

ARACHNOPHOBIA

by Beth Gordon

One minute you're on the phone talking to your cousin in Allentown, PA complaining about her color choice for bridesmaids' dresses, periwinkle for God's sake, *you're crazy if you think I'm carrying a lit*

candle all the way down the aisle and back, and then you're on the floor. You'll never see the film footage of the airplane that explodes 7 stories below your office but now the skirt you bought at a Labor

Day sale at Bloomingdales is on fire and in a split second you overcome all your phobias: fear of heights, roller-coasters, ladders propped against buildings and forget your doubts about the afterlife: you leap

out the window. Watch the documentary 15 years later, or *Towering Inferno* on a rainy Friday night, and some well-read person will always say, *burning's not so bad, they say drowning is the most painful*

way to die, but did you ever know anyone who undrowned, drained the embalming fluid from their veins and confirmed that death by water is worse than death by flame? If you're lucky you don't see it

coming. You're laughing at the television, Jim Carrey in a tutu, and your heart explodes, or the blood clot in your brain blooms like fireworks and down you go, face first in your bowl of New England clam

chowder. Hell is not a fiery pit, you're sure of it, you know that whatever punishment awaits is small, hard to see in the dark: flesh-eating bacteria, your child suffering in silence a thousand miles away, a bed

full of freshly-hatched spiders as you pull back the comforter and lay your body down for the long night.

Beth Gordon is a poet who has been landlocked in St. Louis, Missouri for the past 16 years and dreams of oceans, daily. She is the lucky mother of three creative human beings, Matt, Alex and Elise, who fill her world with art and music. She can be found on Twitter @bethgordonpoet.