“In November”

By Cynthia Rylant

In November, the earth is growing quiet. It is making its bed, a winter bed for flowers and small creatures. The bed is white and silent, and much life can hide beneath its blankets.

In November, the trees are standing all sticks and bones. Without their leaves, how lovely they are, spreading their arms like dancers. They know it is time to be still.

In November, some birds move away and some birds stay. The air is full of good-byes and well-wishes. The birds who are leaving look very serious. No silly spring chirping now. They have long journeys and must watch where they are going. The staying birds are serious too, for cold times lie ahead. Hard times. All berries will be treasures.

In November, animals sleep more. The air is chilly and they shiver. Cats pile up in corners of barns. Mice pile up under logs. Bees pile up in deep, earthy holes. And dogs lie before the fire.

In November, the smell of food is different. It is an orange smell. A squash and pumpkin smell. It tastes like cinnamon and can fill up a house in the morning, can pull everyone from bed in a fog. Food is better in November than any other time of the year.

In November, people are good to each other. They carry pies to each other’s homes and talk by crackling woodstoves, sipping mellow cider. They travel very far on a special November day just to share a meal with one another and to give thanks for their many blessings – for the food on their tables and the babies in their arms. And then they travel back home.

In November, at winter’s gate, the stars are brittle. The sun is a sometime friend. And the world has tucked her children in, with a kiss on their heads, till spring.