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## Lament

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LAMENT

She is afraid of the trader  
who has come from the valley  
three times already to admire her.  
She has heard the climate is all wrong,  
inescapable as the layers of cloth  
worn day and night, the sun  
warming even the glass put away  
in the cupboard. She has heard  
the streets are clamorous  
and filled with rotting fruit,  
streets narrow as the paths  
of insects. At night, impossible  
to sleep or write a letter.  
She has heard too of a flower  
whose touch fills the women's  
arms with sickness. No,  
she refuses to marry the trader  
with his burned complexion  
and those red bags of opium.  
She could die in all that warmth.  
Here on the steppes it is always  
the cold season, a way of looking  
at clouds, and the animals,  
for their sakes this yearly walking  
on ice. No, she refuses to leave  
the village. It is too dangerous,  
the long journey down the pass,  
at dusk the possibility of border guards  
or a horse suddenly lame.  
Who would help with the shearing,  
the feltmaking, who would bring her father

his evening dish of milk? No,  
she refuses to leave the village.  
Still, in moonlight, outside  
her parent's tent, those three white horses  
that circle and gleam like silver  
traveling the distance to her bed.