Nothing happens instantaneously. To move forward, one foot lands, waits for the other to follow. This is the Moment We've All Been Waiting For.

On my last stop, little dishes of kibble line the steps to her house where a pretty cat mews and whirligigs wave. The cat purrs against my leg as the sweet nonagenarian welcomes the container of soup I'm carrying into her kitchen. Pots and pans and an enormous stove echo with nourishing love and a big happy family. I see her special hat that says "Boss Lady" hanging from a wooden chair. She is not wearing the cap today— since her white hair has been professionally cut and styled—and I notice how much tinier her 4-foot-something frame is without the hat's added height. She looks beautiful, and her pink lipstick is reminiscent of earlier days of spring. She's happy to see me on this cold Monday in December, though I'm a relative stranger on this tiny island where the streets bear names of people who have lived here for generations and who tell their stories in a way that sounds like a familiar song. I ask about Thanksgiving dinner with her sons and hear her added delight over a visit with friends and pie. *Are you getting ready for Christmas?* I ask, remembering last year when I helped put batteries into a snowman and how joyful she was when it danced. *No, not quite there yet, but soon.* I admire her ease compared to my fussing about, making elaborate plans to circle my own friends and kin. *How do you do it—?* I ask her, referring to all the gatherings and hustle and bustle of things I anticipate during the Christmas season. *I don't mind*, she says. *Mostly, I like to sit in my easy chair and gather up my cats. One sits right in my lap and the other sits at the top of my head. It's been like that for more than 90 years— I guess—Everything I need is right here.* She lifts her hands up, and for a moment it feels as though Boss Lady is holding the world. By now the day has darkened. In the sky, clouded by a forecast of snow, rain, sun, and snow again, the North Star is the only one visible. What am I waiting for? I know the way home.

Nothing happens instantaneously. To move forward, one foot lands, waits for the other to follow. Each Moment is the Moment We've All Been Waiting For.

Instead of waiting for that perfect moment
I embrace each step that gets me here.

Waiting for a name, a word, to reappear
gestures express feelings too.

The sweater waiting to be mended
keeps memories of what I hope to do.

The home that's gone, the job that's lost
open a new and different space.

The loved ones we'd hoped would make it through
make us wonder what to do. Caring people are waiting.

What of those broken promises?
I try to see that they're fulfilled.

And to other fears that hold me back?
I wait and hope I'll find what's good.

Nothing happens instantaneously. To move forward, one foot lands, waits for the other to follow. This is the moment we've all been waiting for.

Ann van Buren
Advent Vespers
December 4, 2024