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A Year's Time

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A Year's Time

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"A LOT CAN happen given a year's time: birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, memorials, deaths. One year can bring forth many changes to a person's life. Seasons come and they go. Spring to summer, summer to fall, fall to winter, winter to spring, and so on. The seasons will continue to go on in continuous repetition . . ."

Cover Page Footnote

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JESSICA JOHNSON

A YEAR'S TIME

A LOT CAN happen given a year's time: birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, memorials, deaths. One year can bring forth many changes to a person's life. Seasons come and they go. Spring to summer, summer to fall, fall to winter, winter to spring, and so on. The seasons will continue to go on in continuous repetition . . .

"David."

. . . How many days in a year? Not nearly enough . . .

"David."

. . . Time will not stop or wait for anyone. Every human being has a choice . . .

"David, wake up."

. . . A choice about life . . .

"David, honey."

. . . They can either give up or continue to push forward . . .

"David, honey wake up."

"Hmmm . . . what?"

"Come on sleepy head, I made you some breakfast."

I saw stars as she drew open the bedroom curtains and the morning sunlight poured into the room. The bedroom walls transformed to a rich golden color painted by the sunlight. Her childbearing silhouette was so angelic the way the sun's rays outlined her body as she made her way across the room towards the bed. She sat down besides me and grazed my face with her gentle hands. An angel, that's what she is. Her voice, a song from heaven.

"What were you dreaming of?"

"I was speaking to a group of people."

"What about?"

"I'm not sure. I can only remember it might have been a sorrowful crowd."

"I made us breakfast. Let's eat and maybe we could pick up some new materials for the baby's quilt later today. That should take your mind off of your sad dream."

God, she is so beautiful, her brown hair with soft ringlets of curls. I love how that one curl always seems to find itself falling just so on her face. I reach for it and it's so soft. She smiles back at me.

I tell her, "I'm always happy when I'm with you, Tate."

She kisses me and leads me to the kitchen where breakfast waits.

EVER SINCE WE came home from the store tonight, Tate has been working diligently on our unborn baby's quilt. It is bound to be our child's very first birthday gift. Everyday she adds another square piece to it. I walk over to her and watch as her fingers move in a repetitive pattern as she creates the quilt. She is taking such care with every stitch she makes into the fabric. I place my hand on her shoulder.

"It's beautiful," I say aloud.

"Thanks. I hope that it gets finished in time."

"And the quilt looks good too," I say with a half grin on my face.

"Wise guy."

"Come on, baby, it's 10:30. We should get to sleep or we'll be beat tomorrow."

"You go on ahead and I'll be right behind you. I just want to finish this piece tonight."

I kiss her on her head and go to our bedroom.

As I lay there alone in bed, I find myself beginning to cry. I'm going to miss her so much. Why does such a horrible sickness have to infect my beautiful wife? No angel deserves to have such a fate as to have only a year left of which to live! Tears stream down my face. How can she be taken from me so? The doctors gave the name "cancer" to this horrible disease. This stupid, bitch of a disease! My face is flooded with tears of sorrow. I will not be able to go on without her. My beautiful angel is bound to die because of a disease. I can not bear the thought of it.

I hear her footsteps walking across the room.

"Baby, what's wrong?"

I can't believe I let myself be seen by her thinking these thoughts! What should I do? I'm crying and I have to be strong. But I can't anymore! I feel like a child now and I have no control in me to hide my emotions.

"I can't let you go! I can't let you die! We have to raise a family together and grow old together. We can't do this in only one year. I need you to be with me forever! Every night I have nightmares and I am scared of losing you the next day. I cannot bear the thoughts of you not being with me!"

"David, time will not stop or wait for anyone. We have this very moment together. We have now. Do not think of or fear tomorrow or the preceding day for I will always be with you. Live in the present with me and I will live in the present with you. You are my love, my best friend. I love you. Now rest easy. I'm with you. Our baby is right here, safe."

She brought my hand to her stomach and gently held it there with her hand.

"We already are a family."

. . . Two years later . . .

"A LOT CAN happen given a year's time: birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, memorials, deaths. One year can bring forth many changes to a person's life."

I paused and looked around at all the sad familiar faces. All were dressed as black shadows.

"Seasons come and they go. Spring to summer, summer to fall, fall to winter, winter to spring, and so on. The seasons will continue to go on in continuous repetition. . . ."

I looked down upon my little, beautiful, curly blond haired daughter who stood holding my hand as I spoke.

". . . How many days in a year? Not nearly enough . . ."

Oh, how she reminded me so of Tate.

". . . Time will not stop or wait for anyone. Every human being has a choice . . ."

A little blond curl fell to the side of her cheek. She looked up to me and I looked to her. We are family and will be there for each other forever.

". . . A choice about life . . . "

I had a sudden feeling of relief and strength. We are going to be all right.

". . . They can either give up or continue to push forward . . . "

I looked up to the sky and knew she was looking over us from heaven. She never left us.

". . . We have this very moment together. We have now. Do not think of fear tomorrow, or the proceeding day, for Tate and any loved one will always be with you. Just reserve part of your heart for your loved ones to be remembered and thought of dearly day to day, and they will always be right with you. Live in the present with me and I will live in the present with you. We are friends, family, rest easy . . . "

I put my hand to my daughter's heart.

". . . Tate is right here, safe in our hearts and with us always."

. . . Twenty years later . . .

"Dad! Are you home?"

"Come on in, baby! How's daddy's girl doing?" I love it when Kira stops in to talk with me. She always seems to light up the room like the sun with her smile. She is happily married now to a wonderful young man of 24. They are now expecting a child of their own.

"Dad, I'm 22. And I'm doing just fine."

"You'll always be my little curly haired girl, no matter how old you get."

"I know, Daddy. Hey, do you know where mom's old sewing kit is? I wanted to give my quilt to my baby as its first birthday present. It just needs a little stitching up in a few spots and it will be as good as new."

"It's in the spare bedroom on the table in the far corner."

"Alright, I'll be right back."

She laid the quilt down on the chair and went off to the spare bedroom. She quickly returned with a quilt piece in her hand.

"Daddy, what's this in there for?"

"I guess she really didn't ever fully finish it, doll."

"There was this note with it. May I read it?"

"Sure baby, go on ahead, it's your mother's handwriting."

I watched her face as she read the handwritten letter. Her eyes filled with tears.

"Daddy, it's a letter to me. She said she wanted me to put the last piece in when I'm ready to raise a family."

"You're ready, doll."