

Daughter

Watching football with my dad
was a lesson on false starts.
If he were coaching,
his players would never be offsides.

He wanted to drill my spine straight,
told me to keep stretching
long after the bones had bent rigid
into a seahorse shape.
He'd press my left shoulder down,
his face firm, but his blunt fingers gentle.
Convinced he had to help
or else I'd end up uneven.

After a win, I am walking alone
past men drinking behind their cars.
They whistle for a straight and beautiful woman
I can't find.
Still searching, I frown,
and the men catch a glimpse
of my father.

He blamed himself for the scoliosis,
the quarterback shoulders, square face,
unladylike height.
I inherited so much of him,
he cannot see his daughter.