

ALWAYS A BASKETBALL PLAYER

Mark Bennion—Department of English

I dream of the baseline, the backdoor
opening like a fairy tale
where shots, so high and arcing,

lift the crowd from the floor
faster than a miscalled charge.
I feel the ball leave the right hand,

the smudge on the backboard
responsible for missed lay-ups,
and one-handed steals, believable

except in games when one's muscles
are all pine tar and wood
from the curfew broken the night before.

I watch an elbow split the rib
of a friend so hard
his face goes ice on the court,

but he gets up anyway, exhales,
Give me the ball. What pleasure
to see him rise from his knees

for another shot, for the long, slim reach.
Yet it's the pass I want to throw myself
forever, the bounce behind the back—

alive in the sense of help,
the sheen, the smile that brings
a swagger to the lips, the quick brag

that leads to slides,
to suntans glowing all winter,
and the hard wood shine

and fans shouting
let loose memory's throne,
the rebounding notoriety.