

## Necessary Roughness

Summer again and again in my head.

This time I'm ready for everything.  
I anglerfish. I terrify. I skin-search only  
at the bottom of the pool. Say

I'm looking for a mouth

to cover my mouth. My eyes  
are in a bag. The bag slants open and I  
a little lantern. Tarnished. Grinning.

Below my floorboards, a gun

translates: *anyone would turn yellow  
in this heat*. I plague doctor. I immigrant.  
Masked for no one's sake. Words for hands

—all the better to kill me with.

Chaos theory puts me in every iteration  
of the fall of this country. Chaos theory  
gives me the trigger. Holds my breath.

I am the native speaker of so much blood.

Of all the wrong angles a body can learn  
inside its own echo. Washed out. Any body  
as long as it floats. Any body as long as

I'm the one to put it to words.

I good soldier. I puppet. I puppeteer.  
I'm tired. My fingers, I watch them shake.  
All I want is to make something

and never have to touch it again.

**Public Enemy No. 1**

*In 1999, the NSA banned the Furby from its property due to concerns that the toy's alleged ability to record and repeat information made it a potential threat to U.S. national security.*

In the room where all the telephones have gone down  
to die. Yes, there. Hard to miss, I know—murder-blue  
and unblinking. Keep your gun close and your  
death wish closer. Who would've guessed  
that throat was good for something  
other than bending in a rich boy's hands. What  
do you mean it knows your name. Don't listen.  
Think only of whatever else its tongue can do.  
Deep breaths. Biggest mistake man ever made  
was bleeding the execution out of technicolor.  
Instead you'll have to strangle it in some  
ancient dialect of gray. Don't go all soft and stung  
on me now. We don't keep the body around  
for its mercies. Hold your ground. What do you mean  
it's on to you. You haven't done anything wrong.  
You were trained to save your lungs for this. Unspool  
in its name. Don't listen. Do your duty to  
your language, its greed. What a man doesn't know  
won't hurt him. What a nation doesn't know won't  
fix the face of a god who can hear the heads roll  
no matter how far he runs. Don't listen. Keep your arms  
away from lightbulbs in the land of the free. It's lying. Don't  
listen. Those are words it learned from us. It's not  
going anywhere. Stay with me and when you're ready  
shoot. That's right. Think of its skeleton drowned  
in tar. Every oiled joint in every city will thank you,  
son. From sea to skin-choked sea.

**Seoul is singing now**

but all that comes out / is blood. Spice kicks back / in the foreigner's gut: failed autopsy / of the color red. Sundown / & the city sees you. Monsoon season smeared / across its orbit. Myeongdong screeching / like a fallen star & every night-soft tremor / to try & hold it still. The city says / *it's easy / to admit a fear / of the dark*. Monolid menace around / every corner. Grinning lips stained / electric. O broken-nosed / o crashing: could teach you / a thing or two / about plastic. Every high note sweet / & falser for it. Every alien voice / a pulseless cavity. Hasn't anyone / told you? No land will be worn / without its frame of bruises. The body / goes home to the concrete in / its own way. Can't / be helped. As a rule / a Seoul song rises / to abolish its abductor. / Less crime scene settling / more broken windows / after riot. Less perfect victim / more jury saw-toothed / & standing by the guillotine. The blade higher / than guilt but no higher. Every spare hand / & noose / the only mercy left / before gravity & laughter. Natural law. Of all people you / should know what happens / with power so near: the fingers / start to itch. & in the four chambers / of the city's heart / children keep the beat.