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Incident in Winter

Daniel Halpern

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A cage went in search of a bird
—Kafka

Someone had seen him wandering
aimlessly among the trees
after a heavy snow
and called in the information.
The cars came to a standstill
at the turnaround
in the dense cloud that covered
the trees so that only basewood
was visible.
There was very little sound,
only the revolving lights
of official vehicles
sweeping their scarlet beams
off tree base and mountain wall,
off the faces of passengers
backed up down the mountain.
Occasionally, the hollow, static
reproduction of an official voice
with a moment of information
was passed on.
Car exhaust puffed on air
and no one was moving.
And then to the side of the road
a few men in uniform
appeared at the treeline
with a pleasant looking man
in casual dress, being led
to the road by either arm,
a prisoner
in search of his crime.