

**The Pen and the Bat**  
by Lawrence Kesssenich  
*For Laura*

At five or six, my firstborn  
daughter picked up a stick  
and swung it like a batter  
waiting on deck. Amused,  
I took a stone and tossed it  
in her direction. "Hit it,"  
I said, and hit it she did—  
a clean, swift stroke sent it  
whizzing past my ear. Dumb luck  
I thought, but tried it again, and  
again she laid the wood on it,  
knocking it to the street.  
I smiled. She smiled.  
I gathered more stones.

Soon it was clear she had  
superb coordination  
between hand and eye. And I,  
the strikeout king of North Shore  
Little League, was dreaming her  
into a softball scholarship  
to college. I bought her  
a Whiffle ball and bat  
and for a couple years  
she humored me, but  
at seven or eight she dropped  
the bat and never picked it up again.

Instead, she took up a thick  
child's pencil, not much thinner  
than that first stick, and began  
to hit line drives to center field,  
metaphorically speaking,  
her dialogue crisp as  
a Hank Aaron single,  
her characters colorful  
as Casey Stengel,  
her imagination soaring  
like the moon over Fenway Park.