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We are a System of Ghosts II

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LINDSAY TIGUE

WE ARE A SYSTEM OF GHOSTS II

I once saw a photo of someone stranded
in an Iowa blizzard, a figure covered in flurry—

the white, sleeting lines erasing all edges of body.
Hopper-solitary in the flatness. A year later,

I couldn't even begin to locate it in a book
or museum, couldn't remember anything at all except

snow. Most days, half the mail I get is for others.
Or, it isn't even addressed to a name:

Current Resident. I pile it all in a shoebox and keep it
up, away on a shelf. Most days, I want to research

a trip somewhere new. I look up the logistics,
the to and from: the airport, the taxis, the buses,

and trains. I will always know what to do
if I get there. I want to go somewhere

that requires goggles to protect my eyes
against snow blindness, to avoid flash burns

of the cornea. They say it's like an eyeful of sand.
Do I enjoy the feeling of standing in a field,

full of it, alone? Polar explorers treated
this exposure with drops of cocaine in their eyes.

I research that, too. Visitors to Antarctica still arrive
by sea, on a boat from Ushuaia, the southern tip

of Argentina. Thousands of people go each year,
wanting to witness that which disappears. I see them

trekking over ice. On my daily walks home, it's not
winter yet and I can only retrieve what's fallen—I collect

buckeyes, pinecones, horseapples, walnuts. I fold
and store leaves like small paper receipts.