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Through Rainbow-Colored Glasses

By Christine Dinsmore

New Year's Day brings out the melancholy Irish Catholic in me. Not to pin all my neuroses on my parents, but this feeling of doom harks back to my childhood. I witnessed my Italian mother tearfully remembering all the people who had died within the previous 12 months. And my Celtic dad's annual toast "Good riddance to this year—let's hope the next one is better than the last" bolstered the idea that this holiday hinged on heartbreak.

While my Italian heritage may add a drop of sentimental passion to the recipe, with aging also peppered in, it's the cupfuls of Irish black bile that add the flavor to this feast. The New Year is as if William Butler Yeats descends upon my doorstep:

*When you are old and gray and full of sleep
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep.*

Because of this inevitable gloom, I don't make resolutions anymore. Those 10 pounds still weigh me down each year and, no, I'll never run the New York Marathon.

And predictions? Forget it. Last year's prophecies failed to materialize. Bush wasn't impeached. And the New York Mets didn't ride down Broadway's Canyon of Champions. My prescient self failed to see things coming—Cheney's plugging old friend Harry Whittington with buckshot, a gay Republican sex scandal, a gay Evangelical sex scandal, or another chapter in the O.J. saga.

And oh, those regrets. There are woes about should-haves, could-haves, and how-could-I-haves. They come in all shapes and sizes. Some feel humongous. Others miniscule. A few laments are perennial: If only I went to film school. Other heartaches came later: How could I have passed on the deal to buy that Riverside Drive apartment, overlooking the Hudson, for \$150,000? Today, it has a million-dollar price tag.

As the hours lead up to New Year's Eve, I reflect on the unspoken apologies I owe to all who were inadvertently hurt by my egocentricity. How was I to know it was my neighbor tailgating me? Who can see drivers through those tinted

windows? I would have never slammed on the brakes, spritzed her with my windshield fluid, and gave that exaggerated head shake if I knew it was she.

And double oy as I think of the reaction to my narcissistic, nearly deaf 94-year-old mother who declared, "That's it; let's go home," when my terminally ill aunt didn't have the strength for our late-night visit. I could have been a bit more sensitive than to scream "YOUR SISTER IS DYING, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE" as we drove the starlit streets of Jupiter, Florida, on that last trip we saw my aunt alive. My brother decided that I shouldn't be the one to break the news when her sister died a month later. He suspected that my best hospice-training skills would fail me—YOUR SISTER IS DEAD, ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?

I find myself understanding the New Year in a way that was foreign to the younger me when life seemed full of possibilities. I bemoan that this past year I saw my healthcare practitioners more often than my friends. I sheepishly set an alarm for midnight so I can wake up, watch the Times Square ball drop, kiss my spouse, turn over, and fall back to slumber. New Year's Eve is now for sleeping.

Tomorrow will be time to shed the tears for friends and family who are no longer here, and to lift a glass in hopes that 2007 will be the year of health, prosperity, and peace.