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The Longest Night

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The Longest Night

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“The Longest Night”

BY TED OLSON | NOVEMBER 9, 2012

Ted Olson, a former Fulbright Senior Scholar, is the author of several books, including a previous collection of poetry, *Breathing in Darkness*, and a study of Appalachian culture, *Blue Ridge Folklife*. He has edited numerous books, including collections of literary work by [James Still](#), Sarah Orne Jewett, and Sherwood Anderson; and the award-winning *The Bristol Sessions: Writings about the Big Bang of Country Music*. Olson served as associate editor for *The Encyclopedia of Appalachia* and co-editor of *A Tennessee Folklore Sampler*. In 2012, for his work as a music historian, Olson received two Grammy Award nominations and also the East Tennessee Historical Society’s Regional Excellence in History Award of Distinction. He holds the Ph.D. degree in English from the University of Mississippi, and he teaches at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City.

The Longest Night

Each night was darker, trying his patience
because he craves sunlight. Each day inside
working or worshipping, he missed changes
in the sky. A dog, hunched by the front door,
senses a blizzard’s covering the road
on this, the longest night. The man won’t dare
sleep for fear of dreams. Lying in a state
between awareness and forgetting, lost
in winter’s sudden wilderness, without
myth or map, he knows he must go through snow
toward a warmer place, now that fall has passed.
He hopes to see the dawn soon, his shadow
obeying, like the dog tracing his tracks.
He’ll be moving outside, onward at last.

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