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KI-KI

A CIRCUS TROUPER

By
EDITH J. CRAINE

Pictures
By
KURT
WIESE





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KI-KI

A CIRCUS TROUPER

By
EDITH JANICE CRAINE



Pictures by
KURT WIESE

JUNIOR PRESS BOOKS
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I

A CIRCUS IN TOWN

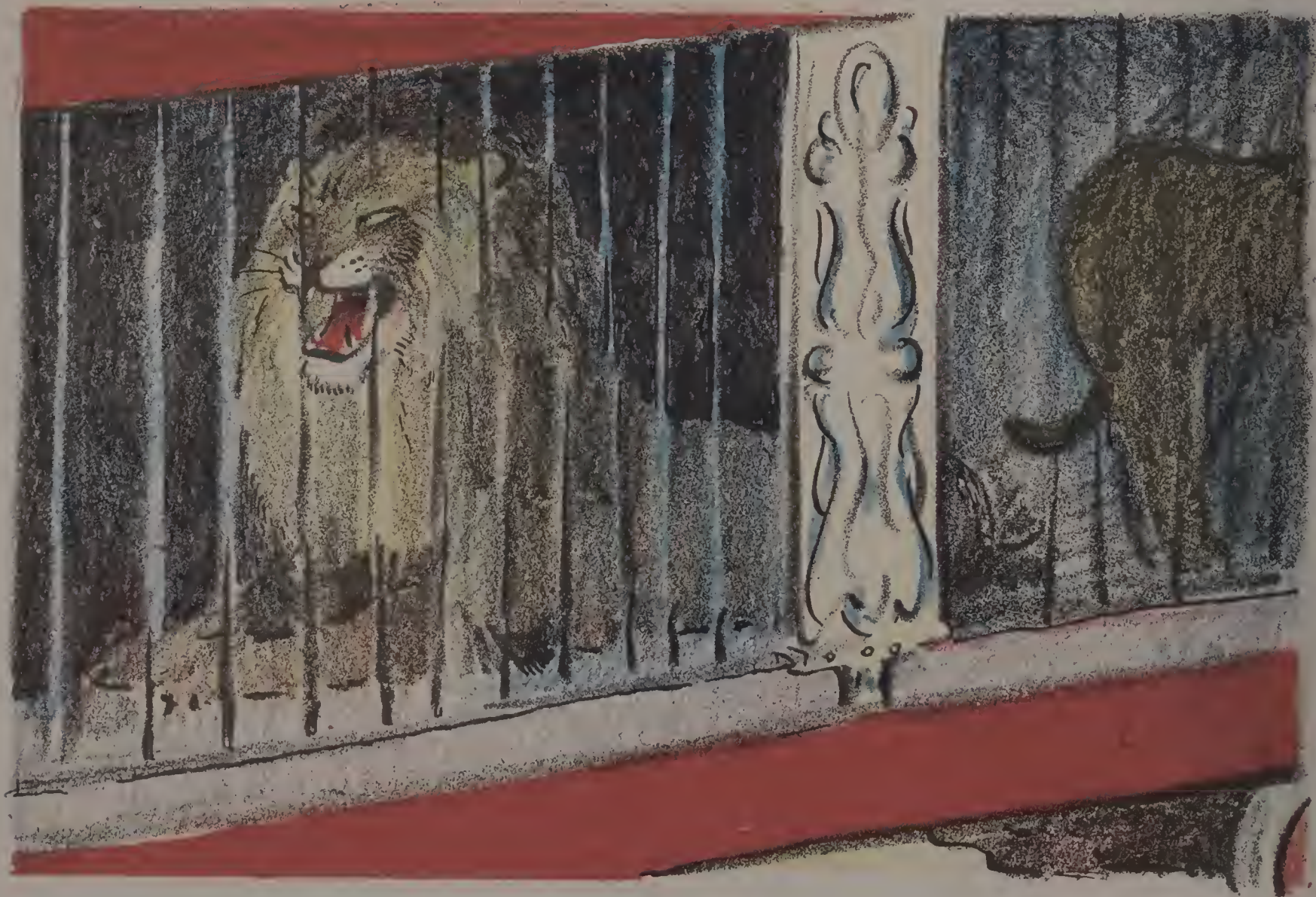
KI-KI was lost!

Ki-Ki did not know that he was lost.

The little dog did know that things all about him were strange. There was not one familiar pair of feet, not one familiar sniff, not one familiar voice.

Ki-Ki knew that he was tired. He was so tired that he could hardly keep his chin up. So tired there was hardly a wag left in his wee tail. So tired that he straddled his legs wide apart to keep them from doubling under him. The tiredness came from running and running, here and there, from one place to another, in search of something he knew, something familiar. He braced himself against a railing and blinked bravely to keep his eyes open.

Suddenly, an enormous wagon rumbled past and something inside roared furiously as though very angry. It was a fearful sound.





Suddenly, an enormous wagon rumbled past

The little dog was so frightened that he forgot his weariness. He did not take an instant to look where he was going. But he jumped as high and as far as he could, and he landed on the cushioned seat of a basket wagon.

With a faint yap, Ki-Ki rolled himself into a tight ball and snuggled down. He tucked his nose under his forepaws, and closed his eyes. Right away he went fast asleep, without knowing where he was, or what had given him such a fright.

While he slept, Ki-Ki dreamed of familiar things and his tiny body quivered happily. He slept and slept and slept. He was awakened by the sound of laughter. It was the sort of laughter that just pops right out of people when there is a pleased, very kindly feeling deep inside them. It comes when something makes them feel so good they have to smile out loud.

That laugh took away every speck of Ki-Ki's tiredness. With a gay little spring he was on his feet. He stood straight and firm now, and he held his head up.

Just ahead, the little dog saw that a great pair of gates was standing wide open, and that he was



He was pushing the wagon

going forward in a basket wagon. The wagon had shafts at the back, and a spotted pony was harnessed between the shafts, with his head facing the wagon. He was pushing the wagon. A small boy, under a very big hat, was astride the back of the pony, and the jolliest clown was driving.

“It’s the clown!”

“He said that he would come!”

“The circus! Oh! Oh! Oh!”

“The clown and his little boy!”

“See the pony. Ha-ha-ha! He’s pushing the wagon!”

“Oh, look!”

“Elephants, with royal covers!”

“I hear bears!”

“There are bears. Brown ones. And look, a big white one!”

“Here they come!”

“Real tigers, and real lions!”

“Wild ones!”

“Wild as anything!”

There were so many shouts from all sides that the noise became a great roar that rolled right into the air.



“Real tigers, and real lions!”



Ki-Ki did not know that those shouts came from boys and girls of a hospital. There were boys and girls, big ones and little ones, who had to be in chairs, or on couches, or had to hold themselves up with crutches until doctors and nurses could make their bodies well and strong.

But, Ki-Ki could tell that they were very, very happy, so he lifted himself right up in plain sight, and barked as hard as he could. To be sure, it wasn't very loud barking. Only those who were nearby could hear him at all, but he did not mind that. A big, kindly hand kept him from jumping under the feet of the elephant, or into a cage and down the throat of a lion. The lion was yawning at the moment.

