

Merry Christmas 2024!!!

Sending Peace, Joy, Hope from Fox Song Farm,

Faith & Vincent Richardson



Our living room window view



Our back porch view



Walter

Fable



Berry and Honey

Okay, so 2024 did not start well.

Except for one thing. The fun start to the year was welcoming Walter into our family as Fable's spotted brother on New Year's Day. Things seemed to go downhill from there ... nothing to do with sweet Walter, who continues to be a wonderful dog!

Vincent's physical therapy felt like it was going on forever.

In January, Faith developed the worst case of Shingles that all the doctors in the Free World had ever seen (not really, but Shingles feels that way). Honestly, I looked scary and sounded weird.

But 2024 got better.

In June, Vincent graduated from his physical therapy of relearning to walk following two more surgeries. Bonus, he was able to get on and off the tractor—a goal he had been working toward. Finally freed from biweekly hospital visits and back to farm chores!

Speaking of farm chores ... Late winter/early spring tasks included Faith's healing/fun jobs of vegetable garden seed-starting and chick raising of new recruits to join our egg-laying hens.

Meanwhile, Vincent took on breadmaking and reclaimed his chef role, transforming our kitchen to produce a vegetable-based Alburni Valley-esque Mediterranean diet. The hoop greenhouse served us well in providing greens over most of the winter and early spring. Sadly, I remain the wrong side of slender. Vincent has had more success!



the hardworking hoophouse

By late April, Faith's shingles finally stopped relapsing (touching wood here), and we are grateful that her eyes and ears remained unaffected from the repeated outbreaks affecting her facial/cranial nerves.

Our garden got off to a slow start with a soggy, cool spring. We began to think that we would be taken over by all Faith's early-start seedlings that were rapidly turning into mature plants. This vigorous green wave was subsuming the activity room and the hoop green house. But by late May, all the plants were homed in the earth and growing well. Our little garden and elderly orchard always produces an astonishing amount of food. While Faith was busy tending the garden and harvesting, Vincent was preserving everything from apples to zucchini.

We welcomed a visit with Faith's sisters in June, and Vincent's sister, nieces and family in August. In between we had several lovely visits from old friends and new ones, too. It was a social summer!



Puck, Penelope, and Arael

In Fall, Faith retired from teaching at the college and three days later started a new job at the parish as relief office person and ... Church Librarian! Of course, writing academic materials, fiction and kidlit remains the focus of her days. (But seriously, if I didn't have a job to go to, I'd become an incorrigible hermit).



Mulligan, Minnow, and Honey

Meanwhile, Vincent has launched our farmstand for farm gate sales of some of our eggs, herbs, and vegetables in season. We launched it in October as a pumpkin stand, just in time for Halloween.

Oh, and attached to the farmstand is a little free library, of course!



New recruits!

We continue to appreciate the great beauty of the Alberni Valley rainforest all around us and our beloved horses, goats, and chickens. Fable and Walter offer comic relief with their ongoing doggy antics and also provide us with staunch support when the occasional bear or cougar hangs out a bit too close. (Most often, though, it is their help with rat hunting that is most in demand!)



Claire and Vincent at Stamp River fish ladder



Fox Song Farmstand and Little Library



Joy, Hope, Faith, Vincent



As we are writing this letter, we are in the middle of an atmospheric river of rain. Beautiful and appreciated for filling our well and replenishing the streams and forest aquifer after the long summer drought. Moss is beginning to flourish again on the limbs of trees and the familiar voice of the creek is no longer silent. The horses, munching hay in the stable, are shaggy-coated and silently celebrating the demise of flies. Safe in the goathouse, the now-fluffy goats are devouring the canes of spent sunflowers and squash vines. The hens, resplendent in feathers like Jacob's coat of many colors are drowsy, roosting on their perches, lulled by the drumming of rain on the tin roof over their coops.

We likely won't see snow until after Christmas. Then, the mud and spent leaves, washed of their October colors, will be blanketed and the winter ice will purify our soggy world. There is that miracle of light gleaming through the dark of night, the ice crystals catching star sheen and the air electric with nature's cold fusion that mirrors the Birth of Light. The Light that catches like a small match, smoldering until that moment in early spring when a flame of green emerges over the land. And the redemptive miracle occurs yet again.

Light has entered our world again in this Holy Season.

Christmas blessings, dear friends!

Love, Faith & Vincent



Advent (aurora borealis)

The Northern Lights in Southern Canada are like Christmas in July.

Red-green specters fading into being, rising and drifting through the night sky.

Elusive to the human eye, their dance is caught like a cougar on a night-cam, a clip-still capture of a flying flame, more caricature than spirit.

I saw you real.

Living, you catalyzed a soul's breath of energetic light and caressed the stars.

A cold fusion of sun and space igniting this Earth-bound child.

I saw the angels dancing on Jacob's Ladder, felt the pointed message of the Nativity star settle in my chest.

I saw Mary's roses glowing in the night, blossom and leaf. Saw graceful stems, needle-like, lacing the great gap between Heaven and Earth. The Christ Child, as tall as the sky, as old as the stars and as young as tomorrow's sunrise.

There were no shepherds in my field that night.

Only three horses stood with me, eyes full of moonlight, mist rising from warm muzzles. The angels sang cricket songs while four goats knelt in the summer grass, their munching mouths forming a percussive beat.

Together, standing in the July night. Together we heard the whispered 'wait!' and felt the patience of the trees, dark and leggy around us like Stonehenge.

While the wise wonder and wander.

While the innkeeper stirs and mumbles in his sleep.

While Herod feasts with flatterers.

We wait.



Faith Richardson

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