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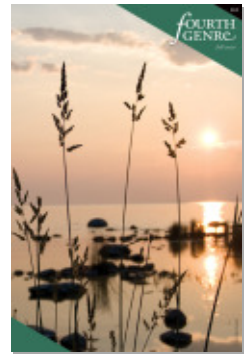
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The Falling

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The Falling

Gail Griffin

A March snow, sudden and thick outside the library windows. Three carels down, two students talking as if their lives depended on it. My mind does its sideways slide, like tires on new ice when a car seems suddenly weightless, and I think *Let it all go flying, why not, let this life unravel like a long scarf*. I watch myself spin away from the loves, the loyalties and meanings that have moored me, feeling that old lurch in the stomach when my gondola went over the top of the double Ferris wheel at the state fairgrounds and for an instant before the ground rushed up I could see all the way to Canada.

In those days, when the snow was new and deep we stood, buffered in snowsuits, faces turned up, open-mouthed, catching flakes, and then we'd throw our arms wide, cruciform, falling back like timber or soldiers, buttermilk sky curling over us, inky trees, and then the soft *whoof* into snow. We lay there breathing, face to face with the great blank winter sky. Then we flapped our arms and legs like stranded birds, planing arcs into the snow. But first there was the falling, the giving in to gravity, as if in that lush surrender we forsook ourselves, took wing. ■