

Mountain

By Clifton Gachagua

On the day I set out on the climb,
grief saddled in my back like a bag of marbles,
my breath like clouds hanging on the low peaks of a mountain,
5 on the day I set out
leaving nothing behind, nothing on the bed, no version of myself,
just my voice through the night, the voice I use to ward off nightmares.
(My voice is a still life in itself, a shroud green and ultramarine deep blue,
a bowl of apples and tangerines on a table.)

10 On the day I set out,
the mountain is high in front of me, the unreliable god of mist and fog.
I have no voice to say how high
my fingers must lift as if on a lover's upper lip,
to take in the breath of how high my mountain is—white teeth behind
15 a snow cap, numberless springs, cold like the enzymes in spit—
a version of me is still asleep: the moving of a limb in sleep.
Everything becomes lucid.