

“Immortals”

by William Conelly

Aged eight to twelve we waged our shooting wars
with bursts of water, charging lawn to lawn
across the neighbourhood to dupe and drench
that moment's foe of our esprit de corps –
friends, siblings, pets – soft targets for a spray.

Fun surged when torrents shot from garden hoses
supplied defending kids a lance, or flail,
to counter our balloons and water guns:
across dry banks of subdivision roses,
we all could claim that war made useful play.

*No one's expired, Mom. No one's sippy slain.
It's just a water game. We seized Jim's pool
cabana once, screwed our hose in his sink,
piled up lawn chairs, hooked back the window pane,
and dared his cohort to a crazed mêlée.*

*Attack us! Water for blood! Hot or cold!
The window open to sustained barrage,
his drapes turned pulpy wet behind our dare
while, happily, we hosed the buoyant fold
of boys that slid and stumbled through the fray.*

No one stayed down. None vanished in the storm.
We shouted, *You're all dead!* They shouted back,
You're the dead ones! Blood *was* just water then,
unfouled by wounds, a resource to transform –
some stark day – from our pre-teen naïveté.