Though I woke again to sand, that morning smelled of cut grass. You’d been called to Aqaba, a cab-driver killed overnight: rockets misfired by Egyptian insurgents. Still, things fell into order: the endangered irises inflating at daybreak in Madaba; black on black, their sword-like leaves facing east. I hoped it impossible: your trip, extending itself. *All’s well,* you kept calling to say. Then Saturday, police shot a hyena near Shafa Badran;

today, an unidentified toddler found wandering in Wihdat. For weeks, tremors come in waves from the Baptismal site. No explanation for aftershocks rattling the air—no earthquake, no thunder, no explosion occurred (Thursday’s official word), not a cylinder of gas set off. Where have these months gone? The world is twice as long as wide, I remember reading in a book that likened sorrow to a sack of fruit. At night I can’t sleep,

I can’t sleep: the rain has ceased—or what I hear as rain. All is sound. It won’t be long, you say, two more days. I think of purgatory—bright
magnesium flare—of seven angels strung in a tree.
This morning: a woman begging outside

Jounia Pharmacy. She has kissed the lips of her husband, her daughters, her God. She has oiled her body, ground powder to draw youth back to her cheeks. The pharmacist shoos her off, returning to his half-stocked shelves of cotton balls, diabetic test strips. He takes the slip I pass him, careful to avoid my hand. She’s not sick, he insists, *not sick*. The woman shifts from her mat of stone. The air conditioner blasts its simple refrain. *Come home.*