

## Faith Healing

*Michael Hicks*

And there she was, Kathryn Kuhlman\* strolling the stage at the Civic, parting a sea of applause, her gown like an angel that got away, so pure it might have been empty but for the Holy Ghost preening in her body as she paced the floral proscenium, lifting her hands in a sign language I knew only God understood.

Sinners ascended on heavy legs, a janitor, a waitress, then more, stark and drooping till Kathryn said the word and illness stripped from their bones like skin from an apple and clean praise ran from our mouths, the aisles breaking into dance jagged as levees in a storm washing us down to Jesus' enormous boat.

It was the night she became the miracle I believed in the way a bird believes in air and branches, all the premises of life and limb. She was open windows blowing in my blood, a lake of promises you might only reach by falling into them.

That summer I lived in my father's trailer, slept on a fold-out bed beside a line of rustler boots, the allemande left and "Oh, Johnny, Oh!" being the stray passions he took up with wife number three, who cajoled me one night into coming to a regional square dance where I sneaked out with a blonde freshman who was ditching her mom.

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\*An American evangelist who held massive healing services throughout the West, mainly California.

We wandered through porchlights, her cheeks perfect crescents under the slouching moon, sky crossing its legs all around us, her chest sloping in white angora, a silver cross playing in her fingers, grace raining from the stars, our words and the quiet between them as balanced as planets, a private equinox we presumed to live in a two-hour walk.

And there I was, at fourteen, wondering if she and this sentiment would apportion the shape of my life from then on. They might have—who knows—but for her mom waiting, arms crossed, at the double doors and my dad with a broken boot-heel, sitting out the late dances, cursing and drinking black coffee from a thermos.

That night,  
fifteen miles from the Civic, the shadows let go of my shoulders and the angels settled in my eyes, a gauze I could barely see through, and everything I knew went up in a cloud of hope, which seemed the world's way of relinquishing the thought that I should ever die.