

THE NEXT TIME I FALL IN LOVE I'LL BRING A CAMERA

Sara Elkamel

To paint love from memory, I return to the morning
 in Alexandria—but I find it impossible
to recall if the sea was visible,
 if it was the stillborn wind
 I heard
or wounded shepherd's song.

I pour turpentine over my portrait
 of a goat
 reclined in a white lace corset,
 looking love
right in the eye.

Can I just say we loved each other how we could
 and also how
 we couldn't—for instance
I wanted to sing *poetically*
 and you'd always start teaching me,
just as you were leaving—
 night now like a mountain
we'd already climbed.

I know now why I was so afraid—I couldn't sing
and every time I reached inside my ears
I pulled out spoonfuls
of pulverized morning air.

Tell you what—the goat keeper has lost his goats.
But look now, I see him
running, the bulge of his throat
alight with calls. Alone,
his song sounds
deranged
desperate to the point
of embarrassment. He thinks his tribe is waiting
where the mountain
turns
but the mountain
(that is no mountain)
doesn't turn.

When you left, the night was how
I always wanted it to be:
unending—
an opus so
monumental
it could only happen once.

I admit I have a tendency to sew the wound
badly. To call love
a goat, to call you over
and over
to say *send me one last picture*
of your perfect ear. I don't want to sing anymore.