

Stop Being Thistledown

Jess Richards

Though softer than air
twisting more than other people's keys
reminders of home, walls, doors which close and
not everything can

stop being thistledown
because now
I've lost/dropped everything, gone
on the north wind which really does blow

stop being thistledown
after this year of nothing owned, this year of
reading no-one's news. To
non-promise, to fly wind carried, can I

stop being thistledown
because what do I still flee
in this rush of missing

stop being thistledown
when at first, air seemed the only freedom
to see light, feel temperature

before landing to field, pavement, a beach no one goes to.

stop being thistledown
and find time's meaning again
tear the corners off newspapers

lighter than sunshine
carried pocket-deep
open again
be a trap,

so afraid—
spinning away
without snow.

refusals to commit,
detach trust from
land. Is it possible?

why allow gales to decide
the travel routes
why not choose the direction?

it's dizzying up here
there's altitude to consider

with you, without you, with you
detaching dates.

Jess Richards is the author of three literary fiction novels. *Snake Ropes*, *Cooking with Bones*, and *City of Circles* are all published in the UK by Sceptre. She also writes poetry, short fiction, and vispo, and her current project is a creative nonfiction manuscript on the theme of birds and ghosts. Originally from Scotland, Jess now lives with her wife in New Zealand.