

CHAPTER XXI -The circus boys on the flying Rings

In Chapter XXI of "The Circus Boys on the Flying Rings," titled "An Elephant in Jail," the narrative unfolds with a gripping episode involving Phil and the circus owner, Mr. Sparling. The chapter begins with a refusal by Phil to name a suspect he believes to be responsible for an undisclosed act, much to Mr. Sparling's frustration. Despite Sparling's anger, he holds Phil in high regard, even jokingly stating Phil might own the show someday. The circus is thriving, especially in Pennsylvania, where Phil and his friend Teddy's performances on the flying rings, under Mr. Miaco's tutelage, have become major attractions. They're also learning tumbling, assisted by a "mechanic" to prevent injury during practice.

The story then takes a turn when an unfortunate incident occurs during a parade in a mining town. A curious local, aiming to test the theory that an elephant's hide is impenetrable, stabs Emperor, one of the circus elephants, with a penknife. The elephant reacts violently, causing serious injury to the man and considerable damage to property. This leads to a legal debacle where the circus owner, Mr. Sparling, is faced with a hefty damages claim, culminating in Emperor being taken into custody by deputies.

As the ever-resourceful Mr. Sparling navigates through the legal challenges, using the incident as an advertisement opportunity, Phil is concerned about the impact on his act and salary. Sparling, despite his exasperated exterior, displays a philosophical attitude towards the ordeal, reassuring Phil. The chapter concludes with Phil in contemplation, asking about the next show's location, indicating his relentless commitment and perhaps a plan to assist in resolving the situation with Emperor.

The chapter artfully blends humor, the harsh realities of circus life, and the commanding presence of the main characters – Phil's determination, Teddy's camaraderie, and Mr. Sparling's complex personality. The incident not only showcases the unpredictability of working with animals but also highlights the close-knit nature of the circus community as they confront challenges together.

