

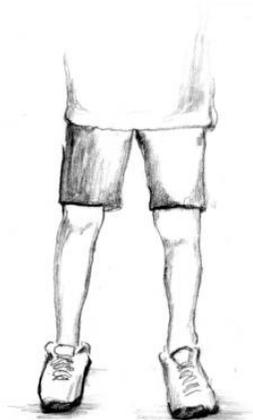


PERSPECTIVES *for a*
DIVERSE AMERICA

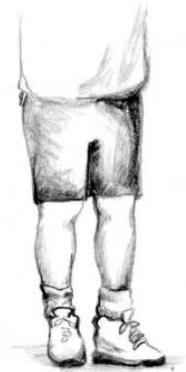
i will be chosen

“i will be chosen” is a self-published poem by ramesh kathanadhi.

[i will be chosen is an anthem for all middle schoolers who knows what it feels like to be left out. Now, they’ll know what it feels like to be included and to win, in more ways than one.]



in 7th grade
the PE shorts are embarrassing enough
without getting picked last because you smell
because you're hairy
because your acne is bad
because you're weird
because you talk funny
because you dress bad
because
you're not wanted
so you learn to be captain



and pick all the unpickables
watching other captains' surprise and joy
at not being forced
to pick the leftovers
you lead a team of cast offs and left offs
who are angry you picked them
because now
they feel expectation
now they feel targeted
and now
singled out as a loser
which they knew they were
but you picking them
has confirmed in grand fashion
now
they're on your team
the kid who was too
hairy
smelly
and unlikeable
to be on any team before assembling their own
so you're there
and your team doesn't believe
in you
in themselves
in this crazy scenario
but you
refuse to have less fun than when
you weren't chosen
and had to wait it out
these terms

you can live with
fight with
now that you've chosen
you're losing games by a margin of 20 points
and you don't care
because you're passing the ball
you're catching the ball
you're bouncing the ball
things you've never been allowed
things you are excited to try out
things that get you a passing grade in PE
then
the margin gets smaller
you're losing by 19 points



this is a victory
“HA—you can't beat me as bad as you did yesterday!
WHO's getting better?”
the margins get smaller
as your team begins to believe
not that they can win
but to believe
they cannot lose
that any point scored is a victory
a black eye to the pretty bully
a clever comeback to the verbal abuse
a paradigm shift to the psych out kings
there are passes
and fakes
and jukes
and still
our defense smothers you
you're unsure
feeling like you shouldn't have so much trouble
with this loser team
doubleteam
what
you ain't got a passing lane?
TURN OVER
that's right the league's first **EVER**



turn over to a loser
to the whole loser team
to the kid with the elastic wore out in their socks
to the kid with the abusive parent at home
to the kid with the survivor story that's too deep for reality tv
to the kid with the acne borne of ill health and sick food
to the kid with the kid siblings to take care of
to the kid that has all that weight on so she won't look so "pretty" to that uncle
to the kid that smells bad because they're allergic to deodorant
to the kid that's tired cuz they're holding down that job to pay the rent
to the kid that's terrified of going back to the shelter that night
and
to the whole
damn
ugly
bench of us
who are cheering on the losers
you just turned the ball over to
the margins get smaller
because we gotta guy who can shoot now
when his glasses are on
because we gotta gal who can
juke and fade
because we got someone
whose two spirits more than make up
for your lack of soul



because our captains
always pass the ball
even if you aren't open
and there's no hope
just because you haven't gotten the ball for a while
because
there are more of us
than there ever were of you

it's been two years
of losers playing together
even the athletes play on our team from time to time
showing us how to do something cool
or try something new
when they want to feel
like they belong too
two years
of younger kids
picking loser teams
and playing like they got nothing to lose
two years
of us learning how to hold
our loser heads high
as one team
two years
til one victory
and something like 400 losses
and now
the coach says
we can't play together any more
"it isn't fair
the other teams have complained"
and that's
when we realize
how ridiculous everyone looks.
in those damn shorts
"ramesh works at Men Stopping Violence - www.menstoppingviolence.org"