

1994

Alba

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ST. FRANCIS IN ECSTASY (BELLINI)

In the morning, the voices wake him.
A crack in the rock fixes the light.
He looks west with the egret and donkey.
A cluster of copper-green leaves
shakes above the fissure.
He forgets his sandals by the bed,
his open book on the table.

ALBA

If the morning could keep this frieze
of rumpled sheets like fossil imprints
in the lumpy bed, then I might also
keep the hawk over the ravine, the flawed
image in the mirror, the new wine.

Last night in the empty vineyards
I looked west to the fast-moving clouds
over Rocher des Vierges, and I wanted to hold that.
And hold the silence—or almost silence—
broken by a few barking dogs and the sound
of the seedpods shaking on the plane tree.

Impossible to keep anything. Impossible
to carry anything away, at least
not what I want to take: fistfuls
of flowering herbs, the wind from any
of the six directions, love's progress—
if, that is, it's possible for love
to progress, when it may be rooted
like local honey in the domain
with the stubborn vines, among the strong
flavors of this world, rose garlic, aneth,
black radishes—and you, this morning.