

In the Night Yard

For J.

Roots rib the ground where dark grows out
from trees, and I stumble among our own
plantings: birch, filbert, cherry.
It's for silence . . . no, the form
of silence . . . that I turned off house lamps
and stepped out alone into shapes holding
between them a present more tangible
in an absence of light—a quiet that keeps poised,
on the verge of spill, whatever moments mean.

No breeze flutes down limbs and trunks;
a scent of ripening grapes hangs faintly.
When I look at a slant,
I see paler night in the west sky,
like that aura reached as darkness
begins to become light.
Time that rivers swiftly in our lit hours
pools now, still and deepening;
the slowed self seems to float
and sink at once . . .

 and you say my name
with that upturn at the end,
not sure to expect I'm here.
Solitude moves instantly
to something fuller . . . who I am linked
to who you are, and though some say
love is a kind of grief, it's only
that absence is carved so exactly
out of presence.

—Dixie L. Partridge