

The Last Triple

There is no remorse so deep as that which is unavailing; if we would be spared its tortures, let us remember this, in time. —Charles Dickens

I

Lisa is watching a young boy eulogize
his father, an Army Ranger, paralyzed for
10 years after diving off a pier to rescue a
child, a Hero whose life would later collapse
in divorce.

II

Last June, watching the Ranger's elderly father feeding
his crippled son French fries at Frazier Field, dipped
in ketchup just the way the Ranger liked them as a child,
25 years before, before Ranger School, before
the accident.

Before two children who alone
could not salvage his marriage
and the brave hero's mother who endured her daughter-in-law's
second marriage to a nice man, upright, now the boy's
new coach.

III

The Ranger, unable to clap or cheer the son
or the boy's Second Father—who sat in the dugout
where the Ranger should be except the wheelchair
would not fit, so he watches now beside his quiet,
coping parents.

Callous fingers curled around the stem
that motored his wheelchair, a soldier whose arms and legs remembered
nothing of the body they once knew, willing but useless,
like old Christmas candles whose stems were all
that remained.

A setting sun shines on his son, Daniel,
whose mother, the hero's ex-wife, was
cheering from the top row of the bleachers
while her son stroked a triple and the new husband gave
high fives.

IV

A flag-draped casket, following by a grieving, blended family,
against a backdrop of spoken memories of combat and travel ball
at the hero's funeral, his son awkwardly escorted through church
by a step-father into the boy's second world
of loss.