

ISLANDS

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If you have walked in sleep
you know this moment, the dream that led you
to this window, eyes open but unseeing
your own voice calling you awake

or sometimes you do not sleep
night is something to be thrown off
like a too-heavy cover—
the same, these moments,
when the old becomes an island
everyone on it far away
their voices, distant, across the water—

The things you remember are not important:
walking with your mother in air cleared by rain,
running along a path through long grass to the
stream
where crawfish disappeared in urgent spurts of silt

how your father placed a peppermint on your
tongue
when you were a child
like a doll
hardly able to warm your own bed

Your father who brought you water at night
hands curved about a cup
and told you those stories with those endings
you believed

you believe they still think of you
are leaning toward you, waiting
for the correct words
for your apologies

and you have imagined what you would say
so many times
until your reasons and sorrows
were as carefully arranged as a painted mosaic
on some sunny wall, perfectly clear
perfectly understandable.