

A Guest At My Table

The chair is cool on my back as I open the Bible. I am studying Isaiah at the moment. I enjoy the prophets - they are real, honest, truthful. Sometimes crazy as the day is long. Still, I enjoy reading the books of the prophets. They inspire me.

*“I will praise you, O Lord.
Although you were angry with me,
your anger has turned away
and you have comforted me.
Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust and not be afraid.
The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation.”
With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.*

I feel him before I see him. I do not fear, oddly enough. There is no pang of panic that someone has broken into my house. I feel no need to defend myself. I am peaceful and I look up. There he is. Sitting across from me as I look at my Bible. I stare at his olive skin and his raven hair. Despite these dark features there is a stunning glow around him. It is almost blinding. I am not speaking figuratively. It is a bright light, and yet a soft light. I have known no light like this; in our common world of electric illumination I have nothing to compare with the softness of this light. Perhaps a candle is the closest I can come to. I think it is white, or maybe a soft yellow, but I can't be sure. It's as if I feel it more than I see it.

“There are some good stories in there.” he says to me. Was that...I think...a twinkle in his eye? I am sure he is amused by the whole thing. Being sent down here to me while I meditate on the Word in my dining room. No close call with firearms. No reckless driving. No need for a guardian, just taking a moment to try and get into contact with the forefathers, with my God.

“I always thought so.” I say. He's right, the Bible is chock full of wonderful stories and beautiful poetry. It is my favorite work of literature, not only because I find it to be sacred but because I find it interesting, entertaining, and beautiful.

He looks me in the eye. I have a slight desire to look away, to continue reading Isaiah. I don't do this. I keep my eyes fixed on him.

“I exist.” he claims, in such a matter of fact voice I come close to a snort of laughter. It truly is comical; he sits at my dining room table circling the edges of my placemat with his fingers, and he finds that he has to speak this obvious truth to me. And yet, here he is, letting me in on the fact of his existence.

“I just thought I would let you know.” he continues. “I don't understand what the issue is with some of your cohorts. Why is it that even many of the faithful equate a belief in angels with a belief in fairies and unicorns?”

I shrug. I am not sure what to say to this, but I am in agreement with him. I have always found it odd. Especially with the evangelical crowd. They seem to take so literal most of the Bible, and yet angels are either not spoken of at all or they become cherubs with fluffy wings sent in chain emails full of niceties and Scripture verses. He looks nothing like any photo of a cherub I've ever seen. There is a gruffness about him. He is clean, but worn somehow. He reminds me of an overworked doctor.

I haven't found any more words to speak to him. I am mostly following his cue. I am waiting, anxiously, to see if he has some kind of message for me. In my reading experience there is usually a reason for a divine appointment such as this one.

“Well, I just thought I would let you know that I’m here.” he says. Is that it? He wanted to come all this way to just say that he’s around? How odd.

“Before I go,” he continues, “do you need any healing?”

Do I need healing? Do I know others who need healing? I think of my grandmother and her aching joints. The child I just heard of who was just diagnosed with leukemia. My friend who is desperately trying to have a baby to no avail. My sweet love and his fight with depression. My growing concern that I am coming dangerously close to developing bipolar disorder. The dozens and hundreds and thousands of people I observe with sickness, addiction, sadness, oppression, hazards, heartache, loneliness. Don’t we all need a healing touch?

“I’m not sure what to say right now.” I answer. “I think I’m okay. I’m going to go back to reading. I’ll look you up.”

He is gone. There was no squeak of the chair from relief of pressure, no footstep on my carpet. No opening and closing of my front door. He is simply no longer in my presence.

Yet, he *is* here. Fighting with and for me. Willing to pray and fight the darkness. It is nice to have such an ally in this war.

He exists. And our God exists. Our Lord is our salvation.

*St. Raphael the Archangel,
we beseech you to help us in all our needs and trials of this life,
as you, through the power of God,
cast out the demon, restored sight, and gave guidance to young Tobias.
We humbly seek your aid and intercession,
that our souls may be healed,
our bodies protected from all ills,
and that through divine grace
we may be made fit to dwell in the eternal Glory of God in heaven.*