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November 1914: George Trakl Writes a Letter

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**NOVEMBER 1914:
GEORG TRAKL WRITES A LETTER**

There is a light that fails in my mouth, a taste of thorns in my throat. How can I explain what this means? I wake at night with the smell of thorns in the room. No one can sleep well here.

Today I was too ill to leave my bed and when the shelling began I could not move to the cellar like the others. Sunset approached; the field beyond the window blossomed with explosions, small fists of flame, these cannibal lights out stalking.

A new man was brought in from the front yesterday, half a leg shot off, blind. He will not speak to the doctors. He holds a round glass paperweight in his hands at all times, turning it endlessly.

And inside it a snowstorm begins. A glass sleigh with three riders makes its way through the blizzard. In the distance a campfire burns. Perhaps it is a piece of agate meant to glow when exposed to light. I watch it in his hand until it flickers and disappears.

I know this fire; it is cold and far away, a luminescent needle weaving back and forth in the dark night. I feel this light in my mouth, a neon shimmer on my tongue. Phosphorescent tablets ignite there, dissolving, dissolving in a deep tunnel.