



BASEBALL POETRY

DILLON HAMILTON

Baseball Collection

by

Dillon Hamilton

Wood swords swung by boy soldiers,
Frank and loud fathers in seats,
Chosen for hips and broad shoulders,
Oh, heated concrete meet our cleats,
Would it be blaze, deluge, or blizzard,
Our boy warriors never cede,
Though fear swirls about their gizzard,
"Worthy," their strides and swings do plead,
Now, cow skin and thread beat back wood,
Bloody-lipped brothers look to stands,
Seams on shin and chin for good,
Our fathers' heads in their hands,
Frightening frames keep score,
Boy soldiers do your battle,
Spirit and mind already sore,
From the coming car-ride prattle.

Toddled and tousled, he grabs his first word,
Not the first, or the second, but surely the third,
To carry the same name last and first,
To hold to pastime and a thirst,
For concession sodas and a daytime crowd,
Or a "Well done, son," said aloud,
He throws his first word behind his head,
But sees a smile, his hunger fed,
No need for other words than the first,
May that ball forever quench his thirst.

Blessed are the boundaries the uncreative call foul,
Too weak to grip the quill that writes single, double, triple,
Working where their quills see neither light, nor ripple,
No callous on their hand, no edge to their jowl,
Learn great restraint from this regulated craft,
Reach each bag with caution, knowing dirt and grass as friends,
Between three cries lies creative glory at their ends,
Honor, virtue, courage into you are graft,
Walled in by iron, wood, and sky to keep your mission clear,
Right conduct in your motion, a love for enemy,
Field, throw, and bat with relaxed intensity,
Rove neatly between the chalk, and glory will draw near.

Prairie pollen potent and wind, a deadly match,
Through swollen eyes and noses, a friendly game of catch,
Tosses love-weighted, after each boy gives chase,
Never landing in webbed leather, their right and proper place,
Frustration throws to Effort, Effort fails once more,
"Stay! Keep trying," Frustration to Effort implores,
Effort sneezes, sweats, and cries,
Frustration dreads he'll watch as Effort dies,
Through bleary-eyes and weariness Effort soldiers on,
To snatch hard-fought victory before all light is gone,
Sight fading, Frustration waiting, Effort never wanes,
Pride and anger he loses, focus he regains,
Webbing finally found, finally felt love's weight,
This game of catch profound, embrace to celebrate.

Training with thin plastic,
Motion, both erratic and elastic,
Eyes on all things other than the Wiffle,
Instructor's sigh and son's snuffle,
Bored with needless exertion of failed will,
In the grass springs something from dead still,
Bat and father forgotten for flailing legs,
"Come, swing, practice," father begs,
Grasp that weighty air for hope of slimed skin,
Weigh the cost of lacking discipline,
An accidental capture, curiosity cured,
New and deeper magic allured,
"You cannot seem to listen in your infant fog",
"But Dad, what about the frog?"

Early morning gravity draws him to the fields,
Momma cooks,
Daddy shapes nature and it yields,
Sneak past sizzling bacon,
Past axe swinging,
Little palms achin',
From play of yesterday,
Songbirds singing,
Another birch falls away,
Daddy rests his rattled hands,
A cedar trunk as stadium stands,
Slow fetch with no dog,
Ball hurled further each throw,
In that quiet early fog,
And dew to make cheat grow,
Thunder and threat of rain,
Tiny finger pads tender,
Behold that coming cloud,
Pray for time from the Lender,
Cry aloud,
But no time to gain,
Early gravity and love for game,
Cut short by prairie rain.

Sing not like castrati,
Boy warriors in dug barracks,
March around Jericho,
Encircle and enrapture,
Any Canaanite you find,
Holding ash, maple, pine,
Shout from your low camp,
A war-cry for your own,
As he strikes the walls,
He knows he's not alone,
Bellow from the front line,
Your marksman from his mound,
Unearth their fear of frenzy,
Drive from them their sound,
Take from field the honor,
Respectful to the fallen,
If they do grant you victors,
Their multitudes undone,
Let them pass before you,
Girded and great protectors,
Of songs and battles won.

