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The Book of Blood

Vicki Feaver

ONCE ANGELS FREELY ROAMED

Once angels freely roamed,
invisible, but known in a wind
breaking open a bolted door or shutter;

or in the fields, wrestling a grown body,
squeezing the breath from its chest;
their voices - a stern roar for the bold

and guilty; or lowered, gentle,
to no more than amaze the innocent
and fearful - not wasted on the air

but poured directly into the ear;
their touch, on the back of hand
or neck, like the brush of soft feathers;

or at the heels, as when our first parents
were scurried from Eden, the bristles
of a powerfully-wielded broom.

Then angels lost their powers
in the world, replaced by effigies
in wood and stone: hanging

in rows on rafters (wings wormed
by flying beetles); or, noses crumbling,
perched on the lids of tombs.

