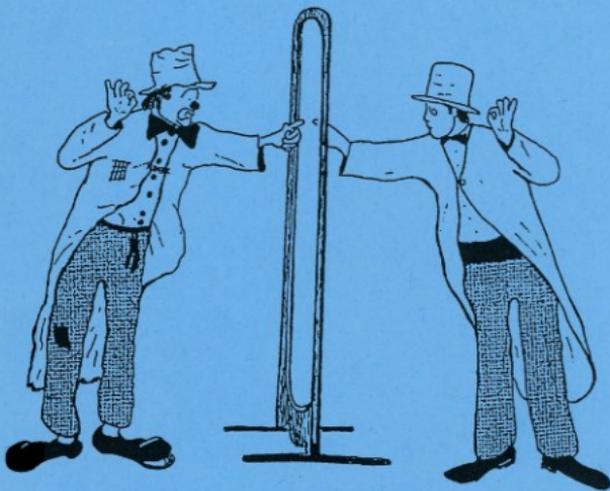


Circus!

by
Joan Cawley and Ruth Diamond

of RECLAIM



*illustrated by
Leslie Knoll*

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ISBN: 1-895539-28-5

RECLAIM

The Reading Council for Literacy Advance in Montreal
3449 University St.
Montreal, Quebec
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This book is a joint project of the following Laubach Literacy of
Canada-Quebec Councils:

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Reading Level 3

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Chapter 1

New words: eastern, juggling, gymnastic, trapeze, performers, costume, design, trailers, greet.

When Annette and Katie got off the train it was late at night. The train had brought them from Amsterdam to Paris. After studying for three years at the Montreal Circus School, they were ready to start their jobs with a real circus.

Katie had come from Holland to study at the Circus School. Annette grew up on a farm in the Gaspé, in eastern Quebec. The two girls shared an apartment while they went to school. In their classes they learned juggling and worked on dance movements. They also learned gymnastic routines and practised on a trapeze. They learned the art of make-up. Many of their costumes were designed by Annette and sewn by Katie.

When they got inside the station, they saw a man holding up a sign. It said "Circus Belman." They ran up to him. "Hello," they said, and told him their names.

He smiled at them and said, "Hi, I'm Pedro." Then he took their bags and said, "Follow me." Outside the station they saw a blue truck with the name Belman on it.

Pedro put their bags in the back. "Well, young ladies, we're off to the circus." They smiled back at him, tired but happy.

As he drove, he told them about himself. He came from Spain and had been with the circus for four years. He worked with the horses and helped set up the big tent, called the Big Top. "This circus is a good place to work. The people in it are my family," he told them. Annette said, "You speak English very well, Pedro. How many other languages are spoken in the circus?"

Pedro replied, "You'll hear lots of different languages here. The performers come from all over the world."

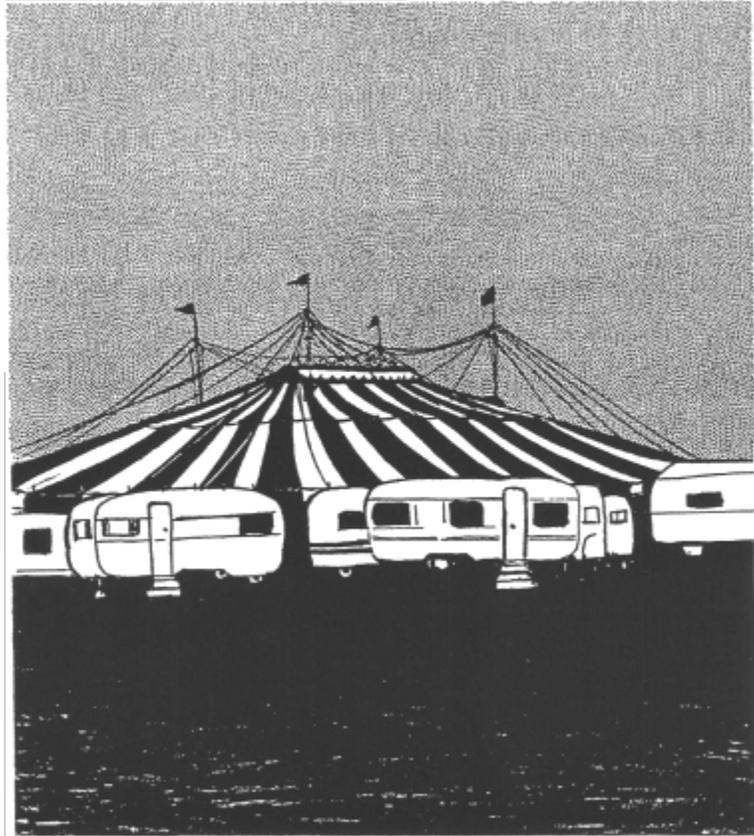
It was very late when they arrived at the place where the circus was set up. The girls saw the Big Top first. It was a wonderful sight—bright blue and white. Many small trailers stood in a big circle around it. Most of the trailers were dark; everyone was asleep. One trailer had its lights on.

