

## The Harp, the Hen and the Wife

The vine winds trellis-less  
Tendrils to leaf, thickening stem  
Bud to flower to fruit  
By the light of the moon  
The song of the loon  
The vine winds higher,  
Sky bound, star tipped  
The vine winds  
Wrapped around  
Your finger  
Surrenders the ground  
Reaching, confounding  
Beasts on the wing  
That mound, that sing  
In the vine winding, side-winding,  
Up-winding, by the light  
Of the night, the vine winds high.

There's a monster waiting  
And where there be monsters, treasure  
Where there is treasure, greed  
And intrigue, plotting and plunder  
A harp, a hen, sharpen wit and pen  
Poke the wife, wake the giant and run.

Or grab a pot and start stirring  
Mixing up a pan of brownies  
Or a batch of biscuits  
With honeyed butter  
A song to sing to calm a king  
To wrap the giant around your finger  
With a harmonic neck, and strings  
Strong hands to pluck the strands for luck  
Your body a golden harp  
Tuned to the sleeping and waking  
Of the monster (his hands  
Like holiday hams)

You chose to sleep with.  
Baking and singing and calming  
You get added to the pile  
Lost among the treasure,  
Just another bauble  
Counted, mounted, yes, cherished  
But still taken out and strummed  
For all your shine and shimmer.

The vine grows in  
Metered time  
Curves in clef and stave  
The vine in line, a budded  
Note and minor chord  
The vine winds shade  
Through-in the stave  
Wind on the vine  
A chant, a cry  
A lullaby on the long  
Lean measure of beats  
And bars as the vine winds  
Binding stars, harp strings singing  
Song-winding, bee buzz stinging  
Scale winding, drone-winding  
Harp-singing bravely, up and through  
Climbing scales and  
Bounding octaves.

The hen hates music,  
Loathes the vine. There's no  
Flight for her in its winding  
No children in its twining.  
The harp, the lark can calm  
The spark of rage, but the hen,  
She might as well be barren  
She can't nest on a golden egg  
Or hatch a jeweled chick  
No rooster in the giant's lair  
No hen-pecked, pecking order

She can't even cluck or fuck  
But broods and burns  
Over a burgled nest

The vine steals, stealthy  
In the night, grabbing, grasping  
Growing, glowing  
Stealing everything in sight  
Smothering, leap and keep  
Stifle and smother  
The wife, vine keep mother, wonders  
How she ever made this mess  
Mistress, trust-less, trussed like a  
Capon ready for roasting. Sauce  
For the goose is good for the gander  
If he would just unhand her neck,  
Unbind her children to hidden  
Steps a path, a leap, a stairway  
Made of vine and leaf.  
She could spin a simple rope  
To tie the monster,  
Send a sweetened tendril  
To lure the thief. Or she could stay  
Solid and roast the meat.  
The hen and the harp plot and pander  
Will a golden egg make the  
Batter richer? The giant fatter?  
Stir with a wand, a hidden frond  
Gentle the hands that pinch  
And grab her with honeyed fruits  
And sugared butter?  
But the wife is a terrible cook  
Feeding his taste for bones in bread.

He's greedy, like that,  
Always counting and mounting  
Her feathers, her strings,  
While the wife brings  
Meat and gravy

What does Fi, Fi, Fo, Fum mean?  
Rage or wonder, a gentle heart at giant center  
Under all that bite and blunder does he  
Dread the monster, curse the plunder?  
The hard truth is he's a small and ordinary evil  
Lazy, vain, the vine around his heart and head  
A poor excuse for power, piles of glass and  
And gold a sorry substitute for glamour

Science can explain it  
But misses the point  
Most days in quarks,  
Up, down, chocolate and vanilla  
The sparks, the trill, a pain  
A part. The vine in rings,  
Heart of stalk, tally years and days  
Thin and thick, measure  
Beat and tick, art and fists  
Days apart and endless lists  
Of how and why  
The impact of his signet ring  
On cheek and lip. A dragging  
Arm, a limping hip. The vine's  
Thickest rings mark the  
The stings, the magics  
You loved best,  
The seasons and reasons you stayed  
While love fades, betrayed by spring and bees.  
Wasps can't save you.  
The cook needs honey and science  
Rears its ugly, oh we know  
Let's make an experiment, tease  
Out the truth in myth and story.  
The Cyclops explained  
By the bones of elephant heads,  
The ground a starting point,  
Up and down, winding walks  
And doors for stalks and stories  
And vines that wind

Home to bees and giants  
The hen and the harp and the wife  
Poised to wind or lean  
Or fall, the all of them bound  
To ground and to each other  
As much as to sky and star.  
Bound by the sound of  
Their own humming  
Bees, leaves, home and hive  
The wasp a sign  
Of the vine's demise  
Blending, rending,  
Yeasty blooming  
Bones for bread  
The looming rise.

And along comes Jack  
A pocket full of beans  
Bursting at the seams  
With quick and bluster.