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.