

RUSSELL IN THE ROAD

Whenever the revolution breaks out
in this country, he's ready to go, dressed
in camouflage all the way up to the visor
on his cap, but today outside the town store,
fast-talking with his lips close together

to hold in his upper plate, Russell doesn't
rant about how the government is taking away
our freedom, or the surprise the terrorists
are in for if they show up in his front yard,
but the neighbor who shot his deer, the doe

he's been making friends with all summer.
Has he always talked to deer or did it start after
his kids left and his wife of forty years moved
out on him? – first to the doe, then to the little
faun she left behind, going down on his haunches

right there beside the gas pumps to show how
he walked toward it whispering to coax it
out of the road and into the woods beyond.
Russell isn't in the road when I drive to the dump
past his lonely scarecrow and his house like a bunker

with high windows nobody can look into,
but I think of him, no taller than a faun himself
as he squats down and walks, trying to find
the words for the danger that lurks all around
the two of them, and the need for safety.