

## A Compassionate Judge at the Veteran's Court

*Judge Lou Olivera sentences a veteran with PTSD to 24 hours in jail,  
then joins him behind bars.*

*--The Washington Post, April 22, 2016*

And so, when the judge  
gets into the cell  
with the man he has just sentenced  
to twenty-four hours in jail,  
the man asks, "*For the whole day?*"  
and the judge says,  
"*Yeah, that's what I'm doing.*"

Like a father who says,  
"*He's my son and I won't see him fall.*"  
And a son who isn't alone  
locked down in the dark with his terror.

Because the judge has been to war, too,  
and knows there are wounds  
that aren't visible. Because the man,  
two decades in the military, knows  
another soldier died for him in combat  
and lives crushed under this,  
and not only this.

And a judge can be a brother  
to a man who has lost his way,  
as two oak trees in a meadow  
can be connected by their roots.  
The way a man who has lost  
his way can be a messenger  
to remind us  
there is so much more to know  
about what's on the inside.

Because we are so ready  
to skate on the surface  
of our minds. Because  
we can do so much more  
to be relatives in the fields  
of trees, beauty,  
and devastation we call home.

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