

## Sledding in America

You can't sled everywhere in America.  
You need a hill. You need snow.

Two police cars blocked the street  
with their bodies askew and lights

wowing the icy January air. I drove  
around the other way, and bounced

up my driveway, hiding from what-  
ever it was. Good old home. Semi-

sweet. Etc. This afternoon two parents  
came to blows on the sledding hill,

ignoring the child with the head wound.  
I wanted to write *nearly*. My daughter

and I pulled away as the ambulance  
arrived. As the police cars arrived.

My daughter had been pleased  
that we'd run into the hay barrels

at the bottom to keep us out of the street.  
She'd never seen adults actually

come to blows. Her face was torn  
with the violence of it, the awkward

mashing of the flesh as they aimed  
at each other's heads, the vulnerable

unpadded places. You can't sled  
everywhere in America. You need —

outside, tires are spinning on ice —  
you need an alternate route.

You need a back way. Walking up  
the hill, my daughter tired. *That's*

*always part of the story*, I told her  
on the way home, in the car heating up

slowly, evening light fading too quickly,  
nearly immediate night. She talked about

the advantages of sitting in front of the sled  
vs. sitting behind me. I didn't want her

to see that: two mad men flailing  
against each other, sliding and tumbling

down the hill together while the world  
stopped to blow on its cold hands.

A nurse tended to that injured child  
while I tended to mine. You need a hill.

You need snow. You need a warm  
place to go. Everybody wants a witness

but I didn't see a thing. *And now this*,  
my daughter said as I circled the block.

We didn't know what *this* was. We'd had  
enough for one day. Why do we hit each other?

Why couldn't I pull her up the hill on the sled  
like I did last year? If we had a fireplace,

I would build a fire. We sat on our old yellow kitchen floor pulling off boots.

*I don't know, I usually ran, I told her, my face burning. I saw everything*

and nothing. You need a way to steer, or all the room in the world.