

## **Adventures of Circus Animals**

Characters:

- Tanny the tiger cub
- Zoozoo the monkey
- Lynda the Lioness
- Elsa the Elephant
- Dancing Bears
- Paddy the Pony
- Musical Dogs
- McNelly
- Nancy, the ring Master's wife
- Hilda
- Clowns

### **Adventures of Circus Animals—Part 1**

**Chapter 1--Zoozoo**

**Chapter 2—Happy Birthday**

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## **Chapter 1--Zoozoo**

Zoozoo the tricky, flying circus monkey was dressed and ready to go.

He had on his bowtie, and a special hat strapped on by a strap under his chin. He never performed without these, at least not if he could help it.

Today was McNelly's birthday; the kind old Ring Master.

Today the performing animals would do their very best.

Zoozoo couldn't actually fly, but he sure could jump from way up high and land in all kinds of ways.

Sometimes it was a trampoline that caught him, other times a net. Sometimes he leapt and grabbed on to tree-like structures set up on the circus floor. He could swing on swings and leap off of them to other swings, holding on with his hands or feet.

He was always eager to get out there and perform, and today was no exception.

However, what he wasn't so good at was waiting for when it was his turn on the program. He didn't really see why they even needed to take turns. He was happy to play and perform for the whole time there was a crowd to watch him.

"The tent is big enough! We can all be there, all at the same time!" Zoozoo would think, when McNelly would say, "You'll need to wait for your turn."

But Zoozoo did notice that whenever he was out doing his tricks—especially when it was not his turn—all eyes and laughs would often be on him. Not that he thought that was a bad thing, but sometimes it did make the other animals that were performing feel rather "upstaged". It didn't make it so fun for them when hardly anyone was looking at their hard-practiced tricks and show.

Other times it actually made the other performing animal not perform so well, as laughs would suddenly burst out from the onlookers at an odd time in their show. When they were trying to do something that required focused attention, it didn't really help them.

Then, afterwards, that animal would be rather discouraged that not only did he get less attention, but he didn't do his act right either.

"Monkeys are always funnier than me," the dancing pony said one time after a show, when he missed a few steps at a show and felt rather embarrassed.

Paddy the Pony didn't notice the time that Zoozoo the monkey had burst in suddenly and started doing all kinds of acrobatic moves. --That is until the roar of laughter burst out, and Paddy the Pony was startled at first and then forgot what he was to do next.

McNelly the Ring Master tried to explain these and other consequences to Zoozoo, and sometimes he seemed to understand.

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## **Chapter 2—Happy Birthday**

Today's circus show started out in a new way. There was a musical band playing "Happy Birthday", while a team of children, who were dressed up really funny, marched all around the ring. They were waving streamers and sprinkling bits of confetti and such things.

It was hard for the animals to wait, as the children's performance looked like a whole lot of fun.

Paddy the Pony wished he could be prancing around with a few children on his back.

Zoozoo the monkey could think of all kinds of things to do, like go and borrow some of the hats the children were wearing, and put them on and off his own head, seeing which ones fit him best.

The team of poodles called, "The Musical Dogs" wanted to run along with the children, barking and jumping on them. They were sure this would be appropriate.

Elsa the elderly Elephant wasn't in the mood for romping around, but she did imagine how the children would enjoy taking turns riding on her. They could climb up a ladder and get to sit in the riding box that was sometimes placed on her back. They could pose and get pictures taken of them. She would feel very admired and appreciated then.

The Dancing Bears were just hoping for snacks, lots of them. They saw some buckets of some sort of treats out in the circus ring. They excitedly anticipated the fish they hoped were in those buckets. The sooner they got into the ring, the sooner the snacks would be passed on.

There were treats in those buckets, and they were for dancing performers, but not those of the bear sort. These were filled with gifts for the children. For after the marching and dancing there was to be some games played and then treats given to them.

Little Tanny the tiger cub wasn't sure just what she'd do if she was let out on stage just now during this most unusual performance. But being let out of her usual cage would give her the chance she always wanted to do some extended exploring under the benches where the families in the audience were sitting. There would be plenty to discover behind the scenes in the large circus tent as well. She wasn't really aware of all that was going on in the circus show right then, nor of what the crowds most enjoyed. She just liked to learn about anything around, and explore all that she could.

One day after a show she was found curled up under a backstage bench, with a new toy in her mouth. A fluffy something that used to be a winter hat found somewhere around.

Well, maybe Tanny the tiger cub couldn't do the hat tricks nor liked to wear one like Zoozoo the monkey did, but she sure kept the circus crew busy keeping up with her if she ever escaped. Thankfully it didn't happen all that much.

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### **Chapter 3—Lynda the Lioness**

At last it was time for the animals to make their appearance on the stage for today's show. The children were finished their lively Birthday presentation and games and were seated.

Up went the netted walls to ensure the animals stayed within the boundaries of the circus ring.

For this show, knowing just how eager Zoozoo the monkey would be to make his appearance, McNelly had planned for both him and Paddy the Pony to do an act together. This worked out nicely, and so neither one had to wait quite so long.

Zoozoo rode on Paddy's back as he pranced and danced all around the ring to some fun riding music.

Meanwhile, getting a fun and rather bumpy ride, Zoozoo had four hats he was holding, one held by each of his hands and feet. He would take turns putting them on his head and making funny faces to go along with it. At the end of show he tossed each of the hats to the centre of the ring, to be caught by a man holding some type of fishing net with a handle.

It was a game to see if he could make sure each hat landed in it. Three went in but one didn't.

If a hat was missed, then Zoozoo had to leap down off of Paddy the Pony and pick up the hat and place it on the man's head, at the end of the act.

So this time one hat landed on the ground, and Zoozoo leaped down and picked up the hat. The man then picked up the monkey so he could reach high enough to put the hat on his head.

The crowd cheered when this was completed successfully.

Right about that time, Paddy the Pony stopped and did a special bow, and the crowd clapped for him as well.

Once this act was done, it was time for the next animal performers to come on.

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Lynda the silky Lioness pranced out like she knew she was the queen of the show; the queen of whatever show she happened to be a part of that month.

She wasn't part of this circus team all the time, for she rather seemed to enjoy a variety of performing opportunities. Since there were other circus teams around, she and her trainer would join different show troupes at different times.

Today she wore a type of crown that was lit up with little white lights.

The lights weren't all that bright so her crown could more easily be seen.

She climbed up on a ramp and perched atop. She looked very much like a very large kitten.

What she actually did wasn't as important as the way that she did it. Even if all she was doing was walking once around the circus ring's edge and then slowly making her way up a ramp with head and tail raised up, she did it in style.

Everyone held their breath when she came out. It wasn't every day you saw a lion so nearby. Of course the crowd was glad there was a secure fence around. But you never knew what to expect with these usually wild creatures.

When Lynda the Lioness was at last in position on top of the high platform, where all could see her and she could see all, she gave one big mighty roar-like sound. It was just for effect, for the most part.

She liked to see the reactions of the on lookers when she did that. Another reason was that it was her signal to her trainer that she was ready for a snack to be rewarded for her fabulous performance. –Or so she thought.

“Some like to jump and prance about,” she would think, “I need nothing of that sort. That simply is not my style. I like to lie down, and to look, and to be admired. Why should I have to struggle to be anything new?”

But what Lynda didn't fully realise, if she indeed realised it at all, was that it was precisely this lack of trying to do much of anything—that is anything besides trying to get the applause of others—that made her unable to stick around in a show for too long.

Other animals would work hard on new tricks, and put daily practice time into their show. This kept them fit and skilled, and most of all very, very interesting for the crowds. They could keep coming back to the show time and again and be sure to see at least something new each time.

However, Lynda was completely predictable. Everyone knew what she was going to do—the same thing she had already done before and the time before that. She was very interesting to first time attendees, but after a time or two, everyone knew there was nothing more to see in her act.

It's not that her trainer didn't have more and new ideas for her to work on, and this would have made them very welcomed by all show troupes. However, Lynda was perfectly satisfied with what she could do—being so very self-controlled, and showing off how un-wild she was; how very cultured she was; so calm and domestic—that she saw no need to learn new things.

It was indeed a feat of will-power and self-control to do as she did, and not try to run away or stir up the crowd lumbering through it. But she thought it very impressive to show how she could sit ever so still, and just raise her voice only at the precise time needed and none other.

When she slowly, ever so slowly walked down the ramp to be led off to her large cage again, out of sight, a new team of performers began to enter.

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## **Chapter 4—Dancing Bears and Musical Dogs**

The Dancing Bears!

Now these were quite a sight!

One of the younger bears, however first dashed over to peek into the now empty buckets that treats for the children had been put into. Even though she knew there was no fish—as she would have been able to smell them if there had been. But still she was curious and eager for any kind of snack.

After all, the dancing children got a snack from those buckets, why not dancing bears!

The music was playing and the semi-dressed bears pranced around, did summersaults, and even tried to dance while standing on their back two feet. This brought some cheers and claps.

A game was played where the man leading the team of bears would throw a large ring over to a bear. If they stood up and got the ring over them, then they were tossed a fish to catch as well.

One by one the bears rose and let the ring pass over them, all around them, and then grabbed a fish reward.

A funny dance move they did was to all line up, standing up on their back legs and place one paw on another's shoulder and take some steps as the line moved along.

It looked very clever.

Though they looked like big and fun teddy bears, the children were warned that they were not trained to be cuddly with children. Though bears, they were not TEDDY bears and would not behave towards them as such. They needed to be treated carefully and wisely and given lots of space to do and be what a bear needs to be.

The costume skirts and vests and other apparel that the funny bears had on was sewn by McNelly's wife, Nancy. She was clever with both the sewing machine, as well as how to come up with patterns and the shapes of things that needed to be sewn. This was one of the many things she was able to contribute to the show.

The Birthday circus show continued and next up was the very special, one and only Elsa the Elderly Elephant.

She strode in and instead of bowing, lifted up her trunk to wave to all the onlookers. She was to reach down and sniff at a bouquet of flowers that her trainer held, and then pick it up with her trunk and toss it into the audience for someone to catch.

This was a fun active way to start her act.

After being led to walk in a circle around, she had a few dance moves to do while the music played. She could lift this foot and then the other, and even add the sound of a trumpet to the routine—her own personal trumpet.

Once that was done, she got into position to receive some children. It was her favourite part of all the show. All she had to do was stand there and look admirable. No one was quite as big or even as old as she was. Children would line up to take turns to climb all the way up and then, with assistance, into the special sitting box that was strapped securely on to Elsa's back.

Of course, not all the children would be able to get a turn right in the middle of the show, but it was a good way to keep the attention of the more wiggling youngsters in the crowd. It gave them a bit of moving and an adventure. The rest of the older children or those who could happily wait, did so, and got their turn, if desired, at the end of the show when all the guests were making their way out of the tent.

Elsa was usually very quiet and patient, and stood very still so as not to wiggle the little ones too much. But she did have a few things to do in order to keep the attention of the rest of the audience. Every now and then, when prompted, she'd lift up her trunk and blow out a sound. This sure got everyone's attention. Another thing she'd do was pick up oranges with her trunk and hand them out to people standing in line with their children. Mama's and Papa's would be pleasantly surprised at this, and it was fun to watch.

The barks of the poodles, or the "The Musical Dogs" as they were called, helped to move the children off the stage after Elsa the Elephant's riding act. They knew it was time for the next part of the show to begin.

