Dear Mother,

Labor, labor, little needfire. You made a nursedom for a speck of love.

You wrote a ream of neckverse to stem your father’s voice raging through the walls.

He hanged your dog. Mother meant penance by the fire. Nine silent hours.

A secret is a sliver inside. For you, love was mania & compulsion, a nunnish fever at your friend’s bedside. She died in childbirth, the baby too.

This is my frantic voice, the mind’s scratch-scratch that sits fireside with you.

I kiss your imagined hand,

Mary Shelley