

## If I Could Have Your Attention

Jonathan Louis Duckworth

-To S. S.

and if I could make of my hands a hammock  
for the sinuous long-S slope of your spine  
if I could flocculate moonlight into a salve  
to rub away our fears as fingers smooth a bedsheet's creases  
if I could scan the abjad calligraphy of your curls  
and wake with long strands coiled lamia-like under my tongue  
if we could lie enmeshed under night's aspect  
our spooned bodies a crescent luna under the folds  
if I could rise first to cook you breakfast  
and convince you basil pesto is morning fare  
if I could recite to you all sixty-three octaves  
of Keats's *Isabella* with pungent pesto breath  
if we could exhume for each other our buried poems  
to pry vital marrow from those discarded bones  
and if we could distill the essential *incanti*  
like sweet incense extracted from fetid agarwood  
if I could breathe my favorite words to you:  
"gloaming," "Ewigkeit," "azimuth," "garrigues," "laverock"  
if I could settle into entire stillness  
while you whisper your own treasured motes into my ear  
and if I could only compose the words  
that could incite in you half what yours have in me  
I could be with you, or else write no more