Some children might have liked to stay to say hello to the fuzzy little dogs, but usually they'd choose to see the full show and not miss anything while trying to get back into their seats.

At first all would be quiet, once everyone was seated. No music, nor talking, not even the bark of the dogs that were then on stage in their place. This was the first trick--the perfectly still and quiet dogs awaiting their cue.

Then boom! All of a sudden the music comes on and the dogs start leaping off ramps and jumping through hoops, doing spins, rolling on the ground and so many funny things. They did it all together at the right time as soon as the music played and their trainer indicated to them what trick or move was to come next.

Then, to the surprise of everyone, again, the music went completely silent again, and the dogs held very, very still. But after a moment, boom, it all repeated.

It would seem to the audience that the dogs would only move if there was music playing. And that is what earned them their name, "Musical Dogs." It seemed they were music-powered.

When their act on this day was over, the music was faded out slowly as they made their way out, following their trainer.

Applause followed their exit. And back stage they were given treats for their most excellent performance.

Now it was time for a show of a different kind. A team of clowns were trying to train Little Tanny the tiger cub—or so the show was made to appear. They didn't usually have a lion for their circus, said the clowns, so they had to do their best with this little cub.

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## **Chapter 5—Clowns and Flying Bananas**

The clowns kept the children laughing at the antics while they chased this most curious little tiger cub around, trying to get her interested in jumping through a hoop.

She certainly could jump, and climb—especially on and off of the table the clowns put their as part of their act. But through the hoop? That was what they rarely succeeded in getting her to do.

One time she grabbed a scarf that was wrapped around of the clown's neck while they were trying to get some rest—in the middle of their show of course. That sure woke up that clown and he had quite a chase, around and around the circus ring, trying to track down his coloured scarf again!

Then they tried to play a ball game with Tanny, to see if the balls could touch her as they rolled some across the floor. Sort of like "dodge ball".

Now, of course, the Musical Dogs would have loved to play "Dog's ball", with as many small balls as they could get and chase after. And sometimes it was their turn to do such on the stage with these very clowns. But today it was "Touch the Tiger's tail" game with some very soft balls.

Now Tanny the tiger cub seemed to know what the object of the game was, because she was very good at suddenly jumping here or climbing there, right as a ball nearly touched her tail.

The crowd was divided up for cheering in this game. One half of the audience was to cheer every time a ball touched Tanny. It was a score for the clowns. The other half was to cheer for Tanny every time she missed getting caught. It was a score for her.

On this day, that second team, the Tanny cheering team, were very loud with frequent cheers, as the ball so rarely ever caught her. She was getting good at it.

I guess she would, because whenever she missed it, she was given a treat nibble.

It was a great game and a fun show.

Everyone seemed to enjoy it.

But now the animals were tired, and needed some rest. All, that is, except for Zoozoo the monkey. He always seemed to be able to pull fun and energy out of a hat, literally. For when he got his show hat put on, zoom he would go out to the ring. He would be climbing up a pole, and hanging off of this and that.

He was a great one to end the show with.

Today's last trick, that Zoozoo was the one to perform, was "catch the flying bananas".

He would be swinging on a trapeze swing, while, one by one, a trainer would toss him up a banana at precisely the right time. It was more of a trick by the trainer than even for Zoozoo. They had to time it just right so that the banana would be in the air at the right time.

When Zoozoo would catch it, he would either toss it back, or would eat one. He could choose. The crowd was kept wondering just what he would do each time.

Zoozoo then climbed over and slid down a pole, to then take his bow on the circus ring floor.

His trainer then ended with picking him up and placing him in a wheelbarrow filled with bananas.

Zoozoo would pick one up in each hand and foot and smile real big as he was wheeled away, while children laughed and clapped.

Sometimes he was put into a little bed to rest after the shows, and today he was placed there as well, with a little blanket on him. But after just a minute or two, he'd had enough rest and was eager to find out just what was going on with the people in the audience. It seemed that he liked to watch them perhaps even more than they him.

So he bounded out of bed the second he heard the final time that "Happy Birthday" was sung, to end the show.

Zoozoo, still with his little blanket over the top of his head, came waddle running out.

He looked very funny, and brought many squeals and laughs.

McNelly who was standing in the center of the circus ring, rather than tell him to go back, went over and picked him up and handed him a banana that he kept in his pocket for just such moments of spontaneous fun.



Then, to the tune of the song being sung, Zoozoo took the banana and started to use it as a drum stick on the tall sturdy drum shaped hat being worn by McNelly just then.

McNelly thought that was enough, but rather than end the fun, placed Zoozoo on the ground, and removed his hat also. The hat was placed beside Zoozoo and another banana was quickly given him by a clown standing nearby. Now Zoozoo could help play the song with a hat drum and banana sticks, in honour of their kind Ring Master.

Everyone clapped in rhythm as the song was sung one last time.

Elsa the Elephant was standing there also, giving turns to the children who hadn't yet sat up in the riding box on her back. When the song ended, she added her own special instrument sound and blew her trunk!

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## **Chapter 6—A Huge Cake**

Just for fun on this day, Nancy, the ring Master's wife, together with others had baked a very huge cake. Well, it was many cakes all put together on a big table placed by the door to the circus tent.

It was shaped and decorated like a circus tent, all striped and round, and even had a few toy animals to decorate it.

Whoever wanted a piece of this special cake was welcome to enjoy one as they walked to and out the door.

Children were eager to leave, though normally it would be hard to do so. The fun treat of the snack for those that were leaving made it easier for them.

The clowns then stood by the door out of the tent waving good-bye to all the people. It had been a great show.

"Hope to see you the next time we are in this town!" they said to the children.

"Okay!" was replied as they happily skipped away.

They had stories to tell to any siblings or friends who hadn't been there that day.

Something new or unexpected happened almost every time the show was put on. Because, after all, animals are animals, and some of the funniest or even unwanted things might occur.

--Like the time Paddy the Pony was taking a very long sleep, when it was his time to ride out into the ring. He was much too groggy right then to do what he was meant to do, so to give him time to wake up more and have a good drink of water, the clowns had to fill in.

They used some pieces of cloth and leaned over, using some stick horses to be the heads of these two rather unusual looking horses that came riding out. Such were some of the jobs of the clowns, to fill in when things didn't go quite as planned.

They did some impromptu moves to the music, made some children laugh, and soon were chased off the stage by a certain pony called Paddy who was not so impressed with the way they were imitating ponies and wanted them to clear off, so he could get to the real show.

The stories and funny antics of this traveling troupe of laugh-givers are many.

But it wasn't only just going from one laugh to the next, for indeed every bit of fun they gave to others had to be worked for in advance.

There was much cleaning and care. There was orderliness and organization. There was food and friendship. There was sleep and so much more.

But I won't list each thing now. Just suffice it to say that there was oodles of activities and chores, and times of training behind each thing that was done on stage that might have taken but a minute or two.

It's good for the onlookers to realise this, for it makes them appreciate it all the more.

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## **Chapter 7—Paddy the Pony**

Paddy the Pony was resting. He was in a spot out in the sunshine.

"Ah, now this is good," he said turning his head up and bathing his head in the glorious light. He shook his head neighed, stomped his feet and stood for a moment on his back legs. He was fully awake now and ready for a run.

Clarence the Keeper helped to see that each of the animals not only got what they needed, but likewise received extra treats and benefits. It was a different life living and working with the circus. But a good life. They had many treats that wild creatures might not get, such a regular and abundant meals, lots of pats and attention, very comfortable beds and living quarters.

If you asked, "Would they survive out in the wild, able to do all that the creature of their type could do?" the answer would be, probably not right away. They could learn, but because they were on this special team they had new and different skills and abilities. Would the wild animals be able to do what these circus creature could do? No, for they had other skill and challenges that taught them differently.

Wild ones were taught to stay away from humans, whereas the circus animals depended on the humans to feed and care for them, and so they learned to trust them. The wild animals had to learn speed to get away from possible danger, whereas the circus animals had to learn patience and to be brave and face crowds of people, and to live in peace with other creatures as well who were also part of the show troupe—animals they might not normally get along well with.

Yes! At last! Here came Clarence the Keeper to the fenced area where Paddy was sunning himself. Paddy took a drink of water and one last nibble of food while Clarence opened the gate and unhooked Paddy's rope that secured him to a post. Willingly Paddy trotted out of the fenced in area and out to the grassy area to graze and run, along with the Musical dogs who were running and playing.

Every morning, by late morning, everyone--clowns and humans included--had enjoyed some vigorous exercise of some sort. Cages and kennels had been cleaned, as well as the trailers that the circus team stayed in as they travelled. Food had been served, and all had done something they most enjoyed.

When Paddy was running and galloping, he realised that one of the trailers were being moved. This only happened on the day the circus was traveling to a new place. Was this to be their last morning there? He did wonder. But it didn't take long until his question was answered. All he had to do was keep watching

and soon he'd see other signs of their stay at this particular place coming to a close. More trailers began to be tugged away and put in position to travel.

The biggest sign of the move was the circus tent that was being taken down.

Paddy looked over and saw Lynda the lioness coming for a stroll, on a rope with her trainer in a different area of the paddock. She would be moving on to perform at a new circus. He neighed what was a hello and goodbye. Lynda growled back a message. Paddy took it to mean, "And have a good trip. I'll see you some other time."

By now the Musical Dogs were done their run and were being taken for a brush down and wash. They were always kept very clean. The audience didn't want to come and smell the circus, but primarily watch one. All the animals were kept as clean as an animal can be kept. The cages and kennel areas were cleared out of the waste a few times a day, usually. Every day a wagon load of manure was taken away from the grounds, along with compost of food stuffs, and whatever could naturally turn back into dirt. This was driven to a nearby farm that specialised in creating nutrient filled soil for growing crops. This would need to be rotted down, or decomposed before it was able to be used as dirt enhancer. But with plenty of water and stirring, the farmer got it worked down to be something real useable.

There was an area outdoors with very strong and closed in fencing. This was put up for the Dancing Bears' daily exercise and practice times. It was used for Tanny the Tiger cub too, for it had high fencing and didn't allow a creature to climb out and escape.

Zoozoo liked to do something different for his exercise. Though being outside was very nice, he had a great need to climb and romp around. He was usually allowed to do this inside the circus tent, while workers cleaned up and set things up for the day. He'd literally "hang around". Sometimes he would surprise the sweeper, for example, and leap on his back for a ride.

One time when Carin the Clown was picking up the bits of rubbish that were around the tent, she found a willing helper. A bag was held by Zoozoo, who kept close by. When Carin found a bit of trash she'd toss it over to Zoozoo who did his best to catch it, or at least to pick it up and put it in the bag he tugged around.

There was always something he liked to help out with.

Sometimes when Paddy was taking his run, Zoozoo thought it would be a help to have a ride on his back. This would give Paddy a weight on him, that would surely give him better exercise. Zoozoo felt very useful doing Paddy this favour, and of course he enjoyed the ride as well. Of course, he was the one who was actually enjoying it. Paddy tolerated it most of the time, because a bit of company was fun.

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## **Chapter 8—Tanny the Tiger Cub**

Tanny the Tiger cub learns to sing:

"Let's try that one more time," said Hilda, who was getting a new act together for the show in a few weeks.

For now, the circus team was camping out in a field. Their tent was packed up and they were taking this time to do different things that they needed to. Some of the clowns went to spend a week or two with

their extended families and to visit friends. Some of the animals were taken to a farm with lots of space to run and time to play. Some of the vehicles needed fixing.

