

Slobberknocker

for Andrew & Brandon Moreski

Before we discovered the magic
of pocket lighters, punk rock music,
or even tattooed women—my two younger brothers
and I praised the wrestlers we saw on cable television
and each Friday after middle school
we paid our respects by emulating them.

Andrew was always Mister Snake
the Sidewinding Southpaw
from the rocks of Nevada.
Brandon, on the other hand,
preferred to be the artist known
as the Freaky Furnace.
I saw more of myself in the luchador,
El Gato the Victorious, as I stood shirtless
with a canary-colored book sock
over my head like a burlap bag.

There, before both parents came home from work,
we defied the notion that wrestling was staged
with broken bed frames, leaning sofas,
and bathroom sinks that collected the aftermath of bloody noses.
Even our pet Labrador Retriever found himself
sinking his teeth into our forearms.

Then one afternoon during the epic “Favorite Son” match,
Mister Snake fell victim to my dreaded ankle lace
and as I waited for him to submit I sat
in our father’s prized upholstered armchair.

It was an anniversary gift,
powder blue with nailhead trim
and legs painted in an espresso finish.
It was the only piece of furniture
in the house that wasn’t obliterated.

But when I turned my attention
to the couch adjacent to me,
the last thing I saw was the Freaky Furnace
crashing down like a warhead,
and once we managed to find our feet
our father’s chair had collapsed into itself:

legs, coil springs, and armrests
all heaped together along the carpet floor.

Nobody said anything for a while
until our father finally walked in the house
and immediately paused at the scene,
his reaction flush on his face.
“Who did it?” he demanded.
“I want to know right now. Who did it?”

We each looked at one another and in a desperate plea
my brothers and I had no choice but to tell the truth,
“*It was the dog,*” we confessed—
our tails dropping between our legs
like smoking revolvers.