Respect Your Elders
CHARLES HARPER WEBB

"Ready for a fastball," the grizzled grampa leather-lungs. "Alls he's got's a fastball. You can hit a fastball," he assures

the child of (he's pretty sure) his own son's loins. "Here comes a fastball. Sit on the fastball. Fastball's alls he's got."

He's waited 67 years for this: the universe that has bashed and baffled him—kept him in shit jobs, a shit marriage,

fishless fishing trips, deerless deer hunts, Vegas jaunts with "seniors" groups where he would have won a bundle

but for all those card-shark racketeers—the universe, so rioted and murky, suddenly made clear. "Here comes a fastball!

Fastball's alls he's got." And so, for two strikes and three balls: "Fastball's comin'. Has to. Fastball's alls he's got."
Full of faith, the batter wags his stick, 
coiled, adder-like to strike the darting rat
of a fastball. The pitcher winds. The pitch
swerves in: a freeze-you-in-your-tracks,
shoot-for-your-head-then drop-and-slice-
the-middle-of-the-plate curveball

that sends the boy back to the bench
scratching his pate, and cursing his idiot
Grampa.