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He takes the connecting train; stepping off the rural platform where there are peanut shells scattering in the gust of air pushed forward by the locomotive. A woman near him holds the handles of a collapsible pram loaded with bagged potatoes, sweating inside the plastic. She's under forty, though in the countries he has travelled to on airplanes she looks as a woman of sixty does: faded print of her dress stained, the lines in her dry hands etched dark. The train passes through a landscape, nondescript and familiar. The wastelands of past agriculture. Land unloved, untended. Land rendered useless. The train moves on, stopping in nowhere places where dry dust is unsettled by trains and settles again. He enjoys that some of the small windows of the train are stuck open. Country people are shy of eyes. Country people, his own people. He catches himself there.

Abandoned farm machinery rusts like dinosaur skeletons, dark red and faded blue or yellow. He remembers these fields filled with activity, regimes of workers, of aunts and uncles. Everyone was aunt or uncle or cousin. He thinks of where he is going, the place he has shut out of his boardrooms and porcelain tiled bathrooms. They have all left him now, the friends with glittering toasts, his wife and her trilling laugh, fingers thick with rings, and chiffon impregnated with reeking French scents.

The train passes through a long line of poplars, a landmark he could not forget. The woman with the pram fans herself with a square of cardboard, eyes him cautiously. He hears her resigned sigh across the rattle and through the breeze gushing in through the windows.

The brakes whine painfully. He stands but and he can't look up from the floor and its layers of dried mud footprints. He steps down to the ground and his grandfather slides across his vision, standing in a field with a withered straw hat clamped onto his head.

For the first time in weeks he has a sense that the lead block on his shoulders is just a featherweight lighter. He has paused there at the door of the train, and peering in as it moves away, the woman and her potatoes look at him directly and for him it couldn't last long enough, the cleansing scalding fire of her stare.

An hour later he is wiping the salty tears from under his glasses, at the place where his mother gave birth to him and his siblings, all gone. The steel breastplate encasing his chest might just have cracked here and there. He removes his glasses. The house is gone now, it surprises him that he didn't consider that this too could be gone. The seams of his white shirt have gladly collected dust, he undoes the buttons and rolls his sleeves up; kneels there, placing his soft palms on the ground, patched with weeds. He reflects on the many lives he has lived since this ground recognised him; the many surfaces he has slid over, shinier, brighter. And he thought he knew more than he did, he sees that now. He has come here for a reason. He can see that now too. He hears a birdsong and a flood of memories hit him in the guts and a fresh wave of tears crash out of him. Some things have begun to ease.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Ninna Millikin.