

PRECARIOUS PLUNGES

The man who designed this rollercoaster knew exactly how far he could push my fear threshold without sending me over the edge.

He knew I'd be able to endure the sickening descent, even though, when I was down by the kiddie rides looking up at the precarious plunges, I'd had my doubts.

He knew I'd feel nauseous when we crested 200 feet above the midway, but that somehow I'd be able to gulp it back.

And I imagine he knew that the car in front of me would be occupied by two kids in faded Guns 'n' Roses tee-shirts for whom this shuddering shriekfest would be a mere prelude to the more thrilling amusements in other parts of the park.

In designing this rollercoaster, he had to factor people like me into the equation. Much as it probably pained him, he had to consider the limits of my tolerance.

He pictures me clearly now, unstrapping myself like a man reprieved by the governor, my legs no steadier than a colt's at birth.

"You milquetoast," he thinks. "You're the one who's holding me back. You're the one who's keeping me from achieving everything I'm capable of"

KICKBOXING

As I watch the kickboxing on the TV tonight, I feel myself growing more and more uneasy with some aspect of it I can't define. It's not the violence — the violence is why I'm watching. I'm afraid — no, it's something else ... it's ... well, okay, it's the kicking. The fact that they're kicking while they're boxing. When I was a kid, there was an unwritten rule that you didn't kick someone during a fight. It was just something you didn't do. I lost many a battle simply because I observed this simple rule. Anyway, here's this guy landing kicks a mule would be proud of on another guy who's kicking right back. They're kicking each other's faces in. I guess I'll learn to like this sport eventually but in doing so I'll have to give up a code whose gentleness seems evident only now.