Pedro went up to the door and spoke to a woman. She came out of the trailer to greet the girls.

"Hi, there. I'm Stella," she said. "You two must be very tired. I'll show you where you'll be sleeping. We'll talk in the morning, and I'll show you around then."

Stella took them to a small white trailer. "This one is yours, girls. I hope everything you need is here. And now, goodnight and sleep well!"

It took the girls very little time to get ready for bed. And it took even less time for them to fall asleep.



Chapter 2

New words: ringmaster, announces, knocked, surprised, ordinary, veterinarian, parade, paddock, fabrics.

The next morning they woke up to strange noises. They heard people shouting and laughing. They heard machines driving by. They heard laughter. And they heard animal sounds.

"Come on, Katie," said Annette. "Let's go! I want to see everything. Let's get moving!" They stepped outside and went over to Stella's trailer. Her door was open.

"Good morning, girls," she said. "Did you sleep well? You must be hungry. Let's go have breakfast."

While they ate, Stella said, "First I'm going to take you to meet Mr. Muller. He's the ringmaster. He stands in the ring during performances and announces the acts. He's also the boss of all the performers. He'll tell you what your jobs will be."

Mr. Muller's office was in a small blue trailer. Stella knocked on the door. A voice said, "Come in."

The girls were surprised to see an ordinary office, complete with desks and computers. Behind one of the desks was a man with grey hair and blue eyes. He looked busy.

"Mr. Muller, these are the girls from the Montreal Circus School," said Stella.

"Hello," said the man and smiled. "It's nice to meet you. Now, we have to find you both a job." He looked at some papers. "Annette, you like animals, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, sir," Annette replied. "I grew up on a farm and have ridden horses most of my life."

"That's great," said Mr. Muller. "Our veterinarian needs some extra help. You'll do very well."

Then he looked at Katie. "Well, Katie, I hear that you can sew. You made costumes when you were in school, right?"

"That's right, Mr. Muller," said Katie. "I love sewing."

"Good," said Mr. Muller. "You can help in the costume department. This is just for now, you understand? As you know, our season started six weeks ago. Our programs have been printed, and we have all the acts we need."

"Don't worry, girls," laughed Stella. "You'll be performers too." "Right," said Mr. Muller. "After each performance we have a parade. Maybe you'll ride one of the elephants. But for now, you'll help out here and there." The girls thanked Mr. Muller and left the office. "Oh, look, Annette," said Stella. "There's David, the vet." She called to a tall young man in a white coat.

"David, this is Annette. She'll be helping you."

"It's nice to meet you, Annette. I'm heading for the paddock to look at the horses. I could sure use some help."

"I love horses," Annette told him. David replied, "Good, let's get to work." Annette had to run to keep up with David. He had long legs and moved very fast.

"And now you, Katie," said Stella. They went to a large blue tent at the left. Inside Katie saw racks of costumes. Stella took Katie over to a young woman.

"Good morning, Mimi," said Stella. "This is Katie. Mr. Muller has sent her to help you."

"Great," said Mimi. "I'm so glad to have you here, Katie. There is lots of work to do here. The costumes need to be fixed after every performance. Every day!"

Katie saw a large pile of costumes on a table. They all had to be repaired. Some had missing buttons. Some had broken zippers. Some had holes or rips. Some of the sleeves were half torn off. Most of the costumes needed to be cleaned, too. Circus people work hard during a performance. And they sweat a lot. The fabrics get weak because they are cleaned so often. So they need to be repaired often.

