We are a System of Ghosts II

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

the white, sleet 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

**WE ARE A SYSTEM OF GHOSTS II**
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.