

THE BASKETBALL PLAYERS

we went over to the local playground
& it turned out to be a junior high
but there were enough baskets there
enough for a whole city
so we warmed up & started playing
some one on one
it had been years for both of us
& we hadn't been so good even then
but in a few minutes it seemed like
it was coming back
it seemed like we had the touch
but we started slowing down
soon enough
we slowed down to a walk
it was kind of pathetic
sweating out last night's booze
unable to follow up on a shot
or run after a loose ball
& we had set the game at 20
but we were having trouble
reaching 10
& then the thing got out of hand
it was all elbows & shoulders
nothing but shoving & pushing
we were taking everything out
on each other
it looked like we might even fight
when the bell rang & they came running out
hollering & screaming & full of energy
I guess they were 7th graders
the boys talked dirty & asked us
if we had any grass
they kept laughing & jiving &
stealing the ball from us
while the girls stood in little groups
pointing & giggling at this strange sight
these broken down basketball players
& one of them kept staring at me
as if she understood something
I probably imagined that
& I started thinking how nice it might be
to be alone with her
in all that innocence, all that energy
& I started showing off
trying half court hook shots
that didn't even hit the boards
dribbling behind my back &
losing the ball
& soon I was hoping for recess to end
I couldn't go on much longer
but we were on show

we couldn't just quit
we were on display
& then this beautiful gym teacher appeared
walked over & introduced herself
& the girls were really giggling now
& I didn't have enough breath
to talk to her
but that wasn't necessary anyway
& she was the director of phys. ed.
& were we there for any particular reason?
& you couldn't play basketball
during school hours
without administrative permission
& administrative permission was never given
during school hours
& it looked like we'd have to leave
which is what we started to do
as they lined up to go back inside
& the boys kept breaking ranks &
running over & stealing the ball
then driving in for layups
while the girls cheered
& the gym teacher fidgeted & stared
& waited for us to
make our exit.

Jehovah's Witness

two of them in front of
Woolworth's
hawking watchtowers
standing & smiling
like mannikins.

one of them
just plain ugly
ugly like
an unmarried aunt.

the other beautiful
wearing her Woolworth smile
like a chastity belt

trembling when a man
approaches

avoiding his eyes.