

Angel

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Well before dawn, awake in my bed,
shoulder throbbing, arm in a sling,
I thought of an angel at the entrance
to the Church of Santa Maria dei Servi
in Orvieto. The angel is part of a fresco
painting inside the main door and to the right,
in a little side chamber that is usually barred
and locked. Late one night, however,
I found the gate ajar, and entered.
And there on the wall was a sacred scene,
the exaltation of a saint or a day in the life
of the Virgin Mary, with attendant angels
looking on. Except one angel was looking right
out of the wall at me instead. At me, I swear,
with a gaze so direct and severe and knowing
and yet so welcoming as well, straight out
of the Renaissance. There was something pure
about those eyes, and eternally young, and full
of holy energy. And I felt seen, and I
felt known, and I felt transfixed and included,
with or without my will. That is what
I knew that night, and this night too,
though my aching shoulder still throbbed,
and I lay sleepless, and it seemed the pain
would never end.