

Found Objects

A cross-shaped stick,
tightly wound with lake-weed,
wedged in a deep crevice between boulders.
Sprawled on his belly,
the boy shimmies into the crack.
He snatches at the tip, earns a handful of dry weed;
clouts the side with a chunk of shale—
it rings like steel.

He shifts his weight, chin scrapes stone,
and his glove drops into the cattails.
Just a half-span deeper—
then the buttery braiding of hand-worked hide.
Skin to skin, it pulses in his palm.

A long sweep of wind wrinkles the lake,
clouds throw shadow, reeds bend, water rushes into the crevice,
laps up the dark crack of rock. A scaled hand,
grey and oily, slides from the water,
circles his arm, his throat: a grave grip,
cold as dirt under stone. His blood thrums,
he holds fast to the hilt. And a black voice
drums—

bound and chosen.

The hard slap of metal on water;
the hand withdraws
and movement is unmade.

A sick sweat slicks his skin. He tugs;
the sword slides out whole
like a newborn calf—
greased, quivering.