“Hello, Trouper! Want to help with the show?” said the clown, as he lifted the little dog up into his arms.

Ki-Ki did not answer, but his red tongue went out, swift as lightning, in a wide lick on the clown’s face. The lick nearly took the clown’s paint off.

“There, there. All right, it’s settled, but you must not spoil my looks,” laughed the clown. He tucked Ki-Ki under his arm where everyone could see the dog and the pair led the great circus parade around the courtyard.



Everywhere boys and girls were watching eagerly. Some were on a platform so low they could reach out and touch the animals, or talk to the performers. Others were on balconies, and they leaned over. There were three rows of those balconies.

Besides the children, there were grown-ups. They all wore smiles that went from ear to ear. Why, there were even twitches and twinkles about the lips and eyes of the most serious-looking doctors.

Around and around went the parade, so that everybody could see every single thing. The elephants poked out their long trunks for peanuts. The lions roared their fiercest, as they balanced on huge balls. Cowboys, on plunging, bucking broncos, whooped and threw their big hats into the air. Their long lariats opened into wide loops with a delightful swish, then poised and dropped. One caught the clown just as he was alighting from his wagon.





One caught the clown just as he was alighting

“What do you mean, sir?” The clown pretended to be very angry.

“Sorry! So sorry, sir. You see, my rope slipped,” said the cowboy very politely.

“I do not see! It is disgraceful,” answered the clown. He had the worst time getting rid of that lariat. It tangled first in one place, then another.

The clown's little boy tried to help. Ki-Ki tried to help and was tossed over and over. A little lame girl with a crutch tried to help, and nearly got caught. It was all so funny that the hospital children laughed and laughed until their sides ached.

The doctors and nurses laughed until their sides ached.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” someone shouted. “Attention!”

“It is time for ice cream,” roared someone else.

“Hurrah!”

“Hurrah for the circus!”

“Hurrah for the clown!”

“We thank you,” the clown waved his hat and bowed very low.

“We thank you for giving us such a good time,” called the children.



“Ladies and gentlemen,” said the clown. “I want to return this lovely little dog.” He held Ki-Ki up, but no one seemed to understand. “I guess he belongs to one of you boys or girls. When I first saw him, I thought he was a brown, woolly muff on legs. He is so little, he surely could get lost in my pocket.” The clown balanced Ki-Ki on the palm of his hand.

“Hurrah for the little dog,” shouted a girl with a crutch.

“Who owns him?”

“He does not belong to us—”

“He doesn’t belong to us—”

Ki-Ki did not belong to any boy or girl there.

“Then, he must belong to a doctor or a nurse,” said the clown.

“Not to us,” said the nurses.

“Nor to us,” said the doctors.

“Land of Liberty! Where, in the name of curly lollipops did you come from, Trouper?” said the clown. He was puzzled as he could be.





Ki-Ki did not belong to any boy or girl there

“Oh, Dad, I saw something jump into the wagon when we hitched up this afternoon,” said the clown’s little boy.

“Was it this fellow?”

“I was going to get some water for the pony, and did not stop to look. But, maybe it was.”

“My word, Trouper. Did you run away?”

“Perhaps he is lost,” said a nurse.

“He looks like a thoroughbred toy ‘Pom’ to me,” said one of the doctors.

“We must watch the newspapers and find out who lost you,” the clown told Ki-Ki.

The tiny dog snuggled close on the clown’s arm, his tail wagging as hard as it could wag, as if to say that he did not feel lost a bit, and that he was quite content to be a trouper forever and ever.





II

THE CIRCUS IN THE COUNTRY

“CUPID! Cupid! Cupid!” The clown’s little boy called three times. The little boy was named Peter Webber. He was stretched out on his stomach on the floor, but his heels were in the air, his chin resting on one palm, and his other hand held a newspaper. He was reading about dogs in the Lost and Found column.

A few feet away from Peter, Ki-Ki was lapping water out of a shiny new pan, which was all his own. He knew very well that his name was Ki-Ki, but he couldn’t tell that to Peter. Of course, he couldn’t tell anyone. After all, what did it matter? He would jump and frisk when they called him Trouper.



“What do you find in the newspaper, Peter?” the clown asked.

“Pom-er-an-ian—”

“Pomeranian?”

“Yes, sir. The newspaper says that the dog answers to the name of Cupid,” Peter read slowly.

“This pup does not answer to that name. What else does the newspaper say, son?”

“Two years old—”

“This chap isn’t more than a year old. Any more lost dogs?”

“Yes, Dad. Listen to these. Lost, a brindle bull pup—”

“That does not fit.”

“Lost, a small brown terrier,” Peter read aloud.

“We did not find a terrier.”

“A black Scottie. That’s all.” Peter folded the newspaper, and Ki-Ki was sure it was time for a romp.

“We must keep watching,” said the clown. “After a while, we shall find out who owns him.”



"Lost, a small brown terrier," Peter read aloud

The clown's name was John Webber and he had deep lines in the corners of his eyes. These lines made his face look as if he were always ready for a good laugh.

"I wonder how the little dog got away from his master," said Mrs. Webber.

"Perhaps he jumped out of an automobile when no one was looking," her husband answered.

"Maybe his owner thought he was asleep among the cushions," suggested Peter.

"He is so little," said Mrs. Webber. "That might have happened."

"And we must be careful he does not do it again," Peter declared. "I am going to keep watch over you, little fellow." Peter caught the dog in his arms and held him close.

A whole week had passed since Ki-Ki had been found on the front seat of the circus wagon, and he had helped the clown give the crippled children at the hospital so much fun.

Now, it was the very last night the circus would be in town. So the clown and his family were in their own dressing room packing boxes and bags for a journey.



The clown and his family were in their own dressing room

Outside, in the great arena of Madison Square Garden, men and women were shouting orders and directions. High poles were lowered, ladders folded, long ropes coiled, and flags were piled carefully.

“Will you be ready soon, Mr. Webber?” Someone gave a thundering knock on the door and Ki-Ki barked.

“All set,” the clown answered. “Come in.”

The door was thrown open and Mr. Lawrence, who owned the circus, came in. He glanced at Peter.

“Want to ride the elephant, Peter?”

“Peter had better ride in the car with us,” said Mrs. Webber.

“Besides, I want to take care of the dog,” said Peter.





Men and women were shouting orders and directions

“Hang him on your father’s watch chain,” Mr. Lawrence laughed, “or keep him on a sheet of fly paper. I’ll be trotting along. Good night.”

“Good night,” answered Peter and his father.

Peter heard a clanking of heavy chains and knew that the wide doors were being opened. In another moment, there came the sound of trucks rumbling into the street. It made another parade, really, only this time the huge animal cages were covered. But, they were not covered so tightly that growls could not escape.

