

... from *Macaroni and Cheese Manifesto* (Third Edition)
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In Centerfield

It happened on a summer day
In 1965,
Our softball season underway,
The schoolyard was alive.

I'd shagged fly balls in centerfield
At least a thousand times;
The label on my glove had peeled—
Like me, its age was nine.

My dad had given me the glove
The day that I was born;
The gift outlived his hopeful love,
By six, my dad was gone.

A boy without a father seeks
A glade where he can grow—
A place where nothing hurts or bleeds,
A place where he feels whole.

For me that place was open sky
On ground of black tar seal;
While others tried in left and right,
I thrived in centerfield.

And so it came to pass that day
My solace was revealed:
With ease I'd made my umpteenth play,
While others lurched and reeled.

It melted through the sun's bright rays,
I heard it soft and clear—
His voice—I heard it plain as day—
His voice caressed my ears:

“My gift, my gift,” the voice intoned
Right through the schoolyard din—
My graceful body is my home,
My home is deep within—

The revelation kissed my face
And soothed my wounds inside,
It told me how I'd find my place,
It blessed my fragile life.

A boy without a father seeks
A glade where he can grow—
A place where nothing hurts or bleeds,
A place where he feels whole.

I've lost my way a dozen times
And tossed away some years,
Been tagged out by my foolish pride
And gagged on my own jeers.

I want to hear the voice again,
To feel at home, to yield;
Yes, purge vainglory and false pain
To be . . . in centerfield.

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