

## *The Light of God: America's Pastime in the Age of Drone Warfare*

**A**t the elbow of Highway 54, where the road bends back toward Jornada del Muerto, there we are, just before it veers north and climbs from the Tularosa Basin, just before the straight shot of asphalt between the dark green stretch of Lincoln Forest and the big pure splotch of White Sands, there we are at the ballpark at the southernmost elbow of Highway 54, just before it rips straight to the Valley of Fires, the hardened guts of the earth coughed up all molten five thousand years ago, cooled to black and stuck midflow like the shadow of a mighty bird hovering, covering the sun, a dark scar across the underbelly of New Mexico, a mean streak grinning toward Trinity where they discovered destroying whole worlds by cracking atoms, radiated sand still glowing green just north of where we are, me and Pops eating hot dogs, holding our hearts and standing atop flimsy aluminum bleachers for The Star-Spangled Banner blaring from a stereo in the press box which is a closet above the garage where they sell beer at the ballpark in Alamogordo—my home sweet home. Can't you see that American flag, popping in the wind? My god, look at that sunset. Take 54 south and there's a porn shop and the very tip of the spout of Texas and then there's Juarez, where 11,202 people have been murdered in six years.

There are maybe seventy fans here at the height of summer in 2012, all milling around, not exactly excited because the heat is a drag and because this is only the Pecos League of semi-pro baseball clubs. But there is minor anticipation; this is a rivalry game—White Sands Pupfish vs. Roswell Invaders. Tickets were six bucks. The players get two hundred a month if they get paid at all. The beer is three bucks, except when the cleanup batter strikes out; then it's two for the rest of the inning.

Pops is keen to retire after thirty years as a public school administrator, tired of dealing with guns like never before, tired of education reduced to standardized tests, tired of his cartoon ties and the click of his cowboy boots on the asbestos tile up and down the halls of Heights Elementary—*Where Everyone Is a Winner*—just tired. I worry he will drown in his La-Z Boy and so we start here with plans to go north and see all the baseball we can, trying to remember why we care to be alive and American.

The Sacramento Mountains rise over 9,000 feet just beyond the outfield fence of chain link covered in tattered banners for Margo's Mexican Food. The white lines to first and third run ninety feet to their bases and, by regulation, at least 325 to the outfield fence, but the rules say nothing of a maximum. *These perpendicular lines theoretically extend to infinity.*<sup>1</sup> Follow the right field line straight into the rolling Sacramentos and there is the New Mexico Museum of Space History, tucked in with the boulders and yuccas, the glossiest building in town, all glass and shimmery and surrounded by a bunch of dead rockets aimed at the sky, a dead monkey named Ham buried at the door, Ham the Astrochimp who rode the Mercury-Redstone to outer space and floated around, yanking at different levers. If the left field line chalked on for five miles, it would cut in half Our Lady of the Light Catholic Church, making her insides both fair and foul. Home plate is the point of the diamond that points directly at Holloman Air Force Base where Ham the Astrochimp was trained, where the F-117A Nighthawk flew and the F-22 Raptor flies and booms and cracks the ceiling in our kitchen, crumbles adobe all over town with blast waves from outracing sound, scratches up the sky with vapor trails like zippers unzipped in the firmament everywhere around the nowhere desert base where they now train young airmen of the 29th Attack Squadron



*Wick Beavers Photographer*

for just a few months and then set them operational as remote pilots of MQ-9 Reaper drones. Some of the Pecos League guys have been playing semi-pro ball for five years and may play for ten years more and never get anywhere close to Major League Baseball's minor leagues.

