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Children's Dreams

Mary Dengler

Children's dreams come rushing
in the windows
with the air that pushes lacy curtains toward the bed.
They circle round the room and fix themselves
upon the walls in darkened orbs or moving, light
upon the drooping sheet
to force delight or terror on the stricken head.

One night I heard adults discussing in the rooms
below the stair
the things they should have talked about
with me—that Mother spoiled her children and
should find an out
from years of marriage to my worthless dad.

Their words, authoritatively spoken in such grand-parental tone, had
clamored up the stairwell like an angry mob.
I didn't know I'd traveled into sleep
beyond the window's threatening darkness
and my stifled sob and lights
below the stair.

Two men in circus tights,
descending by a trapeze from the sky
into my room,
each took me by an arm and caught me into space
while wrapping me in phosphorescent cloth
to make me sparkle like a star.
We sped through galaxy and cloud,
they acting as my wings.

Circling earth, a dizzy but protected moth,
I felt like Faustus on his maiden ride with Mephistopheles
and sensed I'd lost my soul
along with all the other problems
of the erring human race, like voices that patrol
with callous, adult views of things.

In coming back to earth
my trapeze partners gave me
one last fling,
propelling me through houses 'cross the land.

Athena-like, protected by my shroud of sparkling cloth,
I hurled myself through windows without pain,

then, flying close to ceilings,
toured each house protected by my height
from frightened threats of warring inmates
exiting again.

I hovered over wooden panels, carpets, curtains, art,
real fruit in baskets, glowing bulbs in lamps,
the dogs inert, still waiting by the doors,
voices ancestral in the form of kitsch,
or gilded frame on shining family altar, wall, piano top.

Amid these furnishings of hope,
the frightened inmates caught off-guard
were forced to sounds I'd heard at night behind the doors,
to all the rumored tales of fighting spouses
warring young, of plotting,
arms uplifted in a rage,
of weeping, yelping, staring at the closet floors.

My flying coming to an end, I found my sparkling cloth
unfolding down bright clouds to Grandma's house.
My bedroom quiet in the waiting dark confirmed
the end of travel to familiar lands,
the start of night.
I woke to catch the trace of phosphorescence
lingering on empowered hands.