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A Polar Bear Prays for Colder Days Ahead

John Smelcer

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A Polar Bear Prays for Colder Days Ahead

The world is melting beneath us.

Every year the ice pack shrinks, and we have to swim
farther and farther to fill our bellies.

We are not fish. We need the respite. Besides, it is on the ice
that we catch seals and the occasional walrus—

even *they* need a place to hoist their weary bulk from the sea.
To quiet our raging hunger, we ramble inland,

root on the tundra, compete with wolves and grizzlies for caribou.
It is no easy thing to lose a world.

Some of us will be gone by the time you finish reading this.

John Smelcer

JOHN SMELCER, an Alaska Native American, is the author of 40 books, including *Songs from the Outcast* (American Indian Studies Center, UCLA, 2000) and *Without Reservation* (Truman State University Press, 2003). He teaches literature and creative writing at Binghamton University, State University of New York.

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