

The charred moon smoked, reversed itself,  
revealing a death's head just as she always said,  
withholding its downshine, dripping  
ice sweat    wolf sweat    grave sweat.  
Black stained the air. Trackless black  
where the wolf walked, bearded, breath-stealing black,  
silhouette of hills not there, of beasts  
climbing moonward, necks fletched like arrows.

I said my mother's name, clutched fistfuls of wolfsbane,  
scattered it across the bed. She rose in me like ether.  
I groped for her incantations drummed into my childhood,  
stumbled and skidded over forgotten roots  
my father planted. A trailing tendril snagged and held.  
Weed essence opened the flue; friction made a spark.

Still sneezing, I relit the candle, snatched up  
the aconite for a funeral pyre  
fueled with her hand-hewn cedar medicine chest.

Leftover dark  
was stilt-legged shadows on a hearthlit stage,  
the usual cast with known names.  
Tomorrow, I announced to the sniggering flames,  
I will move back among my kind.