

Precipice

I never knew
how the snow could glitter
and the rain could glisten
in the waning warm light
like fish scales and pearls
stippled across the rooftops
mountainsides luminous
tree boughs
silvered.

I never knew
that falling ice
could sound like a drum kit
cymbals ensnared
decay
tapping and crackling and
breaking
tinkling as the shards scatter
shattering
over stone
or brick
or home.

I never knew
how much beauty there could be
in senescence
and entropy
and small things falling apart.

The Market

rumble along the road
every rut a shock
from the hoof
to the haunch
through the heart
like arced lightning

far from fields
and flowers
float sickening fumes
gasoline
city-dogs slinking
to the clamor of hordes

clatter of the cage
opening
to the fateful bright day

a pound
a pen
a pleasant spot
to await
inevitability
to munch
some warm hay

small comforts
out of sight
of knives
and hooks

the light waxes, searing
so many
come and gone

ogling, groping
the crowds fade out
the streets go quiet
from the pen to the cage
the cage to the cart
home to the fields

familiar
a Saturday tradition
safe
the new farmer's market
petting zoo spectacle
with no bloody meat stall

the butcher's bill
always comes due
but not today
 but not yet
 not yet

Nevermore

I don't know
how the chill
wind will slip
or the thin light
will fail
in the coming winter

will the cliffs
and the pinnacles
give high places
to rest
or will the ice
turn every rock
and eyrie
to a cruel
fatal spike

will the towns
give life
scraps of fruit
bread
old meat
or will they seal themselves tight
while I circle alone

will I rise
on jet feathers
or will I be lost
black angel of summits
sunk in an abyss of frost

Self Portrait at Night (The Frustrated Brush)

I try to make the colors match
my eyes squint and star
easel-chained, thrashing in the spray
proud Andromeda
brush wielder
palette as shield
Medusa in her mirror
not an Argonaut in sight.

No one to roll the stone
off my bent back.

In a glimpse of starlight
I will find my muse
when the grudging gods forget to curse
my face will resolve
into a momentary
thing of beauty
before the monsters rise
and chain me
back to the block
my fingers
moving
like tentacles
in cold surf.

Avalanche

A stone foundation to alight upon
Hard bed, heavenly comfort to soft snows
Spring warms the earth, heat urges drifts along
Ice eager to snap as the fresh wind blows.

Mountainsides tremble, momentum awaits
Alabaster charges down a black hill side
Snow shivers, quivers, the storm hesitates
And then slopes shatter, roaring on their ride.

Sparks flashing, rocks tumble, tossed by the fall
Trees bend and shatter, sap spurts from their roots
Mice and marmots dive deep, sensing the squall
A wide-eyed owl circles the ravaged chutes.

A ghost-shrouded cliff face in gleaming white
Uneasy truce of water, rock, and light.