Winter Solstice: Blessing for the Longest Night
by Jan Richardson

Blessing for the Longest Night

All throughout these months
as the shadows
have lengthened,
this blessing has been
gathering itself,
making ready,
preparing for
this night.

It has practiced
walking in the dark,
traveling with
its eyes closed,
feeling its way
by memory
by touch
by the pull of the moon
even as it wanes.

So believe me
when I tell you
this blessing will
reach you
even if you
have not light enough
to read it;
it will find you
even though you cannot
see it coming.

You will know
the moment of its
arriving
by your release
of the breath
you have held
so long;
a loosening
of the clenching
in your hands,  
of the clutch  
around your heart;  
a thinning  
of the darkness  
that had drawn itself  
around you.

This blessing  
does not mean  
to take the night away  
but it knows  
its hidden roads,  
knows the resting spots  
along the path,  
knows what it means  
to travel  
in the company  
of a friend.

So when  
this blessing comes,  
take its hand.  
Get up.  
Set out on the road  
you cannot see.

This is the night  
when you can trust  
that any direction  
you go,  
you will be walking  
toward the dawn.

—Jan Richardson  
from The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief