

Dad

Rachel Francis

Christmas day

7 o'clock a.m.

Every year the same routine,
cartoon-covered wrapping paper
coats the family room floor
by the couches and t.v. stand.
A pile of exotic paper snowballs,
crumpled and scattered randomly,
the aftermath of a paper war,
gift remains tossed
landing in my father's lap.
Now as the ritual commences, the paper
snowballs still fly, but settle
in the abandoned leather chair.

The Anniversary

6 o'clock a.m.

The coffee pot brews its morning caffeine,
warm smells fill the room, the office area
where she goes daily to the same desk
and begins her repetitive tasks -
prepare coffee, start the computer,
turn on the news, busy her burdened mind.
I watch the glass pot that fills contently on
the counter, she fills her cup, then adds creamer.
At her desk the keys begin to click, the
routine continues as she sips from the mug
and the one labeled World's Greatest Dad
remains empty on the counter. Alone at the
desk, she busies her mind with mundane tasks
to forget a year ago today, she had two mugs to fill.

My Birthday

6 o'clock p.m.

Tonight we sit at the dinner table
a homemade vanilla birthday cake
taken from the fridge and
placed in front of me, with
twenty-three candles shoved on top.
The soft, sweet interior now
coated with stiff, rigid icing,
covered in sprinkles, attempting
to be my glorified birthday dessert.
I peer over the vanilla cylinder to
a vacant wooden chair across the
table, filled by an invisible presence
of the one absent from this
day for the first time. The man
who knows I don't even like cake.