

DO NOT TAP ON THE GLASS

Poetry • Karissa Horn

The snake's dull coils glisten under the heat lamp.
She is majestic, lethargic; her filmy amber eyes blink listless
through the smudged glass. Her lithe and limber length
shifts, slow and inexorable, under black mosaic skin
replete with diamonds. I am awed at the mysteries
of her mind, her weighty motion.

But I would not adore her unknowable mind if the glass
shattered, the film of fingerprints gone, and
she fixed my dead stare through the dark
of a few inches.

I would not love her strength if I could feel her cold scales
crawling, rolling with inexorable muscle up my forearm.

And what if we touched? Would your curved arm
coil and constrict my waist, obstruct my breath,
Eyes fixed past my skin with slow-blinking slit-eyes
where no love lurks—
An adversary—a temptation?

I am awed by the majesty only of caged beasts.
I love through thick viewing glass.