

What Names the Moon Gives

Blood beneath my fingernails swells
purple like wild grapes during the third week
of October when men smoke by the river
and wait for the current to rise
with autumn rains. Trains from Detroit
howl from the banks, and cousins who sleep
alone in fear of the space winter brings
turn over to face empty walls. Walking
the spine of the mountain
to where the trees break, I remember
the way my brother collected black
walnuts, his shirt stained with the smell
of millrace, skin of his hands burnt
green. The day my grandfather died,
my brother and I lay in the twin beds upstairs
and fell asleep while our father drove
to the hospice to drop into the open cavern
of his father's mouth, resting on the back
of his tongue. Early in life I remember
a woman holding my hand after church,
telling me our souls become color and fall
heavy at the end of November, grey,
like the collar feathers of doves or
the moon in the high water of early April.

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