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Sestina: In Memoriam Professor Samuel Konefsky

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Sestina: *In Memoriam* Professor Samuel Konefsky

Rising before dawn sometime to note down a dream,
leaning across the margin of the bed in darkness,
I try to read space with my fingers so the light
would find untangled lines, and when I came to see
I might then read and maybe understand
myself through image and association.

Instead I think of you, Sam, the association
simple enough I suppose. Abandoning the dream,
it is your presence I think to understand,
and how you managed a scholar's work in this darkness.
Paper caged behind guide-rails, I seem to see
a machine for aligning the pen to write without light—

as a nightself scrawling for its daylight
amanuensis? No, my own association.
You used a braille-typewriter and the phrase "I see,"
ordinarily, but did so only in dreams.
Struck down by a coach as a child, you woke to darkness
and later the aching work it was to understand

America's constitution and to understand
better than nearly any. The way you anchored you light
table napkin, this page, a clearing now in darkness,
angle diamond-wise into association.
'Tucked in your shirt, pendant, I did not dream
it was method: childish even to a child to see

a man do. I didn't know then; we would see
you only at your home. I came to understand
looking through your books in my usual dream.
"Who reads braille?" I piped, my voice alight
to show my knowledge, making no association
between your eyes' saccade and darkness.

SESTINA

When you answered I ran into the darkness
of another room, ostrich-fashion, afraid to see
how I had hurt your feelings, my own association
with misfortune so slight I couldn't understand
that you were used to it. Now full, the light
whitens the paper a moment in which I dream

I understand how we are dilettantes of darkness
who see to return. From each of yours you send light,
laden as a word dreamed with our best associations.

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