

(POOR) ROGER MARIS, 1964 TOPPS

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Pocket-weary, scuffed, and battered, Roger Maris gazes skyward in defiant optimism. More than anyone, he should know how pinstripes can suppress the ecstasy of flight. At age 29, the navy blue cap sits atop a ravine-furrowed brow, conceals bald patches and tufts of gray – distressed vestiges from 1961. An expanse of black netting looms behind his back. In high, deserted tiers, no crowd of a thousand empetalled faces quivers with applause. But even bold trajectory always dips eventually. So Roger plays with bone chips, a broken hand; he wracks his knees on grandstand dives, and, come retirement, he combats the Hodgkin's lymphoma whose cytology reveals periwinkle profusions among white blood cells. What history has since transpired: wrinkles extend in cellulose varicose veins from center to edges frayed. Yet still he stares through folds of time; he lifts his head, as if to trace the measured beat of ash wood – its resonant, aerial song arcing through the pale-blue down above.