

Actaeon

By A.E. Stallings

The hounds, you know them all by name.
You fostered them from purblind whelps
At their dam's teats, and you have come
To know the music of their yelps:

High-strung Anthee, the brindled bitch,
The blue-tick coated Philomel,
And freckled Chloe, who would fetch
A pretty price if you would sell—

All fleet of foot, and swift to scent,
Inexorable once on the track,
Like angry words you might have meant,
But do not mean, and can't take back.

There was a time when you would brag
How they would bay and rend apart
The hopeless belling from a stag.
You falter now for the foundered hart.

Desires you nursed of a winter night—
Did you know then why you bred them—
Whose needling milk-teeth used to bite
The master's hand that leashed and fed them?

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Source: Poetry (2003)