

## A True Princess Bruises

The weight of a pea under her mattress  
enough to keep her awake all night, they said,  
to cover her skin with small black puckers.

They asked her about her skin, scratch-tests, bleeding time  
and bruises, the red in the water she rinsed her teeth with.  
They held her wrist overhard to observe the blue ring.

Lift up your shirt, so we can see the evidence:  
blood pooled on thigh and stomach, the white back  
marred with what look like thumbprints.

Little use for the princess to complain,  
to say, I didn't choose this unhardy body,  
this useless letting of humors.

She will wait for a prince who barely grazes her cheek,  
whose hands move furniture from her path,  
their bed so large their limbs never accidentally touch.

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