


*By Yara Helou*



Between the Long Night  
&  
THE FLAME

*A journey from Yule to Imbolc*

## INTRODUCTION

# The cold that thickens time

You know the feeling.

The one where the world seems to slow and accelerate at the same time, as though time itself is unsure which direction it wants to move.

Just before Yule, or what most people call the Christmas season, the rhythm of life begins to distort. Some people are suddenly off work. Some have children home from school. Others continue to clock in each day while the world around them appears to pause. No matter where you fall, something shifts.

Time stretches in unfamiliar ways. Days lose their edges. Nights carry more weight. There is more quiet, yet somehow more noise. More closeness, and with it more exposure. More space to rest, paired with an acute awareness of everything that has gone unattended. This is not a season that announces itself loudly, but it is one that reveals. It is the season where sensations arrive before explanations.

The body speaks first. Fatigue appears without a clear cause. Restlessness surfaces that does not align with the calendar. The chest tightens when things finally slow down. Small irritations feel disproportionate. A longing moves through you without language, without direction, without a clear object.

In response, you may feel the urge to fill the space. To reach for your phone. To plan the future. To consume inspiration. To fix something, decide something, move something — anything that might quiet the discomfort of having nothing immediately required of you.

Or you may feel the opposite pull. A withdrawal. A soft retreat inward. A need for fewer voices, fewer gatherings, gentler days. A desire for the world to stop asking questions you cannot yet answer.

All of this often unfolds while you are surrounded by family, navigating conversations that feel heavier than usual, quietly measuring your life against an unspoken sense of where you believe you should be by now.

Then January approaches, carrying with it a familiar pressure. The expectation to set intentions. To articulate a vision. To declare what comes next. And you may notice, with a mixture of frustration and resignation, that the future you are being asked to define looks remarkably similar to the ones you named last year, and the year before that.

This is often where confusion begins.

Because nothing is technically wrong. Life may even appear full, stable, or successful. And yet, something feels incomplete, as though a chapter is ending without a clear sense of what follows.

This is where visions begin to stir without instruction. Where old ways of moving lose their appeal. Where motivation no longer responds to pressure. Where the tools that once worked seem oddly ineffective.

Questions arise that resist easy answers.

Why do I feel behind when nothing is urgent?

Why do I feel both full and empty at the same time?

Why does rest feel uneasy?

Why does inspiration arrive without momentum?

Most people attempt to escape this phase. They label it as laziness, stagnation, or a lack of discipline. They push themselves back into motion too quickly, or they collapse into waiting without understanding what is actually being asked of them. In doing so, they recreate familiar patterns and call it progress.

But this season is not a problem to solve. It is a signal.

The discomfort is not asking you to move yet. It is asking you to listen.

And what comes next is not action, but orientation.

## TIS NOT THE SEASON

There are certain conclusions people reach quickly during this season.

They are rarely true, but they are familiar.

When nothing seems to move, the mind begins to search for a reason. It looks inward, often harshly, and assigns fault where there is none.

Stillness becomes suspicious.

Quiet is interpreted as absence.

Slowness is mistaken for failure.

But this season is not a sign that something is wrong with you.

THE MYTHS & POSSIBLE TRUTHS

# An exploration of the long night

## **Myth 1: Stillness is the problem.**

Stillness is a condition and it's required to sharpen your perception of your being. It is the amplifier of what is under the surface and raising it to become discernible. Without stillness, vision remains vague and unrooted because nothing meaningful arrives through noise. You can use this stillness to become the witness of the blossoming that is happening within you and all around you.

I know. Right now, there may be critical thoughts of all the things that haven't formed or come to completion. This is what the mind does. It begins to inventory what has not materialized, what has not come together, what remains unfinished. It is tempting to interpret this as evidence of failure, delay, or stagnation.

But what you are witnessing is not absence. It is emergence without pressure because the seed has already sprouted but the unfurling of it feels slow. Stillness does not erase momentum. It reveals it. It does not delay creation. It prepares the ground for it.

What feels like nothing happening is often the moment you can finally see what has been forming.

