

## The Year of Magical Thinking, by Joan Didion

*The Year of Magical Thinking* surprised me although I'm not sure why. Maybe it's the term magical. I was imagining a more spiritual, mystical account of death and the grieving process. I thought maybe somehow Joan Didion would touch upon some profound ethereal truth, something beyond the mortal coil.

What she does is exactly the opposite. In *The Year Of Magical Thinking*, Joan Didion gives an unflinching, intensely personal account of the year following her husband's (writer John Gregory Dunne's) sudden death. This is about as human and basic as it gets. "We might expect that we will be prostrate, inconsolable, crazy with loss," she writes. "We do not expect to be literally crazy, cool customers who believe that their husband is about to return and need his shoes."

It is that belief, that stubborn idea that somehow death isn't final and her husband will return that lies at the heart of Didion's "magical thinking." It is at once recognizable and heartbreaking. Her secret, unstated belief protects her and leaves her vulnerable, reassures her and breaks her into pieces. It is human, the kind of everyday magic that keeps us moving through the most difficult times of our lives, the little bit of crazy that keeps us sane.

I loved this book. It's quiet, painful, raw, graceful. It makes you want to grab hold of the people you love and make sure they know how much. It makes you want to notice the details of your life because they're transitory, shifting, like the earth itself. It reminds you how fragile we are, how much we assume, how little we know. "Life changes fast. Life changes in the instant. You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends."

- Judy Clement Wall