

The Trial

Circuit Court of Baltimore City

We're here—allegedly—
about a whiskey drunk
whose pick-up clipped a cop
outside the New! Five Mile House.
Because he doesn't testify,
we scrutinize his gut
and blood-drop pinkie ring.
He naps. We nap, or annotate

last Friday's notes; we squint
to read his bitten smirk.
The courtroom's marble, white
as lard, if lard were plinthed. The State's
stilettos do not fit. She rests.
Her closing arguments
unfold like mercury:
a mangled pair of duty pants;

a fat man boneless as
a fifth of gin. The court-
appointed lawyer drawls
“Sometimes, an accident is just
an accident.” *So what's a black-
out, then?* I think. *The moon
conspiring to shrink macadam
to a suspect diagram?*

Upstairs, sequestered in
our legal garret with
the medical report (cocaine),
we're forced to cut our knuckles on
the mystery of starlit hit-
and-runs. We won't be good,
or kind, or just, just us.
Dead quiet, deadlocked, putting up

a fuss. Please, bailiff, tell
our spare obstructionist
the truth: not all police
collude, but Beaux-Arts murals lie.
The law is linseed mixed with dust.
We want apology,
and, next time, doing right.
But everything's redacted—smudged.

We exit into St. Paul's endless night.