Pops and I throw Cracker Jacks at a guy in a pupfish outfit—our mascot, Gordo. Everybody teases Gordo. One kind of pupfish lives on the brink of extinction in our White Sands, bubbling up in springs that trickle through the hardened gypsum, tiny guys that glow iridescent when they mate, blue or purple, gleaming translucent the way any of us might if we found ourselves in the miracle of a puddle in a white-hot desert with a boner and another fish. No one understands why Pupfish is the name of our baseball club—of all the Old West culture, cowboys and outlaws, of all the Native American lore, of all the war machines and aerospace technology, we ride a scrawny, glowing fish to America's most storied field of play. Last year, the Pupfish were banned from Applebee's for ripping apart the dining room while trading blows with a bunch of Holloman airmen who got to giggling about the team's name. Gordo's mascot getup is the epitome of semi-pro: the fins only come to his elbows so his bare arms and hands and fingers are on display and his bowed legs are sticking out of the yellow foam fillets from the thigh down and his manface looms in the dark of his gaping fishmouth. Too much of the human visible. The way we dream up a transformation and give it a half-assed go and get ourselves stuck looking silly. A swing and a miss and the beer's a buck cheaper.

Wedged in the fence behind home plate is a camcorder and its pony-tailed operator who mostly just stands around puffing cigarettes but sometimes he flips open the side viewer and ducks down and jabs his smoking fingers at the buttons and smooths his ponytail and studies the video. Redneck nearly instant replay. Five miles west, as the Reaper flies, two airmen sit in recliners in a steel cargo container, far from war but dressed for it in flight suits and headsets, one manning a control stick and a couple of pedals and the other on a scroll ball and both airmen staring at six screens, GPS and sensor video feed and data and data and data. The ponytail ashes and grins and slaps his screen closed when he knows a call was either right or wrong but he's just some guy so it doesn't matter much. In the major leagues of our national pastime, the powers that be are all tore up about the role of replay, about the extent to which they're charged with making sure every call is right, tore up about bringing already common video technology to the old sport and whether that will skew its soul. Pops says *Keep the tradition of using your eyeballs*. All the talk is of eyeballs. Last week the Boston Red Sox skipper went on a rant

about science proving that the human eye misses out on the final five feet of a pitch, how hurlers are now so good their pitches cut and split and move all over in that last five feet, how we need new technology to get it right. *Your human lens doesn't snap that photograph* the skipper says. *So if you can't see it, why are we asking umpires to call it? They can't see it. They're humans. We're asking humans to do a feat a human can't do.*<sup>2</sup> Our eyeball wasn't built to track something so imminent—I guess by then we were meant to flee or fight back, anything but hold still in judgment.

Tonight the home plate umpire is a kid, younger looking than most of the players, mostly swallowed up under his chest pillow, a little lanky like he would have been great on the mound but he signed up for a job of jeers and he doesn't care. He sings strikes like opera. He flails his fist way out from his body and hollers each one sustained and soprano just in case the foul lines do extend to infinity and somebody deep along the way gives a damn. He's not worried about second-guessing. He's confident about his eyeballs, how they rolled from the goop of his brain early in development but never let go, stayed tethered by the optic nerve, started the lifelong turn of light into neural twitches into thought into decisions about holding still and calling strikes—how the complexity of the human eye is the hardest thing for evolution to explain. The fans are tired of trusting it. Most are leaning toward an everything-but-the-strike-zone policy for instant replay in the big leagues. This season they can review home runs and next season they may add the review of line drives that are hell for an eyeball to judge because they come off the bat like a bullet, like a missile, absolutely no sense of the arc, no chance to predict a path, where it will land or on which side of the line. And then tags and then trapped balls in the outfield and then everything but the strike zone will be decided by rewinding the world a few seconds and taking another look at the same tiny moment, rewind and replayed again and again, just that one instant until somebody staring at a couple of screens is confident we got all the information to understand it exactly right, that tiny moment and then on to the next.