## **Here is a possible truth that you can adopt instead:**

What you are calling stillness may be the moment your system finally has enough quiet to register what has already been changing.

When external demands loosen, perception sharpens. What was previously drowned out by urgency becomes audible. Sensations, intuitions, and half-formed visions rise not because something has gone wrong, but because there is now room for them to be felt.

Stillness may be the phase where your vision is no longer conceptual, but not yet directional. Where it is reorganizing itself beneath the surface, shedding the shapes that no longer fit, gathering coherence before asking for form.

In this state, movement would be premature. Action would interrupt something delicate. What is required is not intervention, but presence.

It is possible that nothing is stalled.

It is possible that you are not behind.

It is possible that what feels like quiet is the necessary condition for discernment.

Stillness, then, is not an absence of life. It is the pause that allows life to be recognized.

And recognition is what makes movement inevitable.

### **Inner Reflection**

Without trying to change anything, notice where your attention has been going during this season. Where are you quietly evaluating yourself? Where are you measuring what has not yet formed, rather than what is already taking shape?

Bring your awareness to the places where you feel a subtle pull to fix, decide, or resolve something before it has asked for movement. Notice the sensations that arise when you resist that urge. What becomes visible when you allow yourself to stay instead?

Ask yourself, gently and without expectation:

- What is asking for my presence rather than my action right now?
- Where have I been treating stillness as a problem instead of a condition?
- What am I being invited to witness, not intervene in?
- If nothing needed to be completed yet, what would I notice?
- What part of my life feels alive but unclaimed?

Let these questions remain open. You are not meant to answer them quickly.

Presence, in this season, is not about doing more.

It is about staying with what is already here long enough for it to reveal itself.

**Myth 2: I Lack Vision or Creativity**

When vision feels dull, the mind is quick to assume it has disappeared.

When ideas do not arrive effortlessly, when creativity feels muted or distant, it is easy to conclude that something essential is missing. That the spark has gone out. That you no longer know where you are going.

But vision rarely sharpens in isolation.

Vision becomes clear through relationship and relativity. What often feels like a lack of vision is not absence, but disengagement. A subtle withdrawal from participation. Inspiration may still be present, circulating through conversations, teachings, experiences, and the lives of others, but it remains scattered until it is consciously received.

Vision sharpens when you choose to engage with it.

When you allow yourself to be influenced by the creativity reflected outside of you.  
When you reflect instead of passively consume.  
When you recognize that inspiration is abundant, but embodiment is selective.

Creativity does not activate itself. It responds to your attention.

There is a difference between being surrounded by possibility and allowing it to inform you. Between witnessing brilliance and letting it shape your own expression. When vision feels dull, it may be because it has not yet been claimed as something that matters enough to work with.

This is not a failure of imagination.

It is a moment of choice. Inspiration may still be everywhere. In conversations. In teachings. In the work of others. In quiet moments of recognition. But without reflection, it remains external. Without devotion, it remains unclaimed. This can feel like emptiness, when in reality it is dispersion.

**Now, can this be a possible truth for you?**

Vision clarifies when you decide to meet it. When you make space not just to receive, but to reflect. When you allow what inspires you to move through contemplation, integration, and embodiment.

Without that process, inspiration remains external. It excites briefly, then dissipates. With it, vision begins to take form.

The dullness, then, is not emptiness. It is an invitation to choose engagement over waiting. To decide that what you are sensing deserves your attention.

Vision does not arrive fully formed. It sharpens when you decide to participate.

## Inner Reflection

Notice how you have been relating to vision during this season.

Where have you been waiting for clarity to arrive before engaging with it?

Where have you been consuming inspiration without allowing it to shape you?

Bring your attention to the moments when something quietly resonated, but you moved past it without reflection. The conversations, teachings, or ideas that sparked recognition, then dissolved because they were not given space to land.

Ask yourself, slowly and without expectation:

- Where am I inspired but not participating?
- What have I noticed repeatedly, yet not chosen to work with?
- Where have I been waiting for vision to feel certain before taking it seriously?
- What would change if I treated inspiration as something to be engaged with, not observed?
- What vision is asking for my devotion rather than my enthusiasm?

