

Andy Bryenton

Still Standing

The harbour breathes

Slow, salt-swirl, liquid exhalation

Waters tinted pounamu and sky

Edges all lace and opalescence, foam skitters over her mudflats, hungry, driven by the thunder of the ocean's heart.

I am the watcher, the wavescatter reflection, a sentinel mossy with the weight of centuries.

I am silence, storm-defier - from roots in their dark tangle, to the constellations woven amid my branches, and the nesting moon.

The harbour breathes, stone beneath me creaking as we lean into the storm of years;

Spring rises with the sap, the seabirds call, sliding down the cold skies, sliced up by veils of rain and squall. Icy mists enshroud, where shadows walk and nothing else; an immensity of hush, deep as dreamless dark.

Until the summer when the heat-haze pauses, breathless. Until the sap is stilled, the birds are silent, the green-tinted rays of the sun through leaves

/ Skip silver from the edge of heavy steel /

Until this tiny creature, rags and twigs and eyes like amber, mops his wrinkled brow and sits, sweat chilled in the cathedral green. His thoughts are mayfly-skitter, heat-lightning things, light as a feather's fall, slippery as the tide through mangrove roots. His hand is like a fantail's claw.

But I feel the weight behind it. The steam and iron and hunger. The canvas and the gold and blood. These are the fingers which would unpick the skein of constellations, but:

"Like Atlas with the world up on your back, you ancient thing," he says, and lets the cold steel lie. Little numbers in a book of pale white leaves. "And now they'll never find you."

The stars wheel and foam. Sails of mist stretch tight, all things leaning in as we heel toward the coming season.

The harbour breathes, jade-green, mirror of clouds.

While beyond the tide of changes, I wait on the shore of time's deeper sea.

Its heart reflects the water. It's breath is liquid, too.