

# *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.