



The Parable of the Trapeze

By Danaan Perry

Sometimes I feel that my life is a series of trapeze swings. I'm either hanging on to a trapeze bar swinging along or I'm hurtling across space in between bars. Most of the time, I hang on for dear life to my trapeze-bar-of-the-moment. It carries me along at a certain steady rate of swing, and I have the feeling that I'm in control of my life. I know most of the right questions and even some of the answers.

But every once in a while as I'm merrily swinging along, I look out ahead of me into the distance and what do I see? I see another trapeze bar swinging toward me. It is empty. But I know that this other bar has my name on it. It is my next step, my growth, my aliveness coming to get me. I know that for me to grow, I must release my grip on this present, well-known bar and move to the new one.

Each time it happens to me I hope and pray that I won't have to grab the new one. But I know that eventually I must totally release my old bar and, for some moment in time, I must hurtle across space before I can grab the new bar. Each time, I am filled with terror. It doesn't matter that in all my previous hurtles across the void of unknowing I have always made it. I am each time afraid that I will miss, that I will be crushed on unseen rocks below. But I do it anyway.

Perhaps this is the essence of what the mystics call the faith experience. No guarantees, no net, no insurance policy, but you do it anyway because somehow to keep hanging on to that old bar is no longer an alternative. And so for an eternity that can last a microsecond or a thousand lifetimes, I soar across the dark void of *"the past is gone, the future is not here yet."* It's called transition.

I have come to believe that this transition is the only place that real change occurs.

I have noticed that, in our culture, this transition zone is looked upon as a "no-thing," a no-place between places. Sure, the old trapeze bar was real, and that new one coming towards me, I hope that's real too. But the void in between? That's just a scary, confusing, disorienting nowhere that must be gotten through as fast and as unconsciously as possible.

What a waste! I have a sneaking suspicion that the transition zone is the only real thing and the bars are illusions we dream up to avoid the void. Whether or not my hunch is true, it remains that the transition zones in our lives are incredibly rich places. They should be honored, even savored. Yes, with all the pain and fear and feelings of being out of control that can accompany transitions, they are still the most alive, most growth-filled, passionate, expansive moments in our lives.

It can be terrifying. It can also be enlightening in the true sense of the word. Hurtling through the void, we just may learn how to fly.