

Dance 2367H

December 2, 2019

Paper One

The Terrifying Art of Making Suspended Shapes

It is the start of aerial hoop class. I breathe in deeply; my hands reach up for the bottom of the hoop. I hook my legs onto the hoop and swing my upper body up so my hands can catch the sides of the hoop. I sit up, balanced precariously like a canary sitting on its perch. Extending my arms, I grab the top of the hoop. I make sure that my grip is tight, and I slide my body off the hoop so that I am hanging. My legs begin to pump, building momentum. When my legs go behind me, my back arches gently. When my legs go in front of my waist, my back breaks its connection with the hoop. The exhilarating swinging motion feels like flying: the yellow canary escaping from its cage.

Then my arms attempt to bend so that I can pull myself back to a sitting position. My hands start to turn white as they combat the strain. My fingers begin to slip, and I try not to think about the far away ground. I almost make it, my lower back grazing the bottom of the hoop as I barely miss the sitting position. I become limp, dangling from the hoop, too tired to try again. My fingers open, dropping me onto the mat below. My trembling arms feel tired and hang, loosely dangling. In no way does my posture reflect the freedom and terror I just felt. Conditioning is over.

I start the next exercise by hooking my right knee. My left leg hooks on and I transfer one hand to the other side of the hoop. I straighten the right leg and push it down against the bar. This genius movement lets me pull up to sitting position effortlessly. I repeat the process of

hooking my legs on to the top bar of the hoop. The hoop frames my body as I hang upside down. The strength of my knees is the only thing keeping me from plunging to the ground. I wrap my fingers around the top bar of the hoop. Slowly releasing the tension in my bent knee, I hesitantly straighten one leg upwards. I then let that leg fall towards the ground, tracing the edge of the hoop. I open my other leg so that my foot points at the ceiling. Arching my head back, my legs are two daggers in the splits. I slowly exhale, relieved that I got to the beautiful shape without plummeting to the ground.