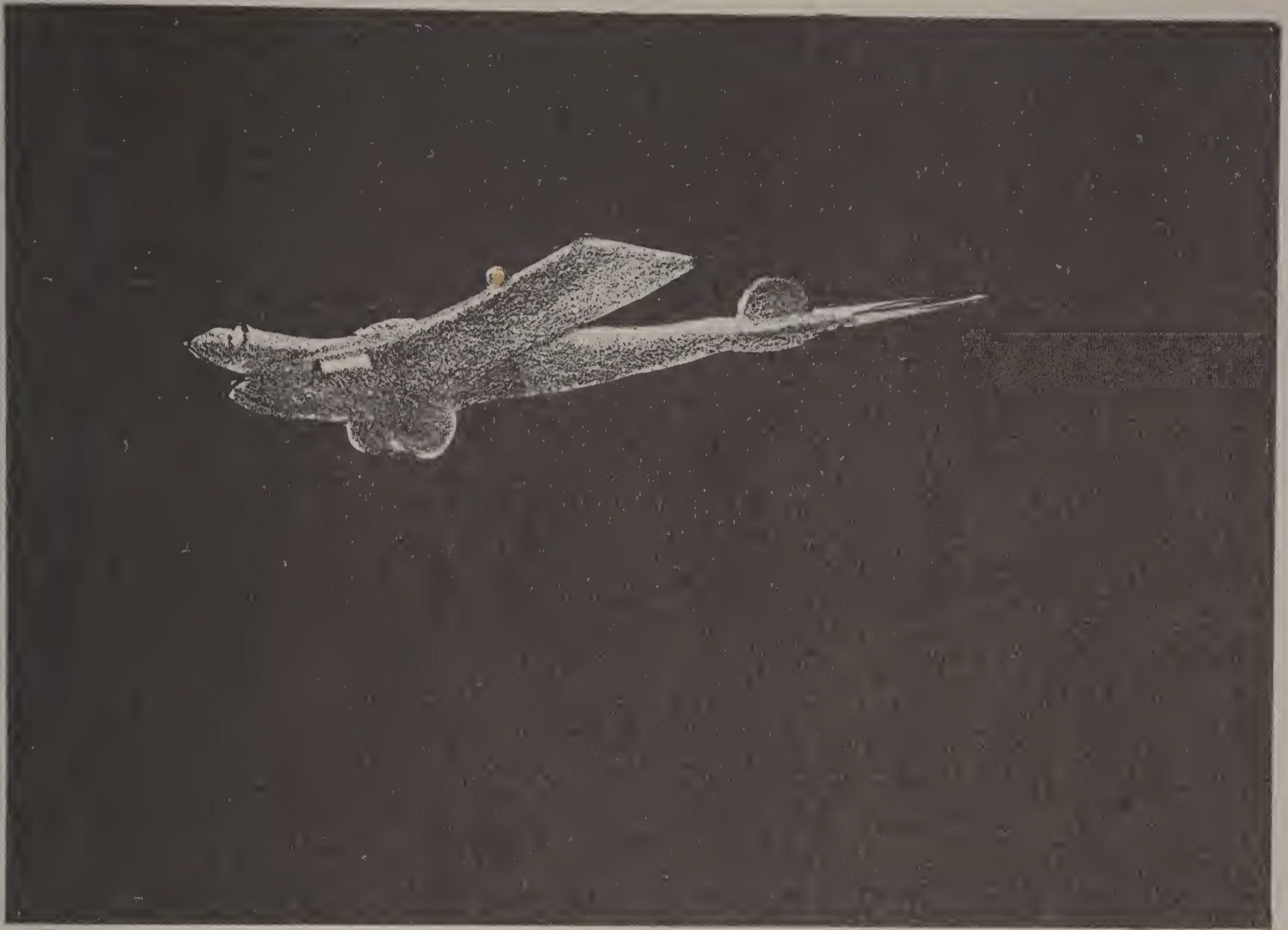
Presently the clown and his family were in their own automobile. Because it was warm, the top was lowered. It was after midnight and the city streets were very quiet.

There was hardly a cloud in the sky. But, there were stars and stars and stars. Little ones and big ones, blinking as if every one of them were curious to see what was happening.

“It seems to me,” said Peter, “the stars are looking at us.”

“I believe they are, dear,” his mother answered.

“Oh, there is a shooting star. Dad, look!” Peter sat up straight and called excitedly.



“That seems slow for a shooting star, dear,” said Mrs. Webber.

“It isn’t a shooting star, son.” added his father.

“Oh, that’s right,” Peter chuckled. “It’s an airplane. That red tail light, so high up, did fool me.”

Peter leaned back so that he could watch the course of the airplane. Soon its light was bigger and it circled low. The boy in the moving caravan made out the hum of the motor. The sound died away. The light grew fainter and fainter until it was quite lost in the Milky Way.



Mr. Webber was driving swiftly along one of the side streets, but soon he had to stop short. Perhaps the noise of the brakes disturbed the lions. Anyway they began to roar. When the lions roared, the tigers snarled, the horses stamped, and the dogs barked. There was such a great noise that echoes started ringing in the city street.

But Peter did not hear a sound. His head slipped onto his mother's shoulder. He did not even know that she drew a light robe close about him, and over the little dog that had adopted the family.



When the lions roared, the tigers snarled

When Peter awakened, the caravan was not moving. He was in his pajamas, snug in his own cot, where his mother had tucked him gently, hours before. The long caravan had come to a halt, and the cot was in the Webber's own tent. From outside came familiar sounds. They were sounds that the little boy knew very well were made by men putting things into shape for the opening of the circus.

There were smells too, very pleasant ones. One was the sweet fragrance from a meadow where the hay had just been cut. Another fragrance came from the campfire breakfasts. These were enough to make any boy hurry out of bed and into his clothes.

Peter found that his mother and father were waiting breakfast for him. Ki-Ki was waiting too, but he did not mind because he had eaten a biscuit.

"Good morning, Mother and Dad," said Peter.

"Good morning," they answered.

"Hungry, dear?" asked his mother.

"Hollow as a bass drum," he said.

"Well, pitch in," invited his father.

The boy did not need to be urged. He had nearly finished his breakfast when something popped into his head.



“Dad, this is the country, isn’t it?”

“It certainly is.”

“You and Mother promised that when we were in the country, I might ride the big elephant, Queen Bess, some afternoon.”

“So we did. Are your lessons finished?”

“They are, Dad, every single lesson.”

“Very well. I see no reason why you should not ride Queen Bess this afternoon, if Mr. Lawrence does not object. If he says that it is safe, you may.”

“Thanks, Dad. I’ll find out.” Peter had finished his breakfast, so he gave them both a good hug. Then he hurried out to find Mr. Lawrence.



Things were coming along pretty well. The enormous tent was in place. Ropes and braces were being made fast on the outside. Small tents were going up for the side shows. Many-colored flags and streamers, that Peter had seen being packed the night before, were now waving gaily in the breeze. In the sky, not a cloud could be seen. The sun was beaming down on the circus, and crowds of people were gathering to enjoy the fun.

“You will have to stay inside, Trouper,” Peter explained as they hurried along, but the little dog only frisked. Soon the small boy found Mr. Lawrence, who said that it would be quite all right for him to ride Queen Bess that afternoon. So Peter raced back to the family tent to tell his mother.



