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Opening Day: Sister Beatrice Throws Out the First Pitch

Ellen La Fleche

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OPENING DAY: SISTER BEATRICE THROWS OUT THE FIRST PITCH

Ellen LaFleche

Sister ascends the mound,
quiets the organist with her palm.

The catcher kneels. He needs a god-
damn miracle to rise from this minor-league limbo.

The stadium lights flicker on, glowing
in tiered rows like votive candles.

Beatrice is a Sister of Mercy
but her windup is brutal,
her leg-kick wicked. The faithful
fans murmur to see
the cool white whisper of holy underclothes.

Sister's hooded head spits forward.

The catcher's glove opens like a heart,
contracts against the fastball's whomp
and slam. His head has stopped
hoping for salvation
but his heart holds on.

Organ music booms against the dome.

The leadoff hitter waits.
Twenty years since his last
confession, but he crosses himself,
steps hopefully to the plate.