**The World Is Full of Beautiful Things**

J.W. Wood

Every time two human beings fall in love, a Beautiful Thing is born.

Beautiful Things aren’t some figment of the imagination: they are real, shaped like a human with limbs but without features like noses, ears, or teeth. Pale yellow, with puffy bodies, human beings can’t see them up close, or indeed from any distance on Earth. We can’t hear or taste or touch them, either—but we feel them. Especially if we’re the two people who fell in love to create that Beautiful Thing.

From far above or far away (I mean further than you or I could travel) it’s possible to see these Things at work all over the world: mediating between two humans, smoothing things over, wishing we wouldn’t make the mistakes we so often make—carelessness, anger, thoughtlessness, the rest.

Beautiful Things never die or grow old. Some are bigger than others, some stronger. But none are too weak or small to matter: every Beautiful Thing counts, and each lives forever. Even when a human dies, the Beautiful Thing they created lives on, watching over the other life form that helped create it. And when its human creators pass, the Beautiful Thing follows their souls wherever they go.

Normally, Beautiful Things play with each other, skipping and jumping through clouds, bathing in starlight, or chasing each other over mountains and seas. They also busy themselves keeping humans out of trouble.

They know sadness, too, of course: the loneliness of being a Beautiful Thing no one remembers or cares for or, worse, one people want to pretend never existed. Such Beautiful Things stand unremembered at the margins of our world.

To tell the truth, there are so many Beautiful Things it’s a wonder we manage to create so much misery—so much effort placed into the hurt that these Beautiful Things try to prevent with their bouncy, caring ways.

If you listen carefully, you might hear the sigh of a Beautiful Thing in the wind or see its tears in a shower of rain every time someone does something stupid or hurtful. Sunlight feeds these Beautiful Things; the whisper of leaves finds them holding court with each other, discussing a mistake some human is about to make in their unwitting ignorance, their unhelpful mix of wants, impulses and vanity.

If two humans decide they aren’t in love anymore, the Beautiful Thing they created carries on alone, watching over them. But these ones feel sad and neglected. And when that happens, they squeeze themselves into the head of some mad human by a magical process.

Then they start singing songs and telling stories or painting through them, very much like the story you’re reading now: tales of lost love and sadness, of being alone and hurt, and how those feelings can happen to anyone—even to Beautiful Things whose nature is so perfect that no one could ever dream they existed. But they are real, and the fact you’re reading this is proof of their existence.