

Everyone Will Love You (Fiction 1: Amelia)

I really ~~do not~~don't want to do this. On the list of things I would like to do, ~~it is~~falls right between ripping off my toenails ~~off~~ and pulling teeth ~~on the list of things I would like to do~~. If I had it my way, I would be at home finishing the laundry, or at the store buying onions for tomorrow's dinner. Instead, ~~I am~~I'm surrounded by ~~the~~ clowns bumbling about as they ~~prep~~prepare to enter the ring for their mid-show performance. I linger at the back of the ensemble, away from the tent entrance flap, ~~towards~~ the rear wooden beams ~~holding~~supporting the seats of the audience ~~sitting~~above me.

Why did I agree to do this? ~~I've~~I'd refused Jim's pleas before, so what made this time different? This wasn't a new request; it hadn't caught me off guard. ~~I've~~prepare myself, been defending myself against almost weekly attacks, always ready with some reason. I haven't done ~~that~~this since college, and that was years ago. I've developed a new phobia of heights. After a fall down a flight of stairs, my balance hasn't quite been ~~quite~~ the same. Sorry, I have to wash my hair tonight. I have to rearrange my sock drawer. Maybe this time I simply ran out of excuses. Maybe I was tired. Maybe I wanted that old feeling of glory. Whatever the reason, in the end, I agreed to my first performance since college. I agreed to do something I ~~had~~vowed I'd never do again.

The final cheer from the audience signals the end of the clown's routine. ~~Applause~~vibrating-vibrates down the wooden supports to where my sequined body stands paralyzed with anticipation. Move to the entrance. It's time to shine. Clear the mind. Focus. Remember the breathing method. No, forget that. Just remember to breathe. Support the diaphragm. Listen for the cue. Shoulders back. Head up. Big smile. Everyone will love you.

It's just how I remember it: ~~the~~ lights searing down on me, the scream of the crowd. I can't bring myself to look at them. I'll lose my cool. They always ~~threw~~throw me off guard, their eyes staring, wondering if I'll mess up and plummet to my death. I wonder that enough for the both of us, thank you. I smile and wave at the crowd I won't look at, focusing on the tent behind them, the ladder in front of me, the ladder beneath my feet. Each rung brings me toward ~~s~~ almost certain death, and ~~I'm~~ fighting the urge ~~not~~ to turn and run. The last time I walked the wire, I fell thirty feet and broke both my femurs. And my confidence. I don't know if I'll get it back.

Climb the ladder. Hand, foot, hand, foot. Up and up. Keep that smile. Pull yourself myself onto the platform. Wave to the crowd. Don't look down. Walk to the end. Was the rope always this thin, always this long? Stop that. Focus. You will do this. Deep breath. Support the diaphragm. Listen for the cue. Shoulders back. Head up. Big smile. Everyone will love you.

Comment [J1]: This is the only sentence in this paragraph that is not a sentence fragment. It breaks up the flow of thoughts.