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ON MY TONGUE

Bismillah is my first memory.
I became a bird in the Qur’an
at hardly eight years old.
I opened the dark green cover
and revealed the slippery
two hearts: Arabic
and its English translation.
On Saturdays, I learned to repeat
passages in Arabic,
to recite the Qur’an
in its truest language—
otherwise are the locusts
really locusts?
I read and read, and yet
I struggled to recite in Arabic.
This was not a problem
with my memory.
I learned in a week how
to recite the first verse in English.
Sometimes I think every Qur’an
has a dark green cover.
Sometimes I think I still
become a bird
when, in my mind, I remember
Bismillah, ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim.
This must be the reason I

continue to love.
On my tongue, there is
a short-horned grasshopper.
Bismillah, I reach for you again.