The Invaders' third base coach sends signals to his batter, a hand swipe across the chest and a touch to the bill of his cap and a wipe down the length of each arm, followed by banging his fists and doing some wacky twisting of his wrists. A primitive form of communication. The Invader at the plate gets the gist and turns to the batter's box but pauses before digging in, grabs his crotch, tugs at his belt, taps his cleats with the bat, bends left, spits, bends right, spits, tugs his helmet down, and chokes up and spits again and tugs at the left shoulder of his jersey and grabs his crotch and does the whole thing again just exactly



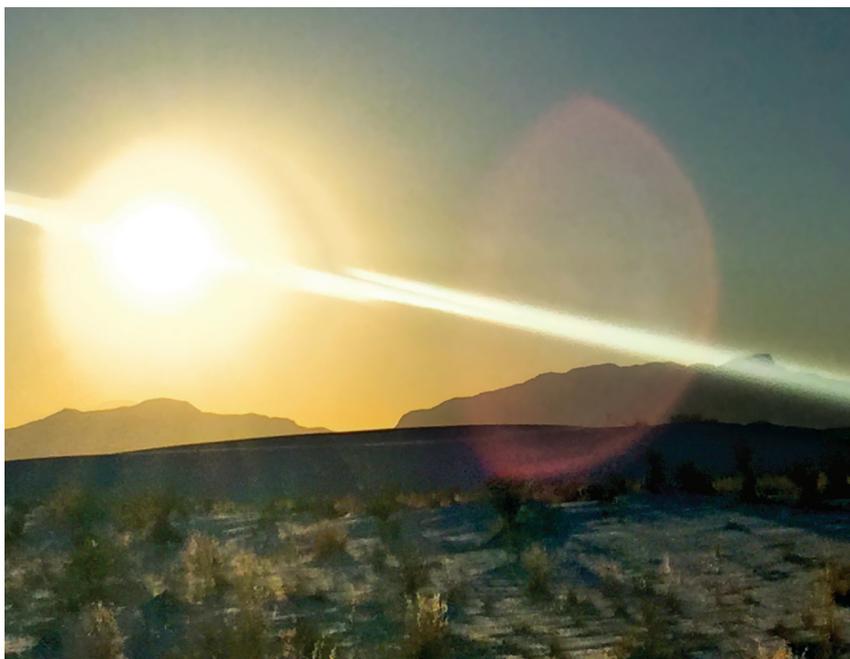
*Wick Beavers Photographer*

the same before every pitch. A primitive form of religion. The Pupfish catcher gets in his squat and reaches with his ungloved hand under his right thigh and rubs back to his ass, holding still like that for a moment before bringing his hand up under his mask to his mouth and, I guess, blowing on it. From where I sit he appears to be eating his own shit, a pantomime not exactly gross but provocative—like this might have been a more effective design for us, scrolling the same chunk of fuel through our bodies for an entire lifetime. Why were we designed just so, to such arbitrary specifications, with eyeballs like ours and desire for more than our own shit? Crack. The Invader gets to first on a fielder's choice. Pops sends me for another round of dogs and beer. I walk in stride with an Invader who has left the field of play, headed to check a phone he's plugged into the generator behind the food cart.

The awful great thing about baseball is that it's boring as hell to watch. I can get lost in pondering all of existence but I've got the crack of the bat to snap me back into the story, ground me in the game, in life for just a moment before I drift again into a lazy anxiety about the universe. Even the players spend most of their time spitting. Pops keeps his dip in his lip as he watches the game. I've never seen him spit the stuff out. His gut is a steel vat bubbling with wintergreen Skoal but he always looks calm and keeps pretty quiet. I say *I'm bored*, not because I

am bored but because baseball fosters a feeling of boredom, so the crack of the bat, when it happens, stings and echoes like an epiphany. You just gotta wait for it. Wait for it. Pops looks at me and says nothing because it's only the bottom of the fourth and the Pufffish are already trying to rally back from five runs down.

