

Stand Like the Bull

Tanner Léon

The only one
on the guys' team
who didn't shave
his head,
a real warrior
amongst high school
peer pressure.
They were ready to hold
him down
with clippers
on standby
before the coach
with a hung head
grumbled for him
to be released.

Fast forward to sectionals,
the final swim meet
of the year.

His hair is all tucked
up into a swim cap,
a ball of fury
and warping potential energy.
His swimsuit:
a skimpy thong at best,
reserved for competition
built for speed,
definitely not the looks.

He's in lane eight,
closest to the crowd
on anticipatory edge
and takes position
on the starting block,

Stand Like the Bull

adrenaline pumping hard
throughout the veins
of his trembling body.
The entire girls' team
chants his name
to the beat of his heart
faster & faster
the rush
of this moment
could be felt
years later
with simple
reminiscence.
It took his breath
away every time.

"Take Your Marks"

starter beeps
he's a swan
that glides
into a stream
slicing through
angles in water
heartbeats on
a line graph,
he's gone.
His arms,
they pump like
two windmills
in freestyle artistry
legs kick to the beat
of a breeze
that's a need
for a brush with life.
Each breath:
taken like a champion.

Spent, taxed, his soul
exhumed into the lap pool,
you could see the apparition

Tanner Léon

of energy streaked through
like squirts of Mio
in your bottle,
dragon claw marks
left behind.

Everyone cheered
at his royal departure
from the water,
his kingdom,
as though Neptune
rose again.

He strolled
back towards his team,
removed the cap,
a prison.

His hair tousled out
in direct defiance
of his teammates
ready to hold him down
and buzz it off.

On that day,
they understood
what it meant:
to Stand like the Bull.