I bring you cobblestones from the cold sea, from the seventh cove of Cranberry Island—where the beach is not sand but stones piled on stones.

What color? you ask, when you call from your mountainside home far from the sea. Gray, I tell you. Blue, black, white, I say.

I mean to say: washed gray of a fogged-in morning, white of salt, of seafoam, night-black, blue of a far harbor. I mean to say: red of rust, red of dried seaweed, yellow-pale, streaked with the first coral of dawn.

Because I wanted to bring them to you, I weighed down my pockets as much as I dared and walked back, light-souled and three pounds heavier, up the grassy path from the sea to the cottage.

I wanted to bring them to you because they are the shades of grief and of mourning, they are patience, endurance—the exact pigmentation of pain.

And don’t we know about endurance? And don’t we know about pain? Now I have spread them out on the wooden kitchen table. Gently they click and clatter.

They are gathering their thick voices. If we listen—will they teach us to sing?