The enormous tent was in place

"I'll get you ready, dear," Mrs. Webber said as she set to work, adding: "you will be very careful, son."

"Of course, Mother. Will you watch?"

"I can watch the start, at least," she told him.

"Where's my elephant boy?" Mr. Lawrence shouted a bit later.

"Right here. All ready," Peter called. He wore red sandals with a high turban to match, and brown tights.

"Run along," urged his mother.

"Be a good fellow, Trouper," the boy said, as he fastened the leash to the leg of the cot. "I'll come for you soon." He raced off to his place in the parade, leaving Ki-Ki looking dreadfully disappointed. The little dog tugged at the leash and barked woe-fully.

"Speed up there," roared the elephant-man.

The elephant's trunk coiled gently about Peter's waist.

"Going up!" Mr. Lawrence laughed as he caught Peter's hand to steady him.

"Whew!" said Peter as he took his place between the elephant's great ears.

"Forward—march!"



Queen Bess moved forward majestically and Peter was so happy that he could hardly contain himself. He wished that he could stand on his head, but that would surely spoil the wonderful turban.

Inside the huge tent, the band was playing such lively music that it made everyone quite gay.

The parade formed as it did for the children at the hospital, with the clown in his funny wagon, pushed by the spotted pony. Only this time, there was no small boy astride the pony's back.





Then came Queen Bess with Peter Webber seated cross-legged on her broad head. There were more elephants, followed by cages of wild animals, roaring and snarling furiously.

Through the performers' entrance went the clown, straight to the center ring, under the gay banners and swinging festoons. From all sides of the arena arose a rousing cheer of welcome. Boys and girls, big and little; men and women, large and small, clapped and shouted at the top of their voices. Around the center ring went the grand parade.

Suddenly, it seemed to Peter, that he heard a different sort of sound. As soon as he could, he looked around to see what it was. Peter was so startled that he forgot how high he was sitting. But the man behind him caught hold of his arm.



“Steady, big boy,” said Mr. Lawrence.

“Yes, sir.” Peter’s teeth chattered. “O-o—oh, Trouper!”

The small dog, his leash dragging, was dashing headlong into the center ring. Heedless of swinging tight-rope tackle, tramping hoofs, and busy performers, he leaped on and on. Two men raced to his rescue and tried to toss him to safety, but the small dog slipped from their hands.

Ki-Ki landed on his side and rolled and tumbled before he regained his feet. With an impudent little yap, he started again.

“Hurrah for that dog!”

The audience thought it a part of the show, and cheered lustily.

“Good boy!”



“Go to it, Old Timer!”

One end of the leash caught the end of a pole, but held only an instant, then Ki-Ki pulled himself free.

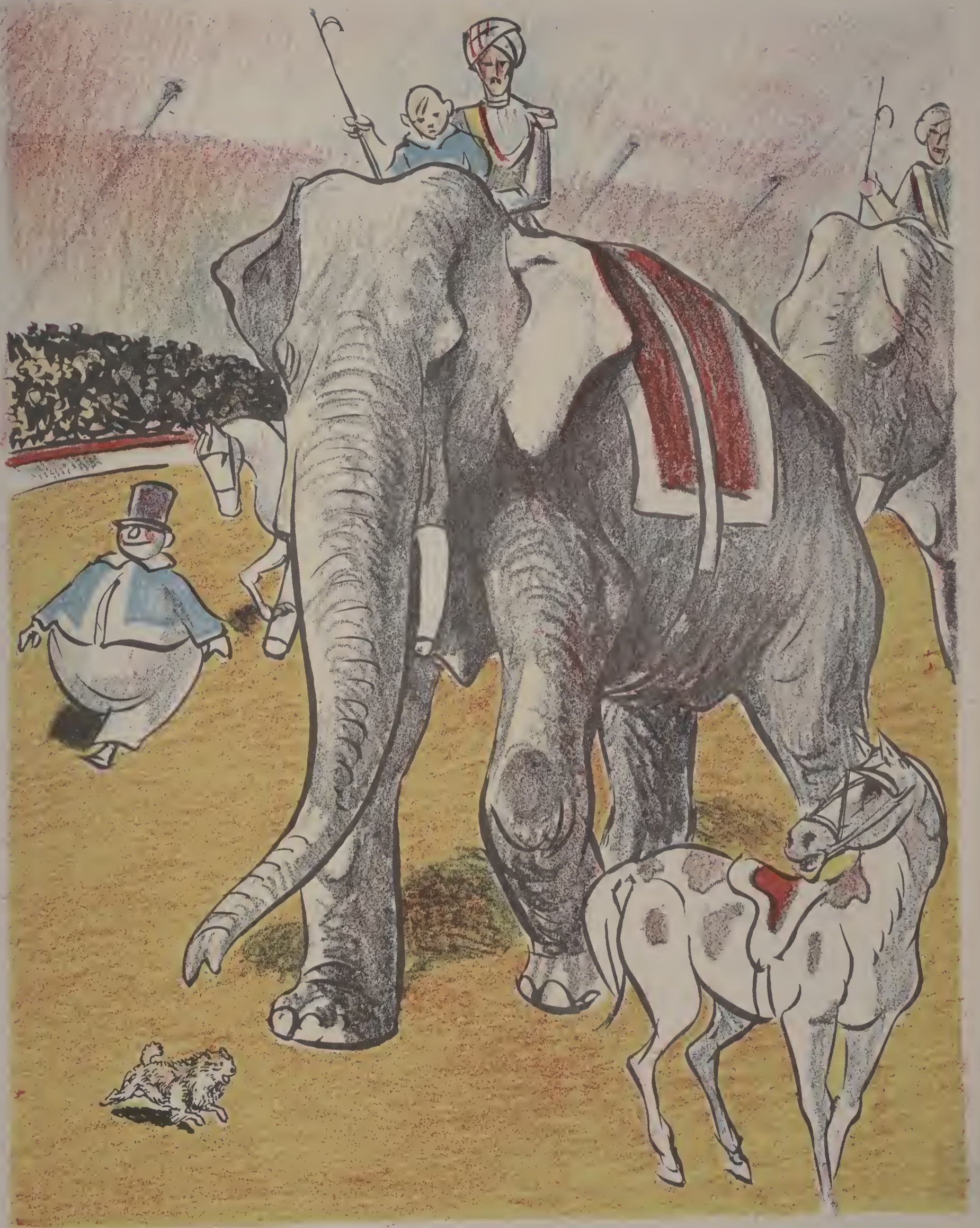
“Woof! Woof!” He headed straight for the parade.

“He’ll be trampled. He’ll be hurt,” Peter choked.

By that time, Peter could not see the dog. Bravely he blinked back tears that welled in his eyes, and gulped down a great lump that rose in his throat. He was sure that Queen Bess would crush the tiny dog. The caravan kept moving steadily, then Peter felt the elephant sway slightly. Her long trunk was swinging from side to side.

Then, just as she had lifted Peter up to his place on her head, so Queen Bess picked up Ki-Ki.