Thirty years ago, the last inning of the longest game in baseball history was played two months after the game began. They only really played about nine hours over two days, but damn—a baseball game can last nine hours and sometimes it seems even longer. The sport embodies timelessness: no game clock, all the action moving counter-clockwise around the diamond, all the cyclical rhythms of its agrarian origins spilling out in the rebirth of spring training and the freeze of the Fall Classic and the hacking away and the whackers and the apple-knockers and the rhubarb and brushback and bush league and rain check and snake jazz, which is the curveball that first got us knocking at apples in the garden, obsessed with knowledge and the idea that we might get things wrong. The game could go on forever and that's the rub with replay, that it will slow the game down even more, that we will go on forever lusting after all the knowledge, trying to get every call right and never make it to an end unless we bore ourselves to death.



*Wick Beavers Photographer*

Crack.

A Pupfish homers. A Pupfish doubles. A Pupfish gets caught stealing third to end the inning.

The sun is pretty well set now and two fans pull out their cowbells. A group of teens down the third base line has hurried through a bunch of beer and started up the taunts. One girl yells at the Invaders *My balls are bigger than yours!* Her taunt does not get lost in a crowd full of taunts or drowned out by a crowd full of cheers and chatter but, because there is almost no one here, her taunt lingers in the air over what is clearly an only slightly modified Little League baseball field and her taunt sours in the quiet and stretches over the grass, crawling with the shadow of the meager press box across the infield toward the Sacramentos until the park lights sizzle to life and all darkness is pushed back just enough for the game to keep on boring us until it incites us. Five miles west, as the Reaper flies, the remote pilot and sensor operator are in the steel cargo container dealing with the same problem of doldrums. One of them says *Highly skilled, highly trained people can only eat so many peanut M&Ms or Doritos or whatnot.*<sup>3</sup> The other one says *For most missions nothing happens. Your plane orbits in the sky, you watch and wait... It's very boring.*<sup>4</sup>

The 29th Attack Squadron is in Alamogordo training so they can avoid what the Air Force calls the two biggest causes of civilian casualties from drone strikes: *lack of positive identification* and *lack of tactical patience*. Out in the White Sands just on the edge of town, you can visit the sites where they've filmed *Jarhead* and *Transformers* and *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* and *The Men Who Stare at Goats* because this place, they say, is so much like that place: the Middle East. The studio execs grin and call our land *NewMexistan*. If you look, they say, at each desert just so, through a camera, on a tiny screen, they're practically the same.<sup>5</sup>

I lean back on the bleachers and sigh to the heavens but I don't see much between me and the stars though I know there's a handful of Reapers hovering above us, their remote pilots getting a feel for the feel of being bored until they get the itch to strike. If a Reaper landed on the diamond right now, in the bottom of the sixth, coasting from one foul territory to the other, and stopped on the infield grass between the mound and home plate, the wings would span the distance from the laces of the ball leaving the hand of the Pupfish pitcher at the top of his hurl, over the dirt of his mound and over the perfectly manicured grass to the dirt around home, over the Invader's choked hands and the barrel of his bat exploding toward the crescendo of his swing—a whiff—and the tip of the Reaper's wing would extend just over the thud in the catcher's mitt to stop exactly at the hand of the umpire as

he unballing his fist and stood up straight after calling the strike, sustained and soprano just in case the foul lines chalk on to infinity and somebody deep along the way gives a damn. But Reapers don't need to land so often. They were built to stay aloft all day and night or maybe just fourteen hours if they're heavy with a payload of Hellfire missiles. They're small for a plane and they fly high and are relatively quiet but oddly they are conspicuous in the skies over Waziristan, like we want everyone on the ground to know we are there, like Reapers evolved for surveillance and then for killing but also there's the advantageous mutation of terror. Villagers all over North and South Waziristan tell stories of the maddening sound: *I can't sleep at night because when the drones are there...I hear them making sound, that noise. The drones are all over my brain. I can't sleep. When I hear the drones making that drone sound, I just turn on the light and sit there looking at the light.*<sup>6</sup>

