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The Nestling

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I crack her legacy open like a walnut,
cupping my great aunt's nesting dolls
in my hands several years after she's died.
Six sapphire dolls, each self cocooned
inside another. I shelter them
in the hollow of my palm as if
I can somehow apologize
for letting her die alone while
I am growing old.

Every woman in my family keeps secrets
like this, wrapped inside, and I can only guess hers.
She was a stranger to me, no matter how much I loved her
ruby lipstick. I am trying to become totally
honest, to strip until the child in my rib cage
finally climbs free, and to take her little hand in mine.
To watch her marvel at that opal sky,
and to tell her the secrets of the world,
starting with the name of every star.