

## Him, Her, Me

The first time our child sprouted wings, I pretended not to see them.

She was only an infant, three days old, none of us had slept since the 36-hour ordeal at the hospital wrenching her out of me, so what if I saw wings? I had given birth, traumatically. I was seeing a lot of unpleasant, unexpected, inexplicable things.

The second time she was two years old. I was better by then, mostly better, much better, at least as far as external appearances. Most days, I twisted my wild curls into a smooth chignon before leaving the apartment. I cooked simple meals for my family.

That sunny summer morning, I had just taken my daily dose of medication when a quicksilver movement, a glint of membrane caught my eye as I scooped scrambled eggs from the skillet. I knew at once that the wings had grown in tandem with her small, pointed shoulder blades, from which they bloomed.

The wings weren't pretty. They had no softly feathered loveliness like the sunlit stained-glass angels we saw once in a church near Niagara Falls, handcrafted by Louis Comfort Tiffany, circa 1920. They were more akin to insect wings, if anything, slender and nearly transparent, fragmented into countless tiny sections bordered by thin black lines.

For all that, they seemed sturdy. So I said nothing, and we sat together, the three of us at our round table, eating.

Ten days later we found ourselves at the park. Him, her, me. Smiley faces chalked all over the concrete. Sprinklers spraying a welter of water, creating rainbows of an almost surreal loveliness. I counted fourteen other children in various stages of helplessness, from newborn to pre-k. None, including my child, displayed any sign of wings.

In the bath the night before kindergarten she splashed so much water with such noisy intensity that I nearly yelled. Instead I told her, very calmly, in the way I have taught myself since becoming a mother, "Stop splashing." She laughed, and sprouted her wings again, flapping right on up to the ceiling.

I didn't think about Icarus. That has nothing to do with her or me. I don't deal in wax and feathers and labyrinths. My island has the most elaborate public transportation system in the Western world, with legendary bridges and roads, epic international airports, a plethora of luxurious private planes. In midtown you will find a helipad, should you require one, copters at the ready.

I wanted to call her father in, ask him what to do. I could smell minced garlic, brown butter with sage, a chicken roasting. He was busy in the kitchen, cooking.

It had taken me more than four years, but I had freed myself from the doctor, from the daily medication, from the sense of falling from a high wire into endless emptiness. Making up a new family rule on the spot, I declared, "No flying up to the ceiling during bath time," to which she said, "OK."