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Samuel Beckett Corresponds With Father Damien On Molokai

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SAMUEL BECKETT CORRESPONDS WITH FATHER
DAMIEN ON MOLOKAI.

The exoticism of place and people
has nothing on the exotic nature
of experience.

He said.

This disease comes wrapped ornately:
non-native, inhabiting, like you,
your own parcel.

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And there, too, you, lifting yourself
as a gift from the selfsame box, wrappings
drooping aside.

You, correspondingly, as background—
all palm, surf, and volcano.

In the foreground you stand holding
the present you are

before the recipient you
are, like

a garment
the birthday boy drapes across his chest, speculating on fit.

Yes, a birthday, I realize—that's what it is—

The alien nakedness of self to self.

The candles redundant in the balmy weather.

The breath peeling itself away from deadened tissue, whereas
the lung
extinguishes the light with its own rare, numb substance.