

Laocoön in the Vatican

Human agony has no redemptive power,  
there is no reward. It is a votive offering,  
concerned with anatomy rather than technique.  
And he is only an athlete, in motion everywhere,  
the panic made to fit each muscle, each band of tissue;  
tension and compression mathematically modelled  
to resist the contrapposto even as the serpent coils  
around each child. Chest curving towards his gods,  
he speaks of what lies beneath devotion, where wrestler  
is the same as family. But in the end, he is a man  
petrified and without skin, makes of his body nothing  
in the fight, except its own peculiar purpose.

Breath as needed

She sleeps on sober ground,  
insistent and in a continuous line.  
Shrouded by the island's shifting tones  
she is heedless of following the dead.

A natural reaction to the body's efforts,  
she holds the air taken, arms above head  
remembering his rhythm was abrupt.  
Were she more resistant, who knows.

Nobody knows where he came from  
Nobody knows who his father is  
Nobody knows she was carried here  
Nobody abandoned on this rock

with all his promises. Lift this rock,  
take your sword and sandals, love.

from **Camera Obscura**

### **Icebergs in Ilulissat**

In Disko Bay the growlers and the bergy bits  
crack their knuckles, assemble for the birth.  
It takes a musician's ear to separate the pattern –  
the falling notes from the echoes and returns  
passed on by the underside of waves. Not random  
but arrhythmic, a natural if not melodic measure.  
We call this an adventure, a reason to travel  
but remain as abstract as the lines of saturated blues  
and bone-dry whites, drifting together and apart.

First published by *Structo* magazine

### **this Polar Night**

the skies drop anchor  
slam a door –

I roll and list  
weightless in my glass jar

game for nocturnal oracles  
and falling stars.

My head on the bag of feathers  
throbbing with gut noise

swells the hurting –  
bass strings

score two heartbeats,  
tactus and ictus

forcing an exit.  
Thin pulse, transparent

white, an image of new life  
revealing the spoils.

First published by *The Next Review*