington, the young maverick general manager of the Boston Red Sox. Scott, who grew up in Connecticut, was a huge Red Sox fan.

In his fantasies he was the Red Sox starting shortstop, basking in the intoxicating joy of standing in the middle of the Fenway Park infield, celebrating a World Series championship with his teammates. However, as the draft approached, he never let himself think about the possibility that the Red Sox would draft him. After all, they would be drafting very near the end of the first round, as they usually did. He would have been drafted before the Red Sox ever got to make a pick. In fact, the Red Sox had had very little contact with him leading up to his senior season.

They had sent someone to speak to him earlier, but he hadn't allowed himself to get his hopes up. What Scott failed to remember was that the Minnesota Twins had signed Mark Johnson as a free agent after last season. Johnson had been the Sox starting right-fielder for six years before signing with Minnesota. As a consequence of losing Johnson to free agency, the Red Sox got the Twins' first-round draft pick this year as compensation. That pick was the thirteenth of the first round.

Jack Byington was telling him that the Red Sox had just made him their first-round pick. Byington continued on, but Scott heard none of it. *Could this really be happening? No, he was dreaming, wasn't he?* His mind was instantly fast-forwarding to the day he would step onto the field at Fenway Park. Then just as quickly rewinding to his days growing up dreaming of this. Scott, finally aware that Byington was still talking to him, was told to expect a phone call from Jim Wallace, the team's traveling secretary. Wallace would be arranging his trip to Fenway Park for his introductory press conference after the college World Series which concluded the next day. Byington wished Scott good luck in the championship game and told him he was looking forward to seeing him in a few days at Fenway Park.

Scott could hardly talk as he responded to Byington's congratulations. He was shaking, his voice trembling as he thanked him and said goodbye. Somewhere in the distance, he thought he heard his dad saying, "Congratulations, kiddo! You really did it! The San Francisco Giants are a great organization, always in the thick of the pennant race. And they need a shortstop. Mom and I are so proud of you."

Scott couldn't contain the smile that seemed as large as the famed Green Monster in Fenway's left field. Through tears he managed to say, "No, Dad. That was Boston."

DOUG Simons was kicking back on a lounge chair by the pool at the Omaha Hilton. He had just been chosen by the San Diego Padres as the third overall pick, and he was on top of the world. At six feet four and two hundred and thirty-five pounds, he was the prototypical power pitcher in the mold of a Roger Clemens or Curt Schilling. He possessed a 96 mph fastball and a wicked off-speed pitch. Ah, the sun, the sand, the surf, the babes, and baseball. It won't ever get better than this, he thought, sipping a cold beer. A practice was scheduled that afternoon to get ready for the series finale the next day, but he figured he deserved one celebratory drink.

Doug was a long way from home—in more ways than one. He grew up in the small town of Granville, North Carolina, where the most excitement anyone had was playing chicken with their John Deere tractors. He had no relationship with his father and barely saw his mother; Felicia Simons worked two jobs to support them—a secretary by day and waitress at night. By age ten Doug knew the only way he was going to escape the sleepy backward town and leave his childhood behind was to put all his efforts into baseball and hope for a scholarship to college.

Stanford University became his ticket out of Granville. There, he formed an immediate bond with his freshman roommate Scott Davis. They were the original odd couple. Scott, the son of a judge and a school guidance counselor, grew up in the affluent Connecticut bedroom community of Weston, located in Fairfield County, one of the richest in the country. Doug, on the other hand, wondered each day if there was going to be a meal on the table at dinnertime. He and his mother barely scraped by. But despite their divergent backgrounds, they had much in common, particularly the Gordon twins. Jackie and Debbie Gordon were incoming freshman just like Doug and Scott. The raven-haired beauties were from Atlanta, and they had amazing emerald eyes and bodies to die for. “Angels” was Doug’s immediate reaction. When it turned out the girls’ apartment was located directly below theirs, they knew college life was going to be awesome.

SCOTT went down to the pool area looking for Doug. He wanted to tell him the news, that Fenway Park was his. As usual, he found his

friend holding court with a number of admiring female fans. They just couldn't resist his flashy smile, thick dark hair, and ice-blue eyes—and he knew it. Scott couldn't understand how Jackie put up with Doug's constant philandering. He was such a lady's man, such a player.

"Hey, Redford!" Doug yelled out to Scott. "You gonna be joining me in California?" Doug's nickname for his friend was based on the fictional baseball prodigy Roy Hobbs in *The Natural*, played by Robert Redford.

"California? I thought you were going to Tampa."

"No way was I gonna last to the fifth pick. I went number three to San Diego, and you are heading to San Fran, right?"

"Well, things worked out a little differently than I thought," Scott said, knowing Doug wouldn't be too happy that they were going to be more than 2,500 miles apart. I got picked early, too, Country." Doug's nickname came from his backwoods upbringing, and Scott never missed a chance to tease him good-naturedly about it.

"Don't hold out on me, Redford. Who gets Roy Hobbs?"

"Beantown."

Doug was speechless, but his expression said it all: pained euphoria. They had become as close as brothers, but soon a whole country would separate them.

The next day, Redford and Country walked into the home locker room at Rosenblatt Stadium to suit up for the championship game of the College World Series, both attempting to forget that this was the last game they would play together as teammates. Doug and Scott were the only members of the Stanford University baseball team to be drafted, and as they entered the locker room, they were met with high-fives and slaps on the ass from their coaches and teammates. As things started to calm down, the friends looked at each other, hugged, and then went about their usual pregame ritual of going over the opposing hitters' tendencies, what pitches they like and in what location, the scouting reports, and where Scott would position himself on different pitches or in various game situations.

THEY put on a two-man show that day that became legend at Rosenblatt Stadium. Doug threw a complete game, two-hit shutout,