Not three months after the destruction of the World Trade Center, an F-117A Nighthawk, the pinnacle of our stealth aircraft engineering, flew over Bank One Ballpark in Phoenix to launch Game 7 of the 2001 World Series between the New York Yankees and the Florida Marlins, flew low and loud just as Jesse McGuire trilled out the last notes of The Star-Spangled Banner on his trumpet. And the crowd went wild and Jesse blew out the very bottom of his lungs and got to fist-pumping and jumping and pumping his trumpet at the sky while the whole stadium shook from the boom of the flyover and the boom of 50,000 fans giving up the last of their lungs too, even before the first pitch because no matter who won the game, it was great to be alive and American with mighty military weapons. Now the F-117s are all in graveyards and the U.S. arsenal swells to over 7,000 Predator drones and Reaper drones but I don't guess we will ever get a triumphant Reaper flyover to commence a ball game, hovering slow and just barely visible above the stadium, all the fans holding their breath to hear the slight, steady buzz of the propeller, like the motor of a distant neighbor's lawnmower as he rides over the same patch of grass all Saturday afternoon just to get out and see what's going on. But I know there are Reapers hovering over us now because there is no better place to train for boredom than a baseball game, to overcome *lack of tactical patience*.

The Elysian Field of Hoboken, New Jersey, was the first place the game of baseball ever bored anyone, in this month of June, 166 years ago. In Greek mythology, the Elysian Fields are a paradise where gods send heroes of war after making them immortal. No one will ever die flying a Reaper. I wonder if eternal paradise is something we can invent and if it will ever bore us. *The lack of tactical patience is not a problem that*

can be solved technologically. That is a matter of training American soldiers to live in a surreal moral universe.<sup>7</sup>

Crack.

A Pupfish fights off the inside heat and then takes a ball and then stumbles back to avoid losing his head when the pitcher hurls some chin music. The aggression begins when the Invader pitcher launches a fastball toward the lone Pupfish at bat, or the aggression begins before that when the Pupfish steps to the plate and waves a stick, or the aggression is sparked by the catcher crouching behind the batter, adopting his perspective, sending covert signals to his pitcher asking for a strike or some dangerous chin music. *Is it so clear who is the defense, who is the offense?*<sup>8</sup> Obama has a *kill list* and a stack of *terrorist suspects' biographies* on what one official calls *macabre baseball cards*.<sup>9</sup> But most Hellfire missiles get loosed in Pakistan not because we know a guy's biography or even his name but because we've observed his *pattern of life* in the desert of Waziristan, extrapolated the imminence of his threat to us by putting the eye of a Reaper on him from 5,000 or 20,000 or 60,000 feet above and watching from up there like a kid doing science, holding a magnifying glass between the sun and an ant. *Signature Strikes*, they're called, and only the powers that be know what that signature is, what confluence of data streaming into our screens from our drones halfway around the world adds up to a *positive identification* of a *pattern of life* that deserves to be snuffed out.<sup>10</sup>

And all those Invaders gathering at the mound, the infielders and the catcher and the skipper out there to check on his pitcher, huddling up in the dirt and jawing for a bit—a Reaper on high is bound to notice such assembly, and the remote operators staring at their screens, running low on Doritos after twelve hours in a steel cargo container, are bound to find a pattern in it. The Invaders pitcher gives up the cowhide and heads for the dugout, done for the night. The rest of them linger around, waiting for a reliever. I can almost see it as ruins—the baseball there, unstitched and steaming. The mound is a crater and there is flesh sizzling on the rim.

Nobody can say for sure how many civilian casualties have resulted from American drone strikes in Pakistan and that is maybe because the drones move on, the stream of data moves on to suck at another target, drones in the air twenty-four hours a day gathering data and data and data, enough data to make the exact right decision about whose life has the scariest pattern when watched from 20,000 feet. But then the gathering of data about that target stops because the target is totally *dismembered, mutilated, and burned beyond recognition* by the Hellfire mis-

siles. We cannot prove the innocence of someone we never bothered to identify and cannot now recognize.