What I carry to the field,
Has been given in great yield,
Not my choices or regret,
Not my sorrows I beget,
His redemption in my swing,
His song my seams do sing,
To rusty clay we both return,
In this play we both may burn,
To hit the mark he had missed,
This near idol cannot resist,
On our mantle on our souls,
Hearts dampened, blackened coals,
Beasts of burden play like sons,
Before regret overruns,
The walls and mottes of homes,
Family tales, tomes,
Mother sobbing over dinner,
Father throbbing, never winner,
All fall short of father's glory,
Son's pray for their own story,
What I carry to the field,
Fruit and hope I cannot yield.

Slip on mud and grass monsters,
Fall just short of an out,
Gloves with grand holes and broken bats,
Beat out the throw just to miss the darn bag,
Catch that fly with the ripped and torn seams,
It's just the top of the frame,
It's one, two, three hours here in this endless game.

Pastures and rigs on the way to scratch a diamond,
Lectures galore as we come off a high mound,
Expecting failures, our hearts weigh and pound,
Under pressure and heat on boy beaten ground,
No shelter or refuge for innocence found,
Buck up or pack up those stands do resound,
Clay, dust, sweat as makeup, changeups clowned,
Eager boys with swift swings and regret to pound,
They think not of winning the blood-bought ground,
For pleasure derives from father's approving sound.

Barn dust fill my mouth and nose,
Licks limp and air stale,
Sweat fill each thread of my clothes,
My target, wooden pale,
Grace uphold my swings and throws,
Let not my hands fail,
Punish hay bales in their rows,
Tell me this persistent tale,
Of love and craft as it grows,
With each triumph and fail,
Labor late so that it shows,
Newest target is a nail,
As long as this barn light glows,
Against flighty form I rail,
Veer not from discipline I've chose,
Barn hold fast against the gale,
Shelter me through highs and lows,
Guard me when mind is frail,
Shield me from hacks or blows,
Always brave, never flail.

Sick from seed salt and sweet snocones,
From dewy park to cartoon sheets,
Told to shower instead,
Trick the concession with different tones,
Combine the spoils and their sweets,
If Dad finds out I'm dead,
Fingers raw and bruised to my bones,
Up before our livestock bleats,
Kisses upon my head,
Wait in the driveway, counting stones,
To dewy park from soiled sheets,
Didn't miss a thread,
My body warming against early groans,
Down the lineup in the team sheet,
Something Nate's daddy said,
Ignite the fight for what no one else owns,
Play Nate right out of his cleats,
Put any doubt to bed.

Edge once, edge twice into velveteen sward,
Brush back crushed brick from cleat scratched clay,
No money, no glory, no teen's reward,
For keep of dirt hills and work after play,
Odd manly pleasure from rake and restore,
Hand to slope before tamp, pass touches test,
Shod neatly with leather, ready for chore,
Cut, water, fill, tamp, and then let it rest,
Keep vermin and vagrants from the surface,
Lest any less careful disturb what was done,
Ruining fine labor, plodding and purpose,
Cover once more with dust thin, damp, and dun,
Know your place and yourself better than all,
Know the slope where you tarry, where you fall.

I'll not play today,
I'll retreat to laurels,
Fight little quarrels,
Not hear what you say,
I'll not play today,

I'll keep shoes untied,
I'll follow careless weeds,
Dragonfly where it leads,
Leave the ball where it died,
I'll keep shoes untied,

I'll burn spiteful still,
No need to light fuses,
I'm full of refuses,
Exert toddler will,
I'll burn spiteful still,

I'll not play today,
Take my due punishment,
Suffer embarrassment,
Hear what you have to say,
I'll not play today.

Sit with seams and leather,
Between tender pad and nail,
Spin it without ceasing,
From your back,
Across the room,
Hide it, Mother's coming soon,
Change grip and target,
Test, see, enjoy,
Miss the creeping fan blades,
Avoid fragile lampshades,
Forgot about the vase,
Hide from face your joy,
Your debt, humble chiding,
Be sure that you repay,
Begin again your spinning,
Break again you may,
Add to this a brother,
Or two, if you don't mind,
Blades break and thunder,
Lampshade not hard to find,
Spin those seams and leather,
Fresh folly and a game,
Fresh, fast, young, bold,
It breaks things new and old,
So fresh it doesn't have a name,
Insignificant those fan blades,
Vanity are lampshades,
And flowers die in vases,
Bad play can break up brothers,
See it on their faces,
Oldest strongarms and dictates,
Youngest pleads, whines,
Middle bides his time,
In a moment bruises,
Bleeding and always tears,
Bad play don't touch my brother,
We ream at drop of feathers,
Sit and spin seams and leather.

