

The Catch

Volume 4

Article 5

2016

Barrens

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Recommended Citation

Raymond, Mark (2016) "Barrens," *The Catch*: Vol. 4 , Article 5.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/the_catch/vol4/iss1/5

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Barrens

It's August, overcast. The sky's beached
on these ironed-out hills. Glaciers must've
pressed like this, gray and thick,
as granite centuries ground down
to outwash grit. Slabs of cloud, gunmetal
colored, draw an arctic mirage, cold
as clay—though the air's muggy, and the day
threatens thunder that'll just peter out,
heat lightning, in the west, after sunset.

The man from Lubec, his accent
thick as salt, puts words in the air
slowly, as if they're bricks. He won't talk
Spanish. End of season laborers follow
what he says with their eyes. Tomorrow,
a van drives them to Nova Scotia. Here,
soon enough, a crisp rust will stain the fields.

Everyone's come from somewhere else.
That Micmac woman wasn't here yesterday.
Hulks of canneries, shell heaps, weren't here before.

Even the spruce, the lichen on rock,
wandered from somewhere, like the caribou, once:

speaking Basque, learning the Bible,
hearing gunpowder thunder off stones, following,
as winters come and go, the land as it rises,
alewives running thick in streams.