The Invaders strike out the side in the bottom of the sixth, and now the seventh inning stretch is in full swing. Some lady hollers a drunken rendition of *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*. There are prizes. The announcer throws a T-shirt from the press box but the fans want more so he grabs a half-gone box of Daylight Donuts and hurls them down one at a time. Folks on the bleachers get ferocious about the donuts even though they're stale—everyone in town knows Daylight Donuts closes at noon. One lady climbs to the top bleacher, snags an airborne donut with each hand, then returns to her seat and munches. She's a German lady, at the game with her kid and probably in town with the German Air Force, which also trains at Holloman. She feels better now, with the donuts, and even though the game is nearly over, she turns to me and asks what all the numbers on the scoreboard mean. I say *Runs, hits, and errors*. She says *Errors*? I say *Yeah, when somebody makes a mistake, an error*. Tonight there are only two errors, both committed by the Invaders. She says *Why would they put errors on the scoreboard* but says it mostly to herself and gets lost again in the donuts.

Pops says *I guess with replay we'd miss the fights*. He means the institutionalized spectacles of rage, when a skipper charges from the dugout and puts his red face up to the stone face of an umpire, a hat thrown to the ground, dirt kicked on pants, spit flying in faces, gum even, ripping the bases from the earth and tossing them into the nowhere of center field as a protest against a call he knows will never be changed. The soul of baseball is somewhere in those rages. There'd be no reason to rage with replay. If the call is always absolutely right then you could only ever weep with regret. The Reaper's wings are prone to get icy when it flies high or at night, so the edges are made to bleed ethylene glycol from areas covered in things called *microscopic weeping holes*. Pops says *Keep the tradition of using your eyeballs*. Crack. An Invader hits a sacrifice fly to center field, bringing his teammate home from third. This is our pastime that must include so magnanimous a gesture: the sacrifice. First they were drones and then they were Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and now they are Remotely Piloted Aircraft because we are increasingly anxious to clarify our relationship to our technology—we are there and not there at all. With Reapers it's whether or not our moral barometer for taking lives slips or loosens wildly or totally implodes and with replay it's whether or not we cling to our infallibility, and these problems have drastically different stakes but are blurred by the same struggle to keep a hold on how we define ourselves as Americans.

By this time next year, many Reapers will be fitted with the *Gorgon Stare* sensor package that will add up to sixty-five full-motion video feeds to the bird's eye, creating *data at rates of 10 to over 1,000 times projected communications data transmission capacities, and will far exceed human analytic capability*.<sup>11</sup> In order to keep this glut of data from being wasted, to make it useful in *pattern-of-life* recognition, the USAF Scientific Advisory Board recommends *automated processing*.<sup>12</sup> By this time next year, the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers will announce that they're designing baseball equipment—bats, balls, and gloves—that can be networked with sensors and transmitters installed around the stadium to provide verdicts for every call in the game. *The new technology should be accurate to an extent that human observers simply cannot match, even with tools such as automatic replay*.<sup>13</sup>

Pop says *We're all human* and I'm not sure what he means.



*Wick Beavers Photographer*

When a reporter gets into the Reaper Ground Control Station at Holloman Air Force Base, he sees the video feed and asks *Is that a civilian car on the road?* Major Trey says *It is a civilian car, here in New Mexico... simply to train drone pilots to be able to follow a moving target... The cars do not know we are following them*.<sup>14</sup> The targeting system on the screen moves along Highway 54, the road Pops and I will take north in a few hours,

along the bend back toward the Jornada del Muerto into La Luz desert, the climb from Tularosa Basin, the straight shot of asphalt between the green stretch of Lincoln Forest and the big pure splotch of White Sands, me and Pops at the start of a road trip to see as much baseball as we can, trying to remember why we care to be alive and American. Major Trey says *We do not simulate or actually engage those vehicles.*

Tomorrow morning, after a stop in Roswell at the Super Meat Mart to buy hot beef jerky, Pops will get chili flakes in his eyes as he gnaws and they will swell and tear and I'll wake in the passenger seat as he steers the truck with his knee, a hand prying open a fiery eye and a hand dumping a bottle of water into the fiery eye and the truck with cruise control set at 75 and all four wheels veering onto the shoulder. Tomorrow morning, when we don't die but his eyes are swollen shut, Pops will say *I didn't want to stop getting to where we were going.*

Crack.