Let these questions remain open.

This is not about forcing creativity or extracting answers.

It is about recognizing where your attention holds the power to sharpen what already exists.

Vision does not require urgency.

It requires presence.

Stay with what continues to return.

### Myth 3: This Is Laziness

There is a particular self-accusation that tends to surface in this season, often quietly, often without being fully named. It appears when certain things are no longer being tended to in the same way.

When effort becomes selective. When the familiar rhythm of doing gives way to something more deliberate, more contained. The mind searches for an explanation and lands on one that feels both uncomfortable and familiar.

Laziness.

But laziness is a shallow diagnosis for a much deeper shift. Laziness suggests indifference.

This season is marked by devotion and care.

What may actually be happening is a withdrawal of energy from what is no longer alive. A quiet refusal to continue investing in patterns, excuses, or obligations that no longer align with what you are devoted to. This does not arrive loudly. It often happens without ceremony, without a clear decision point, simply as a growing inability to pretend that everything deserves the same attention it once did.

This can feel unsettling. When certain things fall away, the absence is noticeable. Not because you miss them, but because they once structured your sense of effort and identity. Their disappearance leaves a kind of open space that is easily misinterpreted as lack.

But absence does not always signal disengagement. Sometimes it signals discernment.

There comes a point when accountability begins to take on a different quality. Not as constant doing, but as a presence in your whole being. Attention gathers around what is most immediate and most real: the way you show up in your life, your home, your relationships, your work, your money. These are no longer abstract ideas or future concerns. They become mirrors of what matters to you. What you tend to reflects what you are devoted to.

This narrowing of focus can feel uncomfortable in a culture and society that equates worth with constant effort. But devotion cannot be fractured. It does not spread itself thin. It chooses. And choice can look, from the outside, like doing less.

Laziness would imply that nothing matters. What is happening here is that something matters more. This is not withdrawal from responsibility. It is responsibility coming into form.

## A Possible Truth

What you are calling laziness may be the moment you stopped offering your energy indiscriminately. When certain things are no longer tended, it is not always because you have withdrawn care, but because care has begun to concentrate. What once received your effort by default no longer does. Not out of neglect, but out of discernment.

There are seasons when accountability deepens. It moves from performance into presence. From trying to appear responsible to actually inhabiting responsibility as a way of being.

In these seasons, excuses lose their usefulness. Not because they are morally wrong, but because they no longer make sense. What remains is a quieter, heavier awareness of how you show up in your life. Your home. Your relationships. Your work. Your resources. These are not separate domains, but reflections of where your devotion lives.

It is possible that you are not doing less because you care less.  
It is possible that you are doing less because you care more precisely.

Devotion narrows before it stabilizes. It asks for honesty. It asks you to see what you are willing to tend, and what you are no longer willing to maintain simply to preserve momentum or appearance. This kind of responsibility does not announce itself. It does not create immediate visible results. But it brings weight and coherence to what you are building.

Laziness would be a withdrawal from care. What is happening here may be a return to it.

## Inner Reflection

Notice where your energy has been narrowing during this season. Where have you naturally stopped tending what once required your effort? Not with resistance or resentment, but with a quiet sense that it no longer fits.

Pay attention to what remains. What still draws your care without negotiation? What feels worthy of your attention even when no one is watching, even when there is no immediate result?

Sit with these questions, without rushing to answer them:

- Where has my effort become more selective?
- What am I no longer willing to maintain out of habit or expectation?
- Where does responsibility feel less like pressure and more like presence?
- What areas of my life reflect devotion rather than obligation?
- If my attention reveals what matters to me, what is it showing me now?

Allow whatever arises to be enough.

Tis not a season for judging how much you are doing.

It is a season for noticing what you are choosing to tend.

Devotion does not announce itself loudly.  
It reveals itself through where you remain.

YOUR EXPANSION MATTERS

# The path of the in-between

If stillness is not a flaw, if vision has not vanished, if this is not laziness in disguise, then the discomfort you are feeling cannot be solved by trying harder or waiting longer. It has to be met differently.

