

III-D

That one day
It was a question of me, or that people may
Have spoken of me, is one and the same.
An exile from the life of city streets
For firmly than if placed on some desert island
In the middle of nowhere, in the Pacific's vast anonymous stretches.

The gray wastes of water surround
My puny little shoal. Sometimes storms roll
Tremendous billows far up on the gray sand beach, and the morning
After, odd tusked monsters lie stinking in the tropic sun.
They are inedible. For food, there is only
Breadfruit, and berries ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ garnered in the jungle's inner reaches,
Wrested from scorpion and poisonous snake. Fresh water is a problem.
After a rain you will find some nestling in the hollow trunk of a tree,
or in hollow stones.

One's only form of distraction is really
To climb to the top of the one tall cliff to scan the distances.
Not for a ship, of course--this island is far from all the trade routes--
But in hopes of an unusual sight, such as a school of dolphins at play,
A whale spouting, or a cormorant bearing down on its pray.
So high this cliff is that the pebble beach far below seems made of gravel.
Halway down, the chaffs and crows look like bees.
Near by are the nests of vultures, ~~and~~ they cluck sympathetically in my direction
(Which will not prevent them from rending me limb from limb once I have kicked off
Further down, and way over to one side, are nests of eagles,
Always fussing, fouling their big nests, they always seem to manage to turn their
backs to you.
The glass is low; no doubt we are in for a storm.

Sure enough; in the pale gray and orange distances, to the left, a
Waterspout is becoming distinctly visible. Beautiful, but terrifying;
Delicate, transparent, like a watercolor by that 19th century Englishman whose
name I forget
(I am beginning to forget everything on this island; if only I had been allowed
to bring my ten favorite books with me--
But a weathered child's alphabet is my only reading material--luckily,
some of the birds and animals on the island are pictured in it--the albatross,
for instance--that's a name I never would have remembered)

It looks as though the storm-fiend were planning to kick up quite a ruckus
For this evening. I had better be getting back to the tent,
Make sure everything is shipshape, weight down the canvas with extra stones,
Bank the fire, and prepare myself a little hard-tack and tea
For the evening's repast. Still, it is rather beautiful up here