

CHILDREN'S EDITION

All Creation Waits

The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings

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PARACLETE PRESS
BREWSTER, MASSACHUSETTS

“Every single creature is full of God
and is a book about God.”

—Meister Eckhart

For Nathan Boss, 1934–2023
Alive always with animal wonder

—G.B.

For my beloved dog Ketem, 2011–2023

—S.S.

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Dear Reader,

This book is a kind of Advent calendar. The pages are numbered—Advent 1, Advent 2, Advent 3—for the days of December leading to Christmas, like the little doors on an Advent calendar. And like an Advent calendar, this book’s “doors” are meant to be opened slowly, one—and only one—each day. This will not be easy. The pictures are beautiful and the animals amazing and you likely will want to rush ahead and see and read all twenty-five at once!

But in Advent, the season when sunlight is fading and cold is creeping in, all creatures know that to be well, they must wait, they must slow their usual way of doing things. You can join creatures in their Advent waiting by staying with just one animal each day. On Advent 1, sink down with Painted Turtle. On Advent 2, huddle with Muskrat. You’ll be excited to see who’s waiting for you each day. By December 25, you will have discovered that the animals companion us and speak to us.

I hope you enjoy getting to know and love these amazing Advent animals—our creature kin.

Gayle



*To help you linger with each day’s animal
there is more animal wonderment
on pages 58–64.*



In late fall . . .

... in the world's north
the sun glides low in the sky.
Light dims, the air cools
signaling every living thing.
Animals know what to do
when the season of dark and cold
spreads over the earth.

Every creature makes changes
to its home, its body, its habits.
Every creature makes ready to wait
until the earth wakes again
into the light and warmth of spring.
Waiting in the cold dark will be hard
but each creature knows

*The dark is not an end. It's a door.
It's the way a new beginning comes.*

Chickadee

A tiny acrobat swirls and twirls through the trees
singing his name

Chick-a-dee-dee-dee!

All fall he searched for seeds.

This one he tucked under a flap of bark
that one in a crack of brick.

Thousands of seeds he hid!

As he did, a kind of map grew in his brain
the secret place of each seed marked.

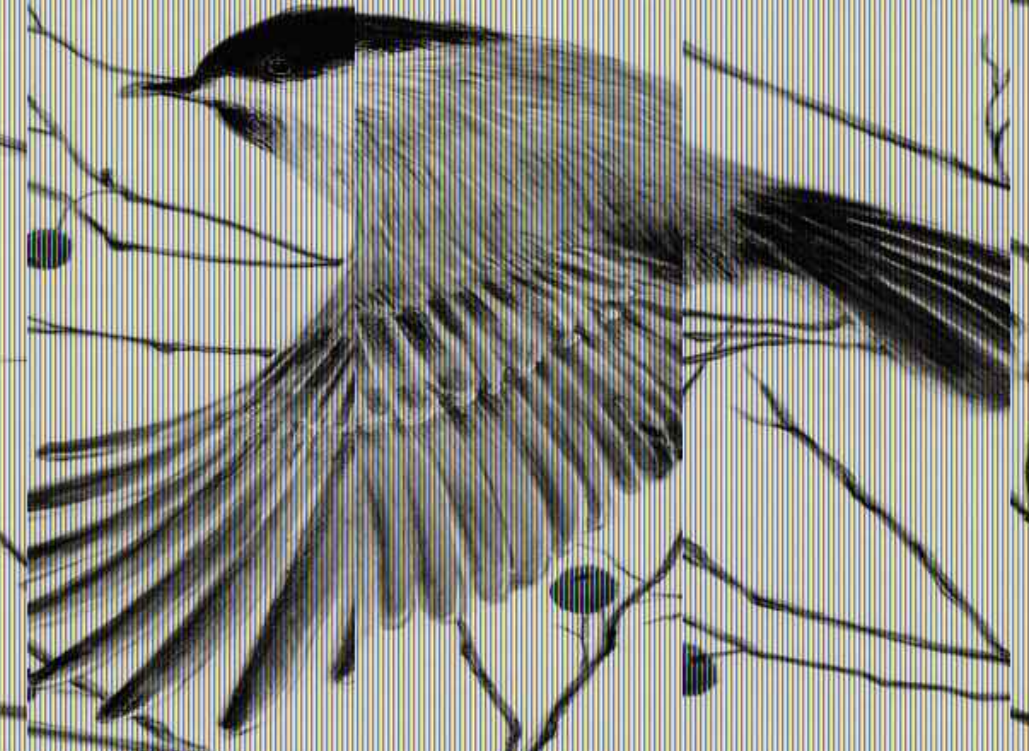
Now those seeds are his only food
and the map reminds him
where they're hid.

Each time he eats a seed
the seed-map shrinks.

Will the seeds and his map last
until the ice and snow go?

Chickadee doesn't know.

Still, he sings!



*The dark is not an end. It's a door.
It's the way a new beginning comes.*

Whitetail Deer

The wind blows cold
and Whitetail Deer—both bucks and does—
are moving, moving, moving.
The forest's strongest buck moves most
searching, searching for a certain place.
Finding it
he paws a circle in the dirt and pees
he rubs his forehead against a small tree
he bites off a branch's tip and strokes his cheek there.
He has spread his scent all across this corner of the forest.

A doe, moving past, lifts her nose.
He calls.
She calls.
Briefly, they meet.
When they part, she finds other does
and they lie close, sheltered by cedar boughs
while the fawns in their bellies grow.



*The dark is not an end. It's a door.
It's the way a new beginning comes.*

Eastern Fox Squirrel

A furry flag flicks in the snow, topples
and up pops Fox Squirrel, mouth full.
When acorns, hickory and walnuts
fell from the trees in fall
he gobbled his belly full
then hid thousands more.
Nut-loving neighbors watched.

So he played nut-hiding tricks:
Dig a hole, pretend to drop an acorn in.
Do this again.
Dig hole number three.
Bury the acorn there.
Maybe.
Come back later, bury it somewhere new.
Or pretend to.
For months he remembered which hole
really hid his buried treasure.
Because Fox Squirrel doesn't want to spend winter sleeping.
Eating nuts hidden and found
he can keep tree-leaping!



*The dark is not an end. It's a door.
It's the way a new beginning comes.*