

Between Darkness and Light

by John Matthews

It is within the darkness and the silence
That the magic of Christmas starts;
Somewhere between the glimmer of lights
And the first breathless moment
When children come
Stumbling like new-born angels
Into morning light.

Within the darkness and the silence
We sit, watching wonder
Evolve into form; where we
Enter the ringing silence
In which the first bells of Christmas
Sound the music of the soul;
Where the morning joy begins
With a single carol
To a half-forgotten tune.

It is here, between the darkness
And the light,
That we wait, uncertain,
Seeking the moment
That challenges us to believe
In a freshly minted miracle
Born every Christmas Day.

From *The Winter Solstice*
Quest 1998

I often read a poem at my Solstice party, right before we turn out the lights and observe five minutes of silence. This poem that John Matthews wrote for his son Emrys is one of my favorites.

Winter Solstice

Thinking only makes the heart sore. – I Ching

when you startle awake in the dark morning
heart pounding breathing fast
sitting bolt upright staring into
dark whirlpool black hole
feeling its suction

get out of bed
knock at the door of your nearest friend
ask to lie down beside ask to be held

listen while whispered words
turn the hole into deep night sky
stars close together
winter moon rising over white fields
nearby a wren rustling dry leaves
distant owl echoing
two people walking up the road laughing

let your soul laugh
let your heart sigh out
that long held breath so hollow in your stomach
so swollen in your throat

already light is returning pairs of wings
lift softly off your eyelids one by one
each feathered edge clearer between you
and the pearl veil of day

you have nothing to do but live

by Jody Aliesan
Grief Sweat, Broken Moon Press 1990

I always put a copy of this poem on my refrigerator when I'm decorating for the winter holidays. It is another one I like to read during the Winter Solstice party.

Just Delicate Needles

It's so delicate, the light.
And there's so little of it. The dark
is huge.
Just delicate needles, the light,
in an endless night.
And it has such a long way to go
through such desolate space.
So let's be gentle with it.
Cherish it.
So it will come again in the morning.
We hope.

Rolf Jacobsen
Translated by Robert Hedin
Copper Canyon Press

I just received a copy of this poem this year via email in a solicitation from Copper Canyon Press, a small press located in Port Townsend, Washington that specializes in publishing exquisite editions of poetry, both in English and in translation.