Necessary Light

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Later that afternoon
after the windblown rolling
of the Cross Sound ferry,
after my nap in your spare spindle bed,
when the crows descended
into the scrub pine forest, the yawls
slunk silently back into the harbor
and we sat on your wooden deck
talking of your work
for the Whaler’s Presbyterian,
mine at the clinic; how we ache
in all the wrong places, clichés
about pounds gained, discovering gray.

No talk of death—though these days
it always surrounds us—the shadow
of a cloud moving across water,
an answering shadow moving beneath waves.

Instead, you told me how you leave
old bread, milk-soaked, in saucers
for the creatures that come
at night out of the scrub pines
and about last December’s deer
running wounded to your lawn
where she stood motionless, a stone,
before bounding into the opposite forest—
the trail of her blood
bothering your days long afterward.

As though no time had passed
we looked out over the sound
in that absent-minded way we’ve learned
to stare into the past or beyond the present.
We stayed there until night floated
a last sail across the ebbing water.