

Simon Perchik

### Five Poems

Before the morning kiss this cup  
must be heated, aroused  
and full length in the ravine

its jittery tongue waits for the sun  
to move closer, fill your mouth  
as if every breath has a tragic ending

is covered in water made invisible  
by tiny desert stalks  
and something to hope for

--it takes hours, panting  
till the light darts across  
smelling from coffee

that asks what time is it  
and the kiss that goes by  
no longer evening or old.

To protect itself this pond  
freezes over, fills with light  
the way the first mother on Earth

made it safely ashore  
taking her child along  
though you are still thirsty

cold, half ice, half comforted  
by this ancient flower  
blooming now as snow

--this knee-deep pond  
once overflowed with power  
could insist on Spring

would lean against the sun  
till it begins to heat again  
taste from salt and open sea

--you can look through  
see where the straight line began  
and keeps arriving

as if every cradle at night  
is rocking in water  
and the now invisible silence.

With one grudging whisper  
all that the sky had given you  
--half-hearted

as if your first breath  
could be returned  
no longer struggling

--Dave, your feeble lips  
are flickering  
can hardly make out

where the night is headed  
though to the darkness  
everything is snow

is covering your pillow  
the way you once imagined  
what words were like

before the coming and going  
--you didn't see, Dave  
as words do

how the door to the room  
was suddenly let in  
no wider than this page

and the hand in back  
stomping to keep warm  
comes off when let go.

But where is the river  
--not one inch closer  
though the will to win  
has outlasted you  
the way sunlight slows  
loses out to the cold

--there must have been a wound  
a rock and that someplace  
the dead are waiting for  
while you watch how the horizon  
slowly ices over, carries you  
into open sea where your breath  
lies down on the darkness

and drinks from this half the sky  
lets the other side take the lead  
eating away at these stars  
sprawled out as shoreline

--you are surrounded at last  
clouded over by moonlight  
and nothing but moonlight.

It's the lane-to-lane  
that throws their aim off  
though for other reasons

you can't hold on, the map  
too slippery and the climbing turn  
is already opened much too wide

--even without the landing lights  
the straight line is dangerous  
tries to get a bead on you

the way stretchers lift the dead  
who want only to move again  
--take command! do in-and-out

or what chance do you have  
with this constant terror  
--a split-second stare

can break the windshield apart  
and its slow, sunlit curve  
all those years in the making

was not saved, its pieces  
laid out as roadway and glass  
and that half look over your shoulder

to pass on the silence  
you were waiting for, already lowered  
into shadow and the wings.