

I N C O ⁸ N I T U M

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...I'd have
nightmares of other islands
stretching away from mine, infinities
of islands, islands spawning islands...
...knowing that I had to live
on each and every one, eventually,
for ages, registering their flora,
their fauna, their geography.

—*Elizabeth Bishop, "Crusoe in England"*

HALF-LIFE

The maple tree in the yard
halved from lightning,

bare hills saddled with
houses, hives

of development and the scourge
of bulldozed ground.

There are the new strip malls,
the polluted creek,

the paper pulp mill
up in flames.

Ignited suburban night,
nightgown clouds

for plumage, shadows
without shirts.

It's all part of you
and then—

I don't mean
to disturb you.

These are the seven days
of clouds.

These are the ten days
of clouds.

The middle of June,
we take in

the hydrangeas because
of frost.

I am speaking plainly here.

The screen doors changed
to storm doors.

The peach tree lost
to infestation,

fruitless and weepy
with golden sap.

The tranquilizers,

little white
seeds—

they aren't working.

AMERICA

Parking lots laid with smoking asphalt
in the night.

Did I tell you I was Little Miss Hudson Valley?

Meltwater, dumped sediment, a glacier's
groove, what's left behind.

The last great boneyard disappears
behind the sign

WE KNOW EVERY MOVE YOU MAKE
ARNOFF MOVING & SELF-STORAGE

The opossums have secret meetings
in the trees.

Flashbulbs pop, they lift the plastered cast
of the Mastodon from the marl pit
for the first time in Newburgh, New York.

O eighteenth century
American Monster,

O Incognitum.

Did I tell you my dress was white
and I rode in the parade?

All night watchmen drive around
car auction lots big as Texas.

Blinking lights. Stop & Shop.
We're here.