

Teaching Myself To Play Basketball

No single night stays clear--
apart, each is a beautiful fog,
implying sign and object death,
as with marriage. I move closer
to the hoop and shots become bunny kills,
bright lipstick and hopscotchy,
as if I had something else to do,
or I move 19, 20 feet away,
orange leather moons
gauzy and unnervous, hoping
to die in the pink landscape's air.

No one is laughing about our team.
Mom has a scar on her forehead,
brother walks with steel knees,
and sister has switched to rugby.
My 2 best friends, Dick and Peter,
the bench, moved to Monter²⁴,
sporting false beards. My step-father--
the bastard!--gave the refs 50 bucks
last half-time and we promptly lost
to a team of retired feminists,
"The Chaperoning Sadists," by 26.
There'll be no mistletoe at our house.

(Cont.)

("Teaching," cont., with break)

My dad, were he alive, would sob
and break down, or marry
my mom's friend sooner than he did,
for he was the one
who taught me how to play:
1,2,3, the perfect release,
the perfect arc, the perfect followthrough,
our court lit by crisscrossing
floodlights and a careening moon.
For this I'm thankful.
Not that I regret
playing by myself or the saltiness
airballs give to my mouth.
Either way, mock, mock,
is the one sound
as misses counterpoint to corners
of the backyard, crazy for darkness.
But it's the problem of the other--
the moon and her profile,
that tells me how flawless
and firmbacked I look,
and how alone.
There is no other moon.