

that summer
was the summer
that my parents forced me to play basketball
on a team with much older boys.

 i was so small that
 my best shot at the basket
 only went halfway up.
 over and over halfway up.
 over and over the team laughing
 at the effort and then my complete humiliation.

my parents
forced
me to
go back every day
 who knows why but now i have a better guess about my mother.

finally
in the desperation
that comes from utter shame
i told the coach he should lower the net
 so i could have a chance to hit the basket.
 he told the other coaches and then
 even the other coaches called me out
 with cruel names
 cruelly sharing cruel jokes
 with the type of cruel laughter
 that you can still hear even after
 it has stopped
 even when
 you are alone.

suddenly someone passed me the ball
for me to take a shot

and amuse themselves again.
so i took careful aim
and with all my strength
 took the shot
 like i was hurling a lightning bolt
 and hit the coach in his crotch.
 he doubled up in cursing pain.
 he dropped to the ground
 while i jumped up and down
 twisting turning wild windmill arms
 cheering for myself knowing i
 had finally scored.

 after that things happened fairly fast.
 practice was called off.
 i was kicked off the team.
 calls were made
 an ambulance came
 my father had to leave
 work to come and pick me up
 severe home punishment followed.

i managed to take my jersey with me.

later i heard
 that the coach had
 fully recovered within three days
 but the whistle in his mouth did not make it.

 much later in my life
 i had the jersey framed and hung it on the wall
 to commemorate my discovery of what it means to be a good sport.

that summer.
wf.h.
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