

# Fifteen Stones

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**Fifteen stones Fifteen** flower petals  
Neruda's garden in Valparaiso Rumi's tomb in Konya

Fifteen pebbles of sand from the base of Ovid  
Fifteen olive pits from Piazza Virgilio

Constanța Mantova Bethlehem Vilnius

Fifteen seashells at the gravesite of H.D.  
Fifteen chestnuts Fifteen lumps of blue coal

Soncino clock tower fifteen minutes out of sync  
Fifteen minute reprieve when all church bells break loose

For the ones who are perpetually out of sync  
Who didn't quite make it Who didn't quite make it back

**I like walking past** where people live, hearing music through their windows from another era—Carlos Gardel, Enrique Caruso, Edith Piaf, Robert Johnson... It's in my blood, like the ones who show up in my dreams. I have no idea who they are, but I always go with them just to listen to what they have to say, then I carry their words into these writings. I'd give them credit if I knew their names. Which is another reason my landlady intrigues me. She's a hypnotherapist, and I want to be hypnotized so I can move on into one of my other dimensions. Like moving to Italy isn't far enough? She tells me, her husband interprets, language will make this impossible. But what language does the subconscious speak? Just get me under, where all my real characters are, and so what! I'll come back speaking Italian, right? I think life is that simple, like jumping up while the world is spinning and coming down half-way around, walking these dream alleys with the only comprehensible words guiding me in my head.

Between the river and the cemetery I have a secret walk through the alleys no one knows. And if you saw me? I think I'm invisible, past the sleeping dog and dead squirrel. I take the trash route. I take the broken glass route. I take the rocks and rusted metal route, leaning against your beat-up car to empty my shoe. A phone rings inside a house. Hey, I'm a burn barrel back alley kinda guy, deflated and who knows where. I go looking for myself in your tires and overturned shopping carts. I am a runaway shopping cart with one good wheel rickety and wobbling toward home.

The young and short of it: I have 5 days to make 5 micro fictions happen with kids my age when I flunked 8th grade. This is Fiction Camp. More real than every day at the Catholic university. Lord Buckley, The Nazz. Yes, the statue actually feels like Jesus. Of course I send my students down to the Psych Lab to ear hustle, eavesdrop, capture the essence of conversations. This is Fiction Camp. We're studying dialogue. How to become thinner than hair. We show up in disguise. Scribble and lie when we get asked, May I help you? Are you lost? What are you doing here? *We've been sent here to study the cracks in the walls. They need little people to clean out the air vents.* C'mon, we're kids at the university. This is Fiction Camp. Even you reading this aren't who you're supposed to be.

**Iquique.** I am filming what I should be writing—said the poet who is now a filmmaker. I am writing a poem to a woman who has captured my imagination—said the filmmaker who is now a poet. I am filming my imagination—said the daydreamer pretending a camera. The words spoken in a dream confound the poet—are they his words or the words of the one dreamed who spoke them? The filmmaker shoots a live-action selfie with the daydreamer’s camera as he walks into the sea backwards.