

Living Alone at High Elevation, After Loss

Dixie L. Partridge

Winter is toward knowing.

—*William Stafford*

Overnight, snow has deepened;
there's this sense of it mending anything broken—
the slight roof-sag on a garden shed next door,
a riven support wall under back fence,
and something more. . . .

In the forest, insulated stillness
comes closer and closer to consolation;
the white soft rind of earth's orb
mellows the sound of too loud ways.

Five winters adapting, and now
I can drink from a stream slowing to ice—
water too cold for most thirsts.

You of the warm climes reading these words—
I was once you: will our geographies
keep us separate here on the page?
Can the horizon of your mind
apprehend morphologies of snow
drifting night after night?

How the white mountains grow—soft fold
on soft fold—with hardly a rock face showing,
plumed waterfalls turned milk glass?
How from enough distance, even the violence
of avalanche is silent and beautiful?

Venturing out, you meet the sound
of white breath in your lungs.
Among frosted firs and pine, no bird
or coyote call, no tremble of leaves—
only needled, frozen wilderness
and a kind of pain relief.

From overhead, the sudden dive of a hawk,
like a knife blade, startles me,
and I wonder at its prey.

I've always found it easy to be fearful,
but attend willingly to the cold
and quiet here—and even the hazards—
under instruction.

Past noon, skies clear, and by dark comes
sub-zero and the lit slush of constellations
beyond any we can name.

Nothing has instilled in me
a hope of riding out any weather
more than this silver flute of moonlight
over new fields of snow.

DIXIE L. PARTRIDGE grew up in Wyoming and lived most of her adult life along the Columbia River in Washington state. Her poetry has appeared in many journals and reviews, including *Poetry Magazine*, *The Georgia Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and most recently *Ars Medica*, *Kaliedescope*, *Blueline*, *MacGuffin*, *BYU Studies*, and *Dialogue*. Her two published books are *Deer in the Haystacks* (Ahsahta Press) and *Watermark*, recipient of the Eileen Barnes Award. Personal impact of landscape is often at the root of her writing.