

## Stitches

*Cassandra Fleming*

The chipped skeleton of  
orange paint and metal bars,  
curled around itself in a dome,  
haunting our playground,  
daring us to climb.

My sister scabbled up its sides,  
into the creamy sky, with only seven  
years to weigh her down.  
Her tiny fingers danced over the rungs  
until they tripped.

She was a falling cloud,  
wrapped in a fleece coat,  
I thought I would catch her,  
I knew I would catch her  
but gravity beat me to it.

The bars bit her neck,  
and the wood chips scythed her skin  
and the ground punched the air from her lungs  
and I just stood there and watched  
my sister crumple.

The morning after, before we even knew it would scar,  
I spilled my Cheerios all over the breakfast table.  
The milk ran onto my sister's bare feet,  
the color of yesterday's sky.  
"Sorry," I mumbled.  
A row of black stitches smiled back at me.