

SCOTT BEAL

The Dream of the Foam Toy Sword

is as real as you, as real as the reign
of your mental confetti machine. The way you want
to be a real boy, a real seafood chef or arsonist, the way
you want to be a real housewife of orange county
in the damp cellar of subcellular yen

is the way it wants to be a real sword,
to thicken its foam into devastating iron.
No more thwacks and thuds when it's parried
or bashes a plastic greave, it wants to clear
its molten throat and sing like a smithy,
it wants to strike the wall and gouge the brick,

it wants in the midst of the child's roaring
to swing its truest self, sudden steel, a new dense weight
dragging its arc toward the floor where it will slice right
and proper through a foot, hack it clean at the ankle,
no soft whump of an imminent bruise, no
chuckling dance of ouches but the godawful shock

of a lopped limb, of the world that ended
at the floor coming to end some inches above.
The sword aches to catalyze, to cauterize, aches
to inhabit its form and forge, its history
and factory of heat and blood and siege engines
the way you yearn to make yourself

a staggering lover or salesman-of-the-month
or half the father your father was, how
you churn your guts and wring your fists
to sift a cure for failure—just this deeply
the sword knows if its dream coheres, if it channels
the current racing down the child's arm,

the capillary hum and the lactic acid choiring
to the muscles, burn, burn, the lungs' shuffle
that feeds the child's vision of paladin, assassin,
if the sword's dream meets the child's as far
as the wrist that it could turn, that it can turn itself
into the dream and bite through birth and dawn.