Sonnets from the Song of Songs

I. (thorns/ forest)

I tried to write you a sonnet; it wouldn’t work. 
Here’s what I would write if you weren’t crazy
was the way it started. But you are crazy
so I just let the laptop screen go dark.
I wouldn’t be writing if you weren’t crazy;
you’d be here in the house somewhere, just back
from the morning’s carpools, not that we’d talk:
you’d be off again on errands; I’d be busy
writing poems that now seem ill-conceived –
not one of them a love poem. Too late.
You could read The Song of Songs. I felt like that,
which explains how I lived the way I lived.
I was fearless once; I chose the rarest
apple tree among the trees of the forest.

II (buds/ turtledove)

This has to be the diametric opposite
of the buds’ appearance, the song’s arrival
but, shoveling snow, I almost pity Shulamit
who’ll never know the earth as this insatiable,
this self-negating, this far gone, this white.
Gazelles or no gazelles, love does unravel.
She may want to lose herself in blankness.
Even my heart has left her hiding place
to try the famous palliative of ice,
our street’s telltale details safely annulled:
I’d stay out with her all night – I love the cold –
until we’re both completely covered over
(good luck to Shulamit with that young lover)
but I have kids to put to sleep, laundry to fold.

III. (kisses/wine)

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his
mouth; let him kiss me with anything;
let him kiss me, let him remember once,
momentarily, that, once, he’d kiss me . . .
for your love is better. . . . Don’t be absurd;
wine can never withstand much bitterness.
It was sung by a single voice, your song
of songs: yours, coming from your upstairs bed,
drowned out by his computer, his TV.
Don’t you remember? This went on for years . . .
and you – I – was so *(let him kiss me)* dense,
I kept believing he’d come up the stairs.
Still, there are girls here. Our daughters. Three.
Surely *(with the kisses of his mouth)* he must have kissed me.