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# PAUL GALLICO'S *greatest triumph*

*The story of a worldly young  
girl and an innocent boy who  
together discovered adult  
passion . . . "haunting, earthy,  
throbbing . . . a masterpiece"*

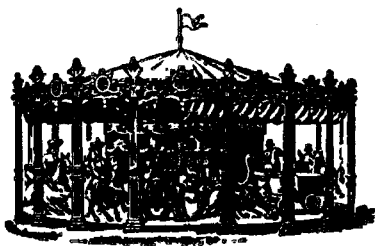
—COLUMBUS DISPA

## Love Let Me Not Hunger



*Love,  
Let Me  
Not  
Hunger*

*PAUL  
GALLICO*



A D E L L B O O K

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Toby waited trembling in his own compartment, listening through the partition to the sounds Rose was making as she undressed—soft sounds—just her breathing and quiet, unhurried movements. . . .

She turned to him, meeting him, yielding, seeking the embrace of his arms, pressing herself to him. "Oh, Toby," she whispered. "I love you."

He hardly heard, or if he had, the words meant nothing to him. For with the touch of her body, he went almost insane with excitement.

And so he was a man.

*"The same Gallico who has touched the hearts of millions . . . tenderness, sensitivity, compassion for the loved and unloved . . . to which he's added a theme of sexual love"*

—ST. PETERSBURG TIMES



## **Contents**

***Part I. Fire 7***

***Part II. Famine 137***

***Part III. Feast 219***



# I Fire





# 1

The gathering in the main building of the winter quarters of the Marvel Circus at Chippenham was an unusual one. Summoned by Sam Marvel, the recently arrived contract artistes and staff stood around in uneasy groups, murmuring and waiting.

Ordinarily, they would have been unpacking their gear and props, seeing their animals into their stalls, and preparing to begin the weeks of limbering up and practise necessary after the long winter months of hibernation before their acts would be ready to take to the road in the spring.

But on this twilight-like day in the middle of a wet, miserable English February, Sam Marvel had called a meeting to be attended by everyone, from the aristocratic Walters riding family down to the lowest groom, and including even lower than low, Mr. Albert, the servant of the beasts.

Winter quarters for Sam Marvel's Marvel Circus consisted of a group of buildings on the outskirts of Chippenham. The long barns were ideal for the sheltering of the horses and the animal cages during the cold months, and there was also one large rectangular structure which had originally served as an indoor market where sales had taken place, and which had been turned into a rehearsal ring and practise hall.

It offered more than enough space for a regulation-size circus ring, the same one they would carry with them on tour, and the roof girders were studded with the necessary eyebolts and rings to support trapezes and other gear of the various acts in the show. It was further equipped with an American riding machine. Here, also, the circular portable steel safety cage could be set up for the wild-animal presentations, and all in all it was a useful and efficient building.

From the time in February when the performers arrived, there was hardly a moment when something was not going on in the hall. There would be acrobats warming up, trapeze artistes stretching before attempting their more spectacular routines, and perch acts balancing gingerly. The Liberty horses would be drilling, trotting through the same movements over and over; the only way to fix the proper habits in their beautiful but thick skulls. Children of the equestrian families would be at their training attached to the belt of the riding machine, a contraption not unlike a fishing pole, from which they would swing suddenly like small, struggling frogs used for bait as the great dapple-grey rosin-backs galloped out from under them, leaving them suspended in mid-air, embarrassed but safe. And strangest of all would be the clowns rehearsing their routines, performances made even more weird by the fact that they were not in costume but clad in trousers and sweaters.

But now there was no such activity, only the polyglot groups of people who seemed quite out of place sitting on the edge of the ring or standing about in the tanbark in their everyday clothes, made all lumpy by the muscular bodies they concealed. The women looked dowdy and ordinary, and the men, mostly small in size, even less impressive in their street garments, with the foreigners easily identified by the white scarves they inevitably wore inside the collars of their jackets.

The uneasiness resulted from the mystery of the meeting call, for in the past Sam Marvel had never been one for speechmaking, or for that matter having much to do with his performers. Usually upon their arrival they were simply greeted by him with a nod, which was more a checkoff to acknowledge their presence than a welcome, and thereafter they went to work under the eye of their immediate superior, Captain Burroughs, the ringmaster, who was also the director and stage manager of the circus.

Much of the rumour that ran through the groups was caused by the fact that many of the acts which had been with the show the previous disastrous summer were missing. The Marvel Circus had prided itself upon presenting the best small circus programme in England. What anyone with experience could see was that there was only half a circus here, and that likewise Captain Burroughs was not

in their midst. The usual clutter of clowns also appeared to be drastically cut.

Someone had placed one of the inverted tubs used by the performing elephants at the end of the building outside the permanent ring, and there was a stir as Sam Marvel emerged from his office opposite, climbed up onto it and stood there silently looking them over. He was wearing a Tattersall waistcoat under his jacket and the inevitable fawn raincoat and brown bowler hat which was his uniform. Veteran members of the circus claimed he slept in them. He was carrying the long-stocked, thin-lashed ring-master's whip.

It was foggy outside and the lights in the building were turned on. One of them, a flood-lamp, beamed from the roof and picked out the spare jockey's figure and the shrewd, dark eyes snapping from the seamed, leathery face of the circus boss. In repose, the hard lines of the thin, almost lipless mouth seemed permanently cynical and contemptuous.

