

WINTER SOLSTICE RISING II

Wrapped in a woolen shawl—
 feeble insulation
 against icy high desert dawn—

I stamp my feet,
wrap my fingers around a mug
to fend off the cold.
Breath-fog twines
with tea-steam,
enwreathes my head,
 vanishes into brittle, frosty
 morning shadows.

For one morning
I set aside
the isolation, anxiety, and waiting
that symbolizes this year.
Waiting—
 for peace and civility,
 for some to grow a heart
 and others stiff resolve,
 for all of us to learn
 how to live together,
 to love each other.

For this morning,
we all face east in expectation—
 with Celts, Egyptians,
 Chacos, Incas, Mayas,
 and red-tailed hawk perched
 on the ham radio antenna
 up the mesa.

In this dawn after winter solstice—
 longest night of the year—
we all stand watch and pray,
with hope and anticipation—
 emotions of this season—
that once again, as in every year
 since the dawn of time,
a first beam of light
 will herald the sun's return
 from the underworld,
 rolling above the horizon and
 up the sky.

That flaming eye,
chariot of fire,
god of many names—

Ra, Belenus, Inti,
Kinich Ahau—
symbol of light, warmth, life, regeneration,
source of fire flickering in candles,
bonfires, temple braziers,
and human hearts.

We wait until at dawn—
shortest day of the year—when

sun rises through a notch in the mesa, illuminates a spiral petroglyph in Kin Kletso Great
Kiva in Chaco Canyon

burning spear pierces entryway of the Temple of Karnak in Luxor, floods chambers and
pharaohs with light

bird of flame ascends steps on the Pyramid of Kukulcan's western face in Chichen Itzá to
hover at the temple apex

finger of fire reaches down, caresses granite altar of Intihuatana at Macchu Picchu and
tethers Inti once again to Pachamama

golden flame penetrates roof-box entrance to the temple mound of Newgrange, Ireland,
travels down a passageway to rekindle light in the cruciform chamber

Here, in brightening New Mexico morning
a sentinel—
white-crowned sparrow—
perched on littleleaf desert sumac
whistles a brave welcome.

Five thousand crows rise
from the bosque—
midnight-feathered provocateurs
shout insolent, corvid cuss-words
at the waking world—
darkness vanquished
by lengthening day.

A beam of brilliance stabs
through leaden clouds
shrouding the Sandía Mountains—
strikes my face.

I am learning.

-- Janet Ruth (published in *Night Songs within the Great Pause*; Winter Solstice Candlelight Poetry
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