

VISIO



DIVINA

*The Wisdom of Contemplative Vision*

**RUMORS OF SNOW**

*PATTIANN ROGERS*

On the edge of the great holiday celebrations we experience year after year, there are rumors of many other things—unseen things, quietly happening that we perhaps do not easily notice. Pattiann Rogers notices, however, and whispers these mysteries to us in her beautiful poem. In her wild and vivid telling of the first snow and the signs of starlight on Christmas eve, she takes us out, naked into that freezing world of midwinter night. She deposits us there in a moment of nostalgia and longing.

Her inner world of seeing is connecting to the outer world of dazzling darkness and to the descending crystalline forms that are rumors of another cosmic and transcendent order. Her awareness of the warm pony who is withstanding the elements in its own way contrasts with the startling urge to throw off all caution, remove all clothing and fling oneself naked into the silence of stars and the banks of fresh fallen snow.

What Pattiann describes is an unlikely scene for most of us. We would never dare to do such a thing, but as we read, the heart somehow knows something of that urge and the wild warmth of human vulnerability in that moment. We enter the eve of Christmas warned that it is both a cold and cosmic zone full of ambiguities and undreamt of possibilities. We are touched by its gifts and sharp-edged realities. Humans know both joy and distress in these celebratory seasons. We are touched by something far larger than ourselves. We are wrapped by its warmth, but also wind-whipped by cold realities that will not leave us even at the midnight hour of Christmas Eve.

Are we not always entering the realm of angels at every hour? Do they not sometimes also take natural forms like snowflakes so they can touch and heal us? Perhaps that is the final gift of Christmas Eve—a snow-storm of healing brought to us as a longed-for Savior.

*Pattiann Rogers is a contemporary poet whose life has been spent exploring the world with her scientist husband, and teaching young poets to write in various colleges and universities. She has published multiple volumes of poetry and currently lives with her family in Colorado.*

**Reflections on Image and Text:**

1. *This is a poem filled with wild energy. How do you respond to it and to the poem itself?*
2. *What part of the poem is most compelling to you? Is there any part of it that you find disconcerting?*
3. *Have you ever experienced feeling of wildness like this, or a longing to fling yourself into the natural world in some way?*
4. *What are angels? Who are angels? What is the purpose in this poem?*
5. *As you engage the image, what does it make you see and feel that perhaps you did not when just reading the poem?*

# LECTIO DIVINA

*The Contemplative Reading of a Sapiential Text*

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## *UMORS OF SNOW, CHRISTMAS EVE*

The snow must be somewhere waiting in the heavens,  
far above the definite point of light where the eye  
stops seeing. It is said that stars pass easily  
through its white gauze girth as it falls from that height,  
and when it settles over broken fields and frozen lakes,  
the vacant marks made by the constellations  
can still be seen in its solid lay.

Maybe the snow waits, curved perfectly  
over the earth, the silent white side of night,  
hovering with all the power and promise of a savior  
who hasn't yet descended.

It is rumored that snow fashions,  
as it falls,, a definite white storm in the distance  
of its coming, slowly descending on the bare backs of ponies,  
stripped sycamores, the branches of naked willows,  
with the only kind of motion angels ever crave.

Some people plan to run outdoors naked  
into the storm's first signs, believing each flake heals  
the body like a savior as it touches flesh. Some say  
that eyes which have fashioned the six sides of themselves  
will be the first to see the firs signs of snow.

Maybe there are eyes that can fashion themselves to see  
naked angels quivering on the bare backs of ponies,  
definite points of light descending to touch  
the first signs of naked flesh. Or maybe it is only  
waiting angles who can see inside the distance of themselves  
constellations in a savior of snow, the naked backs  
of ponies touch by stars, redemption in the motion  
of snow slowly turning the night inside out.

Father, this is our prayer tonight:  
Wherever healing power exists, in a star of ice  
waiting somewhere in the distant heavens or in eyes  
fashioned to perceive that rumor, may a snowy storm  
of angels come quickly, touching all those waiting naked  
for such a promised savior.

—Pattiann Rogers  
*Quickening Fields*  
(*Penquin Poets*, 2017)  
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*Contemplating*  
**THE ILLUMINATION**

