

# The Card Tables

By Jericho Brown

Stop playing. You do remember the card tables,  
Slick stick figures like men with low-cut fades,  
Short but standing straight  
Because we bent them into weak display.  
What didn't we want? What wouldn't we claim?  
How perfectly each surface was made  
For throwing or dropping or slamming a necessary  
Portion of our pay.  
And how could any of us get by  
With one in the way?  
Didn't that bare square ask to be played  
On, beaten in the head, then folded, then put away,  
All so we could call ourselves safe  
Now that there was more room, a little more space?

Source: *Poetry* (October 2018)