

# After the Disaster

By Abigail Deutsch

*New York City, 2001*

One night, not long after the disaster,  
as our train was passing Astor,  
the car door opened with a shudder  
and a girl came flying down the aisle,  
hair that looked to be all feathers  
and a half-moon smile  
making open air of our small car.

The crowd ignored her or they muttered  
“Hey, excuse me” as they passed her  
when the train had paused at Rector.  
The specter crowed “Excuse *me*,” swiftly  
turned, and ran back up the corridor,  
then stopped for me.  
We dove under the river.

She took my head between her fingers,  
squeezing till the birds began to stir.  
And then from out my eyes and ears  
a flock came forth — I couldn’t think or hear  
or breathe or see within that feather-world  
so silently I thanked her.

Such things were common after the disaster.

Notes:

The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.

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