

Dark Heart

by Gary Hardaway

To know a thing, you have to see it
or hear it, faintly, where it hides
or catch a whiff of it, sweet or sour,
or touch it when the lights are out
or taste the way it flavors
what you thought you knew.
To know a thing is to recognize
its properties and how it interacts.

When we take Vengeance,
shave and shower him,
deodorize and scent him,
clothe him in a starched shirt
and dark gray worsted wool,
and call him Justice,
in his dark heart
he is Vengeance, still. Know

the dark heart. Taste
its limbic chemistry
as metal in the mouth. See
the way it pulses through
the bloodworks and muscle,
clenching fingers in a fist. Hear
its paleomammalian shriek
inside the throat. Feel
its surge through the lungs,
abdomen and legs. Smell
the coppery scent within
the gorged nostrils. Seize

the dark heart where it lives

and stoke it back to calm routines.
Let it serve your human life
instead of something
with savage eyes
hiding in the bush.

