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The Ocean Forests: an elegy and lament

As the gleam of growth
stills in harsh, cold sunlight,
and trees tap inner heat
through fibre-optics,
it starts to filter
through here—an earthquake
miles below the ocean's floor,
plate slipping under plate,
the massive release of energy
and surge of water
running the gradient
of landfall: forcing entry,
as deftly as fire, an elemental
crossover on the edge
of all that's living,
or catching sight
of where play or a conversation
rolls in the swell
uprooting the tree as body, as water
is the body we are, and when water
pulls back the soul escapes;
what do we see
in the whitewash,
the island wreckage,
the passing urge to push out
from the point of our disruption?
Calibrating prophecies
of the living, some look for signs
of punishment—there are none,
and those who want such outcomes
condemn us before we wake—
animals moved to higher ground.

Truth annuls our own disasters:
a local freeze or heatwave,
the light of the ocean forest
absorbed by warmer currents,
ice encasing an entire depth
at once pushed and drawn out,
swept with a rush to reshape,
supplant; this melding, curving,
heaving re-alignment . . .
the fulsome atmosphere
imprinted with cloud,
the seaweeds of new oceans,
new shorelines, haphazard burials,
an air pocket in a basement
as light and air saturate
wishful thinking, a choice
we make in a medium
of earth, water, air—no country
declares ownership in the bloom
of hot coral forests, ice forests
and memories of mimosa
from the driest parts.
We reflect from where we are,
where we were. The melting
and piercing of the earth's crust—
made viscous then fragile
then unstable? We search
for answers. We watch
sunsets with iridological
intensity, an emollition
of the planet's static,
a mirror stripped of its backing
we stare up at the swimming,
the molten, the chilled, the drowning.

Cold and calculating:
rupture, megathrust . . .
absolving the apocalypse?
Language betrays disaster,
and makes culture
of the brutal fact: tsunami.
Twenty years ago
on the northern tip of Sumatra,
we reflected on direction:
the choices we might make.
Locals and visitors
brought together:
the warm winter-jaded
visitors linked over a meal
with those knowing each foot of ground,
grown fluid in the wobbling
of the earth's rotation,
shortening all our days,
bringing palm trees and ice forests
under the same cut-glass sky,
salt etching rock and wall
and metal strewn
about an epicentre,
boundaries of touch and impact,
lament and bubbles caught
on our face rising up to sight,
across the transparent divide
of blue fish and white birds,
infusion of haze
and light rebounding,
the swirl of those close
and lost already,
known even in the shock,
thoughts hovering where the body was,
is not . . . and we who know not how

to deal with others lost;
so this is all that will come out
of iced or burning forests?
How do we write: "happy new year"
without the sharp
cut of water,
the burning wash?
How celebrate
seasons when winter
has reached down
into the warm,
torn shores of an ocean
so close, so distant...?