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Negative Confession

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NEGATIVE CONFESSION

I razor-slit three tick-sized hits
of Emerald Pyramid
for five of us, and underneath
a hair-line crack in the dusk, pure space had broken through
with every dream we ever
meant to be tincturing the fire-pond crimson.
One afterlife and the next
seeping away, even the one
called Shame. Phantasmal,
unremembering, we all tried to act
as if everything were normal,
while the windowed end
of the world began again,
a few last blackbirds
thrown across the cornfields
like something torn from earth,
beyond our cool quiet
and the skeletal sycamores,
into the orphanage
called Twilight.

That October sunset
looked us all spacy in the eyes
and told us we would never die
except to dread and wonder.
Twenty years later, if telling
resurrects, then listen O my heart, for we
did not want a peaceful afterlife.
In the Egyptian Book of the Dead
at judgment the heart is placed
on a brass balance
and weighed
against the Feather of Truth.
This is when, if you are lucky, your heart refuses
to testify against itself.
You never asked your servants to work
    past dawn,
nor caught fishes with bait
    of their own bodies, nor
    set the homeless on fire.
You never cursed your past
    except in shame,
    to yourself.

I think I was afraid our best
    highest intentions
    wouldn't outweigh a feather.
We held in dead smoke till the seahorse exhalations
    swam around the Chinese lantern
    while the oaks,
    brazen with blackbirds,
    sang us down from heaven
    twenty years ago.
Their shadows threw themselves past us
as if we were stubble.
    Where in the afterlife
    of saying so
are my almost friends? O my deaf heart,
    why confess to you?
Could you ever
    lie for me, lay me down cold,
    lie down in a jar of wine
and still refuse
    the safety of dying?