

My father on the diving board

by [Benjamin Myers](#) in the [November 8, 2017](#) issue

His body browned from working in a heat  
that blistered paint and cooked the summer grass  
to needle sharp, my father climbed the rungs  
of wet metal up to the fiberglass

cat's tongue above the public swimming pool.  
Chlorine singed my nose, dyed my sisters' hair  
from blond to seasick green, and horseflies bit  
us as they swarmed the heat-thinned humid air.

But it was worth it all to see my father  
dive. He, before the cancer wormed its way  
out of his menthol smokes into his lungs,  
pushed a shovel all week, then Saturday

would swim. He slowly backed until the board  
dipped low and bowed up in the middle, then,  
from toes tensed taut as ten piano strings,  
the suntan oil gleaming on his skin,

flipped like a silver dollar in the air,  
and plunged into the cooling cavity  
to show how even weightless grace depends  
on the unflinching force of gravity.