

In This Version of Autumn

Dixie Partridge

It's as if the fields of five decades
have been broomed clean—dry as straw.
But in the border woods, ground holds scent:
leaf-humus and pine,
an after-hint of smoke, or ash.

Evening: you feel sky distancing itself,
no breeze; hammered gold barely trembles
in the shrunken lake.
Two leaves alight—red wings.

In the dawn: white breath
and a tracery of frost along the edge stones . . .
beauty in change that comes
almost to pain.
Stilled water will begin to freeze
from the top down, long prism needles
or cloudy patches closing, slow cataracts
beneath a vellum light.

Maybe this is the year you'll walk
where you have never walked.
The lake will freeze.
Stepping out upon it
you will feel your pulse
scud quickly across your life.

Words spilt now must troll deeper
than the surface cold. Over lake's center,
faint fog rises. A Rorschach of roots
holds the shore together where you stand;
curlews lift and cry their names.