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License Plate Pitching Rubber

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License Plate Pitching Rubber

Rob Vogt

The day before my first Little League game,
I asked my dad to teach me how to pitch.
Of course I knew how to physically throw a baseball,
but I wanted a knee-lifting, torso-twisting wind-up—
just like the big leaguers on TV.

I'm sure my dad was exhausted
after a long day of moving furniture;
of sweating through his work shirt,
of lugging couches and refrigerators
up ramshackle staircases.

Exhausted or not, he agreed to help me.
We walked out into the street in front of our house,
where he put down an expired license plate
to serve as a makeshift pitching rubber,
then paced off a distance of 46 feet.

I remember the bumpy feeling of
hammered-out license plate digits under my sneakers.
I remember the sound of rusted metal scraping against asphalt
as I practiced my noodle-kneed delivery.

But my favorite memory of that night
is looking through the cool Midwestern dusk
and seeing a tattered baseball disappear with a soft *pop*
into my dad's three-fingered mitt, the kind that was popular
when he was a young boy practicing for his first Little League game.