Fall 1982

Aleutian Stare

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ALEUTIAN STARE

All night the cabin shook
repeating its refusal to a wind
that wanted everything. Now
birds circle the false calm,
squawk and squeal; ravens
among settling gulls like shadows.
Looking out I practice
the scavenger’s habit: trawlers
on the sheared sea, cliffs,
quonset ribs—reference points
in the merged scenery. I’ve heard
what these islands can do
to a man’s eyes. Stares of water and weather,
as if the barrenness
were echoing. Beside the hut
tires, stacked and brimmed
with soil, absorb enough sun
for heat. Within them seedlings:
beets, carrots, a single pea
still thriving in the storms’ interim.
I’ve known the land
by what it lacks, a kayaker
watching the shore, sky,
the wearing trail of a fishline’s wake.
Beneath this surface seeds
I’ve cast drift
baited and barbed with roots.