

## Hills of Eden

### The Book Begins ...

There is a stillness in these Ozarks hills. A deep hush settles in the hollows as if the earth itself is holding its breath. In the mist of a morning, it's so quiet atop the ridge I can hear my heart beat as the echoes of my solitary footsteps die away, lost among the fallen dead leaves of the oaks and hickories, now only skeletons themselves, bleak reminders of winter's wan cast.

The cedars stand ghostly in the dim light of dawn, staggered down slope among the wispy shrouds of fog that cling to the rocks and stumps like shredded cotton batting, while the creek at the bottom, a thin thread of silver and beryl, sweeps down to the smoking mirror of the pond.

And here we are in the month of Janus-faced January, what some call mid-winter. I am reminded that the month is named after a Roman God, Janus, a single-headed deity with two faces, each looking in the opposite direction. Janus was the god of gates and doorways, and over time, he became known as the god of new beginnings. It seems an appropriate month to begin every year anew, and I suppose that is why I walk up the ridge above the hollow and look down at the sleeping land below, to ponder how this year begins and get a sense of how it will flow and end.