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Norwalk Islands Memory

The indigos of muscle, cherrystone
Whites of oysters with their indigo coins
Greens of full-bladdered and sun-dried seaweed,
Browns of sand, disintegrated small shells
And the sea-swell wearing down of granite....
Follow the wrack line around the island
To a small stream, cross onto the mudflats
Respiring with small creatures, step lightly
Into the tall grasses sharp as razors
Climb to a rise cool and beaming with trees
Climb under the shade, enter a farmhouse
In the clutches of embracing verdure
Pulling it down, uprooting all memory.
Only names remain to locate this time:
Cockoene, Ram (now Shea), Chimmons, Goose, Grass
Calf Pasture, Tree Hammock, Copps and Crow,
Sheffield. Little Tavern.
Pirates, Prohibition, booty, and booze
Punctuate the history of these islands.
If you find treasure, it's mine, Dad would say.
Crumbling stairs, collapsed floors, open wells
Between curiosity and ruin:
Once grazing lands, these islands, once homesteads,
Once a vast power plant on Manresa,
Talk once of a nuclear power plant
Ghosts left to be pulled down by time and trees
And in a moment, gone: The family left
Curtains fluttering through open windows,
Teacups in the sink, breadknife on the board
And the family went ashore, went shopping
Went home to dry land. No cattle, no corn-
Somebody's neighbor now, a need to talk.

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On the beach, drinking cold beer from Colemans
(Lukewarm coffee in the Thermos will do
For the ride home to warm baths and cool sheets
The big coffee pot ready for morning),
We set foot on the island to explore
Among the rocks: If you find a treasure
It's mine.
I set out hoping for a gift,
Alone among the rocks, climbing, searching
A sunny day. A picnic. A memory.
Sanctuaries now for all marine life,
These islands keep you.
Come ashore. Come home

For Dad.