

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.