The team that was left, with the animals that were left took the time for planning and practicing some new acts to add some variety to the performances. Every few months this circus team had this time to do different things.

Hilda was a clown and also a good cook. She kept the circus team well-fed. She was good with animals and they liked her. Today she was working on an act called “Tanny the Tiger Cub learns to sing.”

Tanny was placed in something that looked like an extra large birdcage for a canary. Since canaries are known for their lovely songs, and since there was the need for Tanny to be kept from wandering here and there throughout the crowd, this is why she was in this special cage for this act.

Tanny rather liked the feeling of the gentle rocking of the cage as it swung whenever she moved, as it was suspended like old fashioned bird cages were. And she liked the little snacks that Hilda placed in it.

Hilda would be holding a song book of sorts as well as a stick she purposed to pretend to be a conductor of a concert. There was of course music that was being played, but it wasn't one continual song. Rather the music track had silence and then a bit of singing, followed by silence again.

It was at these pauses, which were more than the singing parts, when Hilda would pretend to be teaching the tiger cub how to sing. Hilda would also get audience participation in this act, to keep everyone entertained and involved.

During training, whenever Tanny would make some mild growling attempts, she would get a treat to eat. Tanny discovered that whenever Hilda moved the stick near her cage, that there was something to eat placed on it, some little nibble treat. Tanny wanted it and would eventually make a sound expressing it. The treat would be given then.

After a while, Tanny started to make some sounds when she saw the stick coming close to the cage and would right away stand up and make some noise. She realised after many practice sessions that Hilda's music stick, plus a Tanny sound equalled a special nibble treat.

Tanny was learning well.

A few days before all the rest of the circus crew returned, Tanny had learned her part of the act well. I don't think she quite realised it was an act to be performed in front of crowds, she was just having fun with this little game she would play with Hilda each day.

Hilda made sure to practice it with Tanny each day, so she wouldn't forget what to do on the nights the circus was to perform.

A week later, after all the team had returned and had set up the circus tent where they had been camping, the first show was to be put on. Everyone was excited—both the families and people who came for the show, as well as the crew and animals.

There were a few new acts and it was going to be a whole lot of fun.

When it came time for Tanny's musical show, she didn't fail to bring a good laugh from the watching crowds.

“Come Tanny. It’s time for your daily singing lesson,” Hilda said, leading Tanny by a leash up a ramp that led to the suspended large canary cage.

It was a bit different for Tanny to do her performance with so many people around, but she didn’t take too much notice of everyone. She did well at focusing on the food treats she was looking forward to enjoy, and so into the cage she went.

“Today, Tanny will be taught to sing, and I am going to need your help to teach her as well,” Hilda said to the crowd. “Are you ready? The first note we can teach her is...”

Hilda sang out very loudly the musical note, and had the crowd then sing it back to her and to Tanny.

Then the hush came as it was Tanny the Tiger cub’s turn to try to sing that note. Hilda moved closer to the cage, and lifted her stick to conduct. Tanny knew what was coming and stood up and let out a little growly sound. The musical tape played as well, as if it was Tanny doing the singing. With that the crowd cheered and laughed also, and a treat was given to Tanny.

“Now for the next part of the class, we will teach Tanny to sing this note.” Hilda then led the audience to sing out the note, and afterwards had Tanny try to sing. Again the tape went on while Tanny did her mild growl, and was rewarded. She received lots of cheering.

At the end of the act a very short song was sung, as it appeared, by Tanny, with the help to the music audio playing and so forth. And the audience was encouraged to sing along.

The act had been successful. Tanny felt glad that though the circus show was happening once again, that she was still able to play her daily snack game with Hilda. Even if the game time happened to be when lots of people were around watching her play it. She didn’t know she was the star of the show for that act.

Happily she then exited the cage, led like a puppy out and down the ramp. Tanny was led to walk all along the edge of the circus ring while everyone got a good look at her, and then she was taken to the back of the tent where her cute little house and enclosure was.

Just as Tanny entered her little nook—a place closed in entirely by chicken wire, and a two story little pet house—a few birds landed right nearby and began to sing. Tanny got her own mini concert by real birds who could really sing.

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When Hilda came back to the circus tent from returning Tanny to her place, it seemed there was a disruption in the crowd.

The reason was, that even while dressed in all her fun clown clothing, someone had discovered that she was the famous singer that used to tour around. She wasn’t always part of a circus team, but was accustomed to being on stage.

“Sing! Sing! Sing!” the crowd began to cheerfully chant and clap, while they stood up.

This was the last thing Hilda expected. It seemed the show that was planned would need to be adjusted and a new and unexpected act added to it.

After using her hands to show the crowd that they could resume quietness as their request had been heard, all fell silent.

Hilda smiled while mentally selecting a song. This was more amusing to her than the circus show was to the audience. She somewhat chuckled to herself.

“Well, if they want me to sing, I’ll do that, though I’m not quite like what I used to be. Still, I have kept up my voice as I sing while cooking and doing the washing,” Hilda thought.

The clowns were good at impromptu shows, as that is often what they needed to do. So they playfully got some of the large colourful blocks and placed them together to make a stage to stand on. One block here and two blocks stacked beside it, and a few more blocks on the other side of it. It wasn’t a flat stage to stand on, but looked like a large child’s block tower they were beginning to construct.

Hilda then stepped from one block up to the second one that was stacked on top of it. With her loud voice ringing out, Hilda started one of her favourite songs, one she was often heard singing as she scrubbed the potatoes or cut the veggies for a meal.

“I just can’t be somebody else,  
I just need to be who I’m meant to be,  
Cause when I do that, the job gets done  
When I am me, then I can have fun.  
Don’t wanna waste time staring and comparing.  
Don’t wanna sit here just moping and hoping.  
I’m gonna be glad for who I am, and not get blue .  
I’m gonna be glad and do well what I’m called to do.”

Hilda finished the simple song that was sung with gusto, did a curtsy, and the crowd cheered.

The show could continue now as planned. But maybe there was someone, or many people—if not all who were sitting there watching the show, who needed to hear that song.

And the crowd could ponder the thought that though Hilda had been famous, though no longer was in the spotlight as before, she was still happy to do the best she could to help make others happy. –Even if it meant trying to teach a Tiger cub how to sing!

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## **Chapter 9—McNelly and the Popcorn**

The next night of the circus stared out in a surprising and unexpected way, as Zoozoo the circus monkey decided it was time he tried out some popcorn.

So far all he knew about popcorn was that it was messy. It always had to be swept up after each show. He didn't really understand the attraction, and why so many people held these bags of white puffs, nibbling away at it.

Tonight, right when the ring master was ready to announce the "Prancing Dancing Pony" act, Zoozoo had managed to get a bag of popcorn that was sitting on a table, unused. Rather than have the crowd eating a snack and looking at him in amusement, Zoozoo wanted to try it the other way around. He wanted to eat a snack while watching the crowd. They were entertainment enough. Just look at all those people types!

And they were laughing too. This was great to watch! But after one bite of popcorn, Zoozoo decided that he wanted to get a better view, and so up he climbed to a loft above the circus ring. Now that was a great view. He was looking as funny as ever.

McNelly, accustomed to random antics from Zoozoo sometimes, carried on with the show as regular. However, it was rather surprising when Zoozoo, who was watching his own show—the audience—suddenly made a jerking monkey movement that tipped out the whole bag of popcorn. It fell like snow down to where McNelly stood.

The onlookers laughed, and indeed so did the Ring Master, who played this right into what he was saying.

"... Here comes Paddy the Prancing and dancing pony—as he.. uh... dashes through the snow, like pulling a one-horse open sleigh."

Every one broke out laughing and singing the song, "oh how fun it is to ride..." as Paddy came out into the ring.

Paddy came out fully decorated and donning all kinds of colourful and shiny things for his act.

People were led to clap to the rhythm of the music then being played, and Paddy did a great show prancing around, standing on his back legs, dancing in a circle, and even walking backwards.

Zoozoo enjoyed the music and watching his friend trotting around merrily. Zoozoo wished to continue on as if he was still watching the circus, eating popcorn. However, the popcorn was now all on the ground below. But that was no trouble to Zoozoo, who promptly slid down the pole that was there, much like a fireman would. Then one by one he picked up each kernel of popcorn, while watching the Paddy and of course watching the funny people who were watching the fun and clever animals.

Everyone must have thought that Zoozoo was just part of the show, and planned to be part of the act. How he knew to drop the "snow" popcorn at just the right time, above the head of McNelly, they didn't know. He was surely a well-trained circus monkey to do that!

Then when Zoozoo climbed up the very thick rope than hung down, and swung from it, leaping at just the right time on to the back of the dancing and prancing Paddy the Pony, everyone thought he certainly was part of this act and knew his role.

"He just does acts without a trainer telling him what to do!" someone said. "He just wants to make us laugh and doesn't need to have someone encouraging him with extra treats."

Though surprised, Paddy the Pony didn't mind the sudden addition to his gear—a monkey landing suddenly on his back. It made it all the more fun, and the crowd sure cheered.

Sometimes unexpected events can be better than what was planned. But it all had to do with the reactions of others. If McNelly had been angry with Zoozoo, or if Paddy had refused to keep dancing just because a monkey was now on his back, then that would have made the show not nearly as fun and enjoyable.

One clown said to the other, as they stood to the side,

“Sometimes you just need to flow with something, and not get all upset; especially if it’s making things better. No one minds the fun addition of a little monkey, if they did, we wouldn’t let him romp around. I think we are all enjoying the unexpected surprises, at least today.”

The other clown nodded.

Paddy the Pony finished his prance and dance, topped with a monkey, and trotted off the stage, while the crowd cheered.

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## **Chapter 10—The Missing Musical Dogs**

The musical dogs were each standing poised, each one on a bale of hay all in a line. At the blow of the whistle they leaped off, as if in a race, ran around the ring and then leaped up again on the bales of hay.

They were rewarded, and once again the whistle was blown to start the next “race” or so it seemed.

But this time there was one less performing dog.

The trainer acted as if he wondered where the dog had gone. One place on the bales of hay was empty. The trainer asked the crowd if the dog had ran out there! There was some disruption as the trainer was pointing here and there, to where this dog might be. He just shook and scratched his head and then went on with the show, with one less dog.

But just as he was about to blow the whistle he heard a new-sounding bark. The crowd laughed and pointed. Instead of a dog, on the hay bale sat a funny clown ready to race in place of the missing dog.

This musical dog wasn’t really missing, but was actually back in his kennel. It was all part of the show.

The clown pretended to bark while running, and landed back on the bale of hay.

The trainer acted most puzzled to see that not only was there a clown on the bale of hay, but also another missing dog! What was going on?

He gave the dogs their treats, and just shook his head when he got to the clown who was squatting down, acting as funny and puppy-like as he could. The clown did not get a dog treat. Then as the trainer moved on to reward the next real dog, the clown acted all sad. He’d missed the dog treat.

Feeling sad for the clown missing his treat, a little girl ran right up to the edge of the circus ring and held out a bite of her snack, saying, “You can have this!”

The clown, now looking very happy ran up and nibbled it—and returned to sit on the bale.

Again, the trainer blew his whistle for the next race to begin. This time another clown filled in the second missing dog’s spot.



The trainer was now so very baffled! Where were his dogs all going! Where were the clowns coming from?

Well, the show must go on.

