

Before the First Incision

ALICE HATCHER

At evening tide, I tread past skeletons,
the sand-dusted bones of beached trees,
shiver in the wind whipping my frayed coat,
recall the doctor's sober words and pause,
finger my throat, imagine the blade
sinking into skin, and feel gutted.
I could cede the beach, find refuge inside,
but I embrace the dark, admit the chill.
Let salt spray and wind strip away my skin,
whittle down my bones like so much driftwood,
and lay bare, in taking, what marrow remains.
Better this than the surgeon's knife thieving,
as it certainly will, time and illness
claiming what I have no choice but to give.

