**Become Stone**

It starts with a journey to an island. By June, the ice is melting and a new crop of rocks has been left by entrusting waves or exposed by abrading surf. The best ones for the sculptor's blade are marbleized fossils hard and smooth as an arctic night. A hunt yields one that will become a mask

a memory
of the old shaman masks of fur, ivory and sinew, made not to believe in but to fear, masks that scared children into knowing something could come from the south or the east. Something hiding behind smiling faces and crosses or smelling of cooking oil and gasoline. Masks worn, disintegrated, and forgotten.

In this land souls still abide in the arctic fox, the tern and the snow. The little creatures in this bed of fossils are coming back to life as a mask of stone. A thousand importunate spirits press in trying to get inside

where the atoms are spinning
as fast as on the day the urchins came to life or as the night the stone sharpened the blade.

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