

Winter Fire

by Emily Smith-Miller

Snow is falling like ashes. I know they're hot and cold. One leaves black streaks on my cheeks, the other tears. Maybe the ashes were falling with the snow, not enough water to put out the fire, just to stir the embers. If you screamed I couldn't hear you. It was all fluffy drops in slow motion making the world sound proof. Talking under water while the buildings burned in winter. You were shouting something important. I couldn't make out the words. All I saw were our things losing their shape in the flames.

The soft beat of wings, time for the owls to take flight. The one in your study is struggling, I'm sure, to free itself from the nails pounded through talons to a block of 2 by 4. I always loved that owl, paralyzed in attack, its last moment of greatness before death. I knew his magnificent feathers were melting now.

Someone turned up the volume. She's still inside! You scream. No I'm not. I'm in the snow and ash on our street, looking up at existence through smoke and blaze. How did he use so few colors to paint us? We are black, white and burning. Burning alive. The bodies in Pompeii, we knew how they felt when the apocalypse hit, frozen.

