

If We Are All Unremarkable Angels

by [Anna Elkins](#) in the [June 2024](#) issue

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After a long morning of hiking and getting lost,
I walked to the pebbled edge of the lake to wash my feet.
When I looked up, a toddler with a smile of pure
and fearless joy was running up to me. He stopped
short, bent down to select a stone, and handed it to me,
his face full of a hope so bold it was a knowing—
that I'd think his gift as rich as gems. I smiled back.
Like he had bowed to choose his gift, I bowed to accept it.
I held the stone in my open palm to give it proper honor,
loving not just the gift but how it came *after* the thought
to give. He'd approached me empty-handed, found
what he needed just when he needed it—nothing
planned or stockpiled, as would be my way.
I said, *Thank you*, and put the stone in my pocket.
He ran back to his father, mother, sister.
A beauty suffused the whole family. Maybe
they were angels. Maybe we all take turns playing
angel. Maybe I did earlier, for another child
who'd come running down the mountain, crying,
Can you help me? I'm lost! So we all are, so often.
And then we're found—someone appears, leads us
back up the path or offers us a talisman of praise,
and once again, we're good enough for now.