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The Angel of Baseball

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The Angel of Baseball

by Walt McDonald

Not much, a book of brittle pictures. My wife said, *Walt, it's yours*. Framed paintings were gone as if the walls were hostage. She showed me the silence, the bird cage empty since my sister sent the last canary away.

My first week home from Saigon, I saw their names, my mother's chiseled in granite beside my father's, weathered a darker pink. We drove to the lake and abandoned acres, the rusted tractor and hay rake. The house was echo and bedrooms hollow as halls. My sister and brother said we could take it all,

whatever remained—mahogany piano with loose keys, dogs carved out of rocks, wild pewter geese, a thousand alabaster dolls. She said *Take these, take all of these*—junk souvenirs of baseball teams my father bought—glass paperweights and pewter mugs, one gawky angel of baseball with addled eyes and one arm longer than her legs. Our children took the paperweights and baseball cards, some odd ceramics, who knows why, and moved away. Dusty, stacked on a rafter in the barn,

the angel with goofy eyes guards jays that pecked her paint—beggars her glazed grin forgave. Barn owls and swallows no taller than the doll adopt her. I've found them crouched beside her, blinking. They bring her bones of mice and boluses like balls. She spreads bird-spattered wings above us all, blue eyes that seem to follow, not even blinking when we buck the hay. We hoist our grandson up on our shoulders to rub her wings for luck, hoping he will own it when we're gone.

