You’ll be better tomorrow
And the next and the next.

Our window crammed with bees,
Geese cavorting on the hill

A green pond where we floated
Never dreaming such a fate

Might befall one of us
Mad dance of tumors

This serous thing, spelled differently
But pronounced like the cloud

Cirrus—papa made me see
Lifting me high in afternoon heat

A pallor stroking the inner sky
Ligaments striated

A high interiority picked with ice
Finicky music we dare not hear.

The men with Odysseus
Packed their ears with wax

One or two tore out their tongues
Right there on the Cretan coast.

—Meena Alexander (1951–2018)