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Darkness and Christmas's Arrival

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Darkness and Christmas's Arrival

12/10/96

It is in winter that humans in our half of the world find themselves most alone. The sun retreats behind the clouds more frequently as the world "grays down." Even on clear days, the sun arrives later and leaves sooner, and its rays lack their summer power; we find ourselves more in darkness and more often sad.

In response to the loss of brilliance and warmth, most plants surrender the vigor awakened in Spring and enjoyed throughout the Summer, exchanging their gaiety in one last fling of riotous color for sleep—some forever. Familiar vistas seem strange as the earth pulls up its cover against the advancing cold.

As the world seems to wind down, birds seem to follow suit. Following whatever herald proclaims the day, the feathered ones depart for warmer climes or seek more sheltered habitats from which to venture less often into the open. Songs give way to silence or to the occasional strident calls of hungry raptors who inherit the air.

Like the birds, animals too answer the herald's warning. Some mimic the plants, choosing the dormancy of hibernation over the struggle for food in a less hospitable milieu. All curtail their range except those predators pushed farther by the relative scarcity of prey, the difficulty of hunting in more open terrain which leaves them more vulnerable, and the increased wariness of what prey remain.

So here we gather. We've been abandoned by bird and beast. The world outside lurks more hostile, less inviting by its temperature and denuded appearance to any of our senses, its bleakness compounded by the ever-

increasing dark. The superstitions of our ancestors rouse themselves like half-remembered monsters to stalk our minds with whispers that this time just might be different from all that has gone before. This just might be the time, they warn, when darkness wins! The voices of darkness, wind, and rain gloat that the world will soon be theirs. We shudder at the sounds as the elements pick at our flimsy sanctuary and whispers become shouts.

As we gather, we huddle together for what comfort we can find in the loving relationships that bind us together. We tell our stories and light our candles, exchange our gifts and light the tree. Warmth and light keep the cold and dark at bay, and the Child enters our midst with the promise that the Light will always win. Christmas has come indeed!

Ray Granada