The caravan kept moving steadily

“Oh, Trouper, Trouper!” Peter choked. He could hardly believe his eyes. He leaned forward to catch his pet, but Queen Bess had another idea. She waved the small dog back and forth so that everyone could see him. Then she set him down on the broad back of the spotted pony right in front of her. How everyone laughed!

Of course Ki-Ki had no idea what it was all about, but he understood merry laughs, chuckles, and ha-ha’s. He gave his head a funny little shake, then stood on his hind feet, his forefeet waving, as if he were greeting the cheering crowd.

“Good Queen Bess!”

“Cunning pup!”

More cheers and shouts. The shouts were so thunderous that they nearly brought down the tent poles.

“Cheers for the pup! Cheers for the elephant!”

That is how a little lost dog became a really-for-real trouper.





III

KI-KI BECOMES A REGULAR TROUPER

“**H**OW about adding this toy Pom to your act, Mr. Webber?” asked Mr. Lawrence, as he came into the Webbers’ tent after the performance.

Ki-Ki was snuggled contentedly in Peter’s arms, but he looked up now, as if he knew perfectly well they were talking about him.

“I never saw an audience more pleased with anything,” said Mrs. Webber, with a smile.

“The dog does not belong to us, Mr. Lawrence,” the clown replied. “If he did, I’d do it in a minute. He’s a great fellow.”

“He is clever. It is queer that his owner has never showed up,” answered Mr. Lawrence.

“We put advertisements in newspapers, and I read the Lost and Found column,” said Peter. “But, it didn’t help find the owner.”

“I can’t see any harm in using him,” said Mr. Lawrence.

“The little dog might not do it again,” said the clown.

“True,” Mr. Lawrence answered. “But suppose you try. Tie him, Peter, as you did today, and if he doesn’t break away, I’ll get one of the boys to call him.”

“But, suppose Queen Bess does not pick him up,” objected Peter.





“The little dog might not do it again,” said the clown

“Don’t worry about the elephant,” chuckled Mr. Lawrence. “If he gets close, she’ll pick him up, just as she did this afternoon.”

“He’s such a little dog, Mr. Lawrence,” said Peter. “He might get hurt if he tried it again.”

“We’ll do our best to prevent that, lad. There were two chaps in the ring today who tried to catch him. He surely gave them a great run. I could not help laughing when the Pom dodged them both. Then, the little rascal barked at them both as if he were as big as a lion.” Mr. Lawrence patted the dog’s head.

“If only he doesn’t get hurt,” said Peter.

“I’ll have an extra man in the ring to make sure that he doesn’t,” Mr. Lawrence promised.

“Suppose we put Trouper’s act on tomorrow afternoon. That is the time there are more children,” suggested the clown.

“How the children did cheer him today!” Mrs. Webber chuckled.

“If you do as well tomorrow as you did today, Trouper,” and Mr. Lawrence rubbed the dog’s brown ears, “you’ll have to have your picture taken.”

“Woof! Woof!”



“That sounds to me as if you like the idea,” laughed the clown.

“Shall I put a ribbon on him, or make him a fancy collar?” Mrs. Webber wanted to know.

“He might get tangled in it,” said Peter quickly.

“I like him best as he is,” said the clown.

“So do I,” agreed Mr. Lawrence. “We’ll try the act tomorrow afternoon. I am sure it is going over big. Thanks. So long, folks, and you too, you brown rascal.” Mr. Lawrence gave Ki-Ki a kindly poke, and left the tent.

“Woof!” That was all the small dog had to say, but he did it in his very best style.

Peter was glad about the plan because it meant that he could be the elephant boy again.

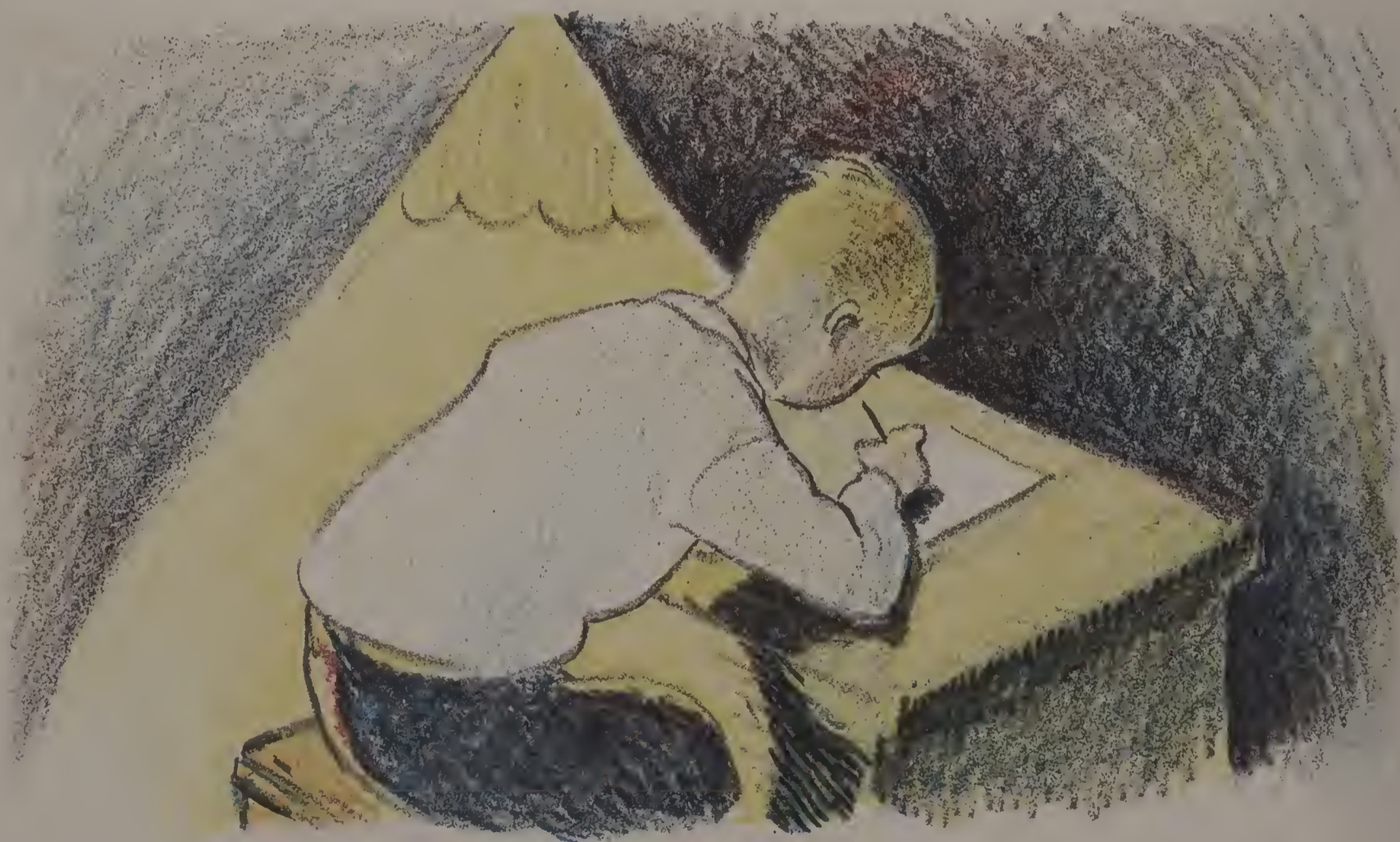
“Son, any unfinished lessons?” the clown wanted to know.

