

Inshallah

—which is to say “God willing,” more or less:
a phrase that rose routinely to her lips
whenever plans were hatched or hopes expressed,
the way we knock on wood, yet fervently,
as if to wax too confident might be
to kill the very thing she wanted most.
It used to pique and trouble me somehow,
this precautionary tic of hers, but now
I understand why she was skeptical
of what Allah in His caprice allots,
because that she should live He did not will,
or, more terribly, He did that she should not.

i.m. Mirel Sayinsoy 1967–99

—Ben Downing