"Katie, it never stops," said Mimi. "Everyday we fix everything in the pile. And the next day there's another pile." "Right, Mimi, let's get to work," said Katie.

Mimi added, "Put aside the ones that need cleaning, after you fix them. They'll be picked up later by a local dry cleaner."

While they were working, Mimi and Katie talked. Mimi told her about the old days. The performers used to repair their own costumes. But not all of them could sew very well. Sometimes the costumes looked bad. Now Mimi did all the repairs. She was very good at her job. She was proud of her work when the performers' costumes looked right.

Chapter 3

New words: favourite, perfect, century, leotards, international, festival, competition, award.

In the evening Katie and Annette ate supper in the dining tent. Then they went to their trailer and slowly got ready for bed. Their first day with Circus Belman had been very full and busy.

Annette said, "I'm too excited to fall asleep right away."

"I know just what you mean," Katie replied. "My head's so full of everything that happened today. So many new faces! So many names to remember! So much to learn!"

The girls talked for a long time. They discussed the new people they had met: Gerda and Johann who trained the dogs; Gaston who trained the horses; David the veterinarian; and Laslo the strongman.

Katie said, "My favourite person of all is Ivan. You know—the clown. He works with Sergei. They're from Russia. Ivan has worked in circuses all his life. I had a chance to watch him practising today. Even without his costume and make-up, he made me laugh. He and Sergei practise every day to keep their performance perfect. He told me some things about circuses I didn't know."

"For instance, the first real circus was in London, in the 18th century. And American circuses have three rings, but European circuses have only one. Did you know, Annette, that every circus ring is the same size? Exactly 42 feet from side to side! All circus animals are trained in a ring of 42 feet. They can perform anywhere in the world, in any circus. That's why circuses can buy animals from other circuses. The ring is always the same size."

"Mimi told me about the very first trapeze act," Annette said. "It was here in France, in 1859. The man's name was Leotard. He designed the first pair of leotards and they were named for him. Just like the ones we wear in our performance."

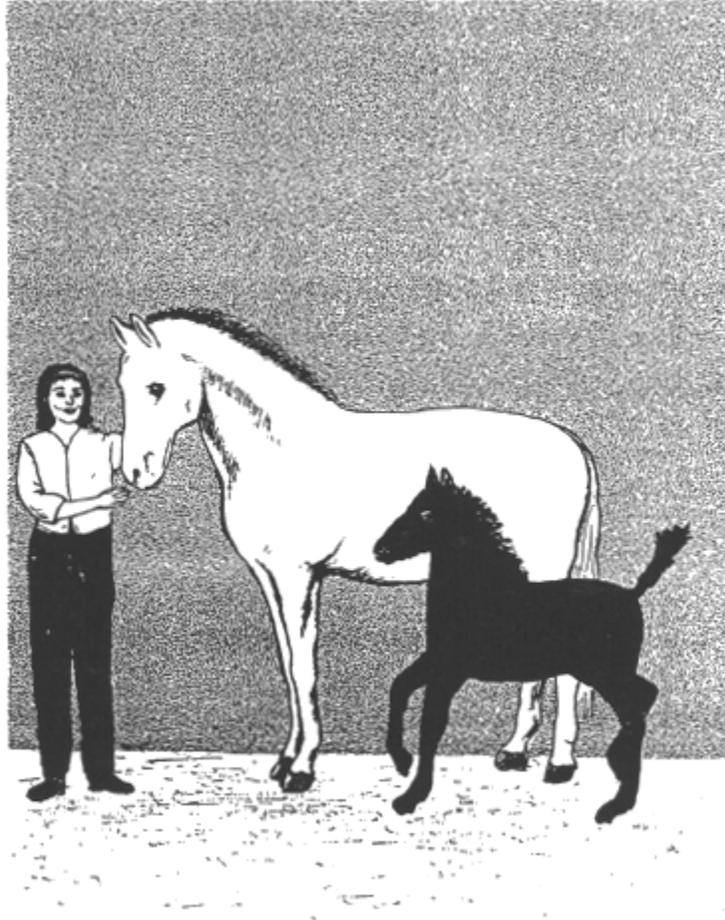
The girls talked about the last stop of the season. It was going to be in Monte Carlo. Every year this city held an international circus festival. The highlight of the festival would be a clown competition. There would be a Golden Clown award, and several Silver Clown awards.