A Pupfish homers in the bottom of the ninth, a long bomb to right field, but it means little; the final score is 10 to 4; the Pupfish fall to the Invaders. Our pupfish are endangered because they survive in only two sad excuses for springs, Salt Creek on the White Sands Missile Range and Lost River on Holloman Air Force Base, both areas off-limits to the public but the military promises to keep an eye on the population count and let us know when they are gone for good. So, you see, our ball team's name is an elegy. We were born to lose.

The ballplayers pack up and some kids run onto the field. They jump around the mound as a lady snaps a photo of them with her phone and hollers at them to stay out of the dirt. There are few published photos of victims of drone strikes in Waziristan because the area is dangerous for reporters, because the Hellfire missile destroys everything, because of a *double-tap* tactic that keeps the drones hovering just long enough to launch additional Hellfires at any first responders. One of the few photos I've seen is of three children whose parents are dead, have not yet been dead a full day or night.<sup>15</sup> Their little hands clutch the rubble, hold the rubble out for the camera, chunks of Dande Darpa Khel where they will never live again, where their parents have died, have not yet been dead one day or night, staring, she into the belly of the camera and he at the rubble like treasure in his hands, and the small one in the middle looks to her right, in profile, her eyeballs invisible, their lips all dipping at the corners but these are not frowns; I can trace the sink of a frown but see smiles on their faces, have in my belly—despite the flames behind them, despite the rubble, despite the sinking—a sensation of smiles, a discrepancy called shock and awe that will not last into the night. There were

no reported civilian casualties for this strike.<sup>16</sup> Two Hellfire missiles hit exactly what they targeted just like they always do because our Reaper uses The Light of God, what Marines call The Light of God, a laser fired from a Multispectral Targeting System on the nose of the drone, fired really from a steel cargo container in an American desert or an office in Langley but beaming down on Dande Darpa Khel in the desert of North Waziristan, a beam that, seen from the ground, might extend up to infinity, *light that looks like it's coming from heaven. Right on the spot. Coming out of nowhere from the sky. It's quite beautiful.*<sup>17</sup> But, of course, it is green like an alien thing and you will only ever see it with the right goggles. And even then it comes only in pulses. You see, for a moment, the pitcher's mound lit up and, for a briefer moment, you don't. And then you see the target lit up again with The Pulsing Green Light of God. And then the explosion where you can't see anything at all but light.

#### *Endnotes*

1. A. Bartlett Giamatti, the seventh Commissioner of Major League Baseball, writes this about foul lines in his essay "Baseball as Narrative," where he also writes that *To know baseball is to continue to aspire to the condition of freedom, individually, and as a people, for baseball is grounded in America in a way unique to our games.* Another of his baseball essays begins *It breaks your heart. It is designed to break your heart.*

2. As early as 1954, *Sports Illustrated* was publishing scientific research that showed a batter never saw his bat hit the ball, lost sight of it eight to fifteen feet from the plate. Seeing the ball pass through the strike zone has never been integral to successful batting. And even the best batters fail most of the time, hitting maybe three times out of ten. This high rate of failure is accepted as part of the game for the players; the umpires, however, are expected to be perfect.

