

The Big Game

by Jedediah Berry

A presumptuous moon rose over the baseball field before the sun could set. The vampire had suffered from terrible dreams, mistaking the cheers from the junior league game for the cries of the damned. He went to the top of his tower. By now the field was empty. The cards on the scoreboard read Home: 6, Guest: 4, Inning: 9.

"Somewhere something is happening," the vampire said.

He rang the servants' bell, but his servants were few and all were sleeping, so he fetched his slippers himself. He sat in his den, spinning the wooden globe he purchased thirty-six years earlier, in Damascus, for two Roman coins. There was a secret compartment beneath the Black Sea. He still hadn't decided what to put in there.

The vampire donated floodlights so the children could play ballgames at night. The lights came on but the dugouts remained vacant. The vampire sat alone in the bleachers. "Sometimes I am less than the sum of my parts," he said to the sum of his parts.

He mistook Wednesday for next Wednesday, and said something embarrassing while waiting his turn at the barbershop. A few friends paid him a visit. They wanted to talk about old times, but couldn't remember them. "This world is getting too young for us," one friend said, and everyone looked at their feet.

The vampire bought twenty red uniforms; he was going to sponsor his own team. Only two boys showed up for practice, and neither of them knew how to pitch.

"I could get a new PA system for the announcers," the vampire said.

One of the boys said, "PA stands for lots of things," and he listed them: particular average, passenger agent, Pennsylvania, personal appearance, personal assistant, power amplifier, power of attorney, press agent, private account, professional association, public address, purchasing agent.

"You forgot per annum," said the other boy.

"Per annum," the first boy conceded.

The vampire let them keep their jerseys and caps.

There was a package waiting for him on his doorstep. In the box were puzzle pieces—a handful, the vampire determined after an hour's work, from at least ten different sets.

"I am habitually missing the point," the vampire said.

Summer proceeded hot and rainless, and sucked the water from unattended glasses. The postal carriers labored on as though through a wilderness. No one waved or honked their horns, and you and I were out of town the day they picked the locks and found the vampire in his secret chamber. The barber held the stake to his chest while the baseball coach pounded it in. The barber was surprised that the vampire didn't turn to ashes. They might have stood there forever if it hadn't been for the cheering outside.

Down at the big game, the team's star player, bearing upon his young shoulders the hopes and dreams of so many, had knocked one high and far into leftfield.