Katie said, "Mr. Muller wants Ivan and Sergei to enter the competition. They'd be sure to win first prize."

"I'm ready for sleep now," said Annette. "Tomorrow, first thing, I have my work with the animals."

"I'm tired and sleepy, too. It's the costume tent for me tomorrow," said Katie. "'Night, Annette. See you in the morning."

"I'm tired and sleepy, too. It's the costume tent for me tomorrow," said Katie. " 'Night, Annette. See you in the morning."



Chapter 4

New Words: foal, saddles, lowered, stiff, trunk, curled, audience.

Early next morning, Annette went to care for the horses. She looked forward to meeting the other circus animals later. She heard the horses before she saw them. They knew breakfast was on its way. They were waiting noisily for the food to arrive.

The Belman Circus owned 16 horses, and a foal. The foal was about two months old. Annette whistled softly to the nearest horse. The mare came over to greet her, followed closely by her baby. Annette patted them both, and spoke gently to them. "You're a pretty baby, little one", Annette said to the foal. "And you, Mama, must be very proud of your baby," she said, as she stroked the mare's nose.

A voice behind her said, "I see you're getting to know them."

It was David, the vet. "These are called Liberty horses. They perform in the circus ring without riders or saddles. Gaston, their trainer, uses his voice to give them orders. Sometimes he claps his hands to tell them what to do."

"When does their training start?" asked Annette.

"When they're very young," David replied. Gaston trained all of these animals. Now, they're a great team."

"Has the new foal started its training yet?" asked Annette. "Maybe I could help Gaston. I used to help my father back home on the farm."

"That's terrific," David said. "I'm sure Gaston would like your help."

Next to the horses were two very large, very stately elephants. "Most circus elephants are females," David explained. They're easier to handle, and are more even-tempered. They're trained for the circus ring right from the time of birth. Audiences love seeing a baby elephant perform. It's so small when it's standing beside its mother. But in the circus an elephant is called a bull. Yes, even when it's a female."

"I heard a wonderful story about an elephant from Mr. Muller," David continued. "It happened years ago, when he was just a young boy. He was working in a circus in the States."

"One night he was in his tent when he heard some strange noises. He went out to find out what the noises were. It was late and the only light around was the moonlight. He saw one of the elephants standing beside the Big Top. She was chained by one hind foot to a tent peg. The chain was a long one so she could move around. She was making soft noises to herself while she practised her circus act. Mr. Muller watched as she put one foot on a tent peg, then the other foot. She lowered herself to a standing position. Then she kneeled on both hind legs, keeping the front legs stiff."

"Then, quite suddenly, she sat back on her rear and raised her front feet. She was almost as tall as the tent! She raised her trunk and blew through it quietly. There was no one around, except Mr. Muller. She was practising all by herself in the moonlight. She was doing her act for the next day!"

Annette said, "That's a terrific story, David."

Just then, she thought she saw two children. She saw them out of the corner of her eye. A girl about 11, and a smaller boy. They were running away as she and David stood by the elephants. "They must belong to someone in the circus," she thought to herself. Many of the circus people were parents. Their children travelled with the circus.

Next, David and Annette visited the two tigers and two black bears. They were housed in large cages.

"You have to be very careful with these animals," said David. "You can never tell what they're going to do. Don't make any sudden moves when you help with their feeding. Or when you help clean their cages. Bears can never be trusted. They have turned on their trainers and killed them. Even after knowing them for many years." Bears can never be trusted. They have turned on their trainers and killed them. Even after knowing them for many years."

The only animals in the circus who were sometimes allowed to run free were the dogs. Annette and David visited them next. They were practising with their trainers, Gerda and Johann.

"Johann and Gerda raised all eight of the dogs from puppies," said David. "The audience loves to watch the dog act."

Chapter 5

New words: trays, tightrope, quarters, southern, exercises, crew, roustabout, props, supplies, shape.

Katie and Annette were very hungry by supper time, as always. They washed up quickly, and hurried to the dining tent. There were a lot of people there, and still more new faces.

"I hope we can remember everybody's name," Katie said.