3. A Predator drone pilot said this in the article "Boredom may be worst foe for Predator drone operators" published November 16, 2012 in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. The article cites an MIT study that claims remote pilots are likely to make fewer mistakes if they distract themselves with snacks or music because they won't get bored. Creech Air Force Base, forty-five minutes outside of Vegas, is where the military operates most of its Afghanistan drone missions. Most drone strikes in Pakistan are likely carried out from CIA offices in Langley, Virginia, because the U.S. is not officially involved in military operations there—

but this, like all things covert and drone, is hard to pinpoint. Also hard to pinpoint is which locale makes for more sinister remote killing, a steel cargo container in the Nevada desert or an air-conditioned office building in Virginia.

4. Another drone pilot quoted in Jefferson Morley's "Boredom, Terror, Deadly Mistake: Secrets of the New Drone War" on April 3, 2012 on Salon.com.

5. Maybe the Hollywood fakery is more right than we know. In September 2011, our drones assassinated an American citizen for the first time and without any kind of U.S. trial. He was killed in the Middle East deserts of Yemen but was born just down the road, in Las Cruces, New Mexico. He was born while his father was in Las Cruces on a Fulbright Fellowship, studying how people of the Yemeni desert could learn from New Mexican agricultural practices because the desert of Southern New Mexico is so much like the desert of Yemen. So little water. So much sand. All life in these areas is miraculous. The assassinated—New Mexico born—American citizen was the radical imam and al-Qaeda recruiter Anwar al-Awlaki.

6. From an interview with a man injured in a March 17, 2011 drone strike on Dhatta Khel in North Waziristan. This interview and others more disturbing, all conducted with Waziris on the ground in Pakistan, are from the report *Living Under Drones* jointly published by the Stanford Law School and the NYU School of Law in 2012. The report is the most comprehensive evaluation of the effect of drone strikes on civilians in the FATA regions of Pakistan.

7. Jefferson Morley again, from Salon, this time paraphrasing a USAF report on how to diminish civilian casualties resulting from drone strikes. Morley focuses on the report's call for *A more human-friendly control station* and the idea that the design of the chairs in Ground Control Stations leave drone operators ergonomically prone to boredom and therefore deadly mistakes. The chairs are too comfortable? Perhaps bleachers...

8. Giamatti again, this time in his essay "Baseball and the American Character." His question eventually leads him to conclude that *In baseball and daily life, Americans do not take sides so much as they change sides in*

ways checked and balanced. Finally, in baseball and daily life, regardless of which side you are on and where you stand, shared principles are supposed to govern.

9. Joe Becker and Scott Shane, “The Shadow War: Secret ‘Kill List’ Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will,” *New York Times*, May 29, 2012.

10. A Reaper’s video stream does not beam halfway around the world in one shot. From Pakistan, it first hits a satellite in low earth orbit and from there it hits a relay satellite on the ground in Europe and then it travels by cable under the Atlantic Ocean to America. The relay satellites are in Germany, at Ramstein Air Force Base, in a clearing just beyond the outfield fence of Ramstein American High School’s baseball field.

11. *Operating Next-Generation Remotely Piloted Aircraft for Irregular Warfare*, United States Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, April 2011, 10–11.

12. *Ibid.*, 21.

13. Michael Endler, “Baseball Meets Internet of Things: Bye, Bad Umpires,” *InformationWeek.com*, April 6, 2013.

14. This exchange occurs in the 2012 Al Jazeera documentary *Attack of the Drones*. An almost identical scene occurs at Holloman in the 2012 ABC Australia documentary *Rise of the Machines*.

15. Spencer Ackerman, “Rare Photographs Show Ground Zero of the Drone War” (photos by Noor Behram), *Wired*, December 12, 2011.

16. Neither the U.S. government nor the mainstream U.S. media reported civilian casualties; the U.S. government said nothing while Reuters reported three dead. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism used eight sources, including locals and Pakistani officials, to estimate that seventeen to twenty-one people were killed in the strike, including nine to thirteen civilians, of whom six were children, including the seven-year-old brother of the children in the photograph.

17. From an interview with a former drone pilot conducted by Oscar Fast for his film *5000 Feet Is the Best*.