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Faith

William Jolliff

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Faith

for my daughter, who never knew her

William Jolliff

Six months illegal, cramped in a schooner,
a girl with your chin and crippled hip
jostled all the way to Oklahoma. Her father,
too much gambler, too little farmer, drove
her mother mad. Loving him wasn't easy.

Back in Ohio, Faith became a teacher,
and the old sooner cried, "I'm sorry,
I'm so sorry about her," by hitching
the buggy at dawn, wrapping fire-bricks
beneath her feet. Until she married another,

featured like him, but less steelish—
less blue in the mind. What she gave him
honed a sharper feeling, and they had
children, some better, some worse.
One of them had me. And now, daughter,

you have *her* features. It's faded,
but today the face in the frame is clearer
to me than your own. She's in your hip
and chin, leading the faithful, cycled life
of stars, swallowed again by the prairie moon.

