On Halloween in the Bright Sun

a wind off the cold bay
points clutches of cornstalk hags
to a house on a hill
where the hunter lies dying.

He is surrounded by heads.
An Alaskan moose spreads its rack,
over him in his hospital bed.
His daughter, her hair tied back,
attends to him as he bleeds.

She sets aside her inherited arrows
to bend over him. Leukemia's guns
make his nose run blood; the disease
flushes each den in his vital red field, everything
that keeps him alive must bolt.

A huge grizzly spreads out across a wall.
Another bear, a black one, walks out of another wall,
turns and looks too softly for a killer,
"He looked at me just like that
before I shot him."

There is a turkey, three bucks and a Caribou
from Canada; a wild boar
and a Muskellunge swimming the pine wall
all in audience to the hunter's death
in his basement, his second choice
place for dying, near a room full of power tools,
nothing that will fix him now. He’s given up
the more and more frequent transfusions.
His daughter props him up
for pills he can only swallow crushed.

It is then he sees out the window:
the small lake, rows
of dried hollyhock, herds of white clouds that run
too fast to kill. The first freeze blows in from Alberta.
He just wanted to crawl away, find a rock

or a soft, needled bed: to lie finally
beneath a standing web of roots. He sees
over the many browns of the hills, the horns
of milkweed cracked open by frost
and the big fish that flashes

a moment above the frigid lake.