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Thank God for Ozzie Smith

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Thank God for Ozzie Smith

When Dad chastised my brother & me for watching TV
on those gorgeous summer Saturdays,
I couldn't disagree, but
baseball beckoned
and any chance to watch our Tigers
or *This Week in Baseball*
was too much to pass up.
It added up, those hours of
Willie Stargell homers, Pete Rose dives, Nolan Ryan
no-hitters, and
Ozzie Smith back flips. It filled our mental record, and

it paid off.

When my two-year-old son ran
too hastily
to the top of the stairs and
tumbled head-first,
I laid out like Ozzie—
a dive so true I
paused
horizontal to the floor just long enough to realize I
was horizontal to the floor
with outstretched arms, and
I caught his right ankle
and held my grasp.

Ozzie, at that point, would pop to his feet
& zip a bullet to first or flip a popcorn
kernel into the mouth of the second baseman's glove
for a double play,
but I pulled in my catch,
held this bawling boy in the acreage of my palm,
rubbed his head,
and muttered love, love, love.

The inning over, I set him down to
toddle off with tentative steps,
and my heart & soul
did a standing back flip in celebration
of the golden magic of perfect movement,
a thank you
to grace.

—Mitchell Nobis

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