

Awakened by blackness heavier than night, I tried
to surface, swim up through it like a cave fish
looking inside its head for its lost eyes. Night
pushed up from the world's old graves. A wolf
night, howling. A night to grow everything old.
I lit a trembling candle. Morpheus had fled,
leaving an empty bottle. I floated in vertigo.
My frail flame flickered out.

The charred moon smoked, reversed itself,
revealing a death's head just as she always said
it someday would, 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;
loud involuntary friction made a spark.

Still sneezing, I felt matches in my pocket,
found and 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.