This is often the point where people look for something new to do. A different approach. A better system. A clearer plan. Something that will restore a sense of forward motion without requiring too much reckoning.

Unfortunately, what ends up happening is recreating the same experience in a different container and a different label. When nothing is pressing you forward, when excuses lose their pull and distractions no longer satisfy, you begin to notice where your attention naturally settles. Not where it should go. Not where you think it belongs. But where it keeps returning.

This is not random.  
Attention gathers where weight is forming.

During the long night of Yule, much of what once demanded your energy begins to loosen its grip. Obligations thin out and the noise recedes. And in that softening, a more honest relationship with your own life emerges. You see more clearly what you are willing to carry, and what you have been carrying out of habit rather than devotion. What has been uncomfortable about this season is not the lack of movement. It is the abundance of the same.

And in that abundance, you are left swimming in your own truth of how you are showing up. Not in theory, but in practice. In your home. In your relationships. In the way you tend your days. In what you give your time, your care, your resources to. This is where responsibility begins to make itself known.

Not as a demand.  
Not as a burden.  
But as a recognition.  
That this is your life.  
And it matters. But only you can define how much it does.

What comes next does not arrive as a sudden burst of action. It arrives as a shift in orientation. A willingness to let what matters take up space. To give it weight. To tend to it not because you are supposed to, but because you are no longer willing to treat it as optional.

This is the point where creation becomes possible again.

Not because you have forced movement, but because you have decided what is worth moving for.

After the thaw, a seed does not rise because it has been inspired. It rises because something in it has reached a point where remaining dormant would become a kind of disappearance.

The soil softens.

The pressure shifts.

Life responds.

But the commitment is not proven in the breaking open. That part is instinct.

The real test begins after emergence.

Once the stem meets air, it is exposed. To light, to cold, to interruption. Growth is no longer hidden. It must orient itself again and again toward what sustains it.

It must draw nourishment consistently. It must continue without the guarantee of being witnessed.

Devotion is not the moment you decide your vision matters. It is what happens after you decide. It is the continued tending of what has begun, the steady refusal to abandon it the moment it becomes vulnerable, slow, or inconvenient.

And this is why creation becomes possible. Not because the weight disappears, but because you remain present under it.

Not because you have proven anything, but because you have chosen to stay with what is yours.

RESPONSIBILITY AS YOUR DEVOTION

# Devotion is the movement

Responsibility, in this season, does not arrive as a command. It arrives as a decision to remain present to what has already begun.

Responsibility begins when you stop treating your life as something happening around you and start inhabiting it from within.

This is not about doing more. It is about no longer being available for excuses that once softened the truth. Not because you have become harsher with yourself, but because something has clarified. What once felt negotiable now feels intimate. Personal. Real.

Responsibility here is not pressure.  
It is devotion.

Devotion to how you appear in your own life.  
To the tone of your household.  
To the way you tend your relationships.  
To how you steward your work, your money, your energy.

These are not separate responsibilities competing for attention. They are expressions of the same choice: to let your life matter.

When responsibility becomes devotion, accountability loses its punitive quality. There is no internal policing, no constant self-correction. Instead, there is presence. A willingness to see clearly how you are showing up, and to allow that seeing to guide what you tend and what you release.

Devotion narrows the field.

Not everything receives your attention anymore, and that is not a failure. It is discernment taking shape. Energy gathers around what you are committed to carrying forward, and what is not alive falls away. This is the part after emergence, when what has begun must be met again and again, not with intensity, but with steadiness.

Devotion is not the initial breakthrough. It is the choice to keep tending what has already emerged.

To remain with what is fragile instead of retreating.  
 To nourish what is growing instead of abandoning it for something easier.  
 To stay responsive to conditions without expecting certainty.

Responsibility, once held as devotion, does not ask you to become someone else. It asks you to remain present to what you have already brought into being. And in that presence, something steadies.

Movement stops feeling forced because it is no longer about proving viability. Creation stops feeling abstract because it is now being lived. What you tend begins to respond through your consistent devotion.

