

One Nil

by Adam Strong

Each step you take on the pitch
Each mile driven down
Each closed exit of highway
Blocked avenues of importance
Boarded up
Hammered
Nailed shut
People and places and things
You can't get to anymore
The knife and the needle
The black and the bilious
Run down the field
You and the ball
The only counter attack
Open goal
Goalkeeper rushing forward
Pull back for a shot
Think twelve
Think 10
Think ten tears on ten math tests
Self hatred is a bitter taste in your mouth
Think wedding ring that won't come off because you don't want it to
The folds on your knuckle that keep it on
The ring
The thing that grounds you
Holds you and keeps you from
Driving through closed off highway exits
From certain people
From certain places
Where the person you destroyed is larger than the person you've
built up
The legend lives on

But here on the pitch
A chance to right the ship
Turn a sinking season around
Your laces on new boots
A ball with smears of Oregon Clay
That ring on your finger
The cold weight to it
28 degrees and the steam out of your mouth
That ball and all the things that came before
A chipper they call it
Ball floats up
The pelota in Spanish
2nd place in Spanish spelling bee
This is what self hatred tastes like
Caracas, 1990
Standing there with a Polar in your hand
A girl from Spain
She's right there
She's that open goal
On a pitch
12 or 40
It's never too late
To volley that bastard up
Out of the muck it came from
Let it shake the asses off the goal
Shake the ground
Down into the pit of your twelve year old
Nervous stomach
You who cried
For all the failures
Because you tried too hard
The past is a breathing thing
Capillaries and lungs
Flesh and blood
21 grams of ash

All of life measured
All of it lives in the gut
Breathe a breath
Collapse and fall
Failure and retribution
One nil

