

Slam, Dunk, & Hook

By Yusef Komunyakaa

1 Fast breaks. Lay ups. With Mercury's
2 Insignia on our sneakers,
3 We outmaneuvered the footwork
4 Of bad angels. Nothing but a hot
5 Swish of strings like silk
6 Ten feet out. In the roundhouse
7 Labyrinth our bodies
8 Created, we could almost
9 Last forever, poised in midair
10 Like storybook sea monsters.
11 A high note hung there
12 A long second. Off
13 The rim. We'd corkscrew
14 Up & dunk balls that exploded
15 The skullcap of hope & good
16 Intention. Lanky, all hands
17 & feet...sprung rhythm.
18 We were metaphysical when girls
19 Cheered on the sidelines.
20 Tangled up in a falling,
21 Muscles were a bright motor
22 Double-flashing to the metal hoop

23 Nailed to our oak.
24 When Sonny Boy's mama died
25 He played nonstop all day, so hard
26 Our backboard splintered.
27 Glistening with sweat,
28 We rolled the ball off
29 Our fingertips. Trouble
30 Was there slapping a blackjack
31 Against an open palm.
32 Dribble, drive to the inside,
33 & glide like a sparrow hawk.
34 Lay ups. Fast breaks.
35 We had moves we didn't know
36 We had. Our bodies spun
37 On swivels of bone & faith,
38 Through a lyric slipknot
39 Of joy, & we knew we were
40 Beautiful & dangerous.