

## *The Arranged Marriage*

It's a good thing Eden was slated  
for dry country so he could keep up

with the trimming — chop or wind  
the vines around a limb where they'd stay

unlike the curl he'd tuck behind her ear  
when she'd allow it. Messy and willful,

gunpowder in a triangle, for all he  
knew of such things, keeping him up

at night with her wisdom talk, and he  
in pale terror at what that meant. Once

he found her stringing leaves together,  
her *books* she called them, claiming

she could read the leaf lines that to him  
ran incomprehensible as the rivers

wanting beyond the edge, or the blue  
vein meandering her left breast.

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Later, long after labor broke them  
and too many unforgivable nights

had passed, he found her outside  
counting the streaks of dying stars.

And unable to bear her bitterness —  
not knowing yet how to sweeten

silence — begged her to read aloud  
from the old books spirited out of Eden.

And she, *How wide the narrow box we lie,*  
by which she meant, books too

succumb to dirt beneath one's feet.  
*If this is so*, he said, *we've toiled on splinters*

*of joy.* And that thin thought seemed  
to suffice, being, at last, he who said it.