

THE STORY STONES



Like people, pebbles on a beach are very different and each has a story. But the story of a pebble and the story a pebble can tell are also different when read by different people.

One day a man sat on a beach looking into himself, but he found nothing. He couldn't remember. Then he looked at where he was, where he sat, and as he looked at the pebbles beneath his feet he began to remember.

The first small stones brought back memories of heavy billowing clouds and foaming water. He recalled fear, the taste of salt and a violent storm. He recalled being thrown as limp as sea weed and dragged into deep shadow and silence.



Then his eyes rested on the next stones. They were very different from each other. One was sharply angled and stark while the other was rounded and swirling like the sea, but warmer, more cradling and comforting. He looked up and realised that these were the cliffs above him and the sand around him. He had not drowned.





The next stone talked to him about the shore he was on and the low sun he saw behind a golden rimmed cloud like the shielded eye of God.

This stone calmed him and centred him. He held it for a long time and it prepared him for the next stone which was riddled with conflicting paths that drew a pattern like the shattered mind of a man who was almost lost, even to himself.

He held both stones in his hands and began to gain strength and an understanding of the need to choose; to know who you are and what you care about.

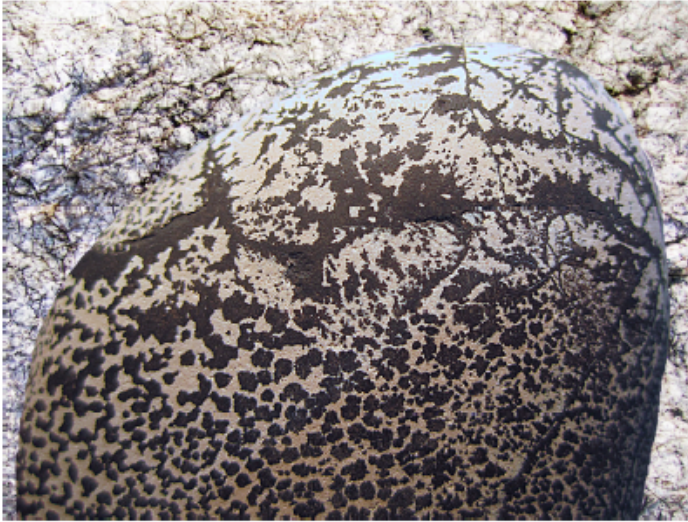


Then he saw two small pebbles that took him further towards this knowledge.



They were so small that each was no bigger than the end of his thumb and yet each said so much.

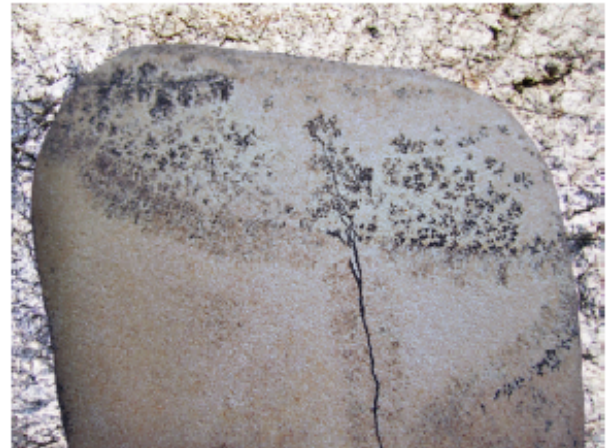
One talked to him about wind blown grass, sweet meadows and fields. The other small stone spoke of graceful, full leafed trees. Now, when he looked into his mind, it was no longer empty. He remembered a place and sensed that he belonged there.



The next stone deepened the clarity of this feeling. The patterns were different, but they resonated with memories of tree lined ridges and dappled light. He had walked these ridges. He had stood in the broken shadows and stared at the sun as it flickered behind a canopy of green. These stones and others spoke to him of a place he had known well. One stone revealed a tall tree beside a stream and another evoked the place that the stream led to.

Home.

Home with its woods and fields and fertile soil. And in that home and of those woods he remembered a table that his father built.



He remembered the grain of its surface and how, when he was a child, these patterns seemed mysterious and suggested maps and journeys away from that home.

Now he knew himself and where he must go. He had journeyed and it was time to complete the circle of his life.



As he left the beach and started inland he took one stone. It showed two trees bent towards each other. He would find them.

Days later, as the landscape changed around him and more memories surfaced, he met a man on the road heading towards him. They spoke about their journeys and when he asked the second man where he was heading the man said, "Why, like you ... I am going home."

The first man showed the second man the stone that he had brought from the beach and the second man smiled. "I know this place. It's not far on this same road, but the trees felt like a fence to me. I needed to see the horizon and so I left." Then the second man took a stone from his pocket, saying, "This is where my home is.", and his stone was equally familiar to the first man. He knew its earth browns and watery blues and the pattern spoke to him about years at sea ... a sea he had left behind.



Then they wished each other good fortune and went opposite ways on the path to their homes; the second man following a heart shaped stone to the sea and the first man his tree patterned stone to the forest.

There are as many people as there are pebbles on a beach and each has a story. Sometimes stories cross when people meet, in this case, heading upland or down to the sea on different homeward paths. But for those who are always searching for home, the phrase 'home is where the heart is' has a special meaning.

The heart is home.

