

A Toast

Here's to the girl pulled off the farm and put on a train,
holding a glove of dusty cracked leather,
staring out the window with eyes looking forward
and praying her muscular arm has the right kind of muscle.
Here's to the girl who is throwing and catching and hitting
over and over and over again, sliding and scoring,
hoping she won't have to leave,
hoping she can make a life for herself here.
Here's to the girls whose names did not appear
in bold, blunt, black typeface on the crisp unfeeling pages,
and who dragged themselves out of the green and brown haven
back into the gray streets, carrying useless cleats.
And here's to those who felt a deep thrum of joy
in their hearts as they realized they could play,
as they realized they were free.

To the tomboy forced to wear a short skirt and lipstick,
even though she never dressed like that on her farm.
To the athletes who returned to the locker rooms
with dark, grimy stains on their skirts
and with dirty scratches running down their legs like raindrops,
scabs just barely creeping over the red flesh.
To the scores of women whose game-ready faces fell
when they discovered the requirements of charm school
and lady classes, when they had to momentarily trade
their trusted gloves and spiked shoes (that fit them like a second
skin well broken and worn in) for pinching heels and
uncomfortably assessing glares and judgments.
To the inquisitive women who wondered
why they had to be beautiful, why couldn't talent
speak for itself, why didn't the men have to learn how to drink tea
instead of learning how to strike someone out.

Here's to the heroic soldiers of World War II,
the conquering heroes, the brave men who valiantly
exchanged their bats and gloves for bullets and guns.
Here's to the men who deprived America of its favorite pastime,
and here's to the women that replaced them.
Here's to the men who replaced their replacements without a thought,
who cleared the bench of skirts and reintroduced baseball as a game of and for men.
Here's to the 545 "Belles of the Ball Game," who attracted more than one million fans,
and who now attract none.

*Written by Suzy Mazur
Deerfield Academy*