

willingly flashed its nakedness for him to see. Adam kept staring. Thinking. Thinking about the gold trimmed, black fountain pen that rested heavily against the top of his thumb near the back of his hand. Adam loved writing with this pen. Never on a computer or typewriter because he believed a writer's power was lost with such machines. His writing students turned nothing in that was typed or word processed. He preached that only with the raw materials of pen and paper could the true spirit of a writer's heart come into contact with the physical world. Modern machinery disrupted the natural flow of spiritual energy that was drawn through the pen as one's hands held it and guided it across a page.

Without passion Adam held the pen softly between his thumb and forefinger. The life the pen once possessed was gone. The pen no longer danced freely across the page. No longer could he be the choreographer of the great performances that once graced his pages. He gazed at the pen, admiring its form. Its sleek black body was highlighted by the amber lights casting their presence from the bronze lamp behind his head. He gripped the pen between the tips of his first two fingers and his thumb, held it in front of his face, and slowly turned it counterclockwise. He concentrated on the light that stayed precisely in the same place while the pen turned underneath it. Adam turned the pen upside-down and back and forth while still watching the light. He was amazed, mystified as he watched the reflection of the bronze lamp creep over the curvatures of his fine pen, and how it shined brightly when crossing the golden trim. Adam looked back down at the paper. He stared. His eyes returned to

the pen. Clenching it tightly in his fist, he brought his hand to his bowed head, and wept silently to himself, the head of the pen resting between his lightly moistened lips. A tear fell to the blank sheet of paper. The sheet did not soak up the drop quickly. It sat beaded, unaccepted, yet slowly began to disappear, until finally all that was left was a dime-sized ripple on the previously smooth and untouched parchment. It was the first bit of Adam's heart that had touched the page in some time.

Teary-eyed, Adam raised his head. He looked at the clock to check what time it was. In the clock's glass he saw the clear reflection of the baseball on the other side of the desk. Adam turned his attention toward the baseball. Reaching forward he picked the ball up from its holder, and a sense of purity crept into his heart. He read the faded, but still distinguishable names and the inscription his father had labeled the ball with: "July 27, 1945 Red Stockings vs. Dodgers." Adam's tears had dried, and were replaced with a smile. A smile recalling the happiness of the memory of a sunny day when he was nine. When his only worries were spelling tests and winning the kickball game at afternoon recess. Jessie leaned back in his tall leather chair and put his feet up on his desk. Holding the ball tightly in his hands, he thought of his father and of the Scottish vendor that sold him hot dogs. He remembered seeing his heroes swing their bats and run the bases. Adam threw the ball up in the air and caught it—reminiscing about the open and carefree days of his childhood.

It isn't a Matter of Life and Death

The game is almost over.
Gripped by fear like a deer who hears a ruffle in
the leaves,
Am I afraid of losing?
It's just a game I played across the street from
My house when I was young.
What's so different now?
The ball floating in the air, mocking me,
you're going to fail.
That's it.
The world is watching.
But dropping the ball doesn't make me a failure.
That's what I tell myself.
Don't take your eye off the ball.

--Dax Gonzalez