

CHAPTER XXII -The circus boys on the flying Rings

After making sure everyone had left, Phil Forrest hurried toward the village under the cover of night, intent on reaching the blacksmith shop where he knew tension had built up against the Sparling Circus and perhaps even against Emperor, the elephant. As Phil arrived near the cemetery, voices in the distance prompted him to stealthily approach the shop, where a group of villagers gathered, discussing their recent antagonistic actions toward the circus. Amidst their conversation, Phil learned that a man injured in the earlier fray was expected to recover, which brought him some comfort, especially concerning Emperor's involvement.

Phil's concern for Emperor grew as he heard the elephant's restless movements from inside the locked shop. Despite his initial ambitions to free Emperor, Phil's contemplation of the legality and morality of breaking the lock made him reconsider. Instead, he opted to comfort the elephant through the small gesture of calling out softly and providing peanuts through a broken window—a small consolation for both.

The situation escalated rapidly when Phil, after signaling Emperor to comfort him, inadvertently provoked a dramatic escape. Emperor emphatically responded to Phil's whistle by breaking free from his confinement, demolishing the shop in a display of strength and determination. Phil, initially stunned, quickly embraced the moment. Demonstrating a remarkable bond, Emperor gently lifted Phil onto his back upon his command, and together they embarked on a daring escape from the village.

Their flight was marked by a cacophony of trumpeting calls from Emperor, which roused the entire village. As the astonished residents discovered the destruction and the elephant's escape, Phil and Emperor made their way towards the show grounds, before veering off to follow the circus's route. Phil's elation at their successful escape

was mingled with apprehension about potential repercussions, but as dawn broke, they continued on, driven by the thrill of freedom and the strength of their unique companionship.

