Man looking for Seal

(for Jinnie P. Sugluk Inuit Community)

Kneeling on a hump of ice he
could be praying
but for the lift of the neck
the hunger of eyes and nose into weather.
And then the tuck of his legs
knees firm on the slope -
the body’s need for seal.

Seal-skin, seal bone
seal-warm flesh and salty guts
seal-prey, seal provider, seal-god
seal-womb of the Northern lives.

Stone hunter

lifting you to the light
feeling the art we have
our palms tickled by the tail
of a fat, fed seal who idles
cosy in the lee of your ice
his ice beneath you, safe
surviving, out of sight.

We complete this carving, our palms
answering the need of the soapstone
which hungers for the oil of our skin
so that we are seal-giving, heat-touching
smiling, learning more of you
growing into more
of ourselves.

— Tony Curtis