A Sudden Turn of Events

 The sound of rubber hitting the gym floor and dozens of sneakers squeaking echo throughout the stands. My eyes dart back and forth across the court as the ball switches possession from player to player, and end to end. The cheers of fans fill the room as each team racks up their points, time quickly running out, but with no clear end in sight. This championship game was going to be a close call. The coaches on the sidelines frantically yell out instructions at their players, trying to gain an upper hand. This game had kept fans on the edge of their seats as each team had been neck and neck the entire time. The home team was desperately trying to catch up as they had missed a rebound, giving the other team an advantage by taking the lead. There was only twenty-two seconds until the buzzer, and time was being killed through a giant game of keep-away with the ball.

 The chanting of the countdown begins among the crowd as the seconds tick by, inching closer to a crushing defeat. Suddenly, a player from the home team snatches the ball from the opposing players clutches and races down the court, shooting a deep three just as the buzzer is about to sound. In a split second, it seems as if time stops as fans perch on the edge of their seats, like a bird preparing itself to take off in a sudden leap. The ball flies through the air, and in one swift motion, sinks through the net and falls to the ground, ending the play with a slight thud. The game was now tied and was heading into overtime. The whole crowd erupts in screams of either excitement or disappointment, but nevertheless, the court shakes to the point where every fan feels the vibrations tremble to their very core. The court is a sea of blue and white jerseys as the home team swarms around the court with excitement, filled with joy at the new opportunity now presented to them. The craziness eventually subsides, and each team makes their way into the locker room to rest and mentally prepare themselves for the oncoming quarter ahead. Fans quickly remove themselves from their seats to refill their stash of drinks, candy and popcorn in hopes that their stress would be relieved from the pressure of the championship game.

 Fifteen minutes go by before both teams reappear on the court again, going through the same routine of dribbling and shooting drills. By the time the game begins, it is as if a fire has ignited on the court, both teams eager and longing for the final win. Minutes tick by, and the score stays constant, as if the players nerves are affecting their ability to shoot straight. More minute’s tick by. At last, with practically seconds left, the point guard from the home team attains possession of the ball and races down the court like lightning. As he prepares to make a layup, one of the players from the opposing team intervenes and shoves him while he is midair. The ball flies out of bounds and the home player falls hard to the ground, several feet away from the bottom of the hoop. Almost immediately, all players crowd around the boy who is lying on the court, clutching his ankle in pain. The referee calls a foul on the opposing team’s player and the boy’s coach urgently pushes through the crowd and kneels down next to him, quietly whispering something while gauging the severity of his injury. The boy nods, then begins to slowly push himself up onto his feet. Claps erupt from the crowd as he limps over to the foul line, preparing to take his two free throws. Silence embraces the room as everyone waits in anticipation for what is about to happen. The player dribbles the ball a few times before preparing his shooting stance. Elegantly, he presses his arms towards the sky, allowing the ball to slip off his fingertips and curve in a graceful arc towards the net. It swishes through the net, and polite and reserved claps surround him, but no noise is heard in his mind; he is nothing but focused on this final shot. He repeats the same process as before: knees bent, arms stretched towards the sky, perfect arc towards the net. It does not swish this time, but rather it bounces, off one side of the rim to the other, until finally it falls into the net, securing the win.