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Before the Tribulations

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BEFORE THE TRIBULATIONS

You can't breathe our air,
a tasteless, invisible mix,
so you wear a pressurized suit, a helmet
like a fishbowl
over your head. For once
your beard's combed and trimmed;
your greenish-gray eyes
reflect
the sky like wet sand
after a wave recedes.
You've come back for me after
two millennia, the Fifth
and Sixth Crusades,
a plague that hardly kept me chaste,
so I can escape the hour,
the centuries of trial.
I'm frustrated,
I can't kiss you, I can't bring any books,
my gloomy
gratitude giving me
the shivers. "This world," you mouth, "is just a dream."
I'll never smell a forest again.
Never feel a lemur's
nose. What's the use
of running from calamity? (So many silently,
loudly in pain.)

We gotta go soon,
you say in your muffled telepathy.

I rush to mist my succulents,

murmur babytalk to them.

Lock my dirty cell.

Shake out my welcome mat.

I run to grip your glove—