

Mount Everest, Falling

CHARLES WEBB

Three times before, her father'd pounded
9-1-1 in time to bring a team to pump
her guts, squeeze her heart, press life back
into the one who, as a child, had chanted,
"Read me, Daddy. Rock me, sing me,
buy me, spin me," years before she said,
"It's like Mount Everest is falling on my head."

Did she look "peaceful" in the saggy bed?
Had she rolled onto the floor? Crawled
to the bathroom? Did he run to pick her up?
Did he taste vomit and the void,
his mouth on hers the mockery of a kiss?
Did he wail, "Wake up! Please!"
or "My baby! No!" as TV fathers do?

Did a weight lift as she filled her fake
prescriptions, and drove to Tujunga Courts—
so tacky, no one would look for her there.

"These avalanches in my brain will bury every
friendship, wreck every career, drive off
every man who might have loved me,"
she wrote on yellowed TC stationery.

"Goodbye, Daddy. 34 years is enough!"
This time he couldn't call what she had done
"a cry for help." This time he'd have to see
it was a cry to stay away, and let the only
help she wanted—carrying its bag
of darkness, soundless sirens screaming—
come.