



## The High-Mountain Dead

*"No one knows exactly how many bodies remain on Everest but there are certainly more than 200."*

—BBC.com October 2015

The storm retreats, the clouds disclose  
figures at rest but un-reposed,  
haunting shapes in haunted snows.

No fine bouquets, no last goodbye,  
no tended earth in which to lie  
half-shrouded in a tomb of sky.

No color but the tattered down  
of bloodless reds, bleary greens and brown  
like prayer flags on the mountain's crown.

The stark expressions of surprise,  
the leathery hands and marbled eyes  
(starved for wisdom but somehow wise)

tell what they gambled, not what they lost.  
Now year by year the veils of frost  
conceal the vale of time they've crossed.

The snow will cover where they stepped.  
And loved ones who have grieved and wept  
will suffer what they must accept:

what the mountain took, the mountain kept.

—Chip Brown, *New York, New York*