

The Lost Baseball

by [Joseph Bathanti](#) in the [March 2025](#) issue

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for Gavin

Winter's left shambled the split rail fence.

Notched stobs, years sunk

in the tallow shank of Linville Creek—

distraught with runoff, though little snow—

finally rotted March and April.

The silver elm's crashed limbs

snapped a dozen cross-beams

whip-tailed in blackberry

and the jagged multiflora—

punk pink roses I tend to love.

I bush-axe, mattock

thorny cane and catbrier,

clip, hack. In a fetch of light,

cupped in a fallen wren's nest—

as if to overwinter in the pocket

of an aged catcher's mitt—

lay the lost baseball—teethed-upon,

bluish-scarlet seams unraveled—

that little Gavin looped over my head

three summers ago as I pitched to him in the yard.

He and I searched through moonrise—

Where can it be? implored.

How he loved that ball.

It should have been there;

and, of course, had been here.

Balls vanish, then reappear.