

The Adventures of Claire Never-Ending

by Catherine Brunelle

(A taster excerpt from Amelia Claire Earl's story, 2011. Amelia is the first Claire we meet in the novel . . .)

. . . The balloon basket was sinking closer to the fair. This was it.

“One last stop. I can do this,” she said to herself.

The marching band’s thumping grew louder. In her tiny cabin, Amelia checked the high-o-meter again; everything looked on track for a nearby landing.

Like the air balloon in which she flew, the air balloon that advertised Sunco’s logo as it drifted over towns and fields and highways and lakes, Amelia’s thoughts lingered and wavered with the shifting, persistent breeze as she drifted closer to the Sunco fair.

Then, just as Amelia and her balloon passed high above a plot of freshly laid earth, she felt herself overcome with an urge for buttered popcorn – Amelia stepped outside her cabin once more and stuck her head over the rim, sucking back the country smell in hopes of tasting mouth-watering wafts of popcorn from the approaching carnival. Instead, she breathed a long, thick pull of cow shit.

“Oh my G—” A wave of nausea punched her in the gut and she vomited a stream of chicken soup, which dispersed over the side like rain.

Amelia heaved once more and then, when the spasms were over, slid down to the bottom of basket.

“Oh no,” she whispered to herself. On her fingers, she began to trace back time and count the days of the calendar. “Oh no. It can’t be.”

Amelia wiped off her mouth. She crawled into her cabin doorway and sat on the floor, chewing on her thumbnail. Suddenly she stopped, spitting a piece of fingernail into the air.

“Get yourself together, girl!” she commanded. Amelia pointed toward the sky, and began shaking her finger to the rhythm of the increasingly loud marching band drum.

“Okay,” she replied to herself.

“You can do this.”

“I can do this,” she replied again.

“Nothing is going to stop us,” she stated.

“Not a damn thing,” she agreed.

“Alright!”

And she meant it, too - *all* of her meant it. Nothing was going to stop her.

Amelia would touchdown, say hello, restock, and wave goodbye.

Actual carnival scents mingling with farming manure began to float into her cabin doorway: sweet cotton candy, hot mini-donuts, deep-fried corn dog and mountains of popcorn. Amelia stifled her urge to gag, because even more grasping than the smell was that sound of the crowd. People were cheering over the marching band’s persistent playing, and they were cheering for *her*.

“One more stop, and then goodbye,” she promised herself.

Amelia would touchdown, say hello, take some photos, find some mouthwash, *and then* get on with her adventure. Oh, and restock as well, that was essential. Restock and get her mail . . . and appear in that television spot . . . have a hot shower, eat a corn dog (maybe), send a postcard, do some laundry, have a nap . . . visit the pharmacy . . . and then *goodbye everyone!*

Hola Mexico and the south east trades. *Bye bye* North America with its stubborn wind streams. And then, *and then*, upwards and onward to Africa, India, Asia and success!

Nothing was going to stop her from flying around the world . . .

Nothing, nothing, nothing.

Not a thing except herself.

~

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The Adventures of Claire Never-Ending,

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Thanks!

~Catherine :)

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