Responsibility, when held as devotion, is not a burden. It is the sustained act of staying with what has begun; long after the breakthrough and under changing conditions, because what is growing matters enough to be carried forward.

### **Turning What Matters Into Matter**

There is a shift that happens in this season, one that asks for a change in how you relate to what you receive. You can be open, receptive, arms wide, and still feel empty-handed if nothing is allowed to stay.

Receptivity brings many things to the surface. Ideas. Desires. Questions. Possibilities. Most of them pass through quickly, leaving little trace. They touch your awareness, then dissolve back into the field of everything else. What matters behaves differently.

It returns.

If a thought does not stay with you, it circles back as a concern. If the concern is ignored, it reappears as a pull. If the pull is dismissed, it arrives through moments. Through interruptions. Through repetition. At first, it is easy to overlook. Easy to postpone. You tell yourself you will come back to it when it is clearer, louder, more convincing.

But clarity does not arrive first.  
 Care does.

Each time you return your attention to what has already appeared, something changes. The signal strengthens, not because it is amplified, but because it is met. Reflection gives it another surface to press against. Contemplation gives it time to settle. Repetition allows it to gather weight.

This is how something begins to matter.

Not because it arrives fully formed, but because it survives your distraction.  
Because it persists through your hesitation.  
Because it remains when other things fall away.

What does not matter fades easily.  
What matters endures contact.

Over time, attention stabilizes. The question stops feeling theoretical. The idea stops feeling optional. What was once a passing impression becomes something you are in relationship with. Something that begins to shape how you see, how you choose, how you move.

This is the quiet compound effect.

Not effort layered on effort, but presence layered over time. Small returns. Repeated listening. Continued contact with the same thread until it carries enough weight to ask something of you.

If nothing feels like it matters yet, it may not be because you lack vision or devotion. It may be because you have not stayed with anything long enough.

This is the season of returning to what feels familiar. Of circling the same themes you believe you have already touched or integrated. Not because they are finished, but because they are asking to matter more. Their familiarity keeps them quiet. They do not excite the mind, but they do illuminate the soul.

And when something finally carries weight, movement follows.  
Not because you force it, but because it becomes difficult to ignore.  
Difficult to abandon.  
Difficult to treat as optional.

This is how something turns from significance into substance.

You stay.

Until the long night turns to the warmth of the flame.

## CONCLUSION

# The work continues...

**If you are here, it is not by accident.**

Something in you recognized itself in these pages. Not as a new idea, but as a familiar truth that has been asking for your attention in quieter ways. The sense that nothing was wrong, but something was waiting. That movement was not missing, but misinterpreted. That what mattered had been present all along, asking only to be met.

**This is the work I do.**

I work with people who are no longer looking for motivation, hacks, or borrowed frameworks. People who feel the weight of their own lives returning to them and are ready to tend it with integrity. People who know their vision matters, but are done trying to force it into form before it has been properly listened to.

**My work is about orientation.**

It is about learning how to stay with what has already begun. How to listen long enough for what matters to gather weight. How to turn significance into substance without rushing, bypassing, or abandoning yourself in the process.

If this book resonated, it is because you are already in the threshold. The long night has done its work. The listening has begun. What comes next is not urgency, but warmth. Not pressure, but direction. Not abstraction, but form.

This body of work did not come from theory or borrowed frameworks.

It was shaped through seasons of listening, tending, and returning; to vision, to responsibility, to the quiet mechanics of how something becomes real.

I guide people through the phases most systems rush past: the pause before clarity, the repetition before momentum, the quiet commitments that make creation inevitable. Not by telling them what to do, but by teaching them how to stay present long enough for what matters to ask something of them.

If this book resonates, it is likely because you are already standing in that threshold — sensing that something is forming, but unwilling to rush it into performance. My role is not to give you answers, but to help you recognize what you are already in relationship with, and to learn how to tend it until movement becomes honest.

What follows from here is not more information. It is deeper contact.

If you feel called, you can continue this work with me [here](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yara Helou". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "Y" and "H".