

A New World
by Marilyn Botta

I wake up with the sunlight filtering through the venetian blinds, leaving shadows on the ceiling and walls. I have a strange sensation—not sure if it is good or bad—but something feels different.

Suddenly I bolt awake, sit up and look at the clock. Okay, it says “SEVEN AM” so that seems about right. What is it then—what feels so foreign and misplaced? Things feel wrong! I look around the room and at first glance everything seems in order—the furniture, pictures on the wall, the color of the room, the bedspread, so I start to relax, thinking that maybe I just had a bad dream. Yet I begin to notice some strange alterations.

The pictures have changed some how—yes, they are animated—my self-portrait is actually talking to me and it seems perfectly natural. I go over and gaze out the window, at the huge glowing chatoyant sphere in the sky, changing shape and form—not a normal sun—almost like an eclipse. I turn on the TV, waiting with anticipation and dread for the latest negative installment of what has become a reality show day after day. It appears that there is no news on The One Who Shall Not Be Named, almost as if he is not even the Commander in Chief anymore, or ever even was. I change channels and cannot find any mention of this person almost as if he never even existed. I look on the Internet and find nothing but good news—no mention of ISIS or terrorists or investigation or collusion.

So now I begin to think that I must’ve died and I am living in Heaven—whew, thank you God. I wonder if they have iPhones in Heaven and what version—are they up to at least 7 yet? 6 would be okay too, but come on—if they are operating only on the four or five, this must be the other place—the place I always assumed I would end up in. Much to my relief, Heaven has kept up with the latest technology and they are operating on a new iPhone 8 and I get to use it even before those poor Earth-bound creatures do. This also confirms that I am indeed blessed. But wait, shouldn’t I be seeing relatives who have passed on or Sweetie, or Parky (my sweet pet budgies)?

Oh no, now an uncomfortable thought occurs to me—maybe this is NOT Heaven after all. So, then where am I anyway? Maybe I am in a sort of in-between world, like Purgatory, where I am being tested to see if I am worthy of moving upwards? I go back to my self-portrait in my bedroom, and start asking her what is happening and where I am.

She says I am neither in Heaven nor Hell and there has been a shift since I went to bed last night. I am now living in another world which resembles the old one, but without all the drama and horror. I ask about my children, friends, pets, and she says they are also in this new world, but better. I am not lonely, my son is well, I am happy at last—that empty pit in my gut, which is always there, has been filled. I look at my contact list and see that it is basically still the same, but I see my son’s name

has been miraculously added. I call him and we have an amazing conversation about how well he is doing, and that he is spending the weekend with his son. He assures me that he will be coming to visit soon and we hang up with “I love you.”

I call some strange name on the list which has been added and discover that he is my boyfriend and we are on for dinner tonight, at which we will be planning a world tour—one which we don’t have to worry about being bombed, shot, run over by a car, or knifed at the airport. That anxious, sick feeling that haunts me day in and day out is amazingly gone.

But wait, I ask my self-portrait, “What is the catch—there must be a catch? There has to be something I must do to have this perfect life—so what is it then? Oh please tell me, my other self!” She smiles and proceeds to tell me what I must do to stay in this utopia. I must be totally unselfish and not self-centered; I must not have to have the last word; I must get rid of all jealousy and envy; I must be grateful for what I now have, even if it isn’t perfect; I must accept things as they currently are, not how I wish them to be; I must look in the mirror and love what I see, regardless of imperfections; I must be non-judgmental and practice tolerance and acceptance of others.

My Alternate Marilyn assures me if I practice these simple principles in my life from this point on I can stay in this perfect world. Marilyn tells me that I have a week trial-period and if I cannot change after a week I will simply wake up, things will seem the same, but my world will return as before and sadly I will not remember. Now I am frightened because I just cannot fathom my life the way it was—all that time, just thinking there was no other way to live. I know I can do this—I am determined to change everything.

I wake up it seems the next day, I turn on the TV and there is yet another investigation of our President, there has been a bombing in the UK with dozens killed and ISIS has claimed responsibility. The world is back to the usual chaos and I blindly accept it with a sigh and resignation as I drink my morning coffee because I don’t know any better. I don’t know what could’ve been because I am back in the old reality—the old world. My self-portrait looks almost the same except for the small tear running down her right cheek.