

## 62° North, 143° West

In the ash-light of a white-out,  
we wound our way up the glacier,  
through a maze of chasms  
and contorted towers.

At the crest of a cliff a second labyrinth  
appeared above the first: a bay  
of blue-gray ice, groined with voids  
and uncrossable seams.

No way forward — and when the serac  
we'd climbed collapsed behind us —  
no way back. Nothing  
to be done that night but anchor

a yellow tent on a frozen reef;  
a pot of soup and unsound sleep.  
Distended night rolled into day  
and night again, and then more day

as undifferentiated as the vapor in which  
we waited, and always, endlessly,  
under the hail and moaning wind,  
the seismic shriek of ice on stone,

the rocket crack of arches fracturing,  
the bowel-and-bone tremor of cave-ins  
coursing like a pulse. All night  
the harp-like tent lines trembled.

On the fourth morning, unretrieved,  
we set out east into a crevasse  
baited like a trap, roped down a hundred feet  
onto a fragile shelf of spindrift,

then trespassed deeper into a soundless  
souk of water-cut alleys no wider  
than a coffin, of blue vault walls veering  
into darkness like the hulls of foundered ships.

Far above, a crease of light  
gleamed faintly as if it were something  
we had imagined, or prayed for,  
a door painted on the ceiling of a crypt,

our passage back to that tender, utmost  
morning when we might walk again  
carelessly in the moss and the phlox  
and the sunlight unboxing our shadows.