

Flaw To Ceiling Fan

Lulu Joy Short Story

I'm bolting my ankles in...ahhhh that reassuring clunkk... I slowly uncurl, leaning my body along the backboard. My feet begin to rise, my head tips back; I grip the side handles the angle of me, the tangle of me, unfurls for the very first time in fifty years. I'm upside down, finally! I'm slowly, tentatively, reversing half a century of gravity, thanks to my inversion machine!

Phew! Space inside me, longitudinally, transcending, if only for a few minutes, all the prejudice of being too tall for a girl. You see, I have the height but not the hormones of a man! O, man! Completely upside down now, my plaits sweep the dust into swirls on my floor. *Depression* and *Compression*, my chronic companions since my teens, are both on their heads, dizzy, both discombobulated; **AND I WISH I COULD STAY HERE FOREVER!**

I was a lucky, little Skylight, just once! Aged ten, at the Port Fairy Holiday Beach Mission camp, Peter the Clown carries ME on his shoulders.... walking across... the tight rope! I'm LOOKING DOWN at everyone LOOKING UP at me! I'm not scared! I'm the shy showgirl! Don't tell anyone, but I'm the Queen of the Castle!

I'm nearly 55 now, "medically retired" on a Disability Pension, my full time job keeping my mind and body in sync! It's Seniors Week and a free introductory class is offered at Aerialize – a circus arts organisation. So I'm there with bells on! I'm LOOKING AROUND this gigantic space at all the circus apparatus suspended from the rafters.... I'm hooked! I'm in heaven! I'm home!

Just hold your horses, old girl! You're designed to be sore! You're destined to be sad! Will that painful pair let you swing on THEIR MONKEY BARS? The Aerialize Youth Troupe are here to assist the 'golden oldies'... Mat and Eli are allocated to me... the twirling twins who help me into an inverted star with my legs entwined in the silks, the long curtains suspended from the rafters. Then I'm posing, standing on the trapeze bar (albeit three feet above the floor)... on tippy toes. I'm thrilled to my back teeth!

From that day forward, I'm having a weekly one-on-one lesson with the best circus skills teacher this side of the black stump!! Helen Lette... *Let there be Light!* Light inside my body and light inside my mind. I even feel light! I can move and flex and reach and stretch like I've never done before. Instead of well-worn pain pathways, I feel suitably sore! Instead of fear and sadness and sorry-for-myself madness, I feel strong and sturdy and sassy (?)... yes, sassy!

Helen introduces me to the aerial lyra hoop. She swings herself up into the circular trapeze, lays her back along the bottom curve into the '*man in the moon*' pose, and I can't wait to repose along this curvaceous hoop! I promptly decide then and there to boycott the straight bar trapeze.

My turn to get up to the moon, into this circle... I lay the back of my body along the curve and... I'm huge, heavy and hurting! I'm forced into foetal! Concertinaed into this miniature clown curve, I'm back to *Vulnerable!* I can't fit in! I instantly hate this apparatus for not accommodating me! Helen tells me there are bigger hoops for bigger bods. PHEW!

I'm basking in the morning-after glow of my first time performing in Aerialise's end of term Student Show. I'm soaring! My past mental and physical blues are now *Rainbow Ribbons of Light and Length!* My phone rings and it's my sister. She's saying: "Dad's dying! *William*, our dad, my soulmate, dies that night! I LOSE MY WILL TO GET UP....FAR LESS MY WILL TO GET UP IN THE AIR!!

Week after week, month after month, and it's now year after year, I just can't swing, swirl or even hang upside down! I do get up... to attend every end of term Aerialize show... in the audience! Term 3 Show, and I buy thirty raffle tickets in the hope that if I win Helen's free lesson, it just might catapult me into the air. Don't dob on me, but I'm in the back row secretly swigging red wines to anaesthetise my size, I mean my sighs.

I do win a Swing Dancing (?) course! "Yippee" I think! My favourite music, and I'm moving...actually, I'm dragging my feet across the floor. The syncopating swing doesn't even help my long body. It's too pacey, too parallel, too partnered... O I WISH I COULD GET UP IN THE AIR...

The Xmas Show rolls along and I'm there with Xmas bells on...mmm... in the audience. My name's called out... I've won a prize... an Aerialize Children's Birthday Party for up to seven kids. Helen tells me I can bring seven big kids if I want!

It takes me nine months to begin my party plan. Spring is in the air! I order a customised aerial lyra hoop 110cm in diameter, 6cm wider than the biggest one at Aerialize. In good faith, I book my party for my birthday – Sunday, November 18th. I can't feel any fledgling impulse yet and it's now only one week to lyra launch. WILL GRIEF GROUND ME FOREVER?

On my round rainbow birthday cake in piped icing, it reads: LuLu Loves Lyrical Lyras! With pump and pomp, Helen strips away the curtain... revealing **MY AERIAL HOOP!** I climb onto the sponge mat and up into **MY CIRCLE!** Helen's right there 'spotting' me, keeping me safe and sound as I twirl around.

Phew! I welcome the space and grace to learn at my longitudinal pace! I'm showing off to my Inner Circle of Seven Big Little Kids – '*woman in the moon*', '*mermaid*' and '*star*' pose.

I'm ready!

With Helen, I'm so 'Reddy'!

"I am Woman! See Me Soar!"

I'M THE LONGITUDINAL SHOWGIRL!

I'M THE QUEEN OF MY CASTLE!