

# CutBank

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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*