

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.