“Only my arithmetic, Dad. I’ll get it right away,” the boy promised, and he handed Ki-Ki to his mother.

Peter took out his arithmetic lesson but it was hard to think of figures because thoughts of tomorrow would pop up. He scowled furiously at his pencil, and scowled furiously at the paper. Not a word did he say as he worked. At last he handed a neat sheet to his father.

“Looks very good,” said the clown. He examined the problems.

“Any mistakes, Dad?” Peter asked anxiously.





They had a jolly romp in the broad meadow

“Not a mistake, son,” his father smiled. “Now, get out into this fine country air, and play.”

“Yes, sir.”

Peter took the small dog and they had a jolly romp in the broad meadow beyond the circus tents, until Mrs. Webber called them to have their supper.

A bit later, good nights were said, and Peter curled up on his own cot, with Ki-Ki close by apparently asleep. The small dog looked exactly like a tight ball of fur, but twice he peeked out with one eye.

Morning came at last, and Peter could hardly wait for the afternoon to come. But the hours finally passed, and in the big tent, a great crowd was gathering as fast as it could. No one wanted to miss a single part of the show. Some had heard of the little dog who rode the spotted pony, and now they talked about him eagerly, while they waited for the opening.

Then, all was ready. The clown was in his funny make-up. He took his place in his funny wagon, with the pony hitched in facing the wagon. Behind stood Queen Bess, with Peter seated proudly between her ears, and Mr. Lawrence right behind, with a long lance.

“All set. Let’s go!”

The band struck up its liveliest music and the spotted pony pushed the wagon. Once inside the tent they were greeted with rousing cheers. Then came Queen Bess. Peter could hardly keep his mind on his own part, because he was thinking of the little dog. He wondered if Trouper would come racing in as before. Would he be all right?

“I told you. There’s the dog!”

“There he is. See him! Oh!”

Peter glanced around anxiously. Sure enough, the small dog, his leash dragging, came tearing in. What a time the men in the ring had trying to catch him! Ki-Ki slipped through their fingers as if he were greased. Away he went. Once he barked impudently, then ran on toward the parade as fast as his tiny body could move.

“Oh! Oh!” Peter could not hold back the cry.

The elephant’s long trunk moved from side to side, then came up slowly, holding the Pom safely. Amid the joyous cheers of the crowd, Ki-Ki was put down on the broad back of the spotted pony. Again he stood on his hind feet, his forefeet beating the air.

“Good fellow!” roared the crowd.



So Ki-Ki did his part every afternoon

“It’s great!” Mr. Lawrence laughed heartily.

“He is cunning,” Peter nodded. “Suppose he was a circus dog before?”

“I wondered about that too, Peter, but it seems to me that an owner would have shown up long ago, if he were.”

After that they did not talk any more and the performance went on with all its jolly fun. There were deep, rumbling chuckles, chortles, and roaring ha-ha’s from all sides. Hands must have hurt from so much clapping for the clown, for Queen Bess, the spotted pony, and the tiny brown dog.

So, after that performance, Ki-Ki did his part every afternoon, and became a really-for-real trouper. Everyone knew that he enjoyed himself, for his tiny brown eyes would sparkle with fun, and he never minded a bit when Peter fastened his string to the leg of the cot.





IV

KI-KI IS A HERO

THE circus traveled on and on. Often the tents were pitched near small villages, and sometimes in the big open meadows of the country. A few times they played in huge buildings in big cities. But, wherever they played, an eager crowd gathered.

One night, after the performance, it was so warm that the circus folk put their cots out-of-doors, or spread blankets on the ground to sleep under the stars. The clown found a place for his family where there was a little breeze, and Peter, on his own cot, drifted off to dreamland with the small dog under his arm.

Ki-Ki slept as soundly as anyone. In fact, he snored a bit. He had a funny little snore, more like a cat's purr than anything else. After a while, he rolled over on his back and snored louder than ever. That waked him up; but he went back to sleep for a whole hour. Then his eyes popped open again and he started to snuggle closer to Peter. He half sat up and sniffed. He sniffed again. The air was queer. It was choky.

"Woof! Woof!" Ki-Ki barked. No one paid any attention to him. Everyone was sound asleep. "Woof! Woof! Woof!" Peter did not wake, but he drew his pet closer. "Woof! Woof!"

"What's the matter?" said Peter drowsily. "Go to sleep, old fellow." The boy was off to dreamland again.

"Woof! Woof! Woof!" This time Ki-Ki barked as hard as he could and scratched at Peter's pajama jacket.

"Keep still! Don't," said Peter.

"Woof! Woof! Woof!" Ki-Ki insisted.

"Trouper, what is the matter with you?" Peter sat up and drew a long breath. "Come—"

"Better keep that dog quiet," someone grumbled.

“You never acted so—” Then Peter noticed something queer. He sniffed hard and sat up very straight.

“Keep still, over there.”

“Dad! Dad!” Peter called.

“What is it, son?” The clown came running.

“I smell something queer. Trouper waked me—”

“You smell something queer?” The clown drew a deep breath. “Whew! Smells like smoke. Get your clothes on, Peter. Be sure to put on your shoes. I’ll find out what is wrong.”

Mr. Webber hurried off. Peter did not lose an instant doing what his father had told him to do. He slipped his knickers over his pajamas, then hurried to his mother. She was wide awake and nearly dressed.

“Do not be afraid, dear,” she said very quietly.

“I’m not,” Peter answered.

“I think there is a fire nearby. Some men are sleeping over there. Better wake them. And, Peter, be very very careful. If you should do such a thing as shout ‘fire’ it would startle everyone who heard you, and some would surely get hurt.”

“Yes, Mother. I’ll be careful.” He left Ki-Ki with



"It's time to get up," Peter answered

her and made his way to the nearest cots. By that time tiny flames were licking swiftly through the grass a short distance from the tents. The boy shook the nearest man.

“What’s up?” the man wanted to know.

“It’s time to get up,” Peter answered. “Mr. Lawrence wants you.”

“O.K. Be ready in a jiffy.”

So Peter wakened four people and none of them was startled. But it did not take them long to understand why Mr. Lawrence wanted them. Presently everyone was aroused. Shouts sounded from all sides of the circus grounds as the fire hose was attached and put to work. Some of the men carried buckets of water to help.

“There, that’s the last,” shouted Mr. Lawrence as he doused a blazing stick so quickly it sizzled.

“Good thing the fire was discovered in time,” said one of the men.



“It might have done a frightful lot of damage,” Mr. Lawrence answered. “Who discovered it?”

“The clown’s boy waked me,” said the man.

“Trouper waked me,” Peter explained.

“Well, we owe a great deal to that dog,” declared Mr. Lawrence.

Everyone was too excited to go to bed, so they all stayed up. They were eating breakfast when a newspaper reporter came to get a story for his paper.