One man was sitting all by himself, in a corner of the tent. The girls remembered meeting him. He was Laslo, the strongman and weightlifter, from Bulgaria. He seemed to be deep in thought. It looked like his thoughts weren't happy ones. "Sure looks like he's got a big problem," Annette said. "Looks like he wants to be left alone."

The girls joined the line-up for food, and filled their trays. Many people waved at them, and smiled.

"What a friendly lot! I see what Pedro means about being in a family," Katie said. "Where shall we sit, Annette?"

Annette looked around and saw two children sitting by themselves. "Let's join the kids, Katie," she said. "They look kind of lost. Maybe we can cheer them up. Besides, they look familiar somehow. I think they're the kids I saw yesterday morning."

"Can we sit with you?" Annette asked the young girl.

"Sure," she said. "I'm Sarah and this is my brother, Ben."

Ben looked up and smiled shyly at the girls. The girls introduced themselves. Sarah told them that their mother was a tightrope walker. She had been hurt in a fall. She was in England now, while she recovered from her accident. Their father was Laslo. They were staying with the circus until their mother came back.

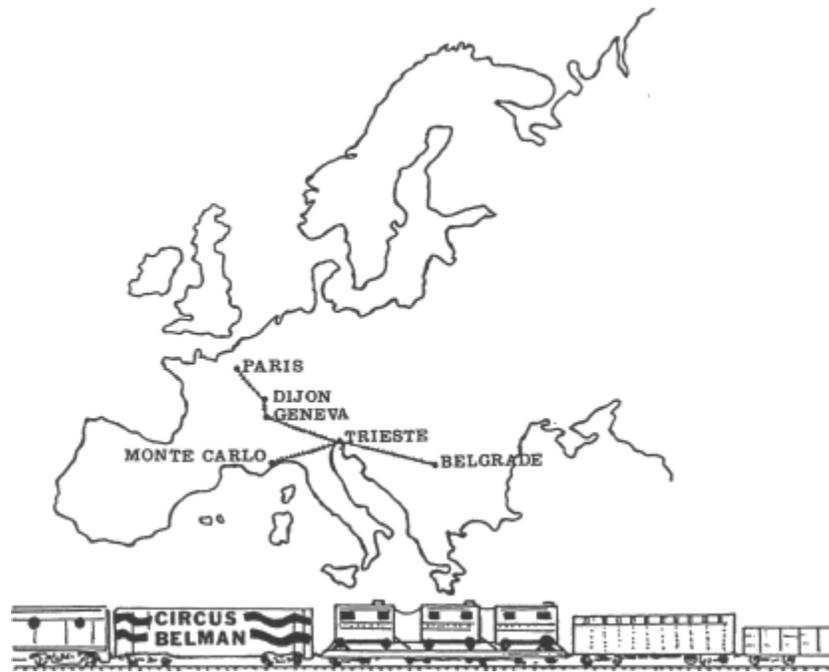
"We miss her so much," said Ben. He had tears in his eyes as he said this.

Katie wondered why the children were not sitting with their father. But when she looked over at Laslo, she understood. He did not look as if he wanted anyone to sit with him.

The circus was getting ready to leave Paris. Their next stop was Dijon. Then on to Geneva and Trieste in northern Italy, and finally Belgrade. By the end of August, they would be in Monte Carlo. Then it would be time to go into winter quarters in southern France.

Over the next few days, Sarah and Ben didn't talk much. They seemed unhappy about something. The girls were so busy that they hardly noticed.

Katie was working hard in the costume tent. Annette had lots of stories about working with David. She liked working with him.



She also liked him a lot. She hoped he liked her too. Annette's stories about David made Katie smile.

At the end of every show, the girls were part of the circus parade. Annette hadn't ridden the elephants yet, but she kept on hoping it would be soon. The costumes they wore were bright and colourful. They loved the parades!

Each morning they worked at their jobs. Twice a week, there was an afternoon performance. The other afternoons, they practised their juggling. They also practised the routines they had learned at the circus school.

