

Home Court

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When I was in second grade,
Oscar and Cesar's dad died.
When they finally came outside,
their faces ashen with sorrow, we turned
to the basketball court. We played with shadows
of death threatening to touch, we were defiant,
we were still alive, we sweat the fever
of hurt from our bodies, our small hands
aching to be held. We played all day

and it was more prayer than basketball,
the jumper's follow-through:
a small, noiseless plea. We held the ball
like rosary beads and prayed with our hands.
We put up a thousand shots of penance,
all of us trying to gather all of the magic
left in our wrists. Lord, we prayed all day

and it was more teeth than basketball.
We stomped around the court trying to destroy
the concrete. Every dribble was violent,
a curse, we were daring whatever god
was watching to strike us down too. We
were striking anything we could touch,
our eyes dry and vengeful. We fought all day
on the same basketball court
that Oscar and Cesar's dad built.

O, Grief,
we went back to our houses
when we realized we were playing
on the dead man's court.
That was nothing compared to our hearts
when we looked at our hands and saw
our whole bodies were made of Grief.

We walked away tough-fisted and prayer-hearted,
our hands stained bright orange, the ball
bleeding away into a patch of grass
that couldn't hide the wound.