

Ellen Telyanin

Age 26; Flying Trapeze I (Angel 1), **Flying Trapeze II (Angel 3)**, Cradle (Flier), **Cloudswing**

It couldn't have worked out any better than this and the best thing of all is Alice brought it on herself. Now Ethan, Jeremy and I can get the roles that we've always deserved.

We were forced to join this two-bit troupe after the family circus went bust and daddy ordered us to take up Uncle Nigel's offer to get us auditions; from the top of crop to having to play seconds to Matt and Tina we went. Fortunately, I managed to make Tina's life uncomfortable enough that she soon handed in her resignation. Not my best work and I know people noticed it but I figured it wouldn't matter once I got the lead role. And then, bloody Alice turns up.

From day one, she was trouble. Somehow, without auditions she gets in as the new show's lead aerialist. Normally, getting rid of her wouldn't be any harder than removing Tina but even though she was starting to get nervous up on the trapeze she stuck about. I re-arranged her gear in the change rooms, alternated putting thin coats of rigging grease and tacky residue on her bar but the girl just refused to budge.

And then Ethan tells me he's in love with Alice. That bitch! I could tell he wouldn't be talked out of it and I know better than to force the issue with him – he's got a temper and sometimes not even I can control it. So, now I had to be even more careful about it all – I couldn't bear to lose Ethan over her. I resigned myself to Alice's presence, instead working to rein her in. I'd make us stars somehow, but I'd allow Alice to stay. It'd just take a little more work.

The Seduction

There's a lot that I miss about the family show. Creative control, people who listen, recognition... I hadn't realised that the company of suitable men was on that list, not until I had been here for months. It was frustrating. Daniel seems to get hard in every way except one and Matt was all talk and no show. How was I supposed to get a little fun?

Then Ethan gift-wrapped a little present for me. Pretty, sensual little Gwen. It turned out that the "boyfriend" sending her gifts had just been some pathetic little psycho. Ethan caught him and showed him what a real man does to cockroaches that touch without permission.

Gwen started following Ethan around with sad-puppy eyes but Ethan was still chasing Alice. Besides, he's not gentle enough to unwrap such a delicate work of art, not without damaging her. But I could.

It was just too easy – there she was vulnerable and scared of almost every man; all I had to do was make sure she came to me for protection and comfort. A few soothing words, some gentle caresses and she came to believe that I was the only person who cared about her. Course, in these kind of cases you have to make sure they think they're the one making the first move – doesn't mean you can't help to engineer the situation though.

Safety-Free

A few months ago, there was a payday when some of the performers didn't get their money. I knew what that meant, having been through it with the family show. We even made sure it was clowns who didn't get paid, not aerialists, just like here. Well, the circus might go under or it might not, but in the meantime, I might as well use this to my advantage.

I came up with the idea of doing our aerial acts without safety harnesses. More danger, more thrills, more crowds, right? Well, maybe not, but it at least puts pressure on the other aerialists. Tighten the screws, let's see who cracks.

At first I didn't think I'd be able to get that past the rest of the group. Gwen and Ethan were in my pocket, but Caitlin, Matt and Daniel would oppose me on principle if nothing else. Alice was the big star, though, and she was my target all along. She was the nut in need of cracking.

When she did crack, everyone had to go along with my idea. But how?

The Hen's Night

Alice finally gave me the opportunity I wanted on the night of Maria's hen's night. Lily had arranged for the "hens" to meet the guys from the buck's night at her party around midnight. They were all well and truly drunk by then, but I know better than to lose control. Alice and John obviously had other ideas. I couldn't believe what I was seeing when little Miss I'm-So-Perfect slipped down the hall towards the bedrooms, followed by Luke, far too quickly to disguise his haste from anyone not completely pissed.

I was ensnared in a boring conversation with Maria, John and Lily. Fortunately Maria took care of that for me by pulling Lily into the kitchen to talk with another bridesmaid. And John, well, he could come along for the ride. I pulled John off the couch and pressed myself against him. "Let's dance," I said. He looked like all his Christmases had come at once. Maybe eight minutes to get John warmed up, that'd be about right for John and Alice too – it's not like they'd be finished quickly, as drunk as they were.

When John looked about ready to burst, I lead him down the hall to the bedroom door – the first bedroom, not Lily's, where they'd be afraid she'd catch them. I opened the door and slipped through, then back out, being careful to press firmly against John in the process. "Oops, occupado!" I said. As John gaped in bewilderment, I held my phone through the door, snapped a shot (with the flash on, or else it wouldn't have shown anything). Then I made a bolt for it, making it sound like a big joke for John's benefit.

The next day, Alice tracked me down, to plead with me not to tell anyone what I'd seen. I told her that it'd cost her – if she supported losing the lines, I'd stay mum, and if she even looked at another man sideways again, well...

Luke was too much of a coward to talk to me himself. He sent John the next afternoon but I never told him that I'd already talked to Alice about it. We kept things...friendly I said I'd stay quiet but only for him. I had the beautiful boy eating out of my palm.

The Fall

Ethan thinks he can be subtle, but I always know when something's up with him. I've spent years controlling his mood swings so I know each and every sign and they were there in plenty during the rehearsal this morning. It doesn't make him perform any worse – if anything, he's better when he's angry – but I could tell, and I always want in on the secret.

So I cornered him in the wings, made him tell me what was going on. That little bitch Alice finally dumped him. What, did she think she was too good for my little brother? Hmph, he was too good for her.

But Alice had finally made a decision, the wrong decision. And there was that nice little photo that had been waiting for just such a time. Confidence in her was already rocky after all the mistakes she'd been making – it wouldn't take much to tip the balance against her. Getting to the office printer after rehearsal was ridiculously painful though. Gwen got all clingy when I went back to my room to find my SD card; it took almost half an hour to get rid of her. Then Ophelia was pushing paper around for what seemed like ages; I had to wait till she went to grab some lunch before I could make copies of the picture.

And then wouldn't you know it? I'd just finished liberally decorating the dressing rooms with lovely, glossy A4 shots of Alice screwing Luke and I hear a banshee impression from the rehearsal rooms. When I peek in I see the selfish bitch lying on the floor – it was pretty obvious she wasn't going to be a threat to me anymore. So then I have to run off and undo all my hard work. Good thing I did get them down before anyone saw them though – with her dead they could only serve to make me look as heartless as she was.

Other People

Alice Taylor (NPC)

To me she was an obstacle, nothing more. It was my turn to get the lead role in the show but she came in, batted her eyelids and I get sent back to a supporting role. Brainless, pointless and ready to jump in to bed with anything that moved.

But Ethan cared about her way too much. If he had ever found out the things I'd done to her... but that's in the past. When she dumped him, the gloves came off. It's almost a pity she died before I could show her the error of her ways.

Bethany Summer

When Alice joined the troupe, it didn't take her long to make Bethany her little pawn. Alice became Bethany's mentor, introduced the quivering little waif to the wonders of flight. Now she's an addict, as sure as if she were snorting cocaine.

But she's good, very good. Losing Tina gave us Alice, will losing Alice mean I have to deal with her protégé?

Caitlin Chin

Caitlin was Alice's understudy for the lead in the new show. That makes her the obvious choice to take over the role now, but when Tina left, Caitlin made no attempt to step into her shoes. Why would this time be any different?

She and Matthew claim to be dating. I don't buy it for a second. There's no real affection between those two.

Daniel Higgs

Pretty in a Michaelangelo's David way but not really of interest. Can't tempt him in to bed and the way he behaves it'd probably be more fun bedding the statue. Talented but of no use to me.

If Caitlin is bedding anyone, it'll be Daniel. It's easy to see how devoted she is to him, and yet, I've never seen him respond, not in the way a man should to a beautiful woman.

Dominic Richards

I know the type – wanting something but too scared to go out and get it. Take Gwen for example – if he'd had any balls he'd have asked her out before the stalker attacked her. Or did what I did and “comfort” her when she was vulnerable.

Ethan Telyanin

My little brother, younger than me by about five minutes – dumb but talented. He needs me to take care of him – he doesn't have the drive, the ambition to really succeed. Got a temper on him but nothing I can't control. He's so used to me running his life that he'd be useless on his own now.

He was obsessed with Alice though, so much so that I couldn't take her from him. I love him, and I know there are things a sister cannot give to her brother.

Gwen Palmer

She's useful enough – pat her on the head now and then, put her out in the cold if she stops behaving the way I want and next thing you know she's begging for forgiveness like a lost little puppy. She's even easier to run than Ethan and Jeremy – so desperate to be loved and protected that she'll do anything for me. All I needed to do was play the consoling confidante after the attack and then slowly manoeuvre her into bed. But...she's a little dull and she's so needy now. Besides I've had my fun with her and as soon as I can convince them to put John in as Caitlin's partner he'll be worth calling into my bed. She'll pout and cry for a while but, honestly, who cares?

Hannah Riordan

A freak of the highest order working in the lowest rung.

Jeremy Telyanin

Sweet, pliable little Jeremy. Shame he doesn't push himself enough – it's disgraceful that he's relegated to the trampoline for this show. He's practically a clown or a tumbler and if he doesn't get

back in the air where he belongs soon then I'm going to have to wash my hands of him. I refuse to associate with the trash sweepers.

John Perrett

Mmmmm, now he's one a wouldn't mind bed-wrestling with, and all it took to draw his interest was the smell of a real woman, rather than a waif too scared to make her move. Once I can get him moved up into the aerialists he'll be worth having as a partner...on and off stage. I know what men like him like – a bit of a chase before the pounce and I've led him on a fine chase since Luke's wedding; I'm ready for the tackle.

Lily Gardner

Weak and pathetic. She mooned about over John forever and never did anything about it. Now she sulks about because I've got his attention.

Luke Conolly

I've heard the stories about Luke, the talk of one-night stands and circus groupies. It's like they say, a leopard doesn't change its spots.

I wonder how his devoted little wifey would take to knowing he screwed Alice on their Hens/Bucks night?

Maria Conolly

If I was ever a queen of the circus, Maria is a princess – no, a baroness. She rules over the little folk, acrobats flocking to her side. Lily loves her almost as much as Luke does, and the two of them control John, or at least did before I turned his eye.

Matthew Mills

A pretty boy but he's apparently immune to my talents. I don't get it, he'll chase any piece of tail that comes along, but the only woman he'll actually date is Caitlin and I don't buy for a minute that they do more than dinner and a movie together. There's no real affection there.

The big question is, will Matt even perform tonight? Maybe it would be better for everyone if he didn't.

Nigel

The family's black sheep. So he got us the auditions for the show, big deal. He's just a clown. Our family comes from a proud line of aerialists and he let us down. He had the skills, he had the training, he had the family name and lineage and he throws it all away to be little better than a custard-throwing monkey. He's frankly an embarrassment to us all – aerialists are the top of the tree and now we have a gutter-performer in the family.

Ophelia

A clown with a big head. Stuck-up and walks about as if she owns the place.

Paul

Him? He's a nobody dating a line runner. I know he disapproves of doing away with the safety harnesses, but why should I care?

Susan Michaels

Now where did Susan come from? The girl's got some talent, and I almost missed it, but then she started as Gwen's understudy for cradle. Amazing! It's not flying, but cradle is one of the most difficult aerial acts around, and for Susan to handle it so well so soon... She's still short of prime material yet, doesn't even have an act of her own in this show, but with training she'll get there...

And Jeremy's all over her too. Maybe she could be the key to lighting a fire under him.