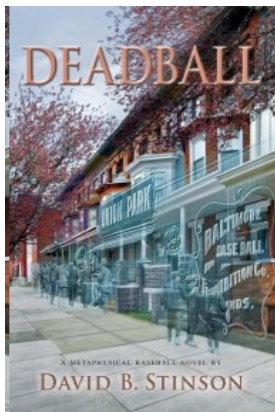




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Deadball, A Metaphysical Baseball Novel

By: David B. Stinson

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SUMMARY

Deadball is the story of Byron Bennett, a former minor-league baseball player who has an unusually deep, even spiritual, appreciation of baseball.

The prologue to the novel describes Byron immersed in the moment of his last at-bat. The story then opens tens years later, in 1999, with Byron alone, divorced, and working for the Bowie Baysox, a minor-league affiliate for the Baltimore Orioles. His true passion, however, remains baseball and its history, and he now spends as much time as he can researching and visiting the sites of old parks. Spurred by the impending demise of Baltimore's Memorial Stadium, he becomes obsessed with learning about the city's other former ballpark sites – especially Union Park, the home of the 1890's National League Orioles.

At the site of Union Park, now populated by shabby, old row houses, Byron has an exhilarating but upsetting vision of the park as it was 100 years earlier. Afterward, he meets two old men: Murph, in front of one of the houses that has transplanted the ballpark; and then Mac, in a tavern down the street. They separately imply to him that they understand why he would have such a vision. He returns home confused, the unsettling incident reminding him of similar visions he had when he was younger, one of Babe Ruth's wedding as he sat outside the church where it took place, and one of Ruth playing in a high-school baseball game at the high school Ruth and Byron both attended.

Byron returns to the Union Park neighborhood of Harwood to invite Mac to accompany him on a baseball trip to Detroit to see Tiger Stadium before it is torn down, but the tavern in which they met is shuttered and boarded up, clearly closed for years, not the few days since Byron sat there. He can't find Mac or anyone who knows him, but later at home he receives a note from him that suggests Byron should make room in his trip to talk to souvenir vendor Matty O'Boyle in Detroit and also to visit vanished Forbes Field in Pittsburgh and League Park in Cleveland.

Byron takes the trip alone and meets a series of characters who seem to support the idea that old parks, players, and crowds can be seen if one is a "true believer." In Pittsburgh, he meets an old man who claims to be a long-dead Pirate player. At the only remaining bit of League Park, he sees the original structure resurrect in front of him, complete with fans in line for a game and a ticket-taker who won't accept Byron's modern money. He visits the homes of Honus Wagner and Cy Young and sees Young's house age and disintegrate before his eyes.

When Byron haltingly tells his ex-wife Maggie and close friend Charles about his growing suspicion that ball parks that seem to be gone are somehow still there, they are of course concerned about him – especially because both are aware of Byron's past visions and his earlier problems with alcohol. Byron still loves Maggie, and she seems still to love Byron. She agrees to meet him at a game, the first time they have seen each other in over a year, and he remembers when their marriage ended and his subsequent vision that day of a train trip from a century before. He admits to himself that his visions and obsessions stand in the way of getting back together with Maggie. Just the same, he feels he must resolve what the visions mean.

Deadball's exciting conclusion depends upon Byron's detective work, now focused less simply on the history of the game and more on the mystery of improbably surviving ballfields and players. Still unsure of what he has found or even what he is looking for, his search sends him to the sites of old parks in New York and Boston and, finally, to a cemetery in Baltimore. In the aftermath, he gains an understanding of the visions he has seen and is able to make sense of his journey.

John Kelly of The Washington Post says:

“Deadball is about the magical intersection of memory and mystery, a place where the crack of the bat and the shouts of the crowd mingle with the bricks and mortar of vanished ballparks. It's about trying to turn a double into a triple and about trying to turn a barely-held memory into a tangible artifact. Someone once said you can't go home again. But you can. That's the whole point of baseball after all – and of David Stinson's beguiling new novel.”

BIOGRAPHY

David B. Stinson, a former litigator for the U.S. Department of Justice, is a recovering lawyer. A long-time youth baseball coach, he did not learn to hit a curve ball until he was in his 40's. David is General Manager of the Silver Spring Thunderbolts, a wooden bat baseball team located in Maryland that plays in the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League. Deadball is his first novel. He resides with his wife and three children in Silver Spring, Maryland.