

CHELSEA B. DESAUTELS

Ghost Child

All day the sun moved over the rock I sat on.
All day I tried to think like an elk.
I'd been drinking bad wine
from a thermos and counting the blades
on little bluestem. It was nearly dark
when they finally appeared under the gnarled oak,
brown legs in prairie grass. And there's the bull —
disappearing into the blackening sky.
Why did I come here, to get drunk among
the glade moss and deerflies? Why not sit
at the kitchen table or in the leather armchair?
When they told me I'd never actually been
pregnant (the test a false positive, the blood
unrelated, the swelling in my belly
tumors), my husband's face turned to mine.
What kind of body prefers cancer to a child?
But I did not want that baby.
The bull has already shed his velvet.
In two seasons, his testosterone will plummet
and his antlers will fall off in a late-spring snow.
And he'll go about his life, mating and grazing,
indistinguishable from the females.