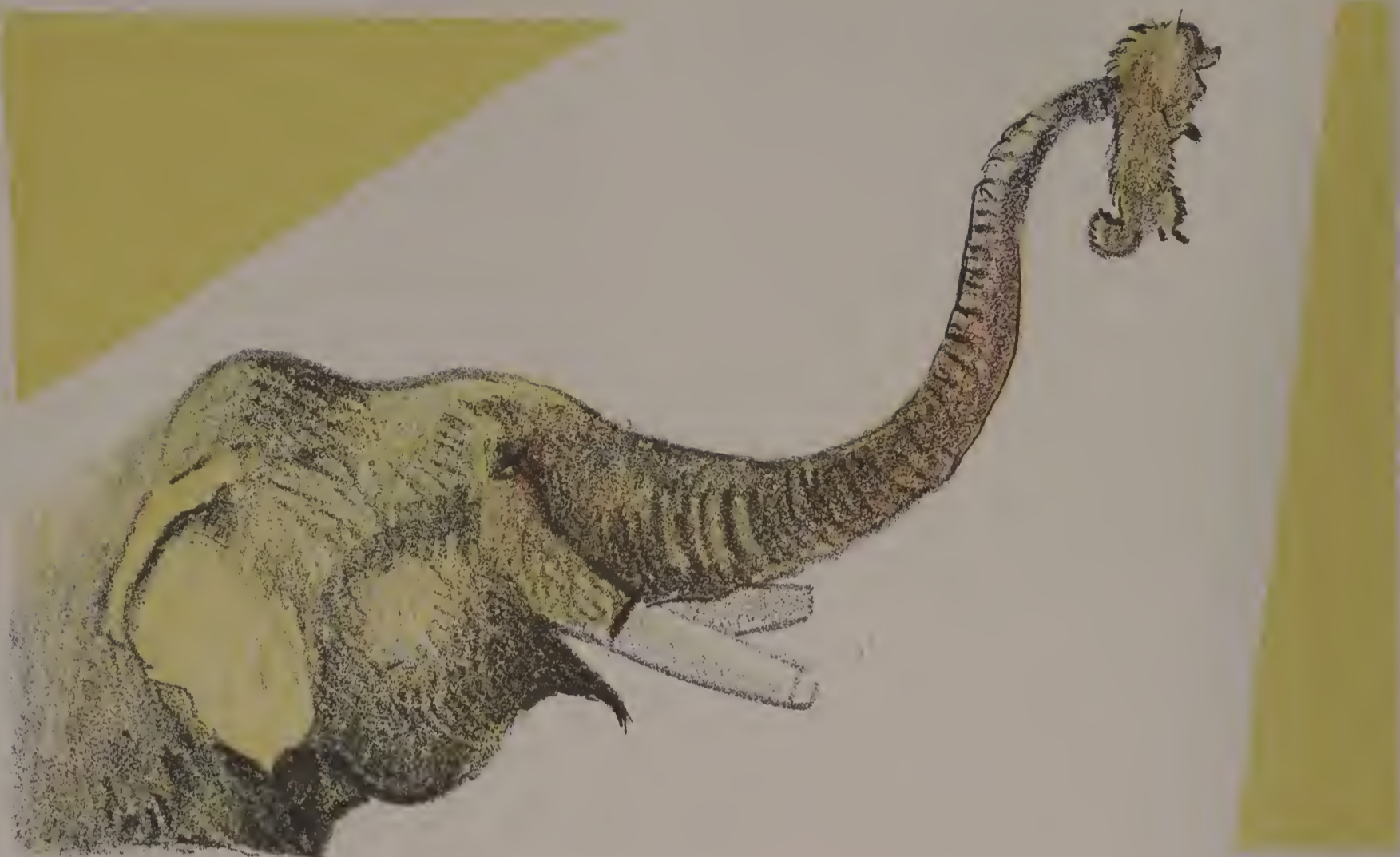
“Wish you’d let me have a picture of that pup. Why, he’s a hero and deserves a medal,” said the reporter.

“Of course you may have a picture,” agreed Mr. Webber, and went to get one.

“He joined the show early this summer,” said Mrs. Webber. Then she told the reporter how the toy Pom had been discovered when the clown was on his way to perform for the crippled children at the hospital.

So, that afternoon, Peter and the circus folk were reading the story in the newspaper, and Trouper certainly was a hero. His picture was on the very front page.

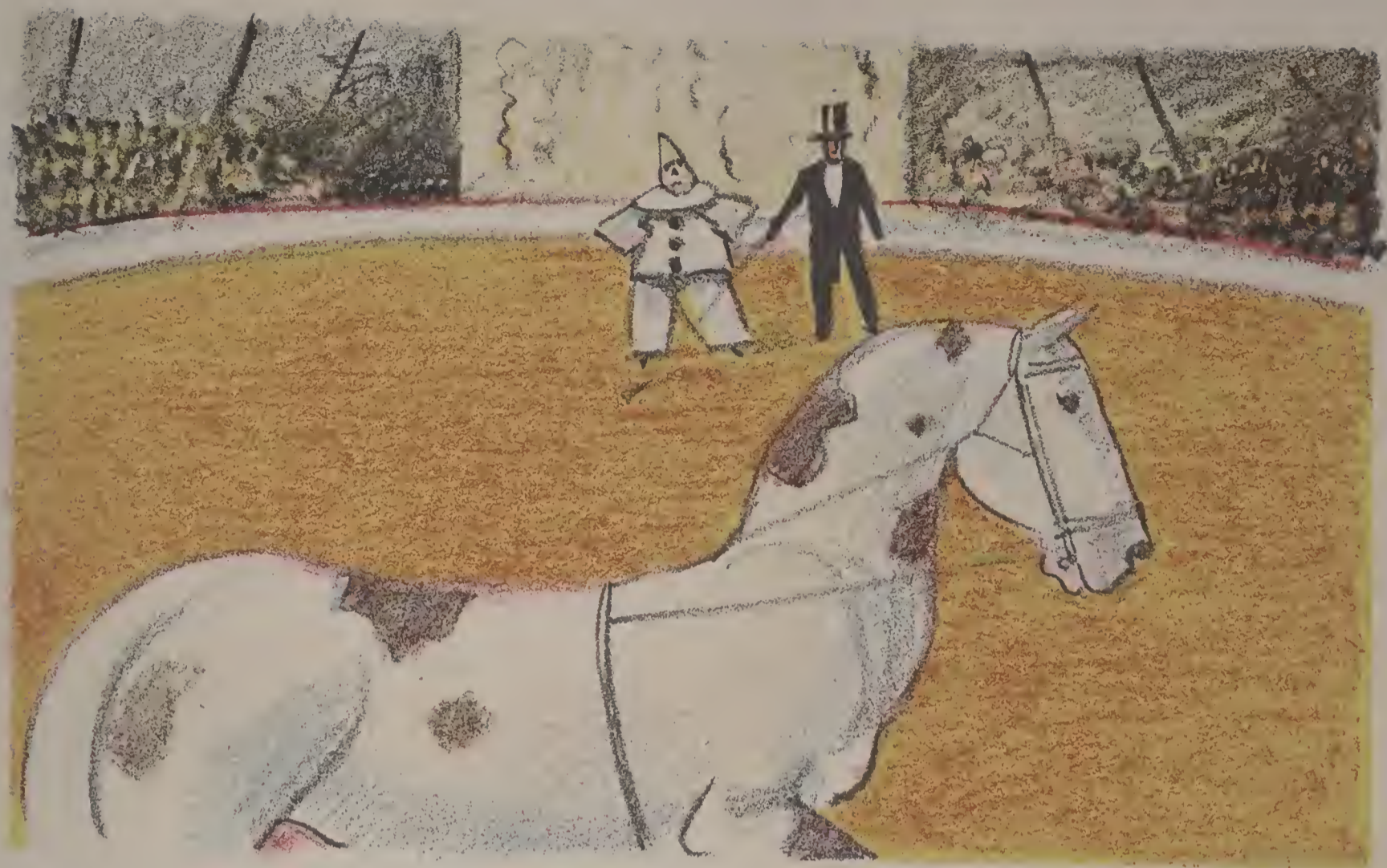
The afternoon crowd was larger than ever. The



