

Vantage: Hoback Rim to Wind River

Dixie Partridge

Closed to drift most of the year,
trails descend through short lives of wildflowers
bright in colonies, August air verging on frost,
its thin metallic edge:
snow squalls visible ahead
where a continent divides.
Life stays steep.

Nothing in the view seems changed
since child years, though you reason lodgepole
and aspen have passed on to other levels of lore;
grasses and lichens shifted
with shapes of mountains
in their shale slides, avalanche, and storm.

Movement nearby: a sleek,
small animal you can't identify, a watcher,
its look so familiar . . . that visage
of fascination and wary regard—your own
and owned in the small face
that slips into rock and is gone.

Haze of smoke above the Hoback
to the south, the route you came.
Haze of smoke northwest,
where you are going.
A wide-spanned hawk
vanishes with such ease into the next scene.