**“Hole in the Wall” by Etgar Keret**

On Bernadotte Avenue, right next to the Central Bus Station, there’s a hole in the wall. There used to be an ATM there once, but it broke or something, or else nobody ever used it, so the people from the bank came in a pickup and took it and never brought it back.

Somebody once told Udi that if you scream a wish into this hole it comes true, but Udi didn’t really buy that. The truth is that once, on his way home from the movies, he screamed into the hole in the wall that he wanted Ruth Rimalt to fall in love with him, and nothing happened. And once, when he was feeling really lonely, he screamed into the hole in the wall that he wanted to have an angel for a friend, and an angel really did show up right after that, but he was never much of a friend, and he’d always disappear just when Udi really needed him.

This angel was skinny and all stooped and he wore a trench coat the whole time to hide his wings. People in the street were sure he was a hunchback. Sometimes, when there were just the two of them, he’d take the coat off. Once he even let Udi touch the feathers on his wings. But when there was anyone else in the room, he always kept it on. Klein’s kids asked him once what he had under his coat, and he said it was a backpack full of books that didnt belong to him and that he didn’t want them to get wet.

Actually, he lied all the time. He told Udi such stories you could die: about places in heaven, about people who when they go to bed at night leave the keys in the ignition, abouts cats who aren’t afraid of anything and don’t even know the meaning of “scat.” The stories he made up were something else, and to top it all, he’d cross-his-heart-and-hope-to-die.

Udi was nuts about him and always tried hard to believe him. Even lent him some money a couple times when he was hard up. As for the angel, he didn’t do a thing to help Udi. He just talked and talked and talked, rambling off his harebrained stories. In the six years he knew him. Udi never saw him so much as rinse a glass.

When Udi was in basic training and really needed someone to talk to, the angle suddenly disappeared on him for two solid months. Then he came back with an unshaven, don’t-ask-what-happened face. So Udi didn’t ask, and on Saturday they sat around on the roof in their underpants just taking in the sun and feeling low. Udi looked at the other rooftops with the cable hookups and solar heaters and the sky. It occurred to him suddenly that in all their years together he’d never once seen the angel fly.

“How about flying around a little,” he said to the angel. “It would make you feel better.” And the angel said: “Forget it. What if someone sees me?”

“Be a sport,” Udi nagged. “Just a little. For my sake.” But the angel just made this disgusting noise from the inside of his mouth and shot a gob of spit and white phlegm at the tar-covered roof… “Never mind,” Udi sulked. “I bet you don’t know how to fly anyway.”

“Sure I do,” the angel shot back. “I just don’t want people to see me, that’s all.”

On the roof across the way they saw some kids throwing a water bomb. “You know,” Udi smiled. “Once, when I was little, before I met you, I used to come up here a lot and throw water bombs on people in the street below. I’d aim them into the space between the awning and the other one,” he explained, bending over the railing and pointing down at the narrow gap between the awning over the grocery store and the one over the shoe store. “People would look up, and all they’d see was the awning. They wouldn’t know where it was coming from.”

The angel got up too and looked down into the street. He opened his mouth to say something. Suddenly, Udi gave him a little shove from behind, and the angel lost his balance. Udi was just fooling around. He didn’t really mean to hurt the angel, just to make him fly a little, for laughs. But the angel dropped the whole five floors, like a sack of potatoes. Stunned, Udi watched him lying there on the sidewalk below. His whole body was completely still, except the wings, which were still fluttering a little, like when someone dies. That’s when he finally understood that of all things the angel had told him, nothing was true. That he wasn’t even an angel, just a liar with wings.