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The Little Stones

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THE LITTLE STONES

The little stones line up on the road and march off. Some are for windows, some are for foreheads, some for the slipping wheels of locomotives. As they reach their stations they turn off without saying goodbye to each other. This one is lucky. He will be a jewel. He will live on the breasts of beautiful women and in the pockets of thieves. Now this one stops. He is meant for the hand of a child and the eye of the child’s sister. And here is a row of four. See how they march together? These stones will grow large, they will signal the tombs of a family, one for the mother and father, one for the daughter and two for the son who dies in a strange land. And a handful of six round, white stones to rub against each other in the pocket of a mathematician. These six stones will conjure numbers that haven’t been invented yet, will measure galaxies, the speed of solar systems, the deaths of stars. And the stars, exploding, will become stones and will line up again on a road and march off, some for windows, some for foreheads, some for the slipping wheels of locomotives or the tombs of families of four—the mother, father, daughter, the son with his body in one land, his grave in another, each of them marked by a stone.