

Dear Tombs, Dear Horizon

I was walking along the concreted pathway  
around the coast and stepping down  
for a grassy lunch when I saw on the rocks  
someone had painted “You are my most  
lovely horizon,” something no one has ever  
said to me. Dear Horizon, you are both  
the limit and beyond, the line  
and the light, and because you will never  
reach these rocks where I saw this  
message I will put it in a poem to sail  
it out to you, a glassy launch.

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Sun on the coast, sun on my back, but  
the mountains dark with cloud,  
misty down to the ground, and higher  
up, stormy. The shadow of my hand  
on the page as I write, writing  
inside my own shadow.

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The din as the stones on the beach  
are rolled by the sea back in.

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Remembering the Villa Isola Bella, Katherine  
Mansfield wrote of the warm stone on the  
terrace, leaning against the warm walls,  
the heat at her back, the furry bees in the air,  
and the cold feelings between her and  
John Middleton Murry, after all the letters  
they had sent back and forth, all the yearning  
for his presence, and then, in his presence,  
absence.

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At the Villa Isola Bella, my favourite place  
is the doorstep, the corner where a spider  
grooms itself on the mottled buttery  
yellow stone, beside the eggshell blue  
door frame, and the terracotta tiles.  
It is like finding myself in a corner  
of a Vermeer interior, a detail  
closer up than a Vermeer painting  
has ever gone, so that with all the stillness  
on the canvas, there is this corner  
so close up, the spider moves.

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