

Wedding Vows

Anne Elizabeth Berbert

My fears awakened
when I touched you, sacrificial,
kneeling at the altar
extending your hands,
beckoning to be destroyed
ceremoniously.

*Can I offer up
what I love most?*

I now listen to your bedside prayer
offering no gold,
just bread and water.
You hold me,
your breath shuffling my hair,
moistening my earlobe.

*If I give you to God,
will He give you back?*

Behind my ribs
resides the map
to my commitment—
the arteries and veins
that enmesh my heart,
run down my pallid arm
past my knuckles
beneath the stone
on my ring finger.

Your life for mine.
I give you my hand,
run it across your chest,
scratching with the diamond,
praying not to draw
blood.