

The Pitcher's Pride ·
Christopher Howell

At sixteen I wanted only
the hard laced scars
of dead horse
blurring from my fingers
as the batter winced
and rode forward
into failure. All dreaming
was a pistol shot,
the ball exploding
in the catcher's glove;
the ump's right arm flying
up, recording the kill.
On my little tower
of earth I was close
enough to God:
I could see my sin
dissolving in thunderclaps
of His applause. *Atta way
to fire, my son.*
When the arm went
years later
in rainy McMinnville
I had prayed forgive
please thy humble servant
his power to mow 'em down
to bleached fear and the dull
lives calling slowly in
across the trimmed outfield
turned brown.
I paid for that
by wanting,
every day always
through the ice packs
and cortisone
and my own brown grass, wanting
forever
one more game.