Eroded Travel

The car pitches west for Devonian shades while our kids limn drumlins swelling past windows. We should be sighting Front Ranges, but Yamnuska’s scalloped mask is swarmed by a stratus pack. We’re bound for a glacier’s toe, more monastic with each season, which rations out chatter marks between ice today and when I last faced the terminus.

~

Stretch-break by a scarp announcing its anticline. My daughter grins at potato stones woken from a bed the stream has ditched.

She heaves refined cobbles. A scuttling course tucks the lobs in a duvet of held breath and her face casts for more.
Taco’d rock in hand, my son
asks why Earth folds itself.

With my boots ruffling water’s
zeal, I wonder how to render

the years for bending shale,
when this trip, to him, makes an era.

~

If we took this creek
at its word and braced

for an argument with
the city, we could alight

at a shore to watch high-rises
accumulating

and drape our arms over
a lacquered bench

engraved
with my brother’s name.

~
The highway unveils a cement plant, 
shoots gnashing a carbonate cache.

Stalks strip the quarry, wad up prey, 
and hoard clinkers in a sealed dome.

In lieu of erosion’s slow slashing, 
these cookers increase nature’s speed, 

deposit concrete along the trough 
and into braided roads.

Continent’s ballast is rebalanced 
by shells and bones paving our path.

~

A man my children 
will never meet.

The date is concretion 
in my mind,

a swelling nucleus 
that syphons memories

embedded in 
hour strata—
exposed by a voice
on the radio

that fractures
an outcrop,

revealing this strange
ball of grief.

Twelve years
since he died.

~

My son begs the disk to skip,
skirt the skin of water’s machine,

but he gives up in a sunken galumph.
His arm’s young arc can’t master

the knuckle-knack needed
to syncopate a flowing ostinato,

while my wife whips stones
that suture across liquid wounds.

~

My brother is
the K-T Boundary

seared through
family seams.

Gaunt line visible
after impact.

Alien elements.
Shocked quartz.

Cross this threshold
from rock to room.

His mute moraine
of clutter.

Empty fridge.
Cigarettes in the freezer.

Signature signifying
he’s not coming back.

~

Switchbacking by foot up the ridge,
our soles scuff petrified corals.

Athabasca, outwashing from snout,
rejects our advances.

Son and daughter pose before
a glacier their life will outlast.

Aging will metamorphose them
into forms beyond my recognition.

How should I explain that uniformity
of Earth can be jarred during

their own microscopic span?
We freeze for a photograph,

but the present is ablating.
Our past seeps through a moulin

back into mainstreams.
We are here to see the going.

~

About-face at the Stygian off-ramp
with its Hades-stewed slate,

purple plates scoffing
as our taillights shrink.

We wind back on unwound
ropes of asphalt, my son

cupping a quartzite memento
that magnetizes his return.

Ice remains a retreating burden.
Wind rasp curdles in my ears.
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