

The Night is Coming

By Anna Von Reitz



The wind is still. A faint golden glow illuminates the Birch leaves still clinging to the treetops, and shadows play among the white tree trunks. A faint hint of woodsmoke lingers along with the overwhelming sense of *deja vu*.

Certainly, I have been here before; perhaps many times before, with a waning moon rising above the clearing and fringe of trees behind me. Even the migratory birds are suddenly gone. No trace of their honking and chirps, clattering of beaks, and fluttering of wings. Nothing stirs in the forest **tonight**.

The Bear Berries have tempted me out of my hovel in the woods, wearing dark boots and green pants and a poncho-like brown shawl wrapped around my massive shoulders. It is cold enough to wear gloves **tonight**, and damp, but it wouldn't do for the delicate task at hand.

I've wandered along the familiar paths picking the small, bright pinkish-red berries that will make medicinal teas throughout the winter. I throw in the few Highbush Cranberries I find. They will add Vitamin C and flavor to the Uva Ursi brew to be sipped in front of winter fires. Both are medicine for kidneys and bladders and all our delicate plumbing, death to parasites, worms, fungi, and unwanted bacteria.

Now, some people might find it a bit creepy to be out in the forest at the edge of night and might feel the odd tingle of the Unseen looking over their shoulders, but it doesn't bother me. I've known the Unseen all my life, and those ghosts that follow me **tonight** are all old friends and family members, coming swiftly and poignantly to mind.

Even my ghost dogs are with me **tonight**, noses down, ranging silently in a broad uneven circle around me.

I have become part of the silence, too, at peace in my mind, knowing that I have done my best by all of you. My words have been forged into arrows and formed shields, have found their way onto innumerable papers and records of all kinds.

I smile in the gathering gloom, wondering --- if the FBI had seven million pages of data on me before this all began, how many pages do they have now? How many rooms full of paper and external computer drives filled to bursting have recorded my words and the pictures of my life?

Perhaps, as I stand up and look around, one of their goons is tracking me [tonight](#), on the trail of an old woman entering the forest at the edge of night. But no, it's only a black shadow moving along the distant road at the forest boundary, swiftly, silently, a Harpie from the Ancient World, sniffing for a scent of me and finding nothing.

As for me, my white face and gold hair blend perfectly with the birch forest in autumn shadows; my old brown marled shawl blends with the fallen leaves and forest litter. I look at the berries in my basket. Over a quart. They'll do, but not quite enough, so I keep picking, stooped over in the darkening silence until I can pick no more.

Headed back to the house alone, except for my ghost dogs jogging down the dim gravel track in front of me. I wonder if they have noticed that they are dead? Animals seldom do. If anything, they are somewhat confused and wait to be invited into the house where they spent their lives draped over the furniture or sprawled in front of the fire.

In Wisconsin, where I grew up, many strange epiphytes like Bittersweet and Old Man's Beard grow in the primordial forests; Bloodroot and Trillium in the spring, mushrooms and cankers in the fall. The acorns fall like raindrops driven by a storm and the spruce cones stay tight-wrapped in their green shrouds, waiting for another season.

If I were there, I'd be picking wintergreen and cranberries and bouquets of maple leaves.

[Tonight](#), I am sure, the Canadian Geese that left Alaska a week ago are carving through the moonlit sky in their V formations, with the pale light reflecting off their wings and backs. The giant White Pines stand like silent sentinels in their sweet-scented groves and the Cat-tails are dark brown, not yet releasing their white fluff. The last of the Great Blue Herons are making their annual visits to the corn fields of my native state, and the Pick Your Own pumpkin patches are open

for business. The apple orchards, too, and the creameries selling cheese curds and smoked meat, sometimes next door to an artisan brewery, and sometimes a bakery. One never knows, in Wisconsin, which is an old and haunted place, well-settled since the last Ice Age.

The Mennonite and Amish farmers are bringing their cabbages and potatoes and turnips to market; loads of winter firewood are appearing, too, and the smell of fresh-sawn lumber and lake water drift over back-country roads as the last of the hay comes home. Baskets of red and green tomatoes snatched off the vines at the last moment before frost seem to be poked into the odd corners of every house and garage from Millston to Egg Harbor. The native grapes, which resemble the Poor Cousins of Concord Grapes, are being boiled down to make their own strong juice and jellies.

The old Norwegians are sitting by their fires, whittling all manner of things, door latches and whistles, wooden toy dogs on wheels, darning eggs and spoons, or, are out in their workshops of an evening, building cabinets and sea trunks, dish racks and rocking chairs. Their brethren are stoking up the forges that were silent in the summer, and the clang of their hammers will ring again. Their ladies are dusting up the houses with fall cleaning, window washing during the last bright days, shepherding the last crocks of pickles, canning up the fall harvest, looking forward to the rest that winter brings.

How blissful to sit and read a book or knit a sweater or build a patchwork quilt after the hard work of the harvest?

Already the pantries are loaded and the shelves are full. The venison and smokehouse season is yet to come in the wild days of October and early November. The butchering will last days and the smoking another two weeks all told. It's hard and frantic work replete with meat saws and cleavers, huge stainless steel bowls and sausage stuffers, rock salt and pepper and dried herbs, and cast iron hooks in smokehouses blackened with decades of winter hams and turkeys, bratwursts and sides of bacon.

I was there, and except for the hand of God, would never have left.

I'd still be there, sharpening up the garden hoe on my Father's grindstone, and oiling up the shovels and rakes and axes and saws, in between sessions of planting tulips and daffodils and Siberian squills, bearded German Iris, peonies, and crocuses.

What a good life, I would have said, and would have welcomed it.

But then, I would have never seen the full grandeur of the Northern Lights or seen the Northern Stars in a sky like blue-black velvet; I would have never dressed out a moose or caught a halibut, drank water out of a rock, as cold and pure as God ever made it, stood in a forest totally covered in flowers, had the fun of dip-netting salmon, and I wouldn't have lived in a landscape so vast and wild that even the towering white peak of Mt. Denali appears to fit and be in place.

I would never have met Jim Belcher and known the challenges of his life and the needs of his family and the trials of their history going all the way back to Virginia and Boston, Exeter and Glastonbury, Belle Garde and Camelotte.

It has all been good; indeed, perfect. And love has been with me every step.

I no longer fear the night or the autumn or the winter, nor things that go bump in the night, the phantoms of lost loves, the regrets of roads not taken; the debts I can't repay and names I can't remember, the ships that sailed and never returned, and the places I have never seen no longer haunt me with any sense of loss.

Yes, I've seen what I have seen, and loved whom I have loved, and that is far more than enough.

The night is coming, but the dawn is coming right behind it.

Keep the faith and like the American Bison, run straight into the storm.

Never falter, never wonder.

There is a Wisdom that guides our steps, and keeps our ways.

Ask for the guidance and protection you need each and every day, and keep grounded and centered on what you want your world to be.

And it will be, at your command.

Granna

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