Often, after the evening performance, people gathered in the dining tent. They needed to unwind after the show. This became a favourite time of day for Katie and Annette. Many of the circus crew had lived all their lives in a circus. They had lots of good stories to tell. Ivan and Mr. Muller both came from circus families. Ivan's father had been a roustabout with a Russian circus. This is what people in the work crews are called. They do anything that needs to be done. They make props for the performers. They feed and clean the animals. They make repairs to all the circus equipment. They shop for supplies, and keep everything freshly painted. They put up the Big Top and keep it in good shape. Sometimes they even play in the small band that plays during performances. Mr. Muller's parents had been trapeze artists.

They taught their son to be a member of their act. Mr. Muller spent many years being a performer. He talked about the daily practices with their routines. He talked about trying new

tricks to add to their routine. Mr. Muller also trained young people who wanted to become trapeze artists.

The girls loved hearing about the past. In the old days there were many small circuses that travelled in Europe. They went from town to town, using horses and wagons to pull their trailers. It was a hard life but also lots of fun. Everyone felt that they were part of a big family.

Chapter 6

New words: puzzled, fuss, scenery, trap, fridge, uncomfortable, crowds, jealous.

Everybody ate breakfast and supper in the dining tent. Nobody ate much before a performance, so everybody usually ate late. Every trailer had a small fridge for snacks.

"Annette, did you eat all the apples?" asked Katie one day.

"What do you mean?" said Annette.

"There aren't any left," laughed Katie. "You must have been really hungry. The cookies are almost gone, too."

Annette looked at Katie. "I didn't take them, Katie," she said. "I didn't, really!"

The girls looked puzzled. Then Katie said, "Annette, I think someone was in our trailer, and took our food!"

The girls didn't know what to do. If they told Stella, she would ask other people. The girls didn't want a fuss over some apples and cookies. All the people in a circus were one big family. And now one of the "family" had sneaked into their trailer and had stolen their food. The girls didn't like this at all. They decided not to say anything to Stella. Not yet.

The next morning as they ate, they looked at everybody around them. Who had taken their food? They felt uncomfortable. Katie looked around for Ben and Sarah. They must have already eaten. She felt sorry to have missed them.

Then they all were very busy. The whole circus had to be packed up and loaded on a train. The trip to the next city would take overnight and part of the next day.

On the train the girls stayed in their trailer. They sat up for a while, enjoying the scenery going by.

"You know, Katie, it is strange. Here we are in Europe. I thought we would see new cities. I thought we would be seeing new things every day. But we really don't. We are so busy with our work that we don't go out much. Do you know how I know when we're in a different country?"

"Yes," smiled Katie. "Mr. Muller announces the acts in another language."

The girls laughed. Then they went to sleep. It was very dark outside when Annette woke Katie.

"Wake up, Katie! There's something going on. I think an animal has got out!"

"Are you sure, Annette?" asked Katie.

"No, I'm not sure, but I hear something under our trailer," Annette replied.

They thought for a moment. They were afraid to open the door. If there were an animal, it could be one of the cats. Or one of the bears. They could be in real danger.

"Wait, Annette," Katie said. "There's a small trap door in the floor of the trailer. Let's try opening it just a little bit."

"O.K.," said Annette. "On 'three' we open it. Ready? One ... two...THREE!"

They peeked down. No tiger. No bear. Just two little faces looking up at them.

"Ben! Sarah!" the girls screamed. "What are you doing there? Come inside, quick!"

They helped the children up through the trap door.

"Why were you under there? Does your father know where you are?" Katie cried.

"Please," exclaimed Sarah, "don't tell our father. He mustn't know where we are. Please!" Ben started to cry.

"Alright, you two. Take it easy. We can't do anything while the train's moving, anyway. Tell us what's going on," said Annette. She put her arms around the children.



Sarah began to talk. "You see, we're running away from father. He won't wait for mother to come back. He wants to go back home to Bulgaria. He wants to keep us with him, away from mother. I think he's jealous of our mom. He heard Mr. Muller telling Stella that he didn't like the strongman's act. But Mr. Muller kept our dad on because of our mom. "Yes," said Ben, "Mom is very good and the crowds love her act. We heard mom and dad fighting about it a lot."

"Can Laslo really get you into Bulgaria?" asked Katie.

"Oh, yes," said Sarah. "He's got our papers. Once in Bulgaria, we would be stuck. Maybe he'll leave the circus without us, if he thinks we've run away. We love our father, but he's changed. He's not kind any more. He shouts and says bad things about mother. We're scared of him now! We don't know what's wrong with him!"

