

NICOLE WALKER

Falling, Self-Admonition

I fall a lot. Not always in the snow
but sometimes on a day of snow
with its acoustic inches of white chamber
mountains echoing back every knee
clink and elbow crack.

I hear the hammer
on the roof across the ravine, the grinding starter
down the hill. Everything echoes and someone must
have heard the way

my hand fell into my wrist
and my wrist doubled back a stem.
My whole arm made a surround sound
like I was hugging a very small quail.

I asked you to help me
up from the snow.

But my arms had turned into big ringed wells
and you tripped
and fell into them.

At the bottom you found little
girls from Ukraine

whose skin was as white as yours
but their hair as dark as the hole you fell into and you
didn't want to fall in love

but they were so swaddled
in yellow and trespass and snow
never white. It snows only to cover up old soot and old carbon. You
breathe in and wonder how it is now
both you and I
ended up so deep in the snow.

On a clear cold New Years' night,
when my sister conceived
 her second child,
 I did not make origami
doves to celebrate. I did not fold white paper,
 press it flat with an ivory knife
and follow the directions
 how to bury the origins
 of a bird's beak in the nestle of its underwing.
No. I want the folds to be my own
belly button unraveled. Look at the lint! I let it ladder.

A bird stuck in the chimney. Birds stuck in the chimney
 require fire and calling.
 I climbed up to the roof and whispered—bird
 come down come down
but I was up and the bird couldn't come up,
 not with me in its nest. Maybe I should have tried
 to jump down
 but I am not brave
 and my bones break
 like crusty snow and the damn
bird could fly both ways.
 I got stuck on the roof in the sticks
of a bird's nest
and I have been there ever since.