



Waiting for Winter Solstice

Three days before Winter Solstice
 We sit on your bench, my friend,
 Overlooking bare-limbed woods,
 New Hope Creek shining silver in
 An arc of pools below.

I tell you my Winter Solstice ritual
 These days is to watch the sunrise,
 Sing to it, and mark its farthest
 Point of standstill
 Before turning north again.
 Desiring to see where the sunset will
 Make its stand, without agreement
 We fall into silence for a long time,
 Waiting.

Your finch draws my attention to
 Sounds of squirrels
 High-tailing through dry leaves,
 Oak, hickory, sourwood, and beech.
 Slowly the sun sets white behind a tall,
 Graceful, black-barked oak,
 Now the Solstice Marker Tree.

Suddenly a red-shouldered hawk lifts off
 From a pine where the sun had been,
 Flies left, abruptly turns in a flat arc,
 Flying past us to the right,
 As if he, too, has been watching the
 Sunset in reverence and,
 Day-bird as he is, goes home,
 Satisfied, if not satiated, to rest.

What song to sing to sunset?
 Recalling girlhood, we sing quietly
*Day is done, gone the sun, from the lake,
 From the hills, from the sky. . .*

Four squirrels explode in a spiraling
 Chase up that marker oak,
 Like acrobats on circus scaffolding
 Silhouetted against twilight,
 Second light, cavorting like shadow
 Puppets, playing with abandon, as if
 Danger had not been so close, or
 Because it had been.
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh. . .

You tell me their tell-tale moaning
 Sounds had been a sign to you
 That a hawk was near.
 My Hawkins ancestors, Romano-Britons,
 Were bird-diviners, watching flight
 For messages from the gods.
 What I see is: Hawk's abrupt turn to the
 Opposite direction mirrors the
 Great reversal the sun's path will take,
 The gods approving the *Great Turning*
 We know we must make, hoping that
 By turning, averting danger so closely,
 We, too, may play together again
 In wild abandon.

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Wishing you, all our beloveds, a glorious and peaceful Winter Solstice !

With Love, Betty Lou and David

