

# Candle Smoke Wishes

*by* Carl Santoro

At first I felt as  
silly as a seven year old.  
Everyone in the room  
demanded I close my  
eyes and make a wish.  
I'm sitting in front  
of my birthday cake  
and surrounded by  
family and friends of every age.  
The shouts are familiar, "Wish for something BIG!"  
"Blow out ALL the candles!"  
I thought I'd play a  
little joke and keep them  
in suspense.  
So I closed my eyelids of 62 years  
and placed them in park mode  
and pretended to go into  
a long, thoughtful meditation  
on what I wanted out of this  
big blow I was about  
to unleash.  
I could hear a couple of  
more shouts commenting about  
the incorrect number of candles  
and warnings about not to  
leave spit on the cake.  
I waited. I listened within  
the darkness created by my  
fleshy, thin shutters.  
"C'mon, DO IT!" whined my  
nephew, restless to

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taste the creamy layers of mocha.  
“LET'S GO! How many things are you wishing for?”  
yelled a cousin I could distinctly hear opening  
another can of Coors.  
The rumbling gradually subsided as I  
registered the sounds of  
throats being cleared  
and the uneven  
staccato of nervous coughing.  
Someone mumbled sarcastically,  
“Wow, tell me when the fun is over.”  
I kept thinking, “ alright, maybe  
a minute more just to really  
unnerve them. “  
Someone pushed my back sharply as another,  
(I think a different person's)  
hand smacked my head.  
Ironically though, the room,  
like a dry sponge filling for it's  
first time with water,  
began to soak in a heavy,  
almost touchable silence.  
It was obvious to me that  
I'd passed the point of  
opening my eyes for them.  
I was now involved in  
NOT opening my eyes  
FOR ME. I had succeeded in  
creating a new experience.  
I was totally consumed with  
being alone on my birthday  
in a room full of people.  
It's dark in here.  
It's thick with issues  
vying for my attention.

Thoughts morphing from Past to Present to Future.  
None of them having anything  
to do with a birthday.  
I remember Woody Allen saying,  
“The minute I stopped wondering about  
the meaning of life is when I  
finally started enjoying life.”  
I can't solve it either.  
This moment can't solve it.  
I open my eyes and blow.  
It's crazy how  
this strong and fierce hot flame  
in front of my lips  
is instantly “pixelated” into a  
mix of writhing ghostlike grey snakes.  
Some moving rapidly as though  
in panic mode,  
others swirling as  
honey might behave having  
a wonderful dream.