Now these dogs knew the clowns well, and they were actually rather happy to be sitting near them and running a lap around the ring together with them. In fact, the clowns would also give the dogs beside them a treat as well, for this was a well-rehearsed act.

By the end of the act, there were only clowns left on the bales, and a trainer who was ready to blow his whistle for the clowns to then have a race. But before he blew it, the clowns beckoned for the trainer to join them. Since he didn't have treats for people, only dog treats, he tossed them to the side and got in position to run the race along with the clowns.

Just as they were about to run, all of a sudden in ran all the Musical Dogs. These quickly gained speed on the clowns and their trainer. They ran faster and finished first. The dogs triumphantly leapt up and sat on the bales of hay. They had won the race! And yes, they were rewarded.

The clowns and the trainer took a bow, and raced with the dogs a time or two around the ring, leaping over the bales of hay and then off the stage.

After that rather energetic show, and panting performers, it was time for something of a different pace than a race.

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## **Chapter 11—Elsa the Elderly Elephant**

In walked Elsa the Elderly Elephant and her trainer. This however, wasn't to be just any performance, for this was something planned for quite some time; an out-of-the-ordinary show.

Today Elsa was going to show how very clever she was. And with paintbrush in hand she demonstrated on a large board covered with plastic sheeting, that she could draw. The people cheered when Elsa stood to bow and moved aside to show the picture she had painted.

It looked little more than lines of paint from a wide brush, going this way and that way. But it was the fact that Elsa could dip the brush into the paint and apply it to the plastic board, noticing the patterns she was making, that impressed the crowd.

Next, Elsa was to blow bubbles! Lots of bubbles. With the tip of her trunk she held a bubble blower. It was of course quite a bit bigger than the small ones a child would hold and blow bubbles with.

To make the bubbles fly out from it, a fan was blowing nearby Elsa. She would dip the blower in the bubbly liquid, then hold it up to the fan. Out and all around the circus ring would fly the bubbles, to the delight of children watching in the audience.

A few clowns were inviting any children who wanted to come. "Come blow bubbles together with Elsa," the clown offered, and led some children by the hand, and others followed, to where they would be allowed to stand.

They stood all around the edge of the circus ring to blow bubbles too. They were each handed a bubble blower and dipped it into the bowl that the assisting clown offered.

There was fun music playing, and some of the children were moving to the music while blowing the bubbles. The clown was dancing around while he offered the bowl of bubble mix to the children. At the same time they were watching to see what Elsa was doing. Her bubbles were of course a whole lot bigger.

But since elephants are big, it only seemed natural that the bubble from an elephant would be bigger.

Then, to end the special time while the children were there, one of the children was given the end of a string to pull. It led up to somewhere way above the circus ring.

“Pull it!” the clown said. All the children were eager to find out what would happen.

With the yank the little girl gave to the string, there was released a whole bunch of balloons. They had been placed way up high, hiding in a sheet of sorts. But pulling the string loosed them.

Watching all those balloons gently descending was sure fun for all the children. They laughed and hoped to catch one or two. They were each given a couple balloons to take back with them to their seat and their family.

Elsa then demonstrated her dancing skills by standing on her back legs and waving her trunk, while the music played. She was led in a spin, and she even walked sideways. There were still some balloons on the ground as she danced. And yes, a balloon or two popped! In fact it was part of the act, for her to try to dance without popping too many balloons. She did well on this day, and the audience cheered.

After Elsa was led off the show area and out of sight, then a team of clowns came in for the next part of the show before the break.

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## **Chapter 12—A Humorous Cleaning Clown**

One clown was sitting down, trying very hard to make the cleaning broom get clean. She tried so many ways, but always, as soon as she attempted to sweep off the ground of the circus ring, it would get soiled again. The hay and sand and whatever, would get on it.

She tried using a hair drier to blow dirt off. Next she used a scrub brush and a bucket of pretend water to try to scrub it clean. She got out a vacuum cleaning to attempt to remove the dirt. She wiped the brush of the broom with a dry sponge. It was taking her more time to try to keep it from getting anything on it, than it was taking to sweep the floor.

“If this broom isn’t clean, how will I ever get this floor swept clean?” she said aloud. The children were laughing at the clown’s silly attempts at perfection. Trying to get somethings so perfect makes it hard to do what you are meant to be doing. Such as sweeping the ground. Finally, she got an idea. She wrapped a cloth around the brush of the broom and “swept” with it like this. The clown showed how marvellous it was at the end to remove the cloth and see how clean it still was.

Another clown pointed out that the floor wasn’t very well swept. However, the sweeping clown was just glad to have a clean broom.

Finally, the other clown got an idea and presented her with a new broom. “Here you can sweep the floor with this one. It’s new and works well, and then your other broom won’t get dirty at all. It can be placed to the side, and just stay unsoiled.”

What a splendid idea! So the sweeping clown got to work right away and did a good job, whistling while she worked. At the end, the third clown came on stage and commended the clown for her good job of a clean floor and asked if she could come and help sweep somewhere else. The sweeping clown nodded and shook the hand of the clown who was thanking her.

But what broom should she use? The choice was easy. The broom that could get dirty and did the job well! The one that she didn't want a speck of dust on, was left to the side. It was better to have a tool that could be used, even if it got a bit soiled, than a one that looked perfect all the time.

Once the sweeping clown left, the second clown began to focus on doing his job. He was to clip and trim the hedge. That is, to trip the imaginary hedge all around the circus ring. He used big trimming scissors—clown prop scissors made for this act, of course. But just about every time he was to trim some of the hedge he'd be interrupted by the song of a bird that seemed to come from inside the hedge. He'd stop to listen, or hope to get it to fly away, but the song just kept on coming—while the bird stayed in the hedge.

So, the clown got an idea to bring a birdcage over to the imaginary hedge, to try to get the bird to go into it. Then he'd be free to do the trimming.

But what should he use to distract the bird and make him want to come into the cage? The clown put on a bird sock puppet on his hand, and popped it in a hole at the base of the cage. He made the bird sock puppet to chirp and move in the cage, hoping to attract the wild bird to come on in as well.

At last a little toy bird with a windup music song that played, was gently picked up and placed in the cage. Now, finally, the bird was safe, and the hedge trimming could be finished. The cage with the windup singing bird had straps on it and could be worn much like a backpack. So, the clown put on the cage and whistled to the tune the windup bird was making, and finished clipping the imaginary hedge.

Then it was time for the third clown, and an eager monkey, to come out and water the plants. (The two other clowns quickly got the stage set up with some potted plants and artificial trees placed around.)

A hose was rolled up and over the clown's shoulder, while he held the nozzle in his hand. The monkey helper was being tugged along as he held the other end of the hose.

But Zoozoo didn't seem to know what hoses were for, and was trying to blow the hose end like a trumpet. But that was just as well, as the hose really wasn't hooked up to water for this show, so it made the children laugh.

All around the stage the clown went, trying to water this plant or that one.

Then Zoozoo discovered the fun of seeing how far the hose would stretch. As he pulled on it, it unwound off the clown's shoulder.

A clown came out and saw this long hose and decided to help the fun reach the next level. So he held the end of it from Zoozoo and began swinging it like jump rope for Zoozoo to leap over, back and forth. All the while the other clown acted out that he was attempting to water the plants, yet the new tug on his arm of the hose being used as a jump rope, pulled him this way and that way.

Finally, the clown attempting to water the plants looked to see what was going on. Zoozoo was having a great time. The clown decided it was time to swap, and had Zoozoo the monkey hold the other side of the hose, so he could also join in with a bit of fun and do some jumping as well.

Then the clowns took a bow, wound up the hose, and with Zoozoo once again holding the end of it, the clowns and their monkey friend, walked off the stage.

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### **Chapter 13—Nancy and Her Hula-hoops**

Now it was time for the Dancing Bears to make their entrance.

Dressed, yes, dressed in cute little outfits—some pink and some blue—the bears were led onto the stage. A special fence was quickly placed around the ring to give extra safety during their act. One should always expect an animal to behave like one. Though well-trained, these creatures still were bears, and one always needed to be careful and watchful.

With the treats of fish, the bears were led this way and that way, and encouraged to stand up on their feet, and lumber down little slides and move around here and there. They balanced along on beams of wood, and clamoured down smooth logs, much like a fireman's pole. All this active play and display of fun was done with lively and energetic music playing.

It was the same music that the Dancing Bears heard every time they had their musical practice and training sessions. They were used to the sound of it meaning lots of fun play, and plenty of fish treats and other nibbles as well.

The place that was set up for them to play along with music looked like a place that some of the children sitting in the crowd would probably also enjoy playing in. Perhaps the reason for the extra protective fence around the ring with the Dancing Bears was both to keep them in just as much as to keep the young children out. They might mistake the Dancing Bears for Teddy bears! But that is not at all what they were. Cute, but not to be snuggled. Just a great bit of fun to watch.

To make up for the fact that children couldn't go and touch and play with the Dancing Bears, though they might have liked to, there were teddy bears being offered at the door of the circus as the children and their families left. These could be purchased as toys to take home.

These soft toys were made to look much like the performing bears, with costumes sewn for them just the same as the real Dancing Bears. A CD of music came along with the toy bears, so the children could climb and play and dance listening to it. It would make for great times of exercise.

Zoozoo wasn't allowed in the cage at all while the Dancing Bears were performing. He would be too much of a distraction. But the play set-up sure did look fun. Today he was looking longingly in the bear's circus ring as they were having great fun playing around and dancing while the music played.

Nancy, the ringmaster's wife, squatted down near Zoozoo. "I'm sure you would really like to join the bears!" she said.

Zoozoo got all excited, as if he was going to get to go in. She wasn't inviting him to go, just letting Zoozoo know that she understood.

Nancy said, "As soon as the bears leave and it's time for me to go on stage, I'll let you come on in with me. And you can then play on the fun set up."

Of course Zoozoo didn't understand all these words, but he was soon to find out what she meant.

The Dancing Bears finished some of their last musical moves, and were led off the stage. Now it was the time for Nancy to take her place in the circus ring, and yes, Zoozoo as well, if he so wished.

Nancy had a great skill for doing the hula hoop. She could keep that ring going and going for a long while. She could keep many rings going for a long while. She could spin hula hoop rings around her in many places on her body—arms, waist, legs, even her neck.

While she was busy moving around, spinning these hoops, Zoozoo was free to climb and roam around. At first he wondered where all the bears were, but soon he didn't wonder but just got into playing with everything still set up.

After awhile he tired of this active play and climbed up to be seated on Nancy shoulder—after she had put the hoops down and was just about to demonstrate her juggling skill. Zoozoo was happy to get himself a top row seat and see the juggling from his high up vantage point.

However, once in a while he did more than just watch. When seeing a skittle or ring flying up while Nancy juggled, he grabbed it in his hands, and then dropped it in order to catch another one.

Nancy just smiled as the audience laughed. They were sure this was just all part of the planned act.

Nancy helped Zoozoo climb down at last, and took a bow. Her bit of the show was complete. She handed Zoozoo a banana that she kept in her pocket and off they went. It looked as if Zoozoo was being rewarded for his great help in the funny performance. But really, it was a treat for him because he was willing to wait until the bears finished their turn in the ring. That took patience. Nancy liked to reward patience. She just waited to give it until Zoozoo was meant to leave the ring. That took obedience. Nancy liked to reward obedience.

The clowns came in for one last bit of the show. The music was played, the extra fence was removed, and all the children who wished to climb around and play with the clowns on the set up, were invited.

