

MOUNTAIN RETREATS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY

Envy the Seasons (with Hamish Whyte & Jim McGonigal)

Fractures

NON-FICTION

The Japan Lights

The Only Gaijin in the Village

FICTION

In the Shadow of Piper Alpha (formerly *The Waves Burn Bright*)

Life is Elsewhere / Burn Your Flags

Silma Hill

First Time Solo

AS EDITOR

In the Empty Places

MOUNTAIN RETREATS

Iain Maloney

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For Alan Spence
who taught me even when I thought I knew it all

For all the 厄年男

WHERE THE SKY BEGINS

I

new year
a hospital waiting room
holding hands

snow settling outside

the news filters
through me

white noise
white mist

the air is brittle

sick

I run for the treeline
run for cover
run for health

the air is brittle

where the trees stop
and the sky begins

before each climb
I lace my boots
out of sequence

like my father taught me

the pressure

even
equal

too long in the foothills
these first steps

escaping
a hard winter

tread boldly
into leaf mould

a soft landing
for now

this escape

on snow
so easy for me
to slip

the air is brittle

this forest
a life here
a moment

a new path on a familiar mountain
like meeting for the first time again

head in the clouds
I cannot see beyond my hands
cannot see the future

I lose the path
find it
moving forwards

with regrets

my antique compass wobbles
uncertain about
true north's truth

deer tracks
boar tracks
footprints converge

where the trees stop

above the treeline

filling the void
quieting in the silence

where the sky begins