Other Laws of Physics

Julia McDaniel

Denison University

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Other Laws of Physics
by Julia McDaniel

1. My father, with his brisk, fumbling hands, should not have handled glass. He had failed to learn the fine science of matter not just once but many times beyond me. There was something about the softness of the wrong woman’s lips that pressed his mind to the skeletons of ash, the ones tucked precariously between the thrum of his heart and the molting threads of his suspenders. He should have studied the nature of refracted light instead. After she left him, the woman he could not love said he had been haunted by a room of perfectly efficient mirrors, never grasping what it would contain except for the latent glow of its own intensity. What could she understand of a lapsed physicist with no consolation but the angel wings he carved out of sapphire shards? They were never meant for her, she knew: they belonged to his theory of faultless edges, as if he could encage transcendence in the grip of his shuttered windows.

2. On Sundays, we rise together in that blistering, early-morning blue. The sunlight floods the kneeling angels’ faces with some fear or awe that is almost alive. It is never in their wings: I’ve traced them closely through the service because I do not believe in god, and you hold my hand although you say I have placed my faith in a science no less terrifying than yours. I am here because you are here. Because I’ve heard you say you love me and caught the prayer in that same exhaling breath, because when you bend your head over your Bible although you do not need the words I see how you might look when you are whole and brimming to your edges and yet alone. Because there is a certain peace as the angels wait for you to find me again, to pull closer
as our eyes meet. Do you not see? They wait in the room of our own infinity.