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Things That Keep Me

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The Thing that Keeps Me

My earliest memory is of crawling to the edge of a cliff
and seeing nothing but pink and blue clouds beneath me
spreading so thick and solid they looked capable of holding me.
My mother said she almost lost me that first camping trip
in the Grand Canyon, she says she thought I was asleep
and she turned her back for just a moment, just a moment
and I was almost gone. She says this is why
I'm so afraid of heights now, that my frantic parents' reaction
to my explorations of that cliff edge
must have scarred me for life.

But in these memories of myself
crawling quickly and purposefully toward my certain death
I am full of giddy, infantile delight, and I don't remember
the terror of my parents' disapproval, the panicked screaming
and understandable overreacting
which surely must have ruined the rest of that morning.
Even now, when my stomach lurches when I step
too close to a railing, or stop at some scenic overlook
there's a small part of me that's convinced that
instead of falling, I am meant to fly
and the steady, adult reasoning that keeps me from testing this theory
from hurtling over the edge and into the air
is tenuous at best.

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