

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

Available online at *«<http://fictionaut.com/stories/carl-santoro/candle-smoke-wishes>»*

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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.

