The future of baseball: the Red Sox in 2086.

Asterisk: Red Sox 2086

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# Asterisk By **Mark LaFlamme**

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## **Asterisk**

There was a steering wheel of sorts at the front of the Astro car, but it was mostly a nod to the days when automobiles were operated by the people within them. It was circular, yes. It was located at the front left side of the car and could be gripped in both hands. You could try twisting it to the right or to the left, but it sure as hell would not change your course. To do that, the operator needed to punch in his personal traveler code, select "change destination," and then enter new travel plans. With quantum mechanisms at work, global repositioning was near instantaneous.

Morris gripped the wheel in both hands. He stared straight ahead, focused, just as he had sixty years ago when he drove up and down highways populated by men and women in full control of their cars. It had been that long since he'd driven a car – since anyone had driven a car that could be speeded up or slowed down, turned left or turned right, at the whim of the operator.

Inside the Astro, Morris eased the wheel to the right, and sighed when the Astro failed to respond. Ahead of them, a row of cars identical to this one floated serenely through the air 65 feet above the ground. Some veered off on new routes to the left or right, but there was no disordered zigging and zagging. The refinement of electro gravity around 2019 had

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spelled the end of the traffic jam, of passing lanes and of entire highway systems.

"Gas had reached twenty four dollars a gallon before the new technology came along. Have I told you that, Billy Ball?"

Beside him, Billy sat in what was still called a passenger seat, although, Morris mused, everyone was a passenger in a driverless car. The boy wore his Red Sox cap pulled down over his brow. With his right hand, he lifted a scuffed baseball into the air and flung it into the glove on his left. He did this over and over, his lips moving slightly. Morris knew there was a very special baseball game being played at some cerebral stadium in which the boy was the best hitter, best fielder and best home run basher the roaring crowd had ever seen. The thought made Morris smile a little.

"Billy? Did you hear me?"

The boy looked up, one eye squeezed shut against the sun. Tufts of red hair curled out from beneath the Sox cap. Billy was 8-years-old and an All-American kid, right down to the freckles and the jack-o-lantern grin.

"I heard you, Grandpa. Gas was twenty four dollars. That's the stuff that used to make cars go. Back when people drove their own cars and California was still connected to the rest of America."

Morris laughed and nodded. So he'd told this story once or twice. Who could remember? He was with the boy a lot, much more than the kid's never-time-for-anybody dad, who thought mining Uranus for diamonds and making a million dollars was the way to good family relations. The dipshit.

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