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You & Leslie Caron

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YOU & LESLIE CARON

You are Fred Astaire in SOMETHING'S GOT TO GIVE. You are dancing in tuxedo & skimmer through one of Leslie Caron's bad dreams. It is a dream

in which washwomen lurch from closets brandishing dustmops, clumsy paper stars pinned to their hair, & you backpedalling

with your hands raised as if to bandits. In another instant, another few frames, Leslie Caron will metamorphose by the luck of the dream

into a caparisoned Egyptian goddess, Hollywood style. Her famous full lips will be shellaced red like some enormous fake fruit & she will

be writing a letter in laborious characters, triangles & crumbling obelisks, each phrase requiring pages. Each deft stroke of her hand

will be like the uncurling of a delicate white snake. She will be singing in French. While you, you will be forever dancing, doomed

to dance. Your bright heels, sparklers in the dark, they will be as if yellow disturbances on a black background, as if a child with crayons

had conceived his private schemata of stars & connected them with lines. For this, you dance in the dark. You clutch a mop by the throat.

Your hands are cold with sweat. As if the dazzlings of your heels made, in randomly sprinkled dots, the ghost figures of bears

& crouched lions, of does the color of caramel
pushing tentatively through a wood,
sniffing the night sky. And Leslie Caron

in Egypt, dabbing her nose under lights in
a blank room, she prays to you, the dancing fool, miscast
in starlight at the dog-end of a dream,

your shuffling, circling heels.