

## The Claw

You know that moment  
When the carnival ride turns on its head  
And you are left stalling?  
For a second, you open your eyes  
And everything is smaller. Everything is upside down.  
Nothing is right, but You  
Are soaring above the Earth.  
The only sound is the blood rushing to your head,  
Your heart keeping pace with the adrenaline brought on by the high.  
Then, as quickly as the ride started,  
You're brought back to Earth.  
The experience is gone.  
It's the breathless halt, the tired, glassy-eyed look-around as you slow to a standstill—  
That's what I hate about carnival rides.

No.  
That's not the only thing.  
I hate closing my eyes and being too afraid to look  
And stare in amazement at how I  
Can be so far removed from the dirt,  
But want nothing more than to be back on solid ground.  
I hate the constant dread  
That I'm always an instant away from slipping.  
The vest the man has locked over my chest is secure. I know it is,  
But I jostle and squirm in my seat, and there's a gap beside my hip, and I can feel myself lift  
Slightly from the seat when the ride dips and swerves.  
I hate knowing how terrified,  
How goddamn terrified I am of heights  
That just looking at a ride from a distance makes my

Chest tighten, fists clench, and quarrelsome thoughts race.

And I hate knowing that I shouldn't get on the ride,  
But realizing it's too late when I've clasped the seatbelt shut.