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Clem Sets Things More Efficient

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CLEM SETS THINGS MORE EFFICIENT

They're so drooling loony
every time it happens: *the angel's coming,*
the angel! They're polishing their windows and even
their gold teeth, mamas almost axe-hack
parts into sons' hair, the daughters sport velveteen bows.
And maybe a light does prance
down Main Street, in a cone of whirling bees, but so far
as I can see it just piss-frights the sheep
a day or two out of grazing land, litters the shop-fronts
with glowing bits of debris, like foresty
snail-slime, and just leaves everyone's eye-whites turned up to heaven
like hard-boiled eggs so long the damn town turns into a sepia
photograph of itself, each year, dog-eared at the edges. See,

in their religion, you work to become an angel
at the end, some sort of reward: all that floss
and cotton-batting, all that celestial marshmallow jazz.
Well, maybe. I've seen the Northern Lights
some nights when I muck out over the rank dried creek
to the woodshed and check the next day's fuel. And run
my hands, for a woodsmoked moment, over the black, shit-gnarled bark,
and press, and leave the tree reversed
in my palm-flesh, a kind of signing the contract for trade
of carbon dioxide and oxygen all through the long toad night.
The wife breathes in. Breathes out. And eases me
up inside her where the gas exchange takes place, a delicate,
glandular, coming-together. Our candled linen-sweat
mixes with the musks of the fields . . .

Well here's my religion: we *start out*
angels. And have to work
to keep ourselves up.