

## FRA ANGELICO'S "ANNUNCIATION" AT SAN MARCO

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*Clare M. Rossini*

Imagine: an angel whose wings imply  
The colors of the world. No wonder  
Mary's head inclines, not wanting  
To miss a word, her book half-dropped  
From her hand in her surprise  
At such a visitor.

If angels had not traditionally been  
Thought of as male, one might mistake  
These two for sisters: their plaster robes  
Stained from the same palette of pink,  
Their hair swept off their faces, falling  
In similar curls.

But they keep their distance, as does Dominic,  
The saint behind the pillar in the yard,  
Who from the Renaissance looks on shyly,  
His hands held formally in prayer,  
His black and white habit austere  
Next to the angel's wings, the venial  
Pink lingering, not yet redeemed,  
In Mary's cheek.

The monk whose cell this painting lit  
Would take Brother Dominic's posture  
As a model for his own when contemplating  
This event, which looms with penitents  
And spires. And probably, a prayerful stance  
Is appropriate; how often, after all,  
Are we promised saviors?

Still, it may have been more instructive  
If the saint had been braver,  
And reached out to finger those wings—  
Just inches away—and let us know what  
An angel's made of.