

Poetry Porch: Poetry

About Angels By Helen Heineman

I do believe in angels.
Real ones, not just the ones
Painted by Botticelli or Lippo Lippi.

The angel of annunciation, of course,
Has been the most famous,
Sent on a mission impossible,
It seemed.

There were others who came before.
The most frightening was the one
Guarding the gates into Eden,
After Adam and Eve had sinned.
We're told he held a flaming sword,
The only one, I think,
Who ever bore a weapon,
Which seems both unlikely
And unnecessary for an angel.

On another improbable occasion,
Three angels visited Abraham
And dined with him at table,
The only time I ever heard
Of angels breaking bread with mortals.
They brought a good message,
Equally improbable,
That the aged Sarah would bear a child.

I think Jacob once wrestled with one,
Again, hardly conduct becoming an angel,
And he also saw a host of angels
Going up and down a ladder
Connecting Heaven and Earth,
Suggesting some connection
Between our world and theirs.

In the novel *Joseph and His Brothers*,
An angel is sent to guard Joseph,
Thrown into the pit,
Keeping him safe until he's sold
Into Egypt to meet his fate
And finally forgive his brothers.
This fictional angel
Thinks his task beneath him.

Sometimes I'm sure
I've been visited by an angel,
Once saved from a terrible fall
On a high escalator in Amsterdam,
Pulled backward by my heavy suitcase
Into the arms of what was no doubt
An angel in a Boston College shirt,
Who hurried away,
Not wanting to be thanked.

I'm sure there are other such times,
Though it's fearful to contemplate the angels
In one of my favorite poems
By Carl Dennis, a new year's poem
With two angels, each unexpectedly providing
Their charges with vastly different fates.

Believe in them you must,
Even though they might make
Rare visits to our secular world.

What do they look like?
Do they have wings,
As almost every artist provides?
Do they call us back
To moments when all was well,
Even perfect?

Or do they appear in fragments of melody,
Weaving their way through
A Beethoven Sonata,
Providing inner solace
Amid our deafness.