D. S. Long

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there is a sort of shelter
out of the wind
in under those crumbling cliffs
where the gulls could sing
but they whisper
in the voice they heard
come out of a shell
the waves had filled with sand

and he often sits there
beside a small fire
he's made out of the driftwood
he'd gathered
fumbling in the dark
for a match he'd thought he'd brought

for there are some days when the bay
stumbles down a rough track
through a field of broken
grass and wet
glistening rocks
to sit so
and watch the bull kelp
suck and grunt
on its shelf
and all those other fields
of black horse mussel
waiting for the season
when the cliffs will loom up
above the surf
north of here
where there is a sweep of marram grass
and sand hills stretched so many miles
the birth marks show
a few hills
all dressed up with farms
and farmers who have buried
their first born
under a hot sun
at the church
and driven home
and gone out
and disced and harrowed far
too far
into the night
up north
where the marram grass
grows and peters out
like a family line
curving into the barren womb
of the Seaward Kaikouras
still stained with a red kelp
where these plains end

and it's maybe ten miles out
fishing for sharks
and the damn net's
got itself fouled
on an inshore wind
I'd say
strained its guts
on no. 8 fencing wire
still nailed to a post
some damn fool threw into the river
not even thinking
you could smash it up
and have enough
to start a fire
in that hole
just round the point
he can't even whisper in

*from The Winter Fisherman*