

Forest Angels:

I live in the forest along Crystal Creek, halfway up the eastern slope, off a gravel road overlooking a valley of farms and pastures. Regardless of the season it is lovely here. Easy on the eyes. Wonderful to wake up in, marvelous to drift off to sleep. A surrounding of peace without noise. A place in which I feel enormously lucky every day. But the essence of this place is not the geography or the views.

The real secret to this place is the angels who live here. This place has spirits who shape and color it. The animals and the plants, the trees and the gardens, the water and the sky all take their daily cues from these angels. Without them this place could be a thousand other places, a thousand other very pretty, quiet places in our lucky part of the world. The Angels are the shapers and the keepers of this Eden. They are diligent. They are dedicated. They love the forest. The forest, in return, murmurs in shy acknowledgement as they walk by. The fog lifts at their whim. There are three of them.

The moon rises to show us secrets of the forest night. I know that the Angels drive the moon on its arc although they will not admit it. I often rise in the middle of the night to see what's afoot while the Juncos are asleep. And, as often as not, I spy one of the Angels on her night watch, focused and gentle making sure that time passes in an orderly fashion, making it safe for the rest of us to sleep. Her name is Ruby. She invented this place. She bears, beautifully, the enormous responsibility that comes from having crafted a paradise.

Daylight comes late here because of the elevation east of our home. Morning is slow and deliberate. You can watch it cross the valley below us. You can watch the world scratch itself awake for miles around.

The Angel Pearl begins the day here. She rises first and brews the house awake. She pretends to leave the valley to work at a job in town but I know it's just her cover. Actually the day in the forest belongs to her. The scheduled feeding for all our creatures on four feet and two, feathered and human is her task. She sees to the petting and grooming the whispering and snoozing, the scolding and cuddling of everything that breathes here. She does it with ease. She does it with the brightest, warmest smile permitted among the Angels. If an Angel were allowed to be any lovelier the forest would lose confidence in its own beauty.

There is a world around the night and the day. There is an ethos that gives everything structure and form. There is a future and a past to hold together. There are forces at play, which are larger than this small forest in our small world. There are reasons and causes and hopes and ends that are so central to the operation of the larger world that they are difficult to see.

Veronica holds the vision for the envelope that surrounds us all. It is she who knows the possibilities. It is she who reads the cards, stirs the pot and taps us all on the shoulder. It is a mighty place. It is a lonely place. It is a place that is so important that we forget someone has to hold it. Because there are no words big enough for it, we'll simply call it Honor.

I live in the love of three Angels. But, I've grown so accustomed to my incredible fortune here that last week I wrote about football or politics or something. I did not write about love. I am a fool. This is not my apology. There is not a lot of sense in apologizing for being happy. It is, rather, my simple statement kept too often to myself.

I love you Ruby, I owe you my home. I love you Pearl, I owe you my peace. I love you Veronica, I owe you my life, everything.