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## For the First Time

Kenneth Schexnayder

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## *For The First Time*

Cockatoos gnaw the heart from papaya,  
leaving only yellow streaked skins.  
On the reef at morning,  
blue starfish abandoned by the tide.  
Take these events as signifiers,  
not for the grief of loss  
we fear our children will know,  
forests gone, the sea a carrier  
of pestilence, but for design,  
the way men or women lift their eyes  
after a mistake, seize some inner knot of strength  
and using both hands tie a stronger one.

It is the moment of clarity that matters:  
the slow warmth of satisfaction felt  
when for the first time I saw  
in humus fertility and not death.  
Like in the letter I wrote to my friend,  
trying to explain my leaving,  
that the ocean between us  
is not simply abrasive waves, a stripping away.  
It has more to do with how the gravel reassembles  
as each wave dies. The continual reorganization.  
The sharp red as a lory darts from a coconut palm.  
Children who sketch patterns in the dirt  
after the midday sun. Daily I walk  
down to the stream to bathe,  
sit with the water to my neck.  
Then fallen leaves appear  
to move against the flow, and the salt from the sea,  
upward from the mouth.