F. J. Bergmann - The Drawing Room

I.

Butterflies drifted through dry air, in the golden light cast by candles whose reflected flames drowned in walnut-paneled darkness. Arsenic-white and sulfur-yellow wings stroked her skin like an endless reception line of doting great-grandmothers feathering a young bride's face with kisses. Where was the portrait she had stepped from?

II.

The mirrors, she remembered—but not like this, clouded with tarnish and spiderwebs, rippling in their gilt frames, sullen as the stony eyes of statues. She pulled the draperies aside, diffusing a mist of golden dust. The windows were mute with frost or something warmer and stranger.

III.

She looked up to find the ceiling absent overhead, open to the cosmos where she had expected the false cerulean of a painted heaven. Were the butterflies floating upward now, occasional flashes from a different spectrum mingling with the pale, winged horde, or were the stars drifting down?

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