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Fault Lines

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The maps have told me secrets
in codes—green and blue—
of other places across the sea.

They've shrunk the planet,
making this rock of war
and fire seem small.

My finger finds home, but the tan shape
has no smoke or explosions,
no bloody streets or prayers.
I don't recognize it.

I slide my hands around, wishing
we could move as easily across the orb.
There are chances elsewhere, we're told,
where the only whistles are bird songs
and there is peace.

We put our life in a bag and live
day-to-day in the skeletons
of buildings, moving slowly
through the dust and rubble.
In time we are handed the ticket to survival.

The new world comes as advertised
with its tranquility and serenity.
Stillness is art. Silence is music.
Eyes and voices are kind.
Slowly we uncoil and build.

The news brings familiar names
along with death and flames
—and memories—as though
the remnants clung to our clothes.

Faces are closed now and whispers
full of acid hiss around us like a pit of snakes.
They mushroom into shouts and stares.
Yesterday the house screamed its broken glass.

War has followed us here
and destroyed the stillness
and buried the silence.

The reprieve is over.
I unfold the map and with trembling fingers,
look for another home.