

light reading series

featherproof



Amelia Gray

WOMEN/GIRLS

WOMEN

Try to think of a job position with more weight in the title than *Lifeguard*. The title *Firefighter* is simply descriptive. *Pastor* makes little descriptive sense outside of a treatment for meat in Mexico. Usually pork. However, *Lifeguard* carries with it a great deal of gravitas which many might consider unearned by the lanky, sweat-hot teenagers found atop most lifeguard stands. I provide myself as a humble exception to the rule: I am in full awareness of the weight I carry.

Three bathers prepare to enter the water. I watch very closely from my stand, a red rescue buoy strapped across my lap. They are three middle-aged women in thick, black, one-piece suits. The texture on their upper thighs is visible from fifty feet. They hold hands like girls and jump, shrieking. I hold my breath with them, deliriously, until all three surface. They are blissfully unaware of the risks they take, regarding their blind faith in the water.

GIRLS

Imagine if you could call up all of your exes, bring them together on a basketball court, and play a pickup game. Maybe you could also call all the girls you ever loved, and split them and your exes into Girls You Had a Chance With and Girls You Never Had a Chance With. Have them play shirts and skins. It won't be for your honor, though you'll be the only one watching. You will promise pizza and beer to the winners. The girls you never had a chance with will spit and glare, and the girls you had a chance with (and may still) will turn to you after making jump shots.

The winners will take your wallet and invite the losers out, everyone will neglect to give you directions, and you'll be left sitting in the gym parking lot. At the pizza place, you will be discussed.

You'll go home and watch basketball movies. You'll build a makeshift court from scrap lumber in your backyard, and leave messages on all of their answering machines, inviting them over. You'll go out back every night, waiting for them to return. You will wear your shirt when you are shirts and you will remove your shirt when you are skins.

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Amelia Gray is a writer living in Austin, TX. Her writing has appeared in *The Onion*, *American Short Fiction*, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *DIAGRAM*, and *Caketrain*, among others. Her work has been chosen as the finalist for *McSweeney's* Amanda Davis Highwire Contest and the *DIAGRAM* Innovative Fiction Contest. She received an MFA from Texas State University in San Marcos. These stories come from *AM/PM*, Amelia's first book, out now on featherproof.

