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The Way Back

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THE WAY BACK

I know an axe and a turtle's shell.
I know the day I won

A silver watch in school,
Then came home to tell my mother

Her mother had died.
I know the way

My mother slapped my father
And let her nails

Linger. Bleeding,
He smiled to teach me:

We slap whom we love.
I know a boy and a turtle.

Each time he held it, it withdrew.
And my aunt was a sea

And two borders removed.
I know the summer she spent waiting

For a visa. Sitting in bed,
Knees bent to hold a book she was reading.

No one had told her
Her mother had died.

When she arrived
She smiled and kissed me.

I said nothing. She wailed and
My uncle slapped her once.

I know the sisters wanted
And the boy also wanted.

To see the body
Inside its shell.

There were shovels by the grave.
There was an axe in the garden.

He grabbed it.