

What I've Learned

By Mary Crescenzo

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On this planet, life is short and living is long,
that if we can breathe, we can make someone smile,
that there are worse smells than urine - one of them is death.

In this place, I've learned that even a man in a diaper
likes to dance, that a woman will tell you how to brush her hair,
even if she doesn't know her own name.

Here, I learn the rules of love, greed and gender,
that reveal how we got to where we are today.

Here, I discover how, those outside of these walls
are afraid of death and time and loving, convinced
that with enough BMW's and Botox, we can live forever.

Here, there is no rushing around, no missing the bus,
no drunk drivers. Here, the bankers eat lunch with the janitors,

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the Daughters of the Revolution dine with the maids.

On this planet, no one has time to snub others,
everyone's too busy keeping each other on their feet.

On this planet, the birthday cakes are always bittersweet,
the tea is always flowing and no one ever says, Don't cry.

Life on this planet is full of expert storytellers,
a dying breed of technical advisors for the past,

who live in this parallel universe, a looking glass
layered in silver, watching you, watching me.

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Recipient of the 2022 Maude's Award for Innovation in Alzheimer's Care, a pioneer in arts engagement for those with dementia and their caregivers, the author of The Planet Alzheimer's Guide: 8 Ways the Arts Can Transform the Life of

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Your Loved One and Your Own, playwright of Planet A, about the inner world of Alzheimer's; co-facilitator of "Dementia and the Arts" on Alzheimer's Speaks; arts strategist/practitioner, and arts advocate for older adults and all caregivers. I wrote this piece in honor of all the people with dementia whom I've worked with over the years who taught me so much about life and living. It is also the last monologue in my play, Planet A, about the inner world of Alzheimer's.