

JAMAAL MAY

**Still Life**

Boy with roof shingles  
duct taped to shins and forearms  
threading barbed wire through pant loops.

Boy with a safety-pin-clasped  
bath towel of a cape  
tucking x-acto knife into sock.

Boy with rocks. Boy  
with a metal grate for a shield.  
Boy with a guardian

daemon and flawless skin.  
Boy in the shuttered district,  
a factory of shattered vials,

green and brown glass.  
Boy with a tiny voice  
and crooked cursive handwriting,

with bent nails in a pouch,  
metal flashing scavenged in bits,  
with half a neck tie

tied about the brow  
pushing a fire door wide.  
Boy with a boy living

in his head keeps him  
quiet by humming a lullaby  
of static and burble.

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The boy in the boy's head  
watches sparse traffic  
from a warehouse window

and takes notes  
on pothole depth,  
overpass paint, where it

bubbles up, fails at  
its job of keeping  
rust from infecting:

a patchwork of pock  
and crumbling disease,  
a thief in the bridge's body.

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