

INSIDE PASSAGE, GLACIER BAY  
 (Remembering Crane, Woolf, Plath and Sexton)

The ship's orchestra finishes with a forte flourish  
 like the midnight buffet's overkill of king crab  
 and baked Alaska. Down below polished dance floors,  
 tightly closed couples and funereal scent of carnations,  
 the engine massages my soles, strums my belly,  
 a discordant guitar. The screw munches  
 loose ice, spitting pieces against the hull  
 like fragments of my life, a hollow random tattoo.

Old images line my crevices. Other guests are primed  
 with thoughts of calving glaciers with gourmet breakfast.  
 Now the first corridor is full of trailing sentences,  
 serial goodnights. I wait for the last door to close.  
 The empty elevator delivers me to the top deck,  
 the penultimate chill. The bay  
 is Irish whiskey smooth on the rocks. The air  
 cleans my lungs like silk pulled through a gun barrel.

Across the bowscape, the moon trails a ramp wide enough  
 to climb if I wanted to be higher. At land's end,  
 an old worn glacier kneels to lap up reflections.  
 The tall young one catches every dangling shine, volleys  
 the bright bias from peak to pylon to friezes of poems  
 in blue calligraphy. Ice-hoarded indigo scalded by silver  
 can no longer resist duress of trapped fire. The facade  
 crazes and falls. Sea geysers muffle the shock wave.  
 The glacier exposes a new face, new verses. Liquid silver  
 plates the jagged pieces wallowing to the surface,  
 blue-fluxed, light-brazed. No mattering difference  
 comes of it all.

The ship yaws, moves on in afterquiet. Far below  
 in the galley, bakers are making bread. I feel  
 kneaded on their boards, then set aside to rise.  
 I ease back, careful not to slip. Older by decades,  
 I experiment with breath, pick up my coat,  
 hunker in its warmth.

A bald eagle crosses the moon-flood, sounding  
 like wet sheets on a windy clothesline, circling  
 to look again at what is passing under his jurisdiction.  
 Like him, I make a fast ascent. Silvered and possible.