

## ISLANDS

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*Jessie Carroll Gearson*

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.