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I Have a Perfect Memory

Abstract

I have a perfect memory of snow—of my boots slipping in the hard-packed snow on a mountain in Bavaria—my body falling—of zipping backward on my belly arms flailing fingers grasping powder and ice for purchase I cannot find...

Cover Page Footnote

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I Have a Perfect Memory

Nonfiction by Nicci Mechler

I have a perfect memory of snow—of my boots slipping in the hard-packed snow on a mountain in Bavaria—my body falling—of zipping backward on my belly arms flailing fingers grasping powder and ice for purchase I cannot find—I remember my heart stopped, and I couldn't breathe—you said to me once *if you fall dig in your boots*—but the world's rushing by and I can't breathe and you're watching me slip away, your face frozen as the ground that will not hold me—you can't reach me, and I just zoom toward the edge of the mountain with my arms out to the side and my toes digging furrows in ice—I can't stop and the edge is right there—it all happens in five seconds—I fall—I slide—you watch—I forget to breathe—and I remember you told me—*dig your boots in*—I do—the first time doesn't work and the panic is blinding but dying on a mountain is stupid—the second time works; the ice cracks hard and I halt with a jerk but I am unable to move because I could slide again and you can't help me—you're my father and every day of my life until just right then I thought you would always catch me—I mean save me from things—like monsters and bad guys but especially falling off mountains—the cliff is behind me and if I die here my mother will remember only that you took me onto a mountain and I fell off because there were no rails to keep me safe and you thought it would be funny to take a picture of me under that sign that says Hike At Your Own Risk—she would strangle you to death and then that would be my memory too—I'd be the girl who fell off a mountain in Bavaria whose mom strangled her dad for being an asshole and, you know, somehow that's even worse.

My memory shifts and I'm standing there on a path and you fall—your body zips backward and I can't reach you—the world rushes by and you can't see the cliff but it's right there behind you and I want to say *dig in your boots* but I can't speak the words—it's cold and I'm freezing and you're dressed all in gray so I see you perfectly outlined—you stand out while you slide away and leave nothing behind you but me—sometimes I can't remember which one really happened because I was eight and it's been more than twenty years and all that's left is the sense of the panic and one of us falling away until the last second and you/I remember to dig in your/my boots because sometimes that's all we can do—you know, I think it was me—it could have been you—anyway, I have a perfect memory of snow.

Nicci Mechler splits her time between writing poetry & speculative fiction, bookbinding, and painting girls with inky tattoos. Her most recent work appears in *Arroyo Literary Review*, *Kestrel*, and *Lines+Stars*. She has two chapbooks forthcoming including: *in these cups*, a collaborative work, and *Deep in Flesh* (Dancing Girl Press, 2014 & 2015). She lives in Cincinnati, Ohio and blogs at damnredshoes.wordpress.com.