

EXORCISM

My mother would have muttered a certain chant all day.
 Sickly sun plunged pale shafts into the soil, sucking it
 Dry, giving no warmth, only taking, leaving a swath
 Of cold-parched earthworms and rock/clay crumbs without
 Energy to unite. The first wind pried the shutters,
 Crashed the lamps, spilling all the oil far from my green firewood.
 Discordant whispers, slaps of chill, wavy scent of animals.
 Half of me gathered wolfsbane, half swallowed a drugstore ball of
 sleep,
 Then centered under the blanket my mother wove and dyed
 Her mystic patterns in.

Awakened by blackness, darker than sleep, 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, smelling
 Of the world's old sins. A wolf night, diseased and howling,
 A night to grow everything old. I lit a candle and went
 To the crazed mirror where Pluto's breath waited to finish my tiny
 flame.

Morpheus fled; his bottle was empty. Pluto ruled rising, smoking and
 Sinking bottomless. The charred moon reversed, floating me in
 vertigo,
 Revealing a death's head like she always said. Dripping

Ice sweat. Wolf sweat. Grave sweat. Black was frozen
Violence and violation. Black stained walls, seeped into drawers
To lie in wait forever. Trackless black where the wolf walked,
Bearded reeking black, silhouette of hills not there, of beasts
Clanning moonward, necks fletched like arrows.

I said my mother's secret name; her part of me
Clutched the aconite, scattered it over the bed,
Rose like ether and tried to pass the speed of light.
Deep in my crypt I groped for the incantations, stumbled and skidded
Over roots my father planted. Some trailing tendril snagged.

Dead weed essence opened the flue; friction made a spark.
Still sneezing, I relit the candle, snatched up the wolfsbane
For a funeral pyre, crowned with homemade lamp tables.
Leftover night was stilt-legged shadows on a hearthlit stage,
The usual cast with known names. Tomorrow
I would move back to town and go to work at the Co-op
Making amulets for tourists.
I went to the mirror to see if I was gray.