

CLAIRE ÅKEBRAND

Reading *In Search of Lost Time*

(or Lullaby) (or Trying to Remember How to Write a Villanelle)

A mouse scurries in the attic. Outside
autumn reads convincingly in winter's voice.
The neighbor's wind chime turns the pages

of the early cold. You stir when I turn
the page: Aunt Léonie grows old. She reads
the street outside the window. (And about

this Moncrieff translation: the French echoes
like church bells in the distance announcing
some foreign ceremony.) The lamp glows

exactly like a lamp. Silence upstairs. Something has found
what it was frantic for. The cat has stopped whining,
no longer tosses and turns

in its hunger. You turn the pages of your sleep, pause
at unknown passages. Decipher
dark. The mouse's absence turns

the pages of the attic. The pages
turn themselves. You open your eyes, a line
of milk down your chin. And amid all these pages,
was there no story? No refrain?