Visit to Cherenki Village, Tanzania

Ellen Satrom*
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her iguana eyes follow us
one dark, staring
the other
blind, flickering
milk-white.

inside we sit on benches while the party chairman talks of ujamaa,
rice irrigation, the japanese are sponsoring projects he is saying.

black, her face frames
her eyes in the open-
shuttered window.
now we see the wild
outline of her knotted
hair, the looseness
of her cotton dress.

we will see the white cars along the road he says and the japanese are
driving them to supervise, are there any questions he says.

she is inside now
her cracked hand wringing
a silver coin through big
knuckles. it pushes
out between fingers,
nipe, nipe, she says, give me.

we move to the door and into our van hoping she doesn't follow, and
you see over there how we have irrigation says the party chairman.

now she squats close
to the ground
only the bulges
of her eyes moving
decaying in their orbits.