



## Gifts of Darkness

**Enjoying The Little Things...On The Mountain .... by Joan Courtney**

Darkness, with its drama, falls more quickly now that our days grow shorter. I used to dread this in-between time of year, after the leaves fell and before the snow arrives. It seemed so dreary and dank. The temperature plummets without the reward of light reflected from fallen snowflakes. However, a few years ago, I noticed that if I got outside, especially early in the morning, I discovered the gifts of darkness.

Now, for some, it's only in the winter that they get up when it is dark. And it can seem like the three F's: fearsome, formidable and freezing, are the only feelings that exist. I felt the same way until a few years back when I started out in the early morning to get to the gym and walk Mac Duff. The weather actually feels cozy and warm as I bundle up and venture outside. Hint: mufflers are a big help here, for they warm the breath and cover the back of the neck. My little cone of light radiates the way ahead as Duff's dog tags jingle and my boots crunch along.

The phase of the moon also plays a big part in my journey and appreciation. The full moon appears to be almost day like with its dazzling light. When the half-moons, then quarter-moons approach, they appear softer and gentler. The new moon brings true darkness with its promise of a brighter tomorrow.

The air itself seems quiet and sounds are muffled and soft. There are a few homes that are lighted from inside but no one else is out and about. The Christmas lights on trees and nearby houses bring their own happiness and joy as they cast a soft light on the road ahead. Wrapped up in the magical world of my thoughts and feelings, I feel like a small boat out in the darkness, cruising uncharted territory. So different from the bright days of summer when we would stop and chat with neighbors along the way.

As I look up, there are so many stars, simply millions of stars, above me. How fortunate we are to be in a place where nature can paint such a palette every night for us to enjoy. Each time I see the panorama of these bright points of light, I am reminded how small I am in the whole scheme of life. Each time, also, the fleeting thought of learning something about the constellations passes through my awareness. And each time, I find myself content to identify the Big Dipper and the North Star. Being witness to the beauty and mystery of this season is enough, for this time will pass all too quickly. Darkness too has its gifts.

While the in-between time clamors for movement and exercise, it also is a time to slow down and cocoon a bit. Time to enjoy the inner parts of the world, both within myself and with others. It is a time for deep sharing and inner knowing among friends, for contemplation and musing about bigger things as I move along. Camping, skiing and hiking are wonderful during the day but laughter and friendship in the night time hours are precious.

What do you do to get up and move in winter's dark early hours? I'd love to hear from you at [www.unstuck-living.com](http://www.unstuck-living.com).

I hope I have opened the door to enjoying the little things, both here on the Mountain and in your life. Be looking for future articles in Get Your Mountain On AZ!