

Angels to the Light

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On Friday night at our house as soon as twilight fell
Mama lit the Sabbath candles and cast a wondrous spell
She pressed her fingers to her eyes and as the candles gleamed
She blessed them and she welcomed in the holy Sabbath Queen.

Mum's blessing was in Yiddish, ancient woman's lore
She'd learned from her own mother many years before
"Lekovid shabis, lekovid gott" was all that we could hear
The rest she said in whispers meant for Another's ear.

And we never thought to learn the Sabbath blessing Mum would say
It's the first thing I would ask her for if she were here today
But I know she spoke with angels as she prayed there in the night
"Evil angels to the darkness, blessed angels to the light."

The years took Mama's memory and locked it all away
She stood before the candles and had no words to say
So we said, "Lekovid shabis, lekovid gott" to help her start
And knew that God would hear the rest that Mum had in her heart.

And we never thought to learn the Sabbath blessing Mum would say
It's the first thing I would ask her for if she were here today
But I know she spoke with angels as she prayed there in the night
"Evil angels to the darkness, blessed angels to the light."

There were words in Mama's blessing she said once, then said again
I remember as a child I thought they sounded like a train —

[SPOKEN: "Tzu di likht" — "fun di likht" — "tzu di likht" — "fun di likht" —like that. After Mum couldn't say her blessing anymore, I asked her sisters, my aunts, about it. They each had a different version, but they all had that phrase: it was "Gute mlokhim tzu di likht, beyze mlokhim fun di likht," — "Good angels to the light, evil angels from the light." The idea of Mum conjuring angels around the Shabis candles took my breath away. I realized that —]

— Mama's words were doing more than any of us knew
For with the Sabbath lights, Mum blessed our house and family too.

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