Some children danced with the clowns, others slid down the slides or poles. Some ran around playing a type of tag game. Others balanced on the low beams of wood. Some crawled through the tractor tires set up like a tunnel, while others walked on top of them.

It was a great way to end a fun circus show.

Once the children had left and returned to their families, and the music volume was turned down low, McNelly spoke to all. He hoped everyone enjoyed their time, and would have a safe trip home. He announced that there were toy dancing bears and CDs of music that could be enjoyed, available at the exit door of the circus tent.

Then all the clowns, and a few of the animals came once again into the ring to wave and say good-bye.

The visitors waved, and filed out to see the cheery afternoon sun.

Children were eager to go to the park, or run in the sun over the grass that was there. Some were hungry, yes, even after the snacks at the circus. Some children just had lots of room for food. Or maybe they just needed a good proper meal or some fresh fruit.

So on the families went, caring for their children's needs and enjoying the rest of the day.

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## **Chapter 14—Appreciation**

The circus crew took a break for a meal, and took time to feed and encourage the animals. Some were placed in the larger areas to run around, like Paddy the Pony and the Musical Dogs. Yet others were happy to take a good afternoon nap--like Tanny the tiger cub and the Dancing Bears.

When everyone had a good time of rest and food, and a bit of fresh air and exercise, they were ready to begin the late afternoon clean up and preparation for the next day's show. There was always lots to do!

As they sat for their evening meal, McNelly thanked all the crew for all they did. "And Hilda, this meal is terrific. What a great skill you have. And speaking of skill, it seems a new act has been added to the show, at least for now. Has it not?" Hilda smiled and remembered the singing she was asked to do.

"I'll think about it," she said with a twinkle. "If they don't mind hearing me sing, well, I don't mind singing out. It feels good for a lady my age to get on her singing lungs again. Does me good. I think I enjoy it more than they do."

"Done!" said McNelly. "I'll be looking forward to hearing the next concert addition to the circus. Does anybody mind?"

Everyone thought it was a great idea to add a bit of spice to the show, at least for as long as it was enjoyed.

"Nancy," McNelly said, as he kissed his wife's hand.

"My dear Nancy. What would I do without you? Why, if it wasn't for you we would never have started this circus at all. It was your courage and encouragement that gave me the will to try. And look where we are now. I think you've helped to put more smiles on children's faces through this circus than the hours it's taken to practice the acts."

Nancy smile and added, "But it wouldn't be possible without all these fine fellows here. It's their skill and determination to keep at something until they can competently perform it that makes it possible at all.

Everyone cheered for each other, and then headed off to get a good night's rest. They'd need that if they were to do a good job the following day. Every day that things went well was a day to celebrate.

So much time and effort had gone into the show so far, and it was good to make sure each one knew they were well appreciated and needed too.

## **Adventures of Circus Animals—Part 2**

### **Chapter 1—Tanny Likes to Romp Around**

### **Chapter 2—Night Time Activities**

### **Chapter 3—A Musical Clown Performance**

### **Chapter 4—New Adventures**

## **Chapter 5—Travelling Circus Trainers**

## **Chapter 6—Once Upon a Time...**

## **Chapter 7—Animal Tales**

## **Chapter 8—New Circus Teams**

## **Chapter 9—Celebration**

## **Chapter 10—Loving Kindness**

### **Chapter 1—Tanny Likes to Romp Around**

Tanny the tiger cub was sunning herself.

“Yawn!” Stretch! She was just waking up from her sun nap. The weather had been rather rainy lately, which meant a lot of mud, and not much outdoor time for many of the animals. But today, ah! This was a glorious day filled with sunshine and play. Or naps in the sun, as it was for Tanny.

When Tanny woke she found to her delight a bowl of food placed there for her.

“Now this is royal treatment!” she thought, and began to nibble.

“There is just one other thing that would really be fun...” Tanny thought as she looked around the edges of the enclosure she was in.

“Mmmm, that meal was good. And now for some exploring. I think it’s about time I learn what real mud feels like. And that new trailer over there. I’m sure it has some new kind of animals for the circus in it. I’ve just got to find out.”

And with those thoughts Tanny was determined to find a way out of her enclosure.

Just then Hilda approached the area. Tanny tried to get her attention. Even though Hilda normally would have taken time to practice their singing act, today was different. With the sun at last shining and with a show to be put on later in the day, there was lots to be done.

The mud would make it rather messy for all the people coming to the circus tent. No little girls would appreciate their dainty little shoes getting all muddy. So Hilda was helping to prepare a pathway of planks of wood and stones for people to walk on.

Tanny did her best to make as loud a growl as she could. She really wanted Hilda to take her out.

“Well, little one,” Hilda said, coming over and looking at Tanny. “I can see that you’d very much enjoy a romp and time and exploring. I’ll tell you what. Just as soon as I finish helping with the pathway I’ll put you on a leash and you can have a look around. Good?”

After explaining this idea, Hilda stood up and got back to work.

Though Tanny didn’t understand the words she spoke, when she saw Hilda walking away she understood that whatever it was, meant “wait”. She’d need to be patient.

To pass the time Tanny decided to do some fly catching. There were always some of these around wherever there were animals and old food. She darted here and then there, and grabbed in the air to get the flies. It made for a good game, though it didn't really clear the place of these dirty flying pests. It was good that the circus team moved as often as they did. That was one way to keep the troublesome type of creatures from moving in all the more.

Whenever they moved to a new area of land, it was like a fresh new start. But when the local bugs and critters were fully aware of the new animals and sources of food, such as trash and pet food bowls, they told the others, and it became a bother.

The rain had kept some of the bugs away, and that was nice. It also helped to clean things up. Of course there was mud, and that might be considered dirty. But the area was washed and cleaned of other things that were smelly and soiling.

"Okay, that looks like it will work!" Hilda said, done with her path making job, sparing people a muddy walk to the circus tent.

"Now to give Tanny a bit of a romp," she said, making her way over to the tiger cub's enclosure.

Tanny had on a collar and Hilda was easily able to hook on a leash.

"Come on, let's go!" she invited an eager Tanny.

At first Tanny walked slowly, as the feeling of mud squishing through her furry paws was a new one. But as soon as she got used to it she started to leap on and climb over anything that was beside her on their walk around the whole circus tent.

Towards the end of their walk Tanny spotted the new large trailer, that she was sure contained some creatures who she hadn't yet met. Though she didn't smell or hear any animal sounds, it was worth investigating.

Hilda went up to the door of the trailer and knocked. She remembered she'd promised to check on her sister who lived in it. She was the newest addition to the circus.

"You brought Tanny to see me?" Hilda's sister Milda exclaimed, looking out the door.

Tanny wondered what else this trailer held. She just knew there was more to it than a woman. After all, if she was really part of the circus, why was she in there, rather than helping around the circus grounds?

Then Tanny found out. A baby sound was heard. A sound of a very young baby.

"And how is Nathan doing?" Hilda asked. And the two chatted for a bit. Though Tanny had no idea what the women were actually saying, she would have liked to know what was going on.

Milda's husband, Sam, had recently joined the crew, and had brought her and the new baby there so they could be together. It was a nice change for them, rather than only being in a house. They would get to spend much time outdoors. Milda could fix Sam's lunches and eat them together in the trailer each day. When Nathan got a little older he would enjoy seeing the animals and getting to know them.

As Hilda walked away to place Tanny back in to her area, Tanny was glad she found out just what or who was in that mysterious new trailer. It could be fun getting to see a baby sometimes.



“Now do be patient in here,” Hilda said returning Tanny to her area. She then was off to see that Paddy the Pony had all that was needed. “I’ll see you later. And maybe we’ll even get to do some singing. Bye,” Hilda said. Tanny, still happy for the sunshine settled once again in her little snug bed for yet the next sunny nap.

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## Chapter 2—Night Time Activities

“And how have you been, Paddy?” Hilda said, greeting the pony.

“Neigh,” was the response, which she took to mean, “All was well, but my legs sure to need to run.”

“I’ll take you to the paddock soon. I just need to freshen up the hay, and oh! What have we here?”

As Hilda scooped up the hay with a pitch fork on the floor of Paddy’s stall it surprised a certain team of mice who had moved in during the rain.

“Well, you best be going. Now off with you!” Hilda picked up a broom and ensured their fast exit.

“Don’t need any of those varmints around now do we? Gotta big enough job picking up after the needed animals without having to pick up after those just here for a free meal and getting to things, taking what isn’t for them.”

Paddy’s water was refreshed, some grain and straw placed in the feeding bins, and Paddy was given a nice brush down.

“You’re set to go!” Hilda said, leading Paddy out to get a bit of a run and nibble something fresh.

Paddy nodded thankfully and walked out as he was led. Ah, the sun did feel good indeed!

Some floor scrubbing for some of the trailers was next. Hilda made quick work of it. Today someone else was cooking the meals, as she was more than glad to put her hands to work in more active ways.

While she went about her clean up and care, a new song was coming to her.

“Let’s see.. what shall I call it? ‘Do it well and Do it right’? Or ‘Do your best, and do it now’?”

Finally she settled on simply calling it, “Do it!”

That night she was sitting in her trailer using a guitar to sing her new song. Now that the circus shows had a spot for her to sing, it was good to write new songs every now and then. Here is what she wrote down; the rough idea for her song:

If I don’t do it, nobody gonna try.

I might go through it, but I’m not the kind of guy

That just leaves the work all piled up for another.

I wish there was a wand that did

All that I see needs doing.

But I'm not going to sit around dreaming up ways

To short cut all that I should just

Pull up my sleeves, get messy, and get it done.

Done right. Done now. Done right now.

Well, she still had work to do on the song. More ways to make it sound smoother, maybe rhyme more. But those were the ideas she was working with.

A new idea was coming to her while she mused on the lyrics.

"What if there was a bit of a clown show that went along with it. Could be funny; could be good."

Hilda would ask McNelly about it once she got the song all finished. Some other day. For now she best get some rest. Tomorrow would be another day of the show.

"Click" she turned off her light.

But "bing!" it was like a light must have just turned on inside of someone else. A very small and special someone. A certain Nathan baby felt wide awake for some unknown reason.

Milda took Nathan in the stroller for a look around the grounds. He needed fresh air, and the starry sky was sure great to enjoy.

"Aarff, arff" came a gentle bark.

Milda turned to see where it was coming from.

"My oh my, wherever are you here? Shouldn't you be tucked away for the night?" Milda said to the Musical Dog that was beside her on the path. It seemed he had slipped away from the Kennel and was very much regretting it. He was no longer in his nice warm area. He missed his other dog friends.

"Well," said Milda, "I see now why it was good that Nathan and I took a walk around, to find a certain lost dog. I happen to have a leash right here, from the time I walked a few of your friends earlier today. Come here. Good boy. I'll slip this on you, and away we go. You can walk with us a while and then I'll return you to where you are meant to be."

The Musical Dog was happy enough for that arrangement. He got a night walk and company, and was certain that the leash meant he was going to go back into the kennel after. He'd lost the feeling of freedom, but was glad for the comfort he would be enjoying.

After walking baby Nathan in the stroller all around for about 15 minutes, Milda made her way over to the dog kennel. One of the clowns had heard some whining coming from there and came to check out what was going on. It seemed the other Musical Dogs were missing their friend, and perhaps wishing they could be out in the night running around trying to find him.

“Well, it looks like the answer has just come,” the clown said, as Milda made her way over with the stroller and the dog.

