

## **FIRE ALARM ●**

Gwendolyn Jensen

Their room was on the ninth floor of the hotel, the  
handicapped floor. When the alarm sounded they went to  
the stairs and began to descend

as if obsessed, slow,  
one step after another,  
twisting down and deep.

Others were on the stairs, quickly leaving them behind, and  
the two of them were last—

slow, far, very slow,  
seemingly useless bends and  
ever sweeping fears.

And then a family entered the stairwell on the sixth floor  
and stayed with them. The teenagers took the man's arms  
and, half helping, half carrying, brought him down with  
them.

Gratitude is hard,  
harder still accepting help,  
but the tears felt good—

the resting center  
of a need, as if nothing  
were left unspoken.

And so they went together.