

NEW YEAR'S DAY
By
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Santa has been and gone. The tree needs untrimming. As I watch the sun rise I think,
Someday a year will dawn without me.

I hate believing it.

The mirror reveals new wrinkles, yet when my eyes meet their reflection, I still see me.
What trick is this? I wonder: Does God age, or is She like St. Nick, timeless and unchanging? Is
the youth I see in my eyes God's foothold? Will my soul still exist when 3007 dawns?

"Isn't she beautiful?" my daughter asks, a caramel colored mealworm cupped in her
small hand. I envision worms and their larvae overrunning the food pantry. "Look at her stripes.
See the dark brown one right in her middle? In a month she'll become a beetle, then we'll let her
go in the woods."

"How do you know it's a she?"

My daughter shrugs. She just knows. In a small box on my kitchen counter the mealworm
inches toward transforming death and ensuing freedom.

Sitting on a winter beach, my daughter gasps and points. Perfectly synchronized pelicans
glide wide-winged through troughs of waves, feathers untouched by froth.

"How do they do that?"

I shake my head. How is it I've never wondered that?

Mid-afternoon, a raccoon and its babe wander past. Rapture illuminates my daughter's
face, even as I shout, "Stay back!"

Exuberance impels her. Fear brakes me.

When did I grow old? How many miracles did I miss with my adult dull eye?

When did I stop believing?

Yet deep within me belief lives. My mind may doubt, but my soul's faith never falters, averring the veracity of ageless myth:

Our bodies lie. They are mere temples subject to daily decay. Our minds are but ego if not tempered by the eternal. The false dream—death—rises from disjuncture of mind and soul, of popular relativism and perpetual truth, of imperfect understanding and perfect compassion, of humanity's dark judgments and God's light laughter.

The I of me is eternal. This is reality. Dipping into that wellspring of youth—that is a gift.

Different views of the sea provide a glimpse. My daughter delights at diamonds shimmering. I grimace at the glare.

This morning she comes to me.

"The truth?" she asks, eyes earnest. An important question awaits.

I nod.

"The truth, Mom." She is emphatic.

"Yes."

"Is there Santa?" She's old enough to know.

I hesitate. Unsure.

"Is there?"

Then I feel it, deep within, even before it rises to capture my lips and crinkle the corners of my eyes: an elfin smile that feels like my daughter's sparkle.

"Oh yes," I whisper.

"And elves?"

“Most definitely.”

“Are they old?”

“Older than time.”

“What do they look like?”

“Why . . . they look like you.”

She grins.

“At the North Pole?”

“No, my love. In your heart.”

Eyes beaming, she squeezes my hand.

The year is newborn. Santa has been and is. And I am young.