

Imbolc Eve

So here in the cold clear morning
no older than I am, or younger,
no wiser than I was before

I gather scraps of wood and leaves
in a motorless vehicle,
a re-invention of the wheel,

pile them one load at a time
in the field in front of the rocks
facing the mountains the sun came over

preparing for later tonight
after the sun before the moon
when we will light the fire again

brightening rocks and earth around them
sending white smoke towards the stars
warming face and hands and thighs

as the sun this morning warms them.
Though frost still clings to the unturned soil
making everything metal or glass

sting our hands as we touch them,
though the fruit is still in the bud,
the grasses still curled and pale underground;

the dark rosettes of mustard scattered
across the land, the elderberry
boughs hanging heavy with moisture,

the rust-edged blades of curly dock
and mint, the blessed mint, all shades
of green, tell a different story —

the one the birds and flowering bulbs
have been telling us for days;
the one the stars have illustrated

inching south night after night
until the Phoenix that rose into view
last August now has disappeared

entirely, slipping into Mexico;
the one the cats have given voice,
insisting on staying out longer;

this one we've been waiting to hear
since winter turned long and hard,
the news like music to our ears,

that spring has come in her usual way,
quietly, in hints and whispers,
a touch here, a scent there,

so this morning in the cold
I gather leaves and scraps of wood
to build a fire to last the night

dragging dry brush through the white
bones and thorns of old downwood,
scratching paths across the red ground,

spokes to the hub, this pyre we raise
in the name of loved ones not here
to welcome her with a warmth of our own.