"Oh, boy!" said Annette. "This is really bad. We need time to think about what to do."

Ben said, "Annette, we took some food from your fridge. I'm sorry. We were so hungry."

"Oh, Ben! It's O.K.," Annette said, and gave him a big hug. "You two kids need some sleep, and Katie and I need to talk."

Chapter 7

New words: recently, separate, arrange, injury, suggest.

The girls talked for quite a long time. In the end, they decided to speak to Mr. Muller.

"He'll know what to do," they both agreed. With that, they went to bed for a few hours' sleep. Next morning, the girls went to see the ringmaster. They tapped on the door of his trailer.

"Mr. Muller, can we talk to you for a moment? We have a big problem."

"Of course, girls," said Mr. Muller, "Come in."

Annette and Katie sat down and told him the whole story. He listened very carefully to what they had to say.

"You two did exactly the right thing, coming to me," he said. "I know Celine, their mother, and I know Laslo well. He's been very unhappy recently. I know he's homesick but he can't separate those kids from their mother. He must talk to her. Here's what I suggest."

Mr. Muller's plan was simple. He would telephone Celine in England and tell her the story. Then he would arrange for her to fly to Trieste right away. In the meantime, he would talk to Laslo.

He would tell Laslo the children were safe. But he would not tell Laslo where they were. He did not want Laslo to take Ben and Sarah away. He wanted Laslo to talk it over with Celine.

Two days later, Celine arrived at the circus grounds. She was so happy to see her children again. Her injury was mending well. Mr. Muller got the children and their parents together in his trailer. They talked for a long time.

"I'm so sorry, Celine, and I'm sorry, Sarah and Ben," Laslo said. "I'm leaving the circus in Belgrade and going home to my father's farm. He has always wanted me to come back to the farm. He is getting old now and I think it is time. I have never wanted to stay with the circus forever. I think I will be happier on the farm. I'd like you to come with me. But I will understand if you would rather stay with the circus. Will you come and visit me?"

Celine replied, "Of course we will. But the children and I want to stay with the circus. Until the end of the season, anyway. Then we'll think about the future."

Chapter 8

New words: honoured, celebrated, success, mirror, tongue.

At last the season was coming to an end. The Belman Circus headed for Monte Carlo for the international competition. Every four years circuses from all over the world came to Monte Carlo. There were competitions for best horse acts. Also for best animal acts and juggling and trapeze acts. It was always an exciting time for everyone.

Ivan and Sergei had agreed to enter the clown contest. But they wouldn't tell anyone what trick they were going to do. Only Mr. Muller had been told. All they would say was that it was a very old act. It was hard to do well, so it wasn't done often. Most people had never seen it. But it could only be done well with a lot of training. And for weeks now Ivan and Sergei had been practising in secret.

At last the big day arrived. All the people from the circuses in Monte Carlo were there. There was a lot of excitement. Everyone wanted their friends to win a prize.

Katie and Annette started clapping when it was the turn of the clowns. They were very curious to see what Ivan and Sergei were going to do.

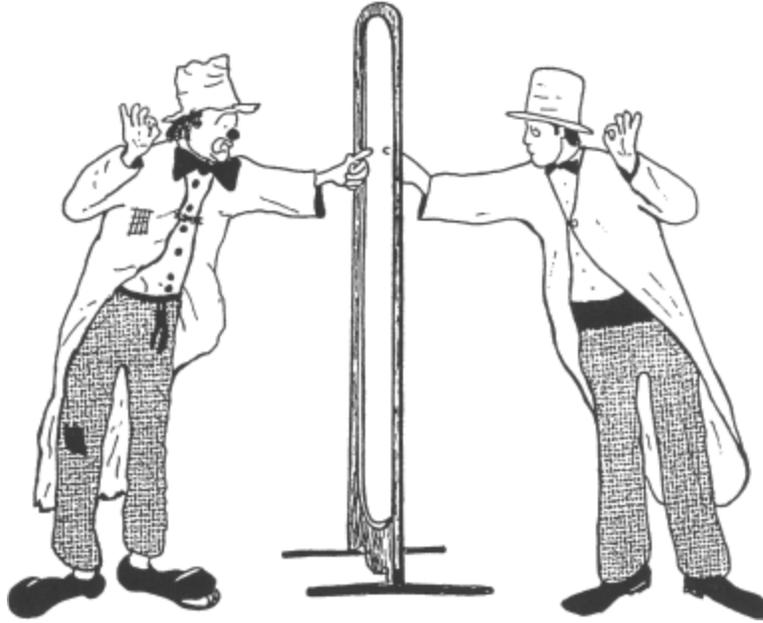
When the act began, people saw Ivan, with white make-up on his face. His costume was shiny and full of colours. From the way Ivan walked, the audience could see he felt great. He knew he looked great. Ivan saw Sergei come in. Sergei was dressed as a tramp. Ivan made fun of Sergei and tried to chase him out of the ring. Sergei looked afraid of Ivan. Then Ivan sent Sergei to get a mirror. Ivan wanted to see how great he looked. When Sergei was out of the ring, everyone heard the sound of breaking glass.

