

Little Brother and Serpent *Samna*

1.

She/I play/s in fields of tall grass and sticker bushes,
that snag on her/my *atiguluq* and white tights.

2.

Little brother skips between moose tracks
and chinked sod houses. She/I sing/s shrill echoes
of red snapper and razor clam shells underfoot.

3.

Blood leaches on her/my shins
collect in wading mosquito pools,
nettle days fester nightfall into salmon sky pink.

4.

Copper mountains and elderberries linger upon Knik Arm,
just between the knots on silver birch burnt spruce.

5.

Mount Williwaw and purple iris below white
Polaris star remind me nightly of youthful delight.

6.

Her/my tent bays on the shore of Cook Inlet,
next to the gulls and charred fir trees,
darkening the sun, cloud by cloud.

7.

Brother's crooked head atop mother's sucking barnacles,
hold him in bore tides of milky water.

8.

Fishing lines hook his sealskin *mukluks*,
feet cemented in rock base, gray quicksand,
he jigs blue hooligan off the point.

9.

Ash mother's mouth like Serpent *Samna* both with
a tendril grasp, tainting him raw sienna.

10.

The mother's milk my brother from each bosom.
He nibbles at his browbeating umbilical cord,
seeks a pacifier of Barter Island, seal sunning.

11.

Samna brings brother close enough to smell the blue ruin,
Yet far enough to build a castle made of tentacles.

12.

He plays tug-of-war and hopscotch with next of kin.
The seahorse saddled and bucking from the spurs
of brackish headwaters and iced shells of razor clams.

13.

She/I left a century ago beyond the castle
into the moat of beadwork; made a sand spit;
an island erected into my likeness: made of pigment,
ivory paper with black scrimshaw pictures.