Sam Marvel thumped the stock of his whip on the bottom of the tub so that the blows echoed through the cavernous enclosure, and then said, "Okay, okay! Pipe down. Is everybody here?" And even as he asked, his shifting eyes were prying, searching, and counting.

All the members of the Walters equestrian family were there, and standing with them Marvel noted Fred Deeter, the American ex-cowboy who also presented the Liberty act and who was always clamouring for a chance at showing off the cats. Well, now he was going to get it. He took in the moonfaces, Chinese and Japanese, of the group of oriental jugglers, Risley balancers, and wire walkers known as the Yoshiwara-Fu Tong troupe: tiny people in out-of-place Western garb. He noted the Albanos, a group of ground acrobats, pyramid builders, and tumblers looking like all such performers, as though they were about to burst from their too tight clothing, and the Birdsalos, husband and wife, and Joe Purvey their partner, who did a trampoline and bar act. The four clowns he had signed were all there: Tom Drury and Bill Semple who worked as Panache and Gogo, whiteface and Auguste; Jackdaw Williams, his bird perched on one shoulder, whom he was lucky to have acquired at the end of a season in the music halls, and the ugly little bow-legged Hungarian dwarf and

utility midget clown, known only as Janos. As always, Janos was munching on something.

There was a girl standing next to Jackdaw Williams, or, as Sam Marvel decided, "with," and for a moment his eyes paused in their restless traverse. It was someone he did not know. She had on a beret from beneath which there showed a glint of reddish hair. She was wearing a blue cloth coat and her hands were pushed down into the pockets. Her mouth was full with a humorous quirk to it. Her eyes, picked out by the lights, returned a greenish glow. Her expression was wary. She was the only one in the group who obviously did not belong.

Over to one side in a cluster of their own he saw the ground staff he had kept on: Joe Cotter, the tent boss, his bald head covered with a cloth cap; Pete Sprague, the mechanic, as always in his grease-stained overalls with grease marks on his face; and the three experienced tentmen who had travelled permanently with the show the year before, as opposed to the floating population of hands and roustabouts who came and went during the season. There were also the two grooms, and, standing slightly detached from the group, and as always faintly ridiculous in the black swallow-tailed coat and black bowler he had adopted as a kind of a uniform when not actually engaged in cleaning the cages or feeding the animals, Mr. Albert, the beast man.

"Okay, okay," repeated the circus boss. "I suppose you're all wondering what I've got you together for? Well, here it is. You've all signed to tour with the Sam Marvel Circus this summer. Only this year the Marvel Circus ain't showing in England. It's going to Spain."

There was a murmur of surprise amongst the performers, some of them looking at one another blankly, and others involuntarily reaching towards their breast pockets in which were their agreements.

But Jackdaw Williams expressed what was in the minds of most when he stepped forward and said, "My contract don't say nothing about touring in Spain." The girl standing beside him looked at him anxiously.

The two fleshless lines of Marvel's lips twisted themselves into the grimace which with him passed for a grin, and he said, "It don't say nothing about not touring there either, if you read it. But that's neither here nor there.

What I'm giving you, anybody that wants to, is a chance to git out."

There was again a confused rustling and exchange of glances. Nobody knew what to do or say. It was the state of mind in which Marvel wanted them.

Marvel again thumped the tub with the stock of the ring whip. "Okay," he repeated, "I'll give you your say when I'm finished. Now you listen. All of you were with us last season. How did you like playing to Mr. Wood?"

There was a kind of a nervous titter at the reminder. "Playing to Mr. Wood" was circus slang they all knew for poor attendance, and referred to the patchwork of empty benches which showed through a thin crowd.

"Yeah," said Marvel with heavy sarcasm, "you seen it last year, but I seen it the year before that, and it started back in 1958. And I seen it on my books too. The receipts have been falling off. And I'll bet it's the same with Chipperfields, Billy Smarts, and all the rest of them big-wig outfits. Only they got more fat to eat up off of. I ain't." Then he flung a question, "You know what's at the bottom of it all?"

They were like schoolchildren being quizzed about something naughty they had done. They knew they had run a good and formerly successful show and performed loyally with the enthusiasm all of them had for their professions, and yet in some manner they were being made to feel it was their fault.

Fred Deeter, the American ex-cowboy said, "We had a lot of lousy weather, didn't we?"

Sam Marvel snorted. "It's always the weather! But it ain't the weather any more, and if you had eyes in your head and the brains to know what you were looking at you'd see the same thing I see."

He paused. No one said anything. "Tellyvision aerials!" he cried in a loud voice, suddenly excited. "Hundreds of 'em, thousands of 'em! Look on the roofs of the houses of any town. It's like a forest of 'em. Every house has got one. That's where they all are. Sitting in their kitchens and parlours looking at the bloody telly!"

Now that the dry, hard little man facing them so belligerently, standing head and shoulders above them on the elephant's prop, had made a picture and a connection for them, they all saw it who had not seen it before. They re-

called the worrisome nights in localities supposed to be "good" when the tent was sometimes no more than two-thirds or even half full, while all about them the television aerials sprouted from every roof.

They stirred and