

The Spectacle of a Husband

Daniela watched in horror as one of the ropes snapped from her husband's antique trapeze, forcing her to ponder life without abuse—if she doesn't save the bastard.

The crowd under the big top shrieked when the artist's hands slipped to the end of the white rope. Two spotlights locked on Alejandro dangling forty feet above the center ring. Two more spotlights angled on the floor where the disconnected safety net lay.

The ring master signaled the clowns to grab the net and hold it taut to lessen Alejandro's impact of hitting the sawdust covered concrete floor. In the stands, frightened children were turned from the attraction, but some felt compelled to watch the acrobat's demise. A few mothers took their children outside.

Daniela scanned the area for a solution, needing to demonstrate an attempt to save him and avoid being frowned upon. She wondered if an elephant's back might spare him from splattering on the ground. She hustled to the elephant trainer who shook his head.

The clowns got tangled in the stretchy net and drew nervous laughter from the bleachers. Daniela jogged out back to the lion tamer and suggested rolling the parade cage under the trapeze. He pointed across the midway where the broken wheel was propped up next to the timbers keeping the cage level.

Daniela jogged back to the big top. Alejandro was still dangling above. She glared at her abuser, but compassion washed over her. Staying true to herself, she jogged backstage to look for a solution. She stopped next to a water cooler and grinned.

"Ladies and gentlemen," shouted the ring master. "Welcome to the center ring, Daniela, the strongest woman in the world."

The confused crowd gave a smattering of applause. Daniela walked in holding a small paper cup with water splashing over its edges. Silence fell under the big top.

"The great Alejandro will perform his new, death-defying, high-diving act from a height of forty feet and land in the water held by the strongest woman in the world."

Daniela encircled the point underneath Alejandro. She lifted the water cup high and signaled she was ready.

Alejandro rotated his body to see the expression on every face before letting go. This would be the greatest feat in circus history or make headlines as the dumbest stunt resulting in death. He was ready.

Releasing his grip, Alejandro fell like a dagger headed toward his wife.

Alejandro snapped his body horizontally. His back hit the cup of water. Daniela swung her arms, squatted, and released, sending Alejandro sideways across the floor. His feet hit the center ring, popped him upright with his hands high in the air. He received a great ovation and bowed. Alejandro extended his hand to his wife for a second bow. She took his hand in hers and bowed. It felt like their early years with her heart filled with hope.

The circus sold out the next day when the newspaper headlines read: "Strong Woman and Acrobat Astound All."