

Martine von Bijlert

WINTER IS COMING AND WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO

(Kabul and elsewhere, 2021)

and I'm far from the city that will soon
be wrapped in oily smoke again

so much colder than anyone can remember because
who has money for wood these days and who has money
to buy a coat for growing children

and who has time to go back to their houses where there are
cupboards maybe still filled but the home is a base now
and there are only men

and the living room is where they eat with their guns
leaning their slender necks against the wall

and you wonder: will they have gone through the boxes
with the knitted little vests in their soft pinks and moss greens

and when we talk about it
we talk about how to know what's going on
and when I get news it's wrapped in Whatsapp
messages sent from frigid mountaintops
only just leaning into the diminishing
reach of a telecom tower

and people will die and get sick and go hungry

and when we talk about it
we hope our words will knit
nets for truths to be caught in

and our breaking is second-hand

and we swap examples of sloppy reporting
and how to inch toward writing about what fallout looks like
in the homes and the rooms with their curtains closed

and when we talk about it we feel the rain inside
and hope that it will water something