

# **a book of miracles**

**Amanda Earl**



## A BOOK OF MIRACLES

is an excerpt from *Saint Ursula's Commonplace Book*.

Ursula lived in the fourth or fifth century. Variations on her story exist. In one version, she is travelling by ship with eleven thousand virgins to meet her groom, a Pagan. The ship is attacked and the women, including Ursula, are beheaded. In another version, an arrow pierces her heart.

A church was built over the tomb where Ursula was buried. The arrow, which pierced her is kept there. Young girls pray to Ursula for protection and miracles. She is their patron saint.

Once upon a time I encountered a homeless woman who seemed to be spouting prophecy. I didn't ask her name at the time but later something gave me the name Ursula. When I looked up this name I discovered the saint and her story. I wrote a long poem about these two women (Ursula, AngelHousePress, 2008). *Saint Ursula's Commonplace Book* is a continuation.

The National Homelessness Initiative estimates that 150,000 Canadians (or approximately one out of every 200 people) were experiencing or have experienced absolute homelessness over the past year. "Experiencing Homelessness, Second Report Card on Homelessness in Ottawa (Jan-Dec 2005)"

I am grateful for funding received from the City of Ottawa for this work, which I intend to be a book of art and fervour, a spiritual exploration.

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*dusie kollektiv 8*

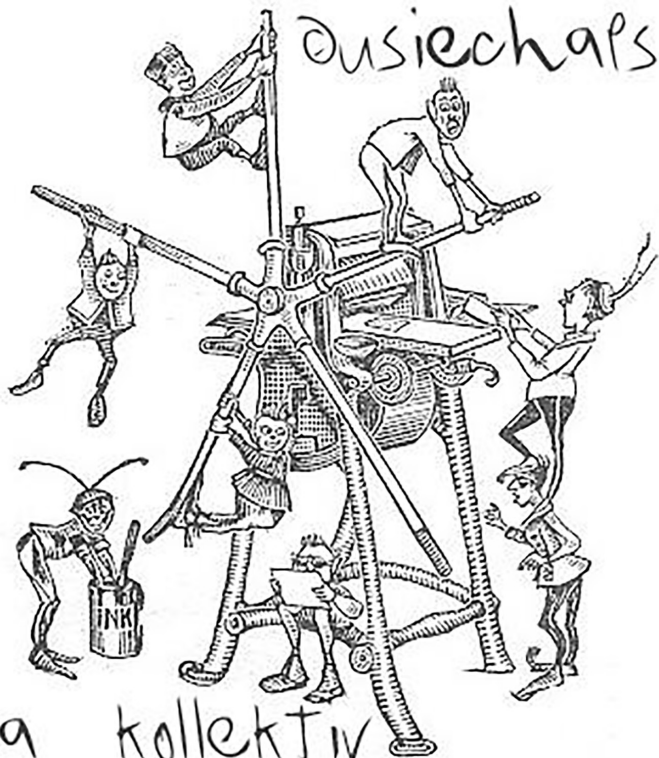
rob mclennan, curator

[Dusie.org/issueeight.html](http://Dusie.org/issueeight.html)

dusie press

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musiechaps



a kollektiv



snow. tree. knots. steam.  
union. wisp. brown. breath.  
sea. chalice. port. clock.  
number. Leviticus. cataract. cure.

*if there  
is any hope,  
if there is  
any hope  
at all,*

*care  
must be taken.  
take care.  
never waiver.  
let the sun  
heat your bones.  
arise before sunlight.  
I must roam.*

*wander.  
listen  
to the voice.  
I must listen.*



azure. sphinx. levee.  
earth. toggle. urn.  
roll. silver. heard.  
feral. specter. finite.

bluff.  
copse.  
swing.  
host.

*the dawn  
breaks, they say,  
it breaks. I have a quest:  
luminosity. I search for  
light. the dark sky opens,  
inside. a jewel, the sun.  
its fire flames across the land. my home.  
a burnished, splendid horizon.  
out of doors. I am wary Must never  
let myself be locked in, shut in again.*

fear. space. cursive. might.  
altar. order. gorge. quartz.  
cave. escape. wish. brood.  
crow. novena. bulb. hope.

*the sky protects  
when it is blue  
is dangerous  
when violet  
a childhood  
thought. the  
pigeons circle  
above, their  
prayers in  
coos. there is no  
order, no control.  
I accompany  
a feather floating  
on the river,  
a stone in my hand.*

abandon. trail. belief. marsh.  
lift. whisper. charm. choir.  
desire. door. sheaf. wind.  
inlet. splash. crust. fog.

*I stumble,*

*pebbles*

*scratch my*

*knees.*

*I look up*

*to the stars*

*and I*

*believe. in*

*something greater*

*than this*

*the blood*

*pouring from*

*my torn knee,*

*the glass*

*in the stained*

*window*

*broken*

*like me.*

myth. knight. oriole. silence.  
poppy. ember. tangle. root.  
despair. flagrant. tear. rot.  
gold. tyrant. field. bend.

*in orbit.  
we are.  
every moment.  
do you think  
about it. ever.  
how the trees  
spin and the  
stars spin and  
the earth  
and the  
starlings  
and the ground.  
sparkle, star  
showers,  
we are light  
years away  
from knowing  
for sure whether  
we are not alone.*



flight. candle. oratio. soul.  
blessing. bargain. rose. mercy.  
cross. reason. dulcimer. china.  
arc. limbo. ecstasy. knife.

*as the night,  
I am. always  
searching. you  
have found me.  
I hear your voice.  
your story haunts  
me. if it is the truth.  
I am tangled in  
branches, bits of green,  
a thick blanket.  
my dreams choke me.*

shawl. seraph. intaglio. torrent.  
dervish. lover. lily. iron.  
crevice. page. ivory. bells.  
sister. spleen. raven. mire.

*I do not*

*cohere. tongue  
between teeth. mid  
night's heat drips  
down my  
naked spine. I  
drink from a  
metal chalice. the broken  
door is half-open.  
sleepless, I list feast  
days and saints. all the  
miracles. I conjure  
kings, the deaths  
of martyrs. eleven  
thousand screams, dreams.*

oars. angel. pine. mast.  
urchin. triangle. brass. recess.  
honey. scour. daylight. fracture.  
gulf. orchid. fissure. arrow.

*I lay in the two*

*masted boat, its cedar  
& pine scent soothing  
me until the day*

*I die. an arrow. a sword.  
a Hun. how do I sleep,  
the long sleep of forever. I want  
to sleep & not waken.*

confession. kettle. tar. bedouin.  
wool. ocher. entropy. file.  
ratchet. swirl. discover. meteor.  
slant. bedrock. carton. shovel.

*I practice theurgy or angel*

*magic, it's simple; I need*

*to know her. but first*

*I must purify my soul.*

*I pray. I collect*

*wood and earthenware*

*detritus from the river.*

*I wander through gardens*

*uninvited to rescue*

*all that withers, the sparrow*

*in the nest, the faded rose,*

*its petals forlorn.*



wisteria. lute. deference. entreaty.  
wine. medicine. swoop. pastiche.  
incantation. river. chronicle. aria.  
sedge. casket. slaughter. egress.



Amanda Earl is a Canadian poet living in Ottawa, Ontario. Her poetry book, *Kiki*, came out with Chaudiere Books in 2014. For more information about Amanda, please visit [AmandaEarl.com](http://AmandaEarl.com), about *Kiki*: [KikiFolle.com](http://KikiFolle.com) or contact her on Twitter @KikiFolle or via e-mail: [amanda@amandaearl.com](mailto:amanda@amandaearl.com).

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