



The Weight of Air

Kimberly Duffy

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In Kimberly Duffy's historical romance novel *The Weight of Air*, circus performers fight to recapture their identities.

Behind the twinkling lights of the circus lies a hidden world of pain and longing. Ever since her mother abandoned her and her father died, strongwoman Mabel has wrestled with crippling self-doubt that leaves her unable to perform. Jake, an acrobat, is desperate to escape the career that killed his wife, but feels obliged to Mabel, his childhood friend. And Polly, once a beloved aerialist, is overwhelmed with guilt for abandoning her family. When the three are drawn together, they decide whether they are willing to forgive the past to move forward.

Set in early twentieth-century Europe and America, *The Weight of Air* presents the realities of circus life through a lens of celebrating differences. Its circus performance scenes are vibrant and exciting while also symbolizing people's inner struggles. Polly's recklessness on the trapeze symbolizes her feelings of worthlessness; Mabel's struggle to perform her strong act represents her struggle to find inner strength after the loss of her father. As Mabel and Jake contemplate finding happiness in one another, Polly realizes that her depression does not define her.

The book is delicate in handling sensitive topics, yet unwavering in its message that they need to be dealt with. Polly opens up about her postpartum depression, which left her unable to care for Mabel. Mabel wrestles with feeling objectified in a society that's dominated by men, in which people see only her body instead of her abilities. And those around them contribute humor and amplify a sense of the circus's strong family atmosphere.

The Weight of Air is refreshing historical romance novel set among circus performers who struggle, but also triumph.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (January / February 2023)

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