

MARK NEELY

Super Blood Moon Eclipsing

Don't worry.
This one has already cracked its skull
on the horizon—

light

draining from the wound. To think

you could perch there, throw
shadows

come home with dust in the piano keys
of your boots. It's going to be okay.

Keep repeating. Evening

bloodies the clouds above Walgreens as we bore

a little deeper into this weird century—

the moon should be long dead.

But here's the radio
here's the arrant thief
robbing the sun

blind

taking over another
poem. Since my father died

I've been afraid to sleep.
I squeeze lemons into Smirnoff, the TV glazed with light
and study the behavior of smug suburbanites
thrust into various hells. Wish I could
say I was reading Keats

Here lies One Whose Name was writ...

Once upon

I almost died myself. A new pill
simply stole
my breath. Blacked out in the elevator I fell
into a wild ecosystem
hallucinations caused by oxygen
deprivation. I crossed over
or so deep into the damp
cave of myself I couldn't get out
thinking
no one can ever see these sights
and live.

When my eyes flew open
I was sitting straight as a juror
trying to rip off the mask
pumping aerosolized steroids into my lungs
my black button-down sliced off
lying in pieces on the floor

and in her white coat
at the foot of the hospital bed, a ventilator
tube dangling from her
right hand, stood something very close
to an angel.

A loophole.

The last time I saw my father his eyes
were swimming in milk

a line of black ants
crawled over the greasy lenses of his glasses—

a scene straight from *Un Chien Andalou*.

I brushed them from his forehead, the skin there
so shriveled I could see the minute
contours of his skull. I took the glasses from his face
and he told me what music to play at his memorial:

the first four minutes of *Ein deutsches Requiem*, then
Beethoven's *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*

where the Holy Spirit descends

on the strains of a single violin.

He also summoned one last growl to say

No members of the clergy!

keeping his contradictions clear
to the end. I pulled a folded paper from my pocket
and read "A Blessing," knowing

no matter how frail and useless
it has become

stepping out of your body

is never easy.

When Jill's fiancé died he came back
in lamps, streetlights, anything with a current. They flickered
threw sparks

went black.

Dad seems to favor birds—first a robin
perched on the side mirror of our Volkswagen

(I could hear him again, calling me
a fucking bourgeois)

then practicing, getting better

until he managed an eagle trailing
a flock of geese
enjoying their panicked bleating

and finally a heron

with a fabulous white beard

dead on the path by the river, its impossibly long neck
twisted backward, bewildered.

Like stepping out of a lunar module

now lighter
governed by different laws.

I have already forgotten the difference
between waxing and waning
gibbous, crescent
blood.

Waning means weakening, fading away.

I know, I know. I should ask a professional.
Lord knows the century doesn't need another elegy
another six-sided moon, another mess
of a son.

But you agreed
to take a little of this silver, a few glinting nickels
slipped in your pocket
however many calories that burns.

I'm not the only one out here trying
to get a sense of it through the clouds.

I'm asking you

to stand under the pine where we spread, no

dumped

my father's ashes—its shed needles
a stockpile of broken claws

and listen to the long high note
of sap coursing
under the gnarled bark

as light rolls off the oily robes

of crows, then
sinks through the branches.

Just for a while.

Some days it rains
and in the droplets clinging to the sharpened leaves
you can see the brick wall of the concert hall

the dull sky

the sun hides
behind when it tires
of trying to comfort us.