

## At a baseball game in ninety-degree weather, the man in front of me

by Remi Recchia

tells his girlfriend that one day he woke up and couldn't stop eating chicken. Pounds and pounds, he says. His tongue wrapped around fillets. Warm skin rooted itself in his receding gumline. The local

grocery store ran into a shortage. The store manager fired his supplier, then himself when he could no longer bear the shame of emptiness. Eventually, the whole place shut down. But this was before we met,

he assures his girlfriend. I'm not that poultry guy anymore. His sun-tanned hands rub ghost-fat, now concave beneath an orange sports jersey. I pull my own T-shirt over my weight. I'm not a hollow bird anymore.

It's the third inning and still the man talks over his girlfriend. She betrays nothing—no eyeroll, no distracted newsfeed scroll—but I don't think for a moment that she has no internal reaction to this, that she believes

the man beside her had once destroyed with his wanting alone. What do they want when they're alone together? What do they do? Does he snore? Does she burrow in enough blankets, or does she wake

cold-footed like a teetering bride—a premonition, perhaps, of what will come snaked in white lace and snaked embroidery? Or maybe they haven't yet seen each other under the indicting bedside lamp, a generic

gift from the man's late grandfather. You can't resent what you don't know. My hands know more about cradling a curveball than keeping someone safe. The Cowboys steal second base as the sun keeps

watch over the fifth inning. I baptize this couple with sweat, the chicken man and his skinny future. A metal bat slices the wet air. Perspiration darkens the back of the man's white cap and now even

the woman has collected a sheen. I keep my eyes on the scoreboard, wonder if I'll make it home in time for lonely nine o'clock cable and a table set for one. I wonder what it's like to be in love. That is to say:

I wonder what it's like to be perfect. The pitcher on his proud mound looks like he's never doubted a day in his life. Every player has legs born to serve the glory of his body. Does he eat

chicken for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? Does he swallow wings and cut his teeth on night-bones, then dawn-tendon? He takes in gristle and spits out perfection, rising over the diamond, the bleachers,

the gods, hovering over the chicken man and uplifting him, he who was once feathered—pitcher and witness rising together—and I watch as their cleats block out the sun like talons.