

soaked with sweat from the ordeal, returned
to the dugout to dry his hands, when
a single gray uniform rose up,

broke rank and stepped out of the sweltering
conformity to the water barrel
to dip a cup of water and hand it

to the batter. Instinctively the guards
jerked to attention. The cons crowed,
as they had not before, a boisterous

approval, intensifying their
derision of Tex and the prison team
to a beast roar. Then another pitch

and another foul. Two pitches later
in dead-silence they watched the hope
and vindication of the twenty-first

pitch hit over the concertina
razor-wire of a temporary
left-field fence, carrying up and out

to strike the forty-foot outer stone wall
just below the guard tower. In rapt
silence they watched the white sphere strike

the stone wall four hundred forty feet
from the plate, watched the ball climb and climb
as if it might leave the yard, then strike