

# December 31

## A poem by michelle

When I was little, I remember I didn't like  
the last day in the year because my mum,  
all dolled up and after dinner,  
rushed out to the world, without me.  
The door closed and it was good time I went to bed.

In my teenage, I remember I lost my companion,  
my beautiful bitch, in a crowd.  
We'd ran away from home. My heart sank,  
and then I found her. What joy, what relief.  
And after a threatening night  
fighting the bitter cold, together,  
we saw some workers carrying away  
our friend from the corner,  
the homeless who told me  
that the cold was just in my imagination.  
And he was right and wrong at the same time.

When I was a young woman,  
I remember a 31st when I overslept.  
People had already eaten the grapes  
and burned up the fireworks.  
I woke up, jumped out of my freezing bed in an attic  
with no water, no toilet, no electricity, no stove.  
I crept out the window,  
onto the red-tiled roof  
to watch the light of the city coming up like smoke. ...  
I smiled. I felt absolutely happy. Unknowingly,

I was able to enjoy the sunny side of poverty.  
But poverty was not a good place to be in.

Then, I remember being a pacifist,  
an international witness in a country at war.  
I had a mission. Workers had locked themselves in a factory,  
and it was in the air -- a death squad might hit the scene.  
It was scary. I held tight to my camera,  
watched the night with all my senses  
and pretended nothing would ever happen.  
The guard, hired by the owners, got drunk.  
He came to me. He was so young.  
For weeks, he had been watching us  
caring, doing what we thought was right,  
and he didn't want me to think  
he was on the dark side.

I reminded him we were nonpartisan - we did not  
see the world in terms of friends or fiends.  
He wasn't listening. He had something to tell me.  
I could have cried my life out of me just to make him shut up.  
I don't remember well. ... It's just I saw in his eyes  
he'd be questioned by his pals, he'd be tortured and murdered,  
and then we'd find him, is it him?, yes, it is,  
in a ditch, like all the others. ...  
I couldn't bear the thought of finding him in a ditch.  
Would they just please leave him on the ground. ...  
I couldn't bear the pain of knowing what life is like  
and knowing it could be something else but it would not.

I also remember friendship in a few 31sts.  
Spending the whole night at home, coming out of our  
flatshared rooms into the common area, the sitting room,  
to chat away all night long, or just be there, together.

I remember a 31st in the basement of a housing co-op in a metropoli,  
all bundled up in bed, reading "One hundred years of solitude"  
with my mother's death in the air,  
my fight for independency and survival, against confusion, in my breath.  
I remember I read nonstop for over 24 hours,  
till I finished the book. No time to spare.

Then one year, I was under the cold rain  
in front of an open fire next to a military base.  
A grumpy woman pointed to a muddied old van  
where I could pick a mat, a blanket, a sleeping bag,  
and then to a bender where I could seek refuge in the night.  
Again, I was somewhere, with people, trying to change the world,  
trying my best to fight the fears and violence in the world  
and my own demons. And it was all powerful and fresh.  
I felt like a wild beautiful animal in the night,  
ready to lift the sun with my mates,  
to warm and heal this aching nightmare planet.

And today I look into your quiet loving eyes  
and I can't believe it's the same life, my sweet love.  
Now I know that when I was there you'd already left.

I don't know what will be  
but one thing seems to be certain --  
love's got some part in it.



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