

The Ice Man

MITCH LESCARBEAU

Bolzano, Italy

We jostle and joke in the waiting line's dark,
snaking toward the cold cube of light in the wall.

We pass the nests of his two grass boots behind the glass.
Here are his arrowtips,
here his little pouch of dusty mushrooms.

The past may be nothing, a phantom,
but sometimes things get stuck in it.

Ropey, glazed, his face partly caved in,
there he is. Every muscle is stripped of skin
and his harrowed mouth opens to splayed ligament.

The ice rolled over him like a blanket.
Four thousand years.

And now this merciless light,

and inside the new white freezer of his tomb:
our lost shepherd, lordless, flockless,

his shadowed eyesockets staring back
and seeing nothing, seeing shadows,
seeing us

in our bright winter polyesters,
our thin and vivid splinter of time.