

JEFF KASS

## Man Shooting Hoops at the Health Club

His shoulder is a broken pipe.

He can barely raise the ball above mid-chest without grimacing. He's not old, maybe early forties – t-shirt, shorts, unobtrusive gym wear. The kind of guy I don't immediately dislike.

His hands on the ball are soft, as if he knows how to cradle it, as if he trusts his fingers after many thousands of curlings around lay-ups and behind-the-backs. He tries to shoot, to raise his arms – once, twice, gives up.

Tries again, succeeds. Can't elevate his wrists above his neck, but nonetheless gets the ball off.

A low-heeled graceless arc. It bumps against the front of the rim, then nudges over the metal – *excuse me* – crawls through the net. He's still

got an eye,

but his face is a sodden pancake. The saddest food in the world. It doesn't matter if he practices profitable law, if he's a loving dad, a warm husband, if he throws and coats a mean pizza-dough.

His shot – no good now, his shot no longer an orbit, an elegant satellite. His shot, flat.