Oud

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Oud

Abstract
It traveled from Damascus,

shipped in a plywood box

resembling a baby’s coffin...

Disciplines
Poetry

Comments
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Oud

It traveled from Damascus,
shipped in a plywood box
resembling a baby's coffin.
   Inside rough latches,
the oud's long thin neck,
   bent back pegbox,
and staved gourd of a stomach,
   looked like the resting body
of a goose, exhausted
   from traversing the waters
of the Mediterranean
   and Atlantic. Ancestor
of the lute and guitar,
   invented by Lamech,
the sixth grandson of Adam,
   what hands,
what ancient music must have sounded
   through your strings.
And how strange
   the moist new air
must have seemed. In truth
   the instrument did not last
six months. The first week,
   I dreamed of minarets
and marble floors, rooftop cities
   and the call of the muezzin.
The second week, I burned sage,
   passed a smudge over
the oud's body to clear its path
to this new life.
When I turned to leave the room,
   I heard a note sound
from its strings. A single note
   rang out, I swear,
without a pick or plectrum in sight.

Special Merit

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