Be still, don't touch the sod,
You'll fumble, kick, and boot,
Off lips, rocks, or clod,
Failure feared at your root,
On this surface dare not trod,
Clean cut, do not pollute,
No err in edges tender plod,
Along this art, you brute,
Your blades may tear and prod,
Your err another's loot.

Arrive with chill and ungenerous clouds,
That leak but never abound in deluge,
Never quenching sprouts from winter's fierce thirst,
Join greedy clouds with contempt of your ground,
Play or pray for rains to ease future pangs,
Set free from day's duty toward restless sleep,
Drought lover's drowned in idleness reaped,

“Power only,” he says,
To his arm hanging cohorts,
Running for days,
With rash-making team shorts,
“We’ve no power,” they answer,
Our position, abundantly clear,
Consider us lower, lesser,
Than our bat-swinging peers,
Can you believe all the rumors?
That we can’t spell ‘bat’,
Not much better than tumors,
Our lefties can’t wear proper hats,
Starters, relievers, angsty closers,
Live and die on that mound,
Popping elbows and shoulders,
Pain-killer and ice-pack bound,
The cure for our painful, powerless lot?
Throw more strikes than balls and run a whole lot.

Who needs the weight of stars and wonder?

I have a father,

Who needs the ox's yoke?

I have a father,

Who needs the depths of failure?

I have a father,

What trouble is quicksilver in my hands?

I have a father,

Who needs to carry conduct perfectly?

I have a father,

What weight is there in glory with a little g?

I have a father,

How light this yoke I hold!

I have the Father!

Even Blue Heelers love baseball,
Salivate for cow atop a tee,
Sit and wait for swing in full glee,
Blur of stitch and leaps tall,
Gladly bleed from every tooth,
Call the sun back up from setting,
Bark away the time for bedding,
Enjoying Master in his youth,
Cattle Dog, by game enthrall,
Even Blue Heelers love baseball.

Rotund, upon your reptile,
Feet on dash, reclined,
A well-deserved exile,
Across a field, maligned,
You cannot hear our whispers,
Contempt we keep confined,
Or masked by infant lispers,
Our tactics unrefined,
Rotund, reaper of grass,
Beware of seeking missiles,
They're coming for your,
Crass language in epistles,
We all have yet to pen,
Immortalize your legend,
Less than half the time a win,
Our mockery, our knife's end,
To your boundless crew,
Careful not to feed,
Nor fuel your arbitrary law,
A wink and nod at your lead,
Rotund, if you could look back,
See that none may follow,
In lonesome, waddling track.

One bucket makes them raw,
Welling weakness from within,
Working from unwritten law,
What's your mettle? Copper? Tin?

Two buckets take to blisters,
Curse your finished wood,
You dare to call us sisters,
There's more to be withstood,

Three buckets and they're bleeding,
Though covered by the hide,
Of she who died while bleating,
Antlerless, this bride,

Four buckets and they spill forth,
Pent, abundant shame,
For failure aptly kills worth,
Making mighty lame,

Five buckets, no redemption,
From marks missed before,
Tearing from the tension,
Of self-inflicted war,

Six buckets by night beams,
Refusing to return,
To bed with deadwood dreams,
Flesh left, yet to burn.

Fix my feet firm upon this ground,
Adorn my hands with leather lattice,
Teach me technique by the pound,
Pray that I grow not to hate this,

I plan to go, rest, and play where I may,
Guide my steps or place me where I stand,
Pieties and duties done before last ray,
Sink my sole's teeth into the land,

Bring me 'round to your best ways,
Show me truths that I have missed,
In the leather, before it frays,
Decays and dies upon my wrist.

At the age of envy,
Beg to join my friends,
Reason by what's trendy,
Peg down light ends,
Of feeble feeling tent,
Make a case through tears,
And persecutions sent,
By house rulers who rear,
Their prince, their law,
He holds my license still,
Philistine against a jaw,
Restrains me from my thrill.

Piled up against my past,
Here to pick my prince,
Enforce more than the last,
House rulers wiser since.