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Survey at 70°N

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RACHEL MCCARTHY

Survey at 70°N

We're here to rename the named -
to pronounce the drowned coves
and redraw the coast.

Yet what troubles me most
are not the abandoned homes
staggering toward the edge

or even the guillemots
huddled on their thin ledge
but the wind singing to itself;

sounding one low sweeping note
as it tunnels clean through snowfall
into the wild heart of the Arctic.

I know I'd be lost
but it's all I can do
not to follow.

*

Late, in your hotel room
we take turns nipping at a flask of Absolut
and talk of tongues of ice
renouncing themselves:

Barents, Novaya Zemlya, Svalbard
I don't mention the wind
despite the fact
you're already drunk

and would be brave enough
to kiss me properly, once.

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