

Indiana, Late August

In the nursing home, my mother maneuvers silently through patient rooms. The whine of rubber on tile unnerves them. She checks the windows. Her hands grasp the fragile chains, sliding curtains back from filtered glass. She knows,

it's been months since most had sun.
If there are fresh chrysanthemums,
she pauses to arrange them prettily.

She's known for her knack with the dying. They call her when pallor shifts from parchment to clay, when no amount of morphine from the drip sleeps the pain. The order reads, *Do Not Resuscitate*. For her,

it's a break in the day. No needles, no calculating medications, and the doctors will not intervene.
They're only interested in the ones they can save.

She says these are moments of peace. She skates a chair to the bedside, lowers the metal gate and circles her thumb across the skin of their palms. It's a conjure. When the eyes drift up and clear, she draws out

the finest memory. She sat first at her father's bedside. His was Indiana, late August. In the eastern wheat field, he and his best girl lay counting stars.