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To My Great-Niece Sylvia

by Catherine McCraw

You are being born
the fall I'm turning sixty.

When you are sixty,
I'll be long gone

along with my contemporaries.
Maybe one robust baby-boomer

will be enjoying a candle-laden cake
in a nursing home

if they still have nursing homes
in 2076.

Your world at sixty
will be a science fiction version

of my world at sixty.
It's late October here

with temperatures in the nineties—
global warming, sweetheart.

The seasons still turn,
but they turn

on rusty, creaking hinges.

The sunset tonight

was blazing orange,

mimicking an autumn bonfire.

A foreboding of starlings swooped down

and lined the telephone wires

in long, long rows,

saying a last goodbye before

migrating for the winter.

My generation is beginning

its long goodbye.

We have become the starlings.

Here are my wishes for you, Sylvia,

when you are sixty:

four distinct seasons,

flaming sunsets,

breathable air,

luminous stars,

and rows and rows

of starlings.