clown and the spotted pony came on, followed by Queen Bess. They were greeted by loud applause. Queen Bess waved the small dog twice as long as usual before placing him on the back of the spotted pony. At last the act was over and the clown was driving out of the ring in his funny wagon.

“Ki-Ki! Ki-Ki!” came a voice.

The small dog wriggled at the sound. He wriggled so hard that he nearly tumbled down under the hoofs of a band of wild broncos. A tall man was hurrying as fast as he could toward the Webbers. Peter gulped, because he felt sure that it must be the man who owned his beloved Pom.



“Hello,” said Peter, trying hard not to show how much he minded.

“I read about the dog and came to see him,” said the man quickly. “He’s the one I lost.”

“We advertised him and watched the newspaper,” the clown explained, introducing himself.

“My name is Adams,” said the man. “The dog belonged to my sister. I always have big dogs myself. Perhaps that is why I was so careless with this little fellow. I didn’t mean to neglect him, but I must admit that I was clear across the country before I missed him. I searched and advertised in the West. Never thought I had lost him in the East.”

“Trouper’s a great dog. Guess you want him now,” said Peter as he bravely handed Ki-Ki to his owner.

“No. I really do not. You see, my sister went to Europe. Since she could not take Ki-Ki with her, she gave him to me. When I saw her off on the ship, I left him in the car. Where he got out, I do not know.”

“We thought he might be a circus dog,” said Peter.

“My sister always said that if Ki-Ki did anything and people laughed, he’d do it again.”

“That explains how easily he learned to perform in the circus, Mr. Adams,” said the clown.

“My sister will not be back for many years, Mr. Webber, and if you care to keep Ki-Ki, you may have him,” said Mr. Adams. “I can see that he is very happy with you.”

“Oh, thank you!” Peter hid his face in the little dog’s brown furry coat, to hide the glad tears that welled into his eyes.


“Woof! Woof!” barked Ki-Ki joyously.





RCUS

THEY TALKED FOR THREE HOURS

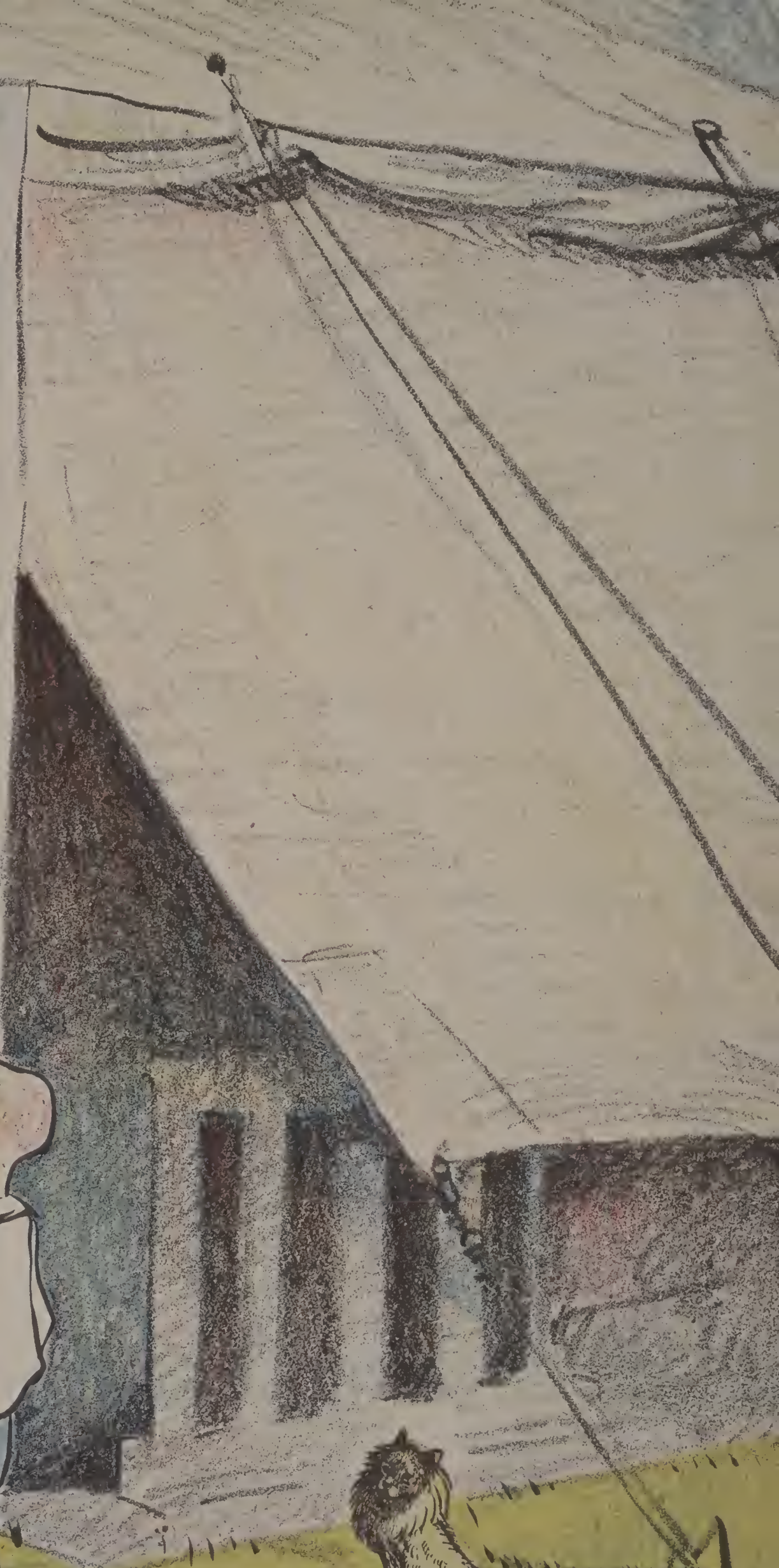


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