

The November Visitor

by Charles Semones

People like you show up out of nowhere when November's here.
 The earth is getting colder now, and lonesome-sounding
 with ax-fall and crow-call in my neighbor's woods all day.
 The last V of wild geese arrows south toward the Gulf.
 Since we're on slow time again, you appear at my back door
 in a pale five o'clock of hound-cry when the Full Beaver Moon,
 like an orb of frost, has cleared what's left of the horizon.
 It's time to start a fire for supper, turn on a lamp or two,
 and check out the news and weather on TV My life's mostly
 the way I like it now. I expect no miracles, though I do not mind
 your dropping by. Or did you come here for a *reason*?
 If so, let me tell you what I've noticed: this is a far cry
 from the November of twenty-something years ago.
 I was younger and burning then. And that was another world.

Since you were here last, almost two dozen calendars have come
 off the wall at year's end and new ones hung up to replace them.
 The grandfather clock in the hallway has kept track of tedious minutes
 and added them up into even more tedious hours like puerile words
 no self-respecting poet would use, no matter what the poem's about.
 I'd say I've had time to get used to your unexplained absence,
 wouldn't you? I don't need to drink from your wineskin of mercy.
 Instead of a stronger libation, I'll keep my head clear with coffee.
 We'll spend the evening here at my table—the ashtray running over
 between us—while the cold constellations spread light-years
 on the far side of creation, like vines loaded down with fox grapes,
 luminous as finger lamps on the mantels of heaven. Most nights
 I fall asleep on the couch by nine. It's as good a place as any for a man
 alone. Don't think my bed will be turned down tonight because of you.