

As the dew subtly transforms into tiny crystals of frost, in those darkest and coldest moments of an October night, the sharp, crisp air feels more transparent, more clean, making me feel more exposed and connected to the universe of stars and other worlds that salt the sky all around me. An invisible tether binds me to Jupiter, and to the galaxies too faint for my eyes to perceive, but whose enormity still reaches me, even if only through my imagination.

It's been an unusually warm fall, and yet the trees still got the memo that winter is fast approaching. Their life energy has been retracted from the leaves that they worked so tirelessly to express from delicate green branches only a few short months ago. Stores of chlorophyll have leached back into those now hardier branches, deep into their trunks and their roots, held for protection from the quickly approaching freezing temperatures, along with every drop of sugar and sap and resin that can be packed into the dense, insulated heartwood of these ever-resilient deciduous trees.

I am hopeful, almost giddy, as I watch the ritual shedding of the leaves this fall. I suppose I am kind of looking forward to the cold and dark months ahead. There is a tinge of something primal in me at this time of the year. Echoes of ancestors reverberate through my bones and my blood; ancestors who survived the cold, back in a time when only ingenuity, patience, bravery, and luck would get a person through a long, cold night.

This moment we are in, as we dance along the cusp of sunshine and darkness, is a time to prepare. To reflect. To purge. To take inventory of what we still need, and let go of

those things that will hold us down in the season to come. Even when those things were once our source of life and sustenance.

The trees show us the way. As they race against fate to drop the last of their leaves before the snow falls, I am reminded to follow suit.

I don't know exactly what lies ahead as the seasons change, but I'm certain that the brilliant orange maple outside my window doesn't either. Yet she trusts the process, heeds the cues from Mother Nature, and reluctantly sheds her sole source of life, holding on to the promise of spring and of rebirth after the long freeze.

Will I do the same? Or will I continue to hold onto things that weigh me down and hold me back from change? I think that as this season approaches its end, I will go the way of the trees and see where that leads.