“Where did you find him? Thanks for bringing him home,” the clown said.

Milda said where he had been found on her night time walk, and was glad to have been a help at the right time.

It wasn't the easiest thing for her to get out of her nice warm bed to take the baby out for a walk in the starlight. After all she was feeling quite tired. But now she was glad to have been a help to the circus in this special way.

“And why don't you get some good sleep, little one, okay?” the clown said softly to the baby, whose eyes were starting to shut already.

“I think he's going to sleep well now,” Milda replied. “Night time fresh air sure helps with that.”

As Milda neared her trailer the door opened and out looked her husband. “Are you alright? Is Nathan okay?” he asked. Milda just nodded with a smile then held her finger to her lips as if to say, “Shhh, he's sleeping now.”

Together with her husband, Milda helped to lift the stroller into the trailer. They soon were all snuggly sleeping.

Well, I'd like to say all, but though all the people in the trailer were resting, not everyone and everything around had slumber on their mind.

*Rustle, rustle*, came and went the opossums. *Scurry, shuffle*, came and went the mice. And Yawn! went Zoozoo. Though tired, he was more interested in what new antics he'd be able to do the next day.

The best he could do for now was to dream about it. And that he did. What a glorious dream it was!

He was in the circus tent swinging around and climbing up here and there, leaping and so forth. But there wasn't just one monkey. In the dream there were so many. And it was oh so much fun! The tricks they could do together were fabulous. Of course, there were things that couldn't be done in real life; or at least not in that tent. But in dreams things are different and show activities that can only occur in dreamland.

As Zoozoo was just about to take a bite of a big banana that he was holding in his dream, suddenly he awoke. There was a pain in his tail that jolted him to reality. He was wide awake now.

“What?!” he said, holding the end of his tail much like the banana he nearly got to have. “That's not a banana!”

But he needn't have worried about a lack of snacks, for just before she went to bed, Nancy had placed a big bunch of bananas in his area, to snack on if he did get hungry.

“Umm, these are good!” Zoozoo said. “Even if the other part of my dream doesn't come true, and I don't have tons of friends to do the most fun things with, at least I've got caring caretakers, and lots of bananas!”

After a good midnight snack, he settled down to hopefully continue his energetic and fabulous dream.

“I wonder what will happen next?” he thought, settling down as snug as he could.

He had shut one eye and then the next. But then the first eye popped open and the other one after that; and it would start all over again. He really was trying to settle down, but it was hard. The dream had been so fun that he could hardly wait to get swinging and flying and leaping and climbing again.

He reminded himself, “The sooner I sleep, the sooner the morning will come.” And that is just what happened.

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### **Chapter 3—A Musical Clown Performance**

One night after supper, Hilda and few of her clown friends decided to go over the routine for the new song. They decided that it would be a fun and good idea to act things out along with the words.

“I think we could add a line that says....” one clown suggested word changes and additions. Together they changed the lyrics just a bit to make it rhyme more, and be easier to flow with the show.

These clowns were used to putting on performances with little to no practice time, when needed. So it was easy to do it after they’d actually had some time to prepare. Of course a show was always better when they did have time to plan, prepare and practice. That way they could have all the necessary props ready.

Here’s what they did, and were able to perform the very next night.

Hilda sang the words to the newly written song, while the clowns acted it out.

*If I don't do it, nobody gonna try*

*I might go through it, but I'm not the kind of guy*

*That just leaves the work all piled up for another.*

*Hoping someone else does it, just leaving it for others.*

(Three clowns were passing on to one clown some jobs that needed do—like a pile of clean laundry to put away, a broom to sweep with, a dog bowl to fill with food. But the clown just took the various items and piled them up to the side, and didn’t do them.)

*I wish there was a wand that I could wave*

*To instantly fix things, and time it would save*

*By doing in a blink what needs to be done*

*And though that would be fun...*

(The clown brought out a chest, and in it was a magician’s wand. He walked around the pile tapping it, poking it, waving the wand around, trying to make the work disappear. But of course, it never did. The other clowns were puzzled and laughing in disbelief, at this lazy clown trying to save himself work, but was only wasting time.)

*I'm not going to sit around dreaming up a way*

*To short cut all that I gotta do today*

(Exhausted with trying, the clown then gets himself in a comfortable and restful position on the pile of clothes that he is to be putting away. He is trying to dream up ways to get it done.)

*Instead I'll pull up my sleeves, get messy, and do*

*The jobs others are entrusting me to do.*

(One clown comes back with a large alarm clock to wake him up and show him it's time to work. The other brings a large clip board showing the list of to do's. Then they get to their own work. One has a mop and bucket, another is washing some clothes in a tub, and the other is carrying a pot and pretends to be cooking.)

*Done right. Done now. Done right now.*

(The clown sees all that is going on, the work being done and get's into action too, until his pile is removed as one by one the tasks get done. Each of the other clowns only have one job to do at a time, but he has lots to do because he piled them up, rather than doing them. He had to work faster and harder now.)

When all the jobs were done, they all sang the last words again, together with Hilda, who was singing the whole song, as they acted it out.

*Done right. Done now. Done right now.*

And off they walked.

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At practice times in the circus tent, such as this time, was the perfect opportunity for Zoozoo to have some late night exercise and fun.

One of the clowns who trained Zoozoo brought him in, so he could romp around, while they planned, prepared, and practiced their new act.

It was both fun, as well as challenging. Zoozoo liked to climb and swing and hang and play, but he also took great interest in any and all props that were being used. Like the broom, for example, seemed particularly interesting—but only interesting when in the hand of the clown who was using it just then.

Thankfully, right when Zoozoo was really trying to hold and use the very thing one of the clowns needed, he'd all of a sudden remember that he didn't have on his hat! He always liked to wear it when playing and performing in the circus ring. So off he would go to try to put on a hat.

The clowns knew this, and so made a whole pile of hats available for Zoozoo to pick from and attempt to put on. Of course, none would stay on, unless they were strapped on. But he just liked trying lots of types on, and examining them, running around with them, and so forth. This would give the performers more time to focus on their show preparation.

Every now and then, Zoozoo wanted a bit of a chase game, and wanted a clown to run and attempt to get from him what he had picked up. He found the best way was to pick up something that a clown was about to use. He thought this was a game the clowns liked playing, because they always played it with him.

So it was tonight, when Zoozoo thought the clowns needed a bit more fun, he picked up the dustpan that one clown was just about to use in his performance and began running around the circus ring with it. Well, thankfully there were more clowns than monkeys, and with the clowns going in different directions they could get Zoozoo easily. Or so they thought. But there was one thing that Zoozoo could do that they couldn't do, at least not as easily as he.

Up and away Zoozoo went, up some thick ropes, up a fence or pole, and above to somewhere up high in the circus tent—still holding the dustpan.

What were they to do? Well, if it was merely fun and action that Zoozoo wanted, he'd come down soon on his own. For up there, high in the circus tent, no one was chasing or playing with them. So zooom! And down the pole he came, like a fireman, ready for action.

With the trade of a banana, the playful Zoozoo gave back the dustpan and went off to the side to eat his snack. The show preparation could continue. That is until Zoozoo would think up a new game to play.

Finally, when the team was ready and had run through the song and show enough times, they stopped to enjoy a bit of focused Zoozoo play. Zoozoo could tell it was high action time. It was three to one—all clowns getting on the chase.

"Let's play, 'catch the monkey's tail'" one clown suggested. Even though this was a game the children often played, and it wasn't with an actual monkey, it sounded right and fun. As soon as Zoozoo saw all eyes were on him, and heard the game announced, he knew he best get moving.

Yelping and squealing he went all around as fast as he could. He didn't always get away this time, for the clowns knew how to work the ropes to bring down a swinging platform he might be sitting on, way up high. They'd hold on to him for a moment when they got him, but then let him go again for a new chase.

At last, when all clowns, and Zoozoo especially, were tired out, it was time to settled down for the night. A ready-for-bed Zoozoo was placed in his area, and the clowns each went off to their trailers.

Hilda was pleased with the show, and thought it would be fun. But she was even thinking that the most fun part to watch would be the final chase scene in the end. Maybe having Zoozoo a part of it, or at least for the ending chase, would be highly entertaining. "Yes, I think I'll suggested that to McNelly," she thought as she walked to the kitchen for a banana snack and a glass of water, and then would be off to bed.

She'd worked hard that day, and would enjoy some good rest.

However, just like her song said, sometimes there was a job that needed doing, and one had to choose to leave it for others, hoping they would do it, or to do it herself.

"Oh, I forgot about the dishes!" Hilda thought as she saw a pile that needed washing. She was at the clown show practice and hadn't been there to do the usual washing. She thought someone else was going to do it, but had actually forgotten to ask them.

So she had to decide, to either do them now, or to just soak them in water and face the job in the morning.

Thankfully some help came on by in the form of McNelly.

"I saw the light on in here and wondered who was still awake," McNelly said when finding Hilda at the sink of dishes, looking very tired.

“Oh, my, that does look like a challenge,” he spoke, rolling up his sleeves and putting on an apron. “And you’ve been working extra hard on the new act. Why don’t you go off to bed and I’ll take care of this.”

Well, with help, Hilda felt maybe she could manage it after all.

“We don’t want the bugs to move in while we are resting, you know,” McNelly said. “As that would be just one more job for you and others to face in the morning. And once they find a feast of old food, ants and others start to become regular customers.”

“Thank you so much,” Hilda replied. “I just don’t know if I’d have the strength to face it alone. I am so very tired.”

“Let’s do it together then, shall we?” McNelly suggested. “Twice as fast it will be done.”

In walked Clarence the Keeper who had just finished a last check on all the animals and saw that Zoozoo was safely and happily away for the night. Seeing the situation he rolled up his sleeves, washed his hands, put on an apron, and said with a grin, “Thrice as fast will be better yet!”

McNelly and Hilda replied, “Thank you!”

And so within minutes, what looked like hard and tiring job, was completed. The floor was mopped, the lights turned off, and at last all could get some rest. The morning was fast approaching and there would be plenty to do then!

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#### **Chapter 4—New Adventures**

McNelly entered his trailer where Nancy was already tucked into bed. There was a little light on and she was reading quietly.

“Hi, Darling. You were out doing some good again, I see. Who was it this time?” Nancy asked. She knew when her husband came in later, it was usually because he was helping out around the camp in some way.

“Just pitched in to help a bit with the dishes. Somehow it got missed in the running of things tonight,” McNelly replied.

Soon he was in bed and a discussion was started.

“I was thinking tonight dear,” Nancy started to say, “about our beginnings. The way we all started off.”

McNelly smiled and visualised the memories, “Ah yes...”

Nancy had been a secretary of a large business that her father was head manager for. But it’s wasn’t always fun, and it certainly wasn’t easy. It’s not that she had a hard time working, it was more the fact that she didn’t seem to be doing anything that really helped others. All she did, day after day, was type notes about plans that never seemed to work out. Plans that really wouldn’t change the world for the better even if they did work out.

Things like what colours should be used on the new flashy sign for the company, and what brand of linen should be used in their company’s overseas hotel, or how many people should attend the conference each year to discuss better strategies to sell their already popular shower caps.

When she walked down the street and saw children sitting around or playing silly hurtful games, Nancy wanted to do so much more with her life. Then she got an idea. “These children want fun, and I think I know just the thing they’d like—they need a circus. And I don’t mean just a show to go to once, but a circus to participate in.”

