

Going Dormant

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Sweet summer is a memory. It's been almost a month now since the autumn equinox on September 23 when the sun crossed the celestial equator and began its move southward in the northern hemisphere. Truth be told, summer's not my favorite season anyway—too much to do in too little precious time, which leaves me frazzled and frayed. Even though I relish summer's sun, the wild bounty of the garden and the joy of travel, I'll take fall, that time of nature's glory when drifting leaves remind me to slow down and savor what is. I know it won't last which makes it all the more special. I take in the breathtaking beauty of the leafy scarlet and bronze maples knowing soon they'll drop their golden coins. The harvest is in, the fields plowed. The jars of peaches and strawberry jams I canned this summer glow from the shelf like iridescent jewels.

As days become shorter, the mornings frostier and nights nippier, I relish each moment, taking none of it for granted. The deer have left a few pink tinged apples high on the tree. It's a race to see who gets them first. Tawny rose hips cluster on the Rugosa. A blue haze of wood smoke drifts from chimneys once again, and the crisp air carries the autumn aroma up the valley. We've gathered our firewood and put the garden to bed for winter, planted our bulbs and cold frames. Busy times, these fall days when we work against November's deadline cleaning up the yard, oiling the tools, putting away outdoor furniture. While working in the yard, I savor any bit of sun taking it in to warm my bones against the coming chill. Some days, the air seems especially still, and it's easy to feel the sadness of summer's passing and the loneliness of the light going away from us. Yet we know this is as it should be and that winter brings time--time to be dormant, time

for reflection, reawakening and rebirth.

Speaking of reawakening, one of my favorite October treats is to attend the annual Write on the Sound Writers Conference in Edmonds, Washington where writers can choose from over 30 sessions on craft, marketing and specialty writing topics and smooze with the folks who are doing what we want to do ourselves—write and publish. This year, some of the sessions made me feel like I'd dropped onto another planet, at least for someone like me in the autumn of my life. I was quickly brought to the realization that I need to keep up or be left behind in a swirling cloud of unknowing and dust as unpredictable as a dust devil on a dry country road. We writers not only have to get our brains around what's hot and what's not, flash fiction, plotting and pacing, POV and voice, but we need to be familiar with an entire new world of language: how to pick a twitter handle, whether to have a vanity URL, how to build a platform, how to upload, download. Being familiar with Facebook, Kindles, Nooks, Apps and YouTube is not enough. We need to know Smashwords, Webinars, e-Books, e-Pub vendors and hashtags, who Indie authors are, what SEO for non-fiction writers is and at least know who Lulu is.

Good thing winter is about to set in so these old bones can go dormant for a while and take time to reflect on all this before spring. After all, I'm old enough to remember rotary telephones that were attached to the wall and rang like a real phone. In today's world, whenever a frog croaks or the sound of an ocean wave crashes, every woman in the place picks up her purse to see if her phone's ringing.

As the year draws to a close and November approaches, we all know what's coming. Whatever you call it—drizzle, mist, sprinkles, precipitation, showers, sideways rain, downpour or a real gullywasher, it's water falling from the sky and there's going to be lots of it. It's time to rest, reflect and while we're at it, consider the miracles all about us.