

Jenny Whistled Through The Mail Slot

by kate hill cantrill

We all thought, *Birds!* We all thought, *Nests inside the chimney!* We crumpled to the hearth, turned wide eyes up toward the flue. Our house's mouth like morning breath, thickly caked with yesterday. Our eyes climbed up the smoker's throat. *WheetTweet. WheetTweet.*

I thought of birds swoop-swooping down. I thought of wings still damp with birth.

If they drop, our mother said, don't place your hands upon them.

But why? we asked.

Their mothers might just leave the nest, fly out above and flutter off.

I cupped my hands behind my back. I told my sisters to do the same.

Old wives tale, our father said, his hands held out before him.

Silence sunk. A chill breathed in from out.

WheetTweet.

If only we knew that chill came from the opened mail slot, the neighbor Jenny blowing through it, we might not have cared which one was right. Instead we held one hand before us, one hand back, our eyes pulled from the nest, soared back and forth between them.

