

# WITHOUT THE SKY

*By Ella Chin*

perhaps,  
had i been there,  
i could've freed  
the bird trapped in the  
window  
or warned her  
before she got stuck.

but i wasn't there,  
so now she waits,  
caught between broken  
panes of glass  
that let her see the sun  
but never fly to it,

and i'm here  
writing about what  
could've been and  
shouldn't be,  
about babies with eggshell bones  
held to cancer-stained hearts  
and voices that weren't heard  
until after they were gone

and her eyes brim  
with the tears  
that fill her child's lungs  
and freeze him  
in the room  
without the sky,

where playgrounds  
are wards,  
green foam walls  
floating between  
electric lullabies  
and the hourly cries  
of the vacuum  
in his throat.

they can never sleep  
without shadowplays  
on their eyelids,  
but they can't sleep with them,  
either,  
and as i write this,

i know that  
the very place they loved  
is too toxic to return to,  
that trees burn red  
with isotopes,  
that the very words i bleed  
are appeals to the world  
to remember heroes  
we owe far too much to  
to forget.