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Rocky

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PETER FILKINS

Rocky

As his fastball released, spinning and spinning
to slide invincibly low and away, how could
I know (the umpire calling me out, out
went the roar of the crowd into the dusky air)
that years later, bleary-eyed mad with grief,

he'd place the gun in his mouth, ignore
any shame he'd leave behind, misery
having triumphed over the future
blank empty of her touch, her smile
no more now than heartsick bitter flame

triggering the disastrous inner explosion
of a life gone to pieces, Rocky! Rocky!
his father bellowed from the back door steps
as we played on and on in the sandlot,
practicing the useless beautiful skills

of our Little League, pop fly and grounder,
toss and catch, there in the low red glare
of a late inning's summer sunset that,
come Saturday, would freeze my stance,
blind me to the pitch, I never saw it coming.