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Letter from Zanzibar

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LETTER FROM ZANZIBAR
—for Jean Kilbourne

I.

Remember that shoreline?—wind, sun, the bad water . . . I don’t.
I remember nothing but your hands and one knee, pointing away. The desertions we mentioned—they’re not so worthless: the amount of air a small bird’s wing displaces, the heartbeat of a snail . . .

II.

Right now, on these dry boulders, I can say: Take fear or any simple uncertainty—it’s water but moves downhill faster and more quietly. And, when it gets there, is unnoticed or else noticed, and fished by those who believe anything yanked from darkness, no matter what it is, is good.

III.

I can understand almost everything: yellow scissors, fields of warm snow, theories about swans—that’s easy—but these declensions, these ersatz needs? Something is wrong with the earth or the sun. One’s not moving fast enough around the other. And that’s only half the gamut.

Thomas Lux