

## dear lover

what is this night gesture

    this sleeping bend of your wrist that frightens me so

what is this heaviness and hurt

keeping me from you

binding me captive and hidden. here.

I cannot love you now.

I can only scratch at pages

with weak ink

    eating fits of bruised anger, leaving me bent and burning

I cannot love you now.

I am in my own way.

one night

I will stand in front of you, arms heavy with offerings.

I will gather fynbos blossoms

    Namaqualand daisies

    dried lavender and cosmos

bind them together with apologies and lace

and place them beside your sleeping elbow

I will offer jars of honey

to the dark beneath your bed

    paint proteas on your bare shoulders with warm fingertips

    blow prayers on your skin

I will sing you awake with trembling timbres – a lullaby in reverse

I'll burn *impepho* at the foot of our bed

banish my ashen ghosts to their autumn hinterland

they will rest there.

I will kiss your cheekbones, then  
    touch your bottom lip with my thumb  
    name both of your hands Forgiveness  
and shiver like a November blade of grass

I'll clutch your head in my hands  
    tug gently  
    watch the tiny black curls shake free  
from the thick, dense night of your hair

I will take your breasts in both my palms and cry.

in the morning  
we'll trap light in pillowed sanctuary  
cup morning in our hands  
keep the coming night away with heavy kisses and teeth

I will laugh then  
recklessly  
like flighted birds.

I will not run from you again.