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## Of Unknown Origin

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The beads of sweat collect  
at the notch below your sallow neck  
your jaundiced skin  
salted, where nothing can thrive  
your feeble body probed again  
and again  
to understand perhaps for our sake  
more than yours  
what we can only call  
a fever of unknown origin.

I stand across from you uneasily  
leaning against  
the cracked crimson paint  
of the windowsill  
each hiding behind our shields:  
your thin parchment gown  
and my flimsy white coat  
starched for some semblance of control  
over this fear of unknown origin.

Afraid that you'll see  
my confidence lacking,  
that you'll see me

as a confidence man,  
dismayed that with all our advances  
we can remain so uncertain.  
I brush the coarse strands  
of your auburn wig  
from your shuttered eyes—  
a favor of unknown origin.

There lie the roses  
that you will never smell  
the apple that you will never taste  
and there in the corner  
float the red balloons  
that you might have liked  
to release to the sky  
in a fervor of unknown origin.

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