

Two Poems · *Stephen Dunn*

GRACE

After the 1993 World Series

Mulholland extended his hand to Williams,
eased him away from the polite avidity
of reporters—good men, mostly,
just doing their jackal job for us.

Didn't we want to know exactly
what public failure felt like?
Mulholland extended his hand
because he couldn't bear what had gone

several questions too long, and Williams,
the wild thing, answering them all straight
down the middle. Mulholland must have known
but for some grace . . . some luck . . .

and how a public man is always a mistake
or two from ruin.
He extended his hand to Williams
while the rest of us watched from our safe

carpeted dens, and the Toronto players
celebrated properly in their locker room.
Back in Jersey vandals had already thrown eggs
at Williams' house, young men no doubt

without doubt who felt others should die
for them and succeed for them and make them
happy. Oh the luxury of failing in private!
Mulholland extended his hand to Williams

who took it and walked out
of the camera's harsh eye, and into history.
Other teammates, sad themselves,
tried to console him, unsure just then—

as we were—if sympathy could reach
all the hard way to forgiveness.

POWER

It comes to this; dwarf-throwing contests,
dwarfs for centuries given away
as gifts, and the dwarf-jokes

at which we laugh in our big, proper bodies.
And people so fat they can't
scratch their toes, so fat

you have to cut away whole sides of their homes
to get them to the morgue.
Don't we snicker, even as the paramedics work?

And imagine the small political base
of a fat dwarf. Nothing to stop us
from slapping our knees, rolling on the floor.

Let's apologize to all of them, Roberta said
at the spirited dinner table. But by then
we could hardly contain ourselves.