

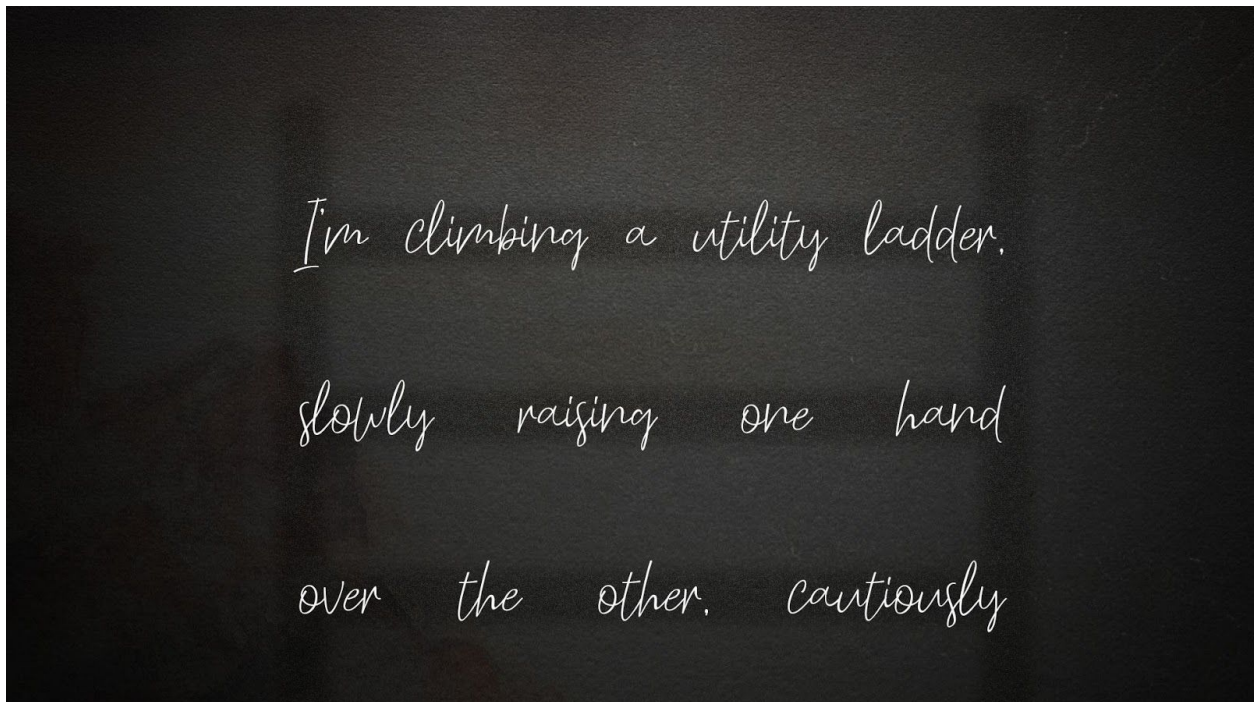
I'm climbing a utility ladder,
slowly raising one hand
over the other, cautiously
securing one foot and then
lifting the other over it.

IDEA: rungs on a ladder via typography; the ladder and text will scroll, suggesting climbing up

Something like this mockup, but we shouldn't see the "top" (or bottom) of the ladder, suggesting the narrator is climbing for a long time. The rungs are a little too close together in this mockup. The sequences of lines will have to be flipped, too, so that they can scroll down from the top and off the bottom.

There should be (I guess?) $0.5 + 1 + 0.5$ lines of text on screen at a given moment:

- half of the next line coming up near the top, darker or slightly transparent
- the current line being narrated near the middle
- half of the line just narrated at the bottom, darker or slightly transparent



The ladder is rough to the touch and cold from the wind that is causing the tower to twist and sway more and more as I climb higher. I am aware that climbing this structure, at night no less, is exceedingly dangerous; I am aware that a fall would be fatal. I just need to climb a few more rungs to make it to the maintenance booth at the top where he is waiting.

IDEA: nothing, really. I think narrating this with the scrolling ladder texture without words is okay. The ladder can fade out slowly, preparing us for...

I pull myself into the booth to find him sitting curled up, hugging his shins, leaning against the metal grating to his side. After taking a moment to collect myself, I sit down opposite him in the booth, which is only a few feet away given the cramped quarters. He peers at me from sunken-in eyes, taking in my presence atop the tower and what that means.

Some time passes like this without either of us speaking.

IDEA: rough drawing of the person sitting curled up, hugging his shins, face buried in knees

Eventually, I opt to break the silence. "Why are you up here?"

He remains motionless, but I hear him sigh gently. His eyes are no longer focused on me, but rather flit back and forth, as though scanning through various explanations somewhere in front of him.

IDEA: same image as above, but the background fades out quickly, leaving only the boy curled up in darkness, surrounded by floating text – various reasons why he climbed the tower, fears, worries:

I hate myself.

I am poison.

I am a monster.

I am destruction.

Why am I like this?

When does it end?

How does this end?

This hurt.

This pain.

This sadness.

It knows no end.

I let him do this for several seconds before asking again, "Why are you up here?"

IDEA: The background comes quickly back into focus now, as though he has been snapped back to reality by the narrator's question.

His eyelids close, and I hear him inhale through his nose before stating, "Because I want to die."

IDEA: fade to black, suggesting he has closed his eyes

"I... I know you're scared of yourself, your past, and your future – the things you've done and the hours you've yet to face. I know you live with depression and come back to the thought of killing yourself every so often. I know this because I know you."

"But you you're alive right now. You are *here*, sitting atop this tower, in this moment, with me. Do you feel the wind stinging your cheeks a little? The cold metal of the tower cutting through your clothing? The warm hope inside you that this isn't necessary? Because that's what I feel, here with you."

IDEA: no imagery necessary

“I understand when things get bad it eclipses your capacity to recall, and it seems like all you’ve ever known is depression and aloneness, but I know otherwise. There is so much beauty in this world you’ve helped me know. You’ve seen and felt and conveyed so much that I’ve experienced through your words.

It was the elderly man’s smile when he was handed a cone of ice cream on a hot summer afternoon, and the sway of the young couple’s winter gloves as they held hands in a snowstorm.

It was the cool fall breeze pushing dry leaves across the sidewalk like rollerskates, and the gentle patter of spring raindrops on your porch awning.

Do you remember describing those things to me? Because I remember the passion in you when you did. You love life so much that you see beauty everywhere but within. But I see it, and I need you to you listen to me now.

Please know that as you love the world, you are loved by it in return. As you love people, you are loved by them in return. I love you so damn much that it hurts to see you hurting, but I’m here for you now, and I want to help you feel less alone and more alive as you’ve done for me.

IDEA: Same background as above, but now there are two people. He is still curled up. The narrator is sitting beside him. She has one arm around his back and the other across his knees. Her head is tilted so as to be leaning against his.

"So, please, just hold onto me now, for a while. Keep me company a little longer and I'll stay here with you to ride out this rough spot and the next."

IDEA: Similar positions to above, but any background (tower, metal grating, etc.) is now gone, leaving only the two characters. He is no longer curled up, but sitting up now, and they are leaning on one another like this, maybe holding hands?

Eventually, it fades to white (rather than black).

[[AFTER THE NARRATION ENDS]]

IDEA:

The same scene as “Night” from chapter 1, but now they are walking down the street together, holding hands. It is day, rather than night.

If there is time (hahahahah), there could be seasonal variations on this that transition one to the next, suggesting the flow of time?

Winter (near) -> Spring (further away) -> Summer (distant)