Around that time, McNelly, was teaching gymnastics to a group of young teenagers. They were eager to learn something active. They’d sat with books in classrooms long enough. It was time to get their bodies in shape. McNelly didn’t just invite the teens who were already in shape. No, he wanted to find those who most needed the exercise and a challenge.

First he started off with teaching them about the best things to eat and drink, and what not to. Next, they’d go on walks and eventually hikes. He’d teach them how to stretch and limber up. They’d then start to learn about strengthening the various parts of their bodies. Eventually they started to be able to do more. Their lean and strong bodies were able to do gymnastic moves, or run for long distances.

He wasn’t just teaching them how to care for themselves, but how to then be leaders and trainers of others.

“When this year is over,” McNelly told them, “I want you each to have at least 12 others that you are helping to teach. I don’t want you to just sit and do nothing with the training I’m giving you. You’ve worked hard, and the best way for that time and effort to be worth it is for you to share it with others also.”

So that is how the “Jim’s Gym Group” started. Jim of course being McNelly’s middle name.

With that program rolling and many more young people starting to get in shape, McNelly wanted to do something for the young children of the area. That is when he and Nancy met. When they discovered they had so many similar ideas for how to make things better, what better way to do it than to do it together?

And that was how the idea for the circus began. Again, they chose to work with people who didn’t know anything about putting on shows, or training animals, or even how to build a circus tent. Yes, McNelly and Nancy wanted to start with at the very beginning, and learn step-by-step how to do it, and then teach others step-by-step.

It took a lot longer to do it this way, then simply finding those who were already trained and putting them to work. But really, the end goal wasn’t just to have a circus. The goal they really were after was to train as many young people as they could and who would be interested in learning. Parents who were interested in allowing their children to be part of this new project, would bring their children for training. They learned simple clown acts, and various acrobatic performances. They watched the animal trainers and eventually learned, as they grew older, how to train animals as well. They learned to prepare snacks, and how to clean the animal’s areas. The children and teens that visited nearly daily, grew bigger and more skilled. It had taken three years before the “Children’s Circus” put on their first simple show. They didn’t have tent back then nor nearly any of the stage props that they now did. But it was a start, and a victory for all their efforts to learn.

But the young ones kept learning and growing, and soon weren’t children any more. They were capable older teens and young adults, well able to put on a great, and more advanced show—and able to turn around and teach other children as well. –Whoever was interested could come and learn from them.



McNelly and Nancy thought about all that had happened, and about what new things they should try to do in the future. Maybe after this circus was going good and strong, others could take over the running of it, and who knows if they would be on to yet another project? This one had taken them nearly 20 years already. But they still had a lot of joy left to give.

“What do you think we’ll be on to next?” McNelly asked, as they turned the light off.

“Tomorrow!” Nancy replied. Yes, they’d take it one day at a time. They were still very much needed and appreciated. But it was worth thinking about training new ones in the skill of running a circus, and all the details to keeping both the performers well cared for, as well as the animals well-trained and looked after. And also, know how to keep the grounds clean and safe and pleasant.

“Perhaps we already have started something new...” Nancy said. “We’ve gone from starting up a circus, to being managers of one, and learning about diligent and careful care of people, as well as animals. Being managers is a new job I’d say.”

“And maybe it’s one that we could help to train others to do,” McNelly added thoughtfully.

“I always did want to go explore a new part of the country, just the two of us. We’d be able to find out new needs that exist in different places. Might give us more ideas of programs and learning opportunities to offer. And if we train someone else to help us, then they could run things while we do a bit of exploring,” Nancy suggested.

“Hmmm,” McNelly pondered this rather new thought. “Let’s think about. You just might be on to something.”

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## **Chapter 5—Travelling Circus Trainers**

One year later, their latest plan was already put into effect.

“Are you ready?” McNelly called out to the busload of travellers, and a few dogs.

“Ready!” they called out.

“Good then!”

This was the first “Traveling Circus Trainers” team that was on their way.

They were to travel to a new and distant place, once each month for the next year. Then the following couple years return to check on things and give more training. They chose 12 places that wanted to have a circus training program, just like McNelly and Nancy had done.

The traveling team would teach how to start up a circus right from the start. It would take some years to get things going, but the patient working with the people and getting to know them was good for them all.

McNelly didn’t worry about their being too many circus teams around, if that would mean less visitors to his own circus. He knew that children everywhere needed lots of fun. He wished young people could be trained in every place, all around, in the skill of how to make others happy. He wanted them to learn how to put forth the hard work it would take to do so.

“Bark bark!” a few of the Musical Dogs announced that they too were ready and eager to get going. There wasn’t much that they were going to do as far as helping to train people in the skill of training people to care for people. But they would miss their trainer. And it would be fun to have these dogs along.

Sam and Milda and baby Nathan were part of the team. Milda and Nathan were great ones for providing night time walks, as well as snack making for the team. Sam and McNelly would give the seminars, and the rest of the crew would be the eager and happy demonstrators. After all, what do clowns do best? They act things out. So doing skits to demonstrate what to do, and what not to do, to best care for and teach others, made it easy for the people listening to get the ideas being shared in words.

Nancy stayed back on this first trip, to be there in case the new team of managers in training had any questions. In the future she would be able to also go.

That night as the team on the road set up their tents, as well as a kennel area for the dogs, Nancy was making the rounds to check on things back at the circus grounds. She spoke with Clarence the Keeper, who had personally seen to it that all the animals were well, and would be comfortable and safe for the night.

Nancy checked on the kitchen and saw that in deed all was clean and in order, and the food was in fridge ready for the morning’s fresh fruit smoothie. The bread was in the oven, ready to be heated up in the morning. There was plenty of clean drinking water available.

She then made her way to some of the trailers to see that everyone was warm enough, and to say good night.

She carried a notebook and pen to take notes on anything that needed to be tended to the next morning.

When she was sure everything was good and right, she retired to go to sleep. It wasn’t very often that she had to face a bed alone, with her husband gone. He would be back in a week or so. But she thought of the future, and of the children and young ones. They each were facing bigger challenges than a quiet and empty trailer. They might face a sad and empty future, if something wasn’t done to help them. And that is just why she choose to share McNelly with others in need of training. She did want as many young people to know how needed they were, and how they could make a big difference to cheer up and bring smiles to the younger ones.

After all, that is why she got married in the first place—so together they would be able to help teach others how to train others in how to help others to live happily.

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## **Chapter 6—Once Upon a Time...**

There was a secret meeting going on in one of the larger trailers. The lights were kept low and everyone there whispered in a hush. They wanted to let as few people as possible find out about this surprise event, or it would no longer be a surprise.

This trailer wasn’t used to sleep in, but was actually for meetings and planning sessions, or those who needed or wanted to talk personally with McNelly about challenges they were facing.

It had been a week since the first training team had left and they were due to return any day now. This team wanted to put on a special show to welcome them back. It would be held in the circus tent, though it wouldn't be filled with the usual audience.

Before this team went to bed they made sure that each one knew what their part in the plan was. It wasn't enough to just have a great idea, nor even to have a meeting on how to do that great idea, but people needed to know their jobs and be able to get them done in time.

Quietly they walked, without talking, out of the planning trailer and into each of their private sleeping trailers. They didn't want to alert the others who might wonder what was going on.

As Neil, of the the clowns, who had been part of this planning committee, rested for the night, a whole new idea came. But for now he'd just write it down. It seemed more ideas were coming to him these days.

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Three days later, after the returning team had rested up and was ready for action, they were led into the large circus tent, "for a meeting" they were told. "Some things happened while you were gone and we need to tell you about them."

It was a rather somber McNelly and others who entered. They wondered what had gone wrong, or what new problems would need to be fixed. Perhaps the crew of the circus no longer wished to be a part of it?

But that was certainly not the case. They were just keeping the reason rather veiled.

This was a meeting—for they were meeting together. And it was about what happened while the team was gone. But it was a very good bunch of things.

The rest of the crew on the circus team that didn't know what was going to happen, were also invited in.

So there everyone sat, all that is except the team that held that secret meeting a few nights ago.

All of a sudden the lights went out, and a voice began to be heard speaking into a microphone, saying,

"Once upon a time, there was nothing—no circus here at all...that is until..."

A spotlight then came on and showed someone dressed as a humorous version of McNelly walked on the to the stage, acting out what it was like when he began teaching them, so many years ago. These adults remembered what it was like when they started, as curious children, eager to play a part in the circus one day. And now the one day had fully come.

A play was put on, using the few people involved, to act out the whole history of the circus project, in a nut shell.

Then it had a scene of what it was like during the week when the team was gone off to give training to others. They carried on well, worked diligently, took good care of the animals, and practiced some new stage acts. They missed McNelly and the others, but wanted him to know that they had done their very best. No one had taken advantage of the time to just waste time and create problems. Some of the older ones who had been with McNelly since the beginning made it clear to others that they would get a full

account of everything done, when he returned, and they wanted to be able to say good things about each one.

But the end of this show McNelly was clapping, and shedding a few tears of gratitude. He felt that all his efforts over these years had been appreciated and had done some good.

The lights came on fully, and a big cake was brought out, prepared to perfection by dear Hilda and some eager to taste it young ones who she was teaching cooking skills too.

“Now we want to hear all about your trip!” one of the older clowns asked.

Since they had done such a splendid job of telling what had happened in his absence, McNelly thought it only fair to return the favour. Of course the stories of their trip away would be far more interesting than what merely happened on the circus grounds. But none of that would have been possible if the team here hadn't stayed.

McNelly was sure to bring that point out, and added, “And you'll each get a turn to go, of course. You each have learned so much and I want you to get an opportunity to tell others what you have discovered over these past many years.”

While munching on the cake and some fruit, they eagerly listened.

Sam said, “I think the hardest, or most challenging part of the whole trip was doing just what we are doing now—talking about really important things. I'm not good at giving speeches. But on the trip I didn't really have the option to just not talk much. I would have kept quiet and just listened to what others wanted to say. But sometimes we don't have the luxury of doing only what we enjoy, or is easy for us.

“See, you here were probably thinking, ‘Oh, they get to have so much fun. They just travel and see and do new things. And best of all they get all these people who want to listen to them and learn from them.’

“Did you think that?” Sam asked. Some nodded shyly.

“Well,” he continued, “I probably would have thought the same. Or perhaps something similar. I didn't go because it was my style of work—doing presentations—but because it helped the circus team back at home, you all, to have the personnel you needed. And since I don't know all that much about running things, thought I am learning, still I might have made a mess of things. And certainly much would have been missed getting done. But if I just have the script of what to say to the team that was listening, then that was easier. Easier for you all.

“And my wife, Milda...” Sam pointed, and Milda added:

“Yes, my work is very baby oriented, and I too couldn't really pull a big load back here, like you all had to do. But I could help to make snacks, or take the dogs for walks, and keep things clean in the bus. My role was very small, but if it helped you all here have an easier time, then I was happy to help.”

McNelly added:

“So it's not that we selected the best and most trained people, and left the rest here at home. No, it's the other way around, we needed to have here the most qualified for doing the jobs here, those who could do even extra work without complaint, and do it diligently and well. Thank you all so very much for being willing to let us go.”

As he said this, McNelly reached over and gave his wife's hand a gentle squeeze and a kind look into her eyes. She had shared him with others, and done extra work to make it possible.

Everyone listening were very encouraged and felt better now. They truly felt appreciated and honoured.

