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Past and Present Tenses

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Past and Present Tenses

(for J., after thirty years)

The moon's weathered hieroglyphs enlarge
with sunset as the speaker drones on.
The outdoor graduation of our youngest,
and the senses reach outward and back . . .

Across the stadium, spring leaves turn
and drop and sprout green again;
that red dress I wore against Wasatch peaks
my first year at college flares
in trees toward the field,
and the old blue convertible of our first
date streaks on a downhill road.

The moment—gold/green caps
tossed high, school emblem lit
on the slope—moves beyond the tentative
to what we think of as set
in the past. Those unmapped landscapes
evolve without our knowing,

while the mind moves
and removes to another section.
Beside me you are gazing above the stands
where seniors already move on
to their graduate lives,
the scattered salt of stars waiting
for floodlights to dim.

—Dixie Partridge