

"Spotting"

At the playground she finds a place to climb
Strong legs, small feet finding each next level
Delicate fingers reaching up to grasp
Curving around edges made for gripping.
Left foot, right foot
Bright eyes and soft brown hair
Two and growing.
Eager to be up, up higher, taller than her Mama
Stepping deliberately, bending, striving
Knees up, toes up, she finds her footing
Smiling skyward.
"Watch me Mama! I is a baby bird climbing to my nest!"

I look to see my younger self in her
But can't.
I was more fearful
Not wanting to climb too high
Clinging, always looking back, downward
Comforted by solid ground.

Now I keep my hands up, spotting her every move
Trying not to touch, unless she asks me to
Safety-conscious as mothers are
Quick reflexes ready, to catch her before a fall
But sure-footed, she rises above me.

That gentle space,
The inches between my hands and her confident little body,
Is trust
And courage to let her ascend
Not hold her back
To be near and watchful
But open
Giving space
Broad enough
To let my baby bird take wing.

by Cathy Guttentag