

JURY DUTY

While driving drunk, a mother kills her daughter

The doctor couldn't save the young girl.
For weeks her hair grew pitilessly without sunlight.
The bones of the tree scratched at her window.

Her brain swelled and humility drained itself
into the shallow lament that guards you
when there's nothing to be forgiven for.

Her last word was *mother* who held her
tiny bones together on starch-white sheets until light
was a handprint in the dark.

Because my mother, while drunk, drove me to school
without killing anyone, I was chosen to decide if the moon,
that night, was sinister enough for reasonable doubt.

It was eerie, the defense argued, how the blood-red moon
dangled. A scientist pencils the moon gliding through
the earth's shadow; moonlight swooping. The state objects.

During recess, we, the jury, jam our *In God We Trust*
dollar bills into the vending machine against the wall
of separation between church and state and lawyers

discuss the discovery of a new planet just the right distance
from the sun to have extraterrestrial power.
They can take what they know there.

From behind his silkworm robe, the clock-eyed judge tells us
reasonable doubt is anything less than absolute certainty.
I believe the earth's shadow stretches all the way to the moon

and lawyers will someday defend life on another planet,
light years past the star-lit statues carved by *our* gods.
From the earth's eye the moon is a cold, vacant white.

From the moon's eye, 200,000 miles into space, the earth is red.
All at once, you witness every sunrise and sunset on Earth.
I am certain the child pointed up at what seemed to be

Poetry

the sun without sunlight and asked what it all means.
Less intoxicated by wine than her child's wonder,
the mother swerved off the road because she loved her.

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