An Angel's Wink

The harbor boat leaned hard against the tide,
Its painted side split open with a groan;
An archangel lay sideways in its belly,
Wings folded close, as if the hull were home.
The painter stood and laid his final color,
A single stroke of blue across the foam.

Seven falling stars went down beneath the ice,
The tourists held their breath and stared awhile;
A box of brushes, rags, and paint tubes waited,
While the angel kept a secret in its smile.

The little girl tugged gently at her mother,
Then pointed where the canvas met the sea:
“Oh look, it’s just like Daddy with Mommy
When evening settles in so quietly.”
The painter’s hand went still above the water,
And every stranger turned to look at me.

Seven falling stars went down beneath the ice,
The tourists held their breath and stared awhile;
A box of brushes, rags, and paint tubes waited,
While the angel kept a secret in its smile.

The boat rolled over; no one made a sound.
The last bright streak ran silver through the dark.
Then from the painted wreck, without a word,
The angel winked—and warmed the frozen harbor.

Seven falling stars went down beneath the ice,
The tourists found their voices after a while;
The painter shut the box and faced the child,
As the angel smiled and answered with a wink.

A brush, a rag, the evening turning blue;
The little girl still knew what angels do.

Adrienne Atkinson

Loosely inspired by the title *The Angelic Smile* by Chantell Gasp.