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Notes From A Museum Guard

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ANDREW SEGUIN

NOTES FROM A MUSEUM GUARD

In the palace of the curious, the world
continues to perpetrate its mysteries.
Middens, pickled orchids, forests
that stretch in endless resolution around
the glass. An observer's fingers

can spin cedar carousels, green wheels.
There is a room of sleepy alphabets
where one can catch a word of the quick
dreams that stab the aged in mid-sentence.
The letters flutter to tongues as moths,

but mouths close on them like cages
after all the silence, decades of infection,
and no one remembers the cadence
of the ancient songs, their raveling.
At night I hear voices in the hall

of unbuilt machines, laughter and lament
intermittent as they look at plans to unearth
archives, portable stairs that compress
like bellows. Visitors are also specimens,
unconscious of what they display

in this place: bewilderment, elbows, noise.
An old abacus keeps track of the guests,
its calculus clicking around the ceilings
with dragonflies. Theft and trespass
are inevitable. I tell no one not to touch.