

The Tale of Annie Edson Taylor and her Harrowing Adventure at Niagara

I'm as tall as a waterfall.

I brush my brambled hair
with the legs of a chair

and when I teach my music class
to play the xylophone,
the children carry mallets

in a circle chanting, *Every crone
gets lonely without money...*
Listen closely—we each

have a song. So I build a barrel
in the size of me. Pin oak,
iron, tapered top to bottom.

The morning whistles,
and the verdant torches
floating in the river balance

on the fingertips of water nymphs.
Ladies and gentlemen
gathering at the banks—

waistcoats, fascinators, boots
with buttons stacked in stairs,
brochures like missals

in their hands. I take a bow.
They slide the mattress in
around me—inside its spiral

I can smell the bills and bars
of gold that I'll be banking in
by dinnertime. Out West,

the rodeos and lumberjacks
have posters tacked
to tree trunks, but I want a show

to call my own. A postage
stamp, a dressmaker. Here,
the policeman and the census

taker nail the barrel shut.
This American sun
through the breath-hole,

shining like a spirit lamp.
Plus the bobbing, plus
the wonder-thuds,

plus the kitty cat tail
of gravity, extending
above me as I drop.

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