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Green Stone with a White Heart

Joan Swift

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Do you know the sea?
Sometimes it rages so its waves stand
up like trees.
Yet its bells ring for safety.
And its tongues lie down on sand.

Green Stone with a White Heart / Joan Swift

I have for you a kind of valentine
I found on the beach.
Either the waves wanted those millions
of stones and kept coming back for them
or the ocean was trying to get away
and the pebbles were following.
They were the colors of all the animals
and all the eyes. They were lying
together like the parts of speech.

Here is one as green as the face
of a seasick woman I saw once
where she lay at the bottom
of the engine room stairs,
not wanting to fish anymore.
On its concave side is a white
heart, some harder compound
whose equation keeps out the sea.
Each time the wind blew or a wave
passed over, it stepped a little
further into the sunlight
and is now in your hand.