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Syrian Roses

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SYRIAN ROSES

O, my spy, my follower, my government shadow,
Here is my schedule: I am going to pick the park’s roses.

I will cut their slim throats, legal or illegal
carry a bouquet to the illicit money changer,

(green leaves of bills, oval pictures of Ben Franklin;
that old fraud would approve of saving twenty percent!)

take left-overs to my garage family—
Five kids and parents in the single-car garage.

No window. They get water from a spigot
outside the door in the dirt street.

She gives me tea, heavy with sugar; we sip it,
sitting on a plastic rug she brings outside.

Her face is tattooed with blue flowers. “Qua–is,”
she tells me, beautiful. She’s pregnant again.

What can we say to her, Ben? Hard work? thrift?
every day is hand-to-mouth, even the baby

knows this as he crawls in the dirty street,
a piece of flat bread in each small fist.