The audience gasped. Everyone wondered what Sergei and Ivan would do now. Katie and Annette looked at each other. How terrible. An accident, right in the middle of the most important act.

Because Sergei was afraid of Ivan, he pretended nothing had happened. He came in carrying a big frame. He set the frame in front of Ivan. Ivan looked into the mirror and saw.....Sergei looking back at him.

Ivan smiled at the mirror. Sergei smiled back. When Ivan pushed his hat to the right, Sergei did the same thing. Ivan looked for a moment.

Then he turned his back to the mirror. Sergei did the same thing. When Ivan looked around very quickly, Sergei turned around too. Ivan stuck out his tongue, and Sergei stuck out his tongue. Ivan looked as if he was not sure things were right. He quickly waved his hand. At the same time Sergei waved his hand. Whatever Ivan did, Sergei did too.



By now the audience was laughing so hard, they were crying. The tears were rolling down their faces.

Ivan and Sergei jumped up and down at the same time. Then Ivan suddenly jumped to the right, out of the mirror frame. Sergei did the same thing. Then Ivan and Sergei were face to face, to the side of the mirror. Ivan pretended to be very angry and hit Sergei with the mirror frame. Then the audience heard the sound of breaking glass again. They went wild, and clapped their hands. Everyone was cheering. The act was very funny.

Then the awards were announced. Ivan and Sergei had won the Golden Clown Award. They were so happy that they cried. The Golden Clown award was theirs! After long careers in the circus, this was their great moment. They had been honoured by their fellow performers. That night everybody in the Belman Circus celebrated Ivan's and Sergei's success. The very next morning, the circus moved to winter quarters in Nice.

It took a couple of weeks to settle into their winter home. Costumes were repaired and cleaned. Repairs were made to the tents and trailers. Props were repaired and painted, ready for the next season. Finally everything was finished.

"What are your plans, Katie?" asked Annette.

"Well," Katie replied, "first I'm off to Amsterdam. To spend time with my family. Then off to Montreal, to the Circus School. I have an idea for a special routine for next year. I have spoken to Mr. Muller. He could use another act. The act is for two people. Interested in joining me?"

"Of course I am," Annette replied. "I thought you'd never ask. But first I have a side trip to make. David has asked me to visit England and meet his family."

Katie laughed. "I'm not surprised at all, Annette. Are you sure you want to work on a new routine with me?"

"I'm positive, Katie," Annette replied. "I love circus life. I can hardly wait for the next season to begin. David is coming back too, and we'll see what will happen. I look forward to a wonderful season next year. A wonderful season for you and me and David. "

New Words

Chapter 1: eastern, juggling, gymnastic, trapeze, performers, costume, design, trailers, greet.

Chapter 2: ringmaster, announces, knocked, surprised, ordinary, veterinarian, parade, paddock, fabrics.

Chapter 3: favourite, perfect, century, leotards, international, festival, competition, award.

Chapter 4: foal, saddles, lowered, stiff, trunk, curled, audience.

Chapter 5: trays, tightrope, quarters, southern, exercises, crew, roustabout, props, supplies, shape.

Chapter 6: puzzled, fuss, scenery, trap, fridge, uncomfortable, crowds, jealous.

Chapter 7: recently, separate, arrange, injury, suggest.

Chapter 8: honoured, celebrated, success, mirror, tongue.