

Ghosted

My hiking sticks won't hold. The road
beneath my feet cracks in ice. Hunkered
under clods of snow, blue-berried junipers
hang, helpless for melt.

I'm trying to keep
my footing, despite a mind that tenter-
hooks tight to the ICU's stark light, your
body pierced with tubes, anchored
to monitors and metal. Two tears streak
and freeze-burn on my cheek . . .

Then,
ahead, like smoke, five deer emerge out
of nowhere, finely trotting in sprung
steps. They float across the way, vanish
into dusking woods. Breath stops in my throat.

I want to take them for a sign—their bodies'
fluid ease as they navigate a forest ghosted
under frost, their apparitional beauty—
snow-combed coats, fawn nostrils loosing
clouds of moist air.

They're not a sign.

I know they're not a sign for your survival.
But it's offered. I take it. I take it in.