Sam continued, "The good thing is that it worked! Everyone we spoke with really enjoyed hearing the ideas, and wanted to get started on it right away."

"Yes," McNelly chimed in, "We'll probably never know the full extent of how far this gift we all gave them will go. We'll never know each and every child and young person, and older ones too, that we helped to give joy to. All we can do is get people started. Then what happens from then on, we may never hear about. And that's hard. But we know we are doing the right thing, and that's what's important."

Everyone agreed and was fully supportive of the project.

"I'd just like to say," started off one of the clowns that went on the trip, "that the Musical Dog's representatives who came along, were very well behaved. And learned plenty too!"

"Yes," replied the other clown with a chuckle, "Especially not to go out at night without a caretaker!"

The whole team laughed a bit remembering the situation.

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## **Chapter 7—Animal Tales**

Those listening were ready for some animal tales. What was the trip like from the dog's point of view?

The clowns related the story.

"Well, one night at a campground we'd been hearing some very strange noises, and wanted to check it out. It turned out to be nothing more than a type of night bird they have in that area. Or so we thought. We were satisfied with thinking that."

"But not so with Nilly and Humphrey, our dear dog friends," the other clown spoke up.

"They were just getting going. If there was an adventure to be had, somewhere out there in the night, they wanted to get it. So as I was filling their water bowls and some food for the night, right beside the bus, they took this as their chance."

The first clown continued, "I guess it was actually my fault, as I had them unchained and unleashed. They were just sitting on the ground, and besides, being the highly trained dogs that they are, I was sure they would be perfect in all they chose to do."

Everyone laughed. They knew that although the dogs were well trained, they also could indeed be rather scamperous. But they also knew that this clown thought very highly of them, and sometimes thought the dogs would never do anything wrong.

The next clown told what happened next,

"As soon as that odd noise from some creature, sounded out again, the two of them looked at each other, gave a bark, and darted out fast as anything, right into the pitch black area. Without so much as flashlight

ready on hand, I wasn't sure what to do. My calls for them weren't being heard, or at least weren't being heeded."

The first clown added the next part, "I blew with the whistle, but to no avail. So we got on our coats and hats and hiking shoes and took a good light—and of course two leashes, to bring them home with. It was time to find out what was going on.

"We walked for a bit, calling and whistling. We were actually getting worried. Maybe there was something out here that we didn't know about? Were there any animals that were a danger to the dogs, lurking at night? Or a danger to us? For a little while our manly hero spirit began to waver. It felt too big for us to tackle—the problem that is. Hopefully not an animal."

The other clown added, "Then the moon seemed to come out from behind a cloud and there was a slivery light on a field in front of us. We could see a tent was pitched there. So we made our way to it.

"'Who's there?' came the gruff call from inside the darkened tent, as they heard some feet—our feet, approach.

"'We're just looking for some runaway dogs. Got any ideas?' we asked."

At this the voice softened.

"'I lost a dog once here too,' he said, 'but if you pass the field, I think you'll find the next clue.'

"'Thanks a lot' we replied and did as he suggested.

"We were very curious and so cautiously walked the rest of the way to the edge of the field.

"'What?' we said. We were taken completely by surprise by what we saw: A building we nearly walked into, as it was so very disguised in this darkness, covered by plants and bushes. From the building some faint dog yelps could be heard.

"'How do we get in here?' we wondered.

"Around and around we walked attempting to find some sort of an entrance, but there was none that we could see.

"'Think like a dog', I told myself. 'What would a dog have done?'

"In answer to my thoughts, my clown partner here said, 'Is there a dug out hole or tunnel, like an animal would like to burrow in? You know like a beaver gets into his house by going down and then up?'

"That proved to be a right on clue. So rather than looking for the well disguised door, we looked for an animal-friendly entrance.

"'I found it!' my friend here said, and soon we were both wiggling our way through it, crawling like ants to get a prize. We knew the sounds we were hearing was certainly coming from our dogs. It was good we had a light with us, as when we popped up in the building, all would have been completely dark.

"'What are you doing here?' we said looking at our dogs, both chained up, nibbling on a delicious dog bone. We released them, took the bone along with us, and went out the door, which was easier to find now from the inside.

“But as the door opened it made a jingling sound that alerted the care taker of this place, from his room up high. A light was turned on and he explained to us, as we made our way out, what this place was. Our dogs weren’t the only ones in here. It was meant to be like a holding place for stray dogs. Maybe like trap in a way so they wouldn’t roam the area. Or perhaps like a game for some. Or even like a lesson-learning experience for the overly curious dogs who should be with their owners.

“Well, our dear dogs never did stray again. Partly because of their experience, and partly because we kept them more secure from then on.”

Everyone was relieved that the dogs were safe, yet still recovering from laughter. These clowns had a way of telling and acting out a story of just about any kind, in a way that brought out the laughs in just about anyone. It was good to have these guys back. They sure had been missed.

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## **Chapter 8—New Circus Teams**

One year later a team was heading back on the very same trip, to check on the new circus team they had gotten started, with their training presentations.

This time Nancy accompanied McNelly, while Sam and Milda were the new part-time managers of their circus, and stayed with the circus team. McNelly and Nancy were free to travel, and encourage people along the way, with how easy it would be to make the whole area so much happier and exciting. All it takes is a great idea, and a great pair of people focussing on making it happen. And of course, willing young ones wanting a bit of fun, and most of all wanting to have fun making others feel excited about living; young ones having some good natured things to occupy their time with.

McNelly and Nancy smiled as they pulled into the circus grounds after their most interesting trip. They’d done more than just check on the new circus team. They’d enjoyed a holiday while at it, seeing places around that they never had the time or opportunity to see before, as busy as they were helping to make children and young people as happy as they could.

But as they drove in to park near their trailer, they gave out a laugh! The whole thing was decorated with streamers and balloons and a welcome sign. It felt good to give love and joy to others, and certainly felt great to have it given back.

“Something’s different...” Nancy said. She noticed it first. “The trailer, is that the same colour it usually is...?”

“Is that the same size it usually is?” McNelly questioned.

“What?” they both looked incredulously at this.

A big surprise had been done for them. Their trailer had been the smallest and most rundown of them all, leaking a bit at times. They always ensured that everyone one else on the team had something better than they did. They were ‘here to serve and help others’, they’d say, ‘not to live in the lap of luxury’.

How the circus crew did this, they didn’t know, but there sat a bigger, shinier, non-leaking trailer.

Nancy nearly cried. It was so kind of everyone to give them this gift. More than a nice trailer it was the thought that counted, to know that they were appreciated.

“Perhaps they are worried we’ll move on to look after some other circus...” McNelly said with a chuckle.

Then he got a crazy idea. And before they walked through the door of the new trailer, he picked up his slender wife and lifted her through the “threshold” the door, like newlyweds do when entering their new house.

“Nancy, I would be honoured if you would be my wife, will you?” McNelly said, while a group of welcomers stood around smiling and watching the best act they had seen put on all day. Only it really wasn’t an act, but this couple did genuinely wish to be life partners for yet a long time more—for the rest of their life.

“Yes, I do,” Nancy replied. “Though I know being married to you will be a circus for sure.”

She joked and everyone laughed and clapped.

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## **Chapter 9—Celebration**

Hilda and Milda, seizing the moment of fun, quickly began passing out cups to everyone around, and filling them with the juice they had prepared. It was to be served later, in a more proper fashion, but flowing with the fun of the moment was an even more respectable thing to do. Surprises were good for all—good surprises.

McNelly, stood in the open doorway of his trailer, rather like a stage, and gave an impromptu speech.

“Thank you all, our dear dear friends. For that is what you are to us. More than a team of workmates, or a team of helpers, or even a circus team, more than anything we are simply a team. We are there for each other in our ups and downs, in our sickness or in health. On the sunny days and the rainy days. Whether together or apart for a time, we still are united in goal and mission, and sure need each other.

“Nothing that was done could have been done by just me or my wife alone. –As wonderful as she is. It was because you all wanted to join with us in goal, in vision and work hard to make all this happen. I want us to always maintain our close ties of friendship. Yet, continue as always, to bring others into the tent of our joy.”

Cheers were heard, and dinner was called. But more fun was to be had as well.

Tonight there was to be a game and dance night held in the big circus tent. It wasn’t just for helping others, but also for strengthening their own ties of friendship, with a heap of fun. However, dance parties with a circus team, with very acrobatic people, took on a new appearance than what one might find at a regular dance or ballroom. But they all enjoyed their style of fun.

So then it became a routine from then on, that whenever McNelly and Nancy, or whoever returned from their trips away, a large and fun party was held.

Of course Zoozoo was not to miss out on the action at all. Why he was the very life of the party!

And tonight plenty of hats were provided for his play and fun. He was sure this was the best night yet. The ideas were endless of the fun he could make for others.

Paddy the Pony got a place in the party as well, giving free rides.



Even Tanny the Tiger cub was allowed to explore under each and ever bench around in the tent, and climb here and there—for the door was well secured for this night.

During the evening event, the Musical Dogs put on a show of their own, off to the side. They invented just what they wanted to do, as the music played. They thought up some moves that were never usually done on the circus stage for an audience. –Otherwise known as romping and playing, chasing and growling.

The bears were happy to just have a night to rest, they weren't interested in the lively activity. But Nancy herself visited to make sure they were fine and had what they needed.

Elsa the Elderly Elephant too was content to have her usual calm night. Though she was glad to hear the sounds of laughter and music coming from the large circus tent. That was reward enough for her. The more joy, the better, she thought, while drifting off to sleep.

Nancy took a turn, like most everyone else as well, holding and dancing with baby Nathan, who was starting to learn to stand now. But he liked to be held up in someone's arms. This was like his big family, and he liked everyone in a different way. Each one tried to do a little something with him each day, teaching him or making him laugh, or helping to feed him while Milda would prepare food for others.

It really did feel like one big family.

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## **Chapter 10—Loving Kindness**

When the tent was at last silent, the dance part over, the still of the night had come, there were two clowns quietly picking things up before heading each to their own trailers.

Clarence the Keeper and Shelly the newest clown were the ones there. Before leaving, Clarence got up the courage to ask Shelly the question that had been on his mind for nearly a year.

“Shelly...”

She knew what he was going to say. And before he could say it, she nodded, “Yes.” Clarence took this as the answer his heart so wanted to hear.

And by the next time of the circus fun party, Clarence and Shelly were engaged. It was a great reason to celebrate!

McNelly smiled to his wife.

“I'm glad, dear, to see people getting on. I think it's great when the circus can provide challenging work, good opportunities for learning, a way to help cheer others, and best of all each one gets the love and companionship they each need. They are so much happier that way.”

“Yes,” replied Nancy, “It's great too when life partners are part of the team. Then they can enjoy life as a family unit, near to one another. But yet, they are aren't alone, as there are others willing to help with young ones, or other things they might not know how to do, but others on the team do. I think it's great. And I wish for all the rest of the team who are grown, to find the one their heart needs.”

“I found mine...” McNelly said, folding his wife in a hug.

Then Nancy suddenly got an idea.

“You know that woman who was very interested in our circus show last month, and offered to volunteer if we needed extra hands sometimes—like when some of us are on trips away? I think she could be just the one a certain lonely clown on the team might like to have in his life. I love it when love stories start...” she said.

“And when they keep going,” McNelly said to his wife, kissing her hand.

Things were going to continue getting better, both for the circus and for the crew, as long as lovingkindness was at the heart of all they did.