

Cabin 135

Katie Eberhart

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Cabin 135 is Katie Eberhart's contemplative account of several decades in Alaska, through which she both reflects on the past and on environmental changes that could impact the future.

Eberhart moved to Alaska with her husband in the late 1970s. After brief stints in an apartment and a flooding, flat-roofed house, they moved into a log cabin that was built in 1935 as part of a New Deal project. As they engaged in home renovations, they came to feel linked to the people who had lived there before them. History pervaded the dwelling, while weather extremes and natural disasters, including the Mount St. Helens eruption, reminded them of human vulnerability to the elements.

The book collects short vignettes under recurring headings, including "Earth," "Migration," and "Water." The structure is thematic rather than chronological: "I string together recollections according to connections I discern," Eberhart writes. Gardening, camping, and preparing a dwelling for the winter are presented as seasonal activities that come in cycles. Eberhart also gives space to considering the past generations of her family.

Through travel interludes to the Arctic, Iceland, and Switzerland, the book crosses "terrain as well as time." Volunteering at an archaeological site, Eberhart connects to previous centuries, while on a smaller scale, she remembers her parents' orchard, and notes that apple trees always elicit nostalgia for her adolescence. Loving descriptions of nature and cooking projects result in a tranquil atmosphere that is furthered by the book's lyrical style and inventive vocabulary, as when Eberhart remarks, while gardening, "I'm empress and laborer, nanny and tutor."

Moving to Alaska gave Katie Eberhart a longed-for sense of rootedness, and *Cabin 135* is her meditative memoir that covers her experiences there.

REBECCA FOSTER (November / December 2020)

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