

I Love the Ballpark

Lyri Ahnam

I earned straight-A tickets again and today
we're going to the Cardinals game!
I hardly fight with my brother
during the hour-long ride into St. Louis when he strays
onto my side of the back seat.
Our parents bicker over where to park the station wagon.
We walk and walk and walk
to our seats in left field under the boiling sun.
I love our melty-hot seats at the ballpark.

The organ pulses. We clap, clap, clap along.
Lou Brock, my idol, trots into left field,
moving with grace and purpose.
I try to play left field in softball, but have trouble
tracking the ball through my thick glasses, and my body
rarely agrees on a single course of action.
Someone starts a wave—wait, wait, wait, jump!
The announcer describes the play
far away at home plate.
I love sitting in left field at the ballpark.

Vendors sing-shout through the crowd, “Popcorn!”
“Get yer popcorn here!” and “Cold Beer!”
“Ice cold beer!” Dad splurges on one beer.
Mom complains everything is too expensive.
When my brother and I get thirsty she escorts us
to the water fountain, which is free.
My brother says, “I’m starving,” and begs and begs and begs.
Mom relents during the seventh inning stretch. We each get one hot dog.
I eat mine with mustard and pickle relish; my brother drowns his in ketchup.
I love hotdogs at the ballpark.

First Dad and my brother, then Mom and I
take turns going to the restroom.
The line is a mile long for the women’s room.
By the time we get to the stall my bladder is bursting tight.
I dance in place as Mom lays toilet paper on the seat
to cover the germs. I hop on, careful not to disturb the paper.
My bladder is barely shy amidst the thunderous
flushing, growly sink splashing, and echoing voices.
I go and go and go.
I love peeing at the ballpark.

Sun scorched and exhausted, we join the crush of people squeezing
out of the stadium. In the stifling station wagon,
Mom tells us kids to lie down and sleep,
but I stay up to see my favorite, the Anheuser-Busch sign on Highway 40.
We’re in luck! Stadium traffic is heavy, and I get to see the big “A” fill
and the neon eagle fly over and over and over as we creep by.
Once we pass the sign, I curl up on the backseat beside my sleeping brother,
listening to my parents’ squabbling.
I love our family’s annual trek to the ballpark.