

Routes for Grieving

Dixie Partridge

Keep moving at the pace of the path, no matter how it unfolds.

—Mark Nepo

Nights of little sleep, now the morning of the switch
from daylight saving time. In the cold before dawn,
the road I follow bends where the river bends,
its curve of mist ghosting upward like a long exhale.

My spouse by degrees is leaving me
via Alzheimer's. I'm unable to identify when this began,
the tarnish on the future before we were aware.
If we sensed fully the moment
something begins to be lost, could we act
with instincts that might mean salvation?

As clouds darken sunrise, I turn off near the edge
of forest. Once more on an old path I walk in
and into a kind of stillness that can mean solace.
Surprised to find anxieties outnumbered
by overnight blooms—like grace notes emerged
without the aid of anyone—I try to identify
the white corollas, but they are nameless now.

I think of a faint trail worn into welcome shade
of cottonwood on the farm where I grew,
nights helping with irrigation during drought;
how darkness can teach about light,
how the word *pasture* became scriptural.
For months I've wished for the long,
lost sleep of childhood: that sinking,
sinking, until it felt like rising. . . .

Darkening clouds turn to rain and I don't mind
the drenching, but must go slowly driving back—
in the downpour the wipers can't keep up,
just as they can't beat back time,
nor can daylight be saved.

DIXIE PARTRIDGE {pearanttree@gmail.com} grew up in Wyoming; lived most of her adult life along the Columbia River. Her poetry has appeared in many journals and reviews, including *Poetry Magazine*, *The Georgia Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and most recently *Kaliedescope*, *Blueline*, and *Dialogue*. Her two published books: *Deer in the Haystacks* (Ahsahta Press) and *Watermark*, recipient of the Eileen Barnes Award. The personal impact of landscape is often at the root of her writing.