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The Bright Waterfall of Angels

Susan Firer

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of dream, on the cusp of moon, I see myself
young and white nightgowned walking deep
at night through the Highland Zoo that surrounded
my French grandmother's house. From the bay
window, my mother calls me back; her voice
is a clarinet. When neon was new,
and every yard was filled with cherry and apple
trees, the plaster saints I lit candles in front of
always had bare feet, and it never rained stones.
Then, my mother on hot nights slept
with her head on a windowsill. Now
a freeway runs through her place
of those dreams. Still within walking
distance, some nights I go and watch
the cars' lights burst shining from black
then disappear into stars,
into peonies, then prayers.

THE BRIGHT WATERFALL OF ANGELS

Everywhere that summer there were angels,
hanging over the lake piers deflated with prayer,
blowing like soap bubbles past night windows,
flying from the weekend colored skirts
of young girls. In August, under the full
moon, I walked Oakland Ave., and a night
bus, windows burning yellow with angels, passed.
And still, I could see people praying for more
bird angels, drug angels, kaiser roll angels, money
angels, love angels, health angels, rain angels.
There were angels with hearts large as bagpipes
who circled our village's ice cube houses
and flew bright loud into our bang nights.
There were angels in movie houses and in sweet corn
stands, and angels who dropped like catalpa
snakes from summer. One angel followed

me into our Chang Cheng Restaurant. Where
were the angels that summer when the neighbor-
hood women were being hunted and ripped
open like field animals? Or when the man
who walked away from DePaul Rehab gave up
on my garage? When I came home from “The Wizard
of Loneliness” the Flight for Life
helicopter was landing in my front yard.
And a young man was leaning against my garage,
his throat an awful open clown smile.
Rivers and steams of dark blood
ran down the alley. All the children
awakened by the helicopter ran barefoot
and pajamad through the actual
blood and night. Mary,
the neighborhood nurse, kept telling
everyone there was a murderer loose.
“No one could do that much damage to themselves.
I’m a nurse, I’m telling you that no one could
do that much damage to themself.”
And the police, and firefighters, and pilot,
and attendants their rubber gloved hands filled
with the moon, and someone held up the knife
the man had used on himself. Off they rolled
him on a cot into the helicopter.
When they took off lighted and loud into the mid-
night sky, I saw angels of despair, windfull
and spinning happy on the helicopter blades.
There were angels who wrote their names on leaves,
and show-offs who rode August’s tornadoes.
Nights the sky was often a thunder of angels,
a heat lightning sky, where angel wings fit
together in crossword puzzle perfection.
At the State Fair that August, the great
chefs of Wisconsin came to convince the world
of the superior beauty of carved cheese over carved
ice for table centerpieces, and although originally

they had come planning to carve cows and swans,
always the cheddar blocks turned to the gold
cheesy beauty of angels. Angels hid
behind apples, behind goldfinches, hid in foot-high
Mexican-stuffed toads who stood forever on
their back legs, their front legs shellacked forever
into playing red painted concertinas.
And if someone would have come to you as many
years as you are old ago, and told you:
You will be slapped around, a man will cut your
mouth open, only because he says he loves you,
and you will have to give up lovers, before they are,
and children before they are yours;
friends will call you from sexual assault centers
and their stitched together voices will tell you
things done to them that you will never be able to forget.
Some friends you will bury and children and parents, too.
(Your mother and father will breathe flowers
from their graves.) Your body's skin and bones
will cartwheel around you, tilt-a-whirl around you
until you are nauseous and dizzy and uncertain.
The money angel will never like you; often
you will sleep with razor blades. Often
you will fall out of the trap door of yourself
and have to climb back up and start over, and
sometimes the angels will help and often they won't,
and you can never count on either. And if someone
had come to you, as many years ago as you are old
right now, and told you all this, and more,
would you sign up for the bright waterfall of angels?
Would you be silent? Would you whisper, or shout:
Bring on the tour, the bright waterfall of angels tour?