

THE TRAPEZE ARTIST from *CIRCUS SCHISM*

by Arthur M. Jolly

Dramatic, F, (20's)

This gymnast/trapeze artist has just left her husband of several years. In the original play, she has a strong Italian accent, and has entered with a cartwheel into the splits.

RITA

I hate this outfit. Virginal white. Decorative display as I spin upside down and men stare at my crotch. It picks up the light, he says. Picks up the dirt. Picks up stains.

(she looks at the floor)

They need to sweep this. But you have to be pure, you have to be white. And mama hangs the sheet for all to see on the morning after your wedding night.

... What was that rhyme? Girls sitting... finger snaps. Ah yes... Girls who sit like this are nice, girls who sit like this think twice, girls who sit like this get this like that.*

(she realizes she is still sitting in the splits and crosses her legs. After a beat, she sits comfortably.)

I sit how I want. So much fuss. All that fuss over a little hole. A third hole. ...I was eleven before I even knew there was a third hole. Eleven and playing in the bales in the hay barn with my brother.

(beat)

You'd think I would've known. The boys used to tease me, growing up on a farm. You've seen the cows and bulls, the boys would say, chewing garlic on market day, little cow girl knows it all, they laugh, and make jokes about milking the bull. Yeah, I live on a farm so I recognize manure, I call back. We didn't keep cows, we had heifers. They don't even know the difference, the market boys. A yearling first year, heifer second; but not a cow until after she has a calf and becomes a mother. I watched my father helping heifers have their first calf - his arm in it's ass up to here. He didn't call it ass, he said *estremità*, but you know what I mean. It confused me - but if you put your arm in with the baby, the mother kicks. Stick it in her ass, you can feel the calf, turn it around if it's backwards, but the mother doesn't kick. That I knew. So I guess I knew there was another hole for the baby to come out of, in a cow. I didn't realize I had one. One to pee from, yes, but that third hole... I didn't know until I was eleven, jumping from the bales in the hay barn with my brother and blood came from there. Blood on my shorts, running down my leg, and I ran screaming to my mother with the hay sticking to the sweat on my face and my brother was crying too and he kept trying to carry me cause he thought I was dying. My mother took him into the front room, and I don't even know what she told him but he never played in the barn with me again. Finito, like that.

(finger snap)

* Accompanying this children's rhyme are finger shapes - index and first finger crossed for "nice girls", next to each other for ones that "think twice", fingers apart get "this": middle finger extended up - like "that" - finger snap.