

Cotton Candy

The first thing to hit us is the smell riding on those of onions
fries and red hots like the sweet crest of a wave.

A woman in a glass cage twirls pink froth from steel. She spins
a mountain. Still she spins and spins, offers her treasure to
a smiling man.

In the Manufacturers Building my father surrenders. Now it is I
who stand before such a magic booth, watching, watching the motion
the skill of hands. Suddenly I realize my mistake. They do not make
the cones as big here as at other booths. I should have chosen my booth
more carefully. I should have spent at least a whole day studying each
booth and each woman inside each booth. Then I would know which
woman
gives you the biggest, which woman has the most expert spinning
hands,
which is the most generous, a fat woman perhaps. The woman in my
booth
is thin with skinny arms, talons for fingers, long blood-red nails.

She and my father exchange money and the thing. Finally my desire
is within my grasp. I open my mouth as wide as it will reach. Then
I learn that you cannot bite cotton candy, no more than you can bite
air. Neither can you crunch it, chew it, get it stuck in your teeth,
taste it, or swallow it. You cannot hold it in your mouth like water.
Rather it melts into you, into your saliva, down your throat. What
is left is a sweet sticky ring circling your lips.

I hand it back to my father. He looks helplessly at my mother. She
takes it back, not without a great groan of disgust. She marches over to
a trash

bin and tosses it in. As we walk away I am the only one who looks back.
There it lies on top of candy bar wrappers, soda pop bottles, cigarette
packages. Almost immediately some people come by and throw in an
empty

fish and chip container. Others pass, toss in cardboard milkshake
cups, half-finished ice cream cones, paper boats from hamburgers
and hotdogs. Soon from a square metal of mesh only a reminder
of pink seeps out like the flesh of a fat woman's thigh escaping
her garter which is grey and you are a child who sits on the floor
forced into seeing.

— *Cecelia Frey*