

*confession\**

Lucille Clifton

father  
i am not equal to the faith required.  
i doubt.  
i have a woman's certainties;  
bodies pulled from me,  
pushed into me.  
bone flesh is what i know.

father  
the angels say they have no wings.  
i woke one morning  
feeling how to see them.  
i could discern their shadows  
in the shadow. i am not  
equal to the faith required.

father  
i see your mother standing now  
shoulderless and shoeless by your side.  
i hear her whisper truths i cannot know.  
father i doubt.

father  
what are the actual certainties?  
your mother speaks of love.

the angels say they have no wings.  
i am not equal to the faith required.  
i try to run from such surprising presence;  
the angels stream before me  
like a torch.

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in populated air  
our ancestors continue.  
i have seen them.  
i have heard  
their shimmering voices  
singing.

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\* Clifton, Lucille. *Good Woman: Poems and a Memoir, 1969-1980*. Brockport, NY: BOA Editions, 1987. 220-21.