

## Richard Nester

### Angel

Thank you, Corrine, my neighbor  
from up the road, for working so hard  
to save my soul, especially  
considering how fervently you believe  
in hell. It's touching to have you pray  
for my soul's safety, more so  
because you take hell's existence and my consequent  
endangerment so much more seriously  
than any risk I could detail  
out of my own apocalyptic musing,  
say, climate change or nuclear war or  
any of the other tangible  
but still difficult to believe in threats  
that lurk around the corner of civilization  
like so many cliffs  
between the harsh rows of a Nebraska cornfield  
that I see and you don't. Hell is real to you  
like the hardscrabble highway you cross  
with your gifts of rhubarb pies and pickles  
that are sweet and sour and rapturous  
like all prayers.

**Richard Nester** is the author of 4 books of poems, the most recent *Red Truck Bear* (Kelsay, 2020). His poems have appeared in numerous magazines and journals, including *Cape Discovery: the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center Anthology*, *Ploughshares* and *Seneca Review* and on-line in *Qarrtsiluni* and *Inlandia*.