

## This Gift

In the dunes between Race Point,  
Provincetown and High Head,  
North Truro, I went to burrow  
like a sand crab, glad to be alone  
in my temporary spartan home—  
tiny shack perched precariously  
among the dunes, so near  
to a twenty-foot-high cliff of sand

I could hear and feel the ocean lift  
me up. To reside on the backside  
of an ocean cliff, be hemmed in by dune  
grass and thick lushly fruited rose hips  
that touch the porch with thorny  
fingertips—to be lulled to sleep  
by the muffled rhythm of breaking  
waves is to slip away into nirvana,

pure bliss. By day, I trailed hunch-  
backed sanderlings along the shoreline,  
wishing I weighed so little and could  
trade my toes for their splayed ones  
to keep me from sinking into soft sand.  
Back at the shack, I sat in the shade  
and ocean breeze watching whales sail by,  
breaching and reaching for the sky.

How I longed to join them.  
Night of the full moon, I meandered  
in between the dunes, lingered among  
ripe beach plums, lichen and mushrooms,  
followed deer tracks through the scrub  
forest. Come dawn, I shadowed  
spiraling sparrows and talked to one  
marsh hawk, my faithful visitor.

In the dunes, I embraced the essence  
of wabi-sabi—alone but not lonely  
in my weathered shack—the austere  
beauty of simplicity and nature's majesty.  
If only I could have stayed forever.  
But that was never the objective,  
was it, of this gift of a dune shack  
on the backside of an ocean cliff.

—Diana Woodcock

image info