

Bruce Naylor

Left that rum old town,took an easy plane south  
Did a flyer,did an easy one - bounce,bounce,bounce  
On the hard brilliant snow with three good mates  
Felt the clearness,the light glancing,dancing  
Down each rib and spur - a hard landing but  
Easy on these poor legs,then the old hut  
Ripe with history,kero and smelly feet -  
Plains mortals lost below in a cloud sea.  
Sweet tea,nervous talk,deadly preparations  
Full sickly stomachs,some small sleep -  
Finally we leave,tense as vampires at midnight  
Crampons biting,ropes kissing.  
One hour of shadow and the Plateau greets us -  
Well met by smiling moon,we look up tentatively  
and the old Cloud-Piercer knocks us down to size  
Massive,stupendous,God-wrought.  
My spirit leaves us with the silence as I  
Gaze spellbound, aloft and away  
The towering mile wide face riven by black shadow  
The big thing is uneven but perfect,no useless spaces  
Some white corridors repelling but beckoning to us  
To join in the game - bemused I think,just another hill  
Only bigger,shut out the fear,that'll come later.  
Wandering through gloomy cracks and crevasses in  
The morning's half dark we thoughtfully gain  
Our ridge as the sun kisses us good morning -  
I'm sleep-walking,feeling great,belaying  
Swift and neat,cold toes and sleepy eyes  
Take in the rosy heights we briefly call our own.  
Cold rocks stick but hold,the glacier yawns  
Bored between my legs -  
I'm alive, O so high and alive,breathing hard  
Head,hands,feet as one - finding all the right places.  
It's easy,take care,it's perfect for remembering  
But don't fall or you're history along with the best  
Stones rattle as snow softens and loosens its grip  
My nerve goes on a shitty bit,ball-bearings roll  
Under my feet and touch bottom without a murmur.  
The last steep snow and we top the mighty ridge  
The highest mile is ours for one perfect day  
No toilets,no seatbelts just that snowy highway  
With both seas cruising in the distance.  
We can only stumble and mumble,wonder how  
We came so high as the snow glistens on fragile icicles.  
The steep cathedral beckons grandly to us  
So near yet another hour of pleading muscles,no brain.  
We've got it,no worries - what a day,what a minute  
What a moment - all the mighty peaks lie flat and beaten.

Exhausted,surprised,wondering,we suck a barley sugar  
Sort the rope yet again then plunge down the ladder trail  
The last of the red sun gilding my shoulder  
That first-time moment lost to me forever.

Back in our smelly little city  
Life looked desperate,dangerous  
A maze of pitfalls and errors  
So many roads leading to nowhere.  
We looked at each other disappointed  
Wondering who to tell  
That we'd been king of our castle  
Seen a world that had no end.

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