

# Vida Blue and the Boy who Loved Baseball

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The Boy taught me the secret of Risk:  
always sweep Madagascar early in the game.

I admired the pieces of petrified day-old gum  
that were stationed on his bedpost.  
Before his saliva had transformed those pink globs,  
they were just thick slabs of powdery stiffness stuck  
between Rick Monday and Reggie Jackson.

Only the Boy could blow a true bubble  
with original Topps baseball-card gum.

A trip to the 7-Eleven was his whiffle-ball break.  
He would return for the seventh inning  
with a gob-stoppered mouth  
and a root beer Slurpee.

*"Too many Catfishes, not enough Vida Blues."*

A forkball, a slider, and the Boy is gone.

They named the Little League field after him.  
At night, I sit on the worn six-tiered metal bleachers  
and half-expect to see him appear,  
with a Pixie stick drooping from his bubble-gum mouth,

baseball cap on crooked, but not backwards,  
and a tired Louisville Slugger in his right hand.

But I am alone beside the concession stand  
and his name has long been weathered.  
It has been thirty-three summers.

When the evening overwhelms me,  
I see him laughing in the sky:  
the galaxy spread out before him.  
He is trading Draco for Cassiopeia.

He has stars now instead of cards,  
light instead of dice:  
no baseball, but memories of  
the feel of the swing - the connecting.

The gods banter alongside him  
while he swaps constellations  
as though they were second-string players.  
He has been forgotten,  
and yet remembered:  
the Boy who only lost at Risk once  
and never did get that Vida Blue card.