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Acts of Faith

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I woke to the bright round moon crowding our window, shining down on a final tiny acrobat steadying himself soundlessly on a tightrope strung from my heart to yours while we slept. There was, it seemed, an entire army of them: slippered and poised, all dressed in green tights and short capes, their taut arms folded in muscular defiance. "Jesus what are you doing here?" I said, trying to hold my voice to a whisper. "Go away now. You'll wake her." And out came the cannonballs. Out came the bowling pins and spinning dinner plates. Out came the handkerchiefs and chainsaws, the juggling knives and glowing torches, the hoops, umbrellas, and ladders, the wheelbarrows and pets and very small children. It was a nightmare: a great noisy cloud of maneuvers and props whirled tirelessly between us, threatening to come raining down, threatening to send you crashing from a dream. "Guys," I said through clenched teeth, sitting up some though

careful not to sway or shake them loose. "Back to the circus now, or wherever you're from, okay? She's sleeping." Your eyelids twitched at these words and you rolled closer. I backed off but reached to wipe a bit of night drool from the pinches of your soft mouth. They tossed everything higher, jumped in tandem from the strained rope to such a frightening height above our bed, everything—including my breath—suspended in midair. "Don't worry," you said then, eyes suddenly open, clear. "They'll leave of their own accord. Or they're not going anywhere. Or maybe they were never really here to begin with. Just lie back and go to sleep, I promise you'll see." With that, you brushed your lips against mine and the moon disappeared. And so did you—not even the wrinkled impression of your body left on the sheet, and the rope fell away, of course, and my eyelids grew so heavy; heavy and heavier, like all those little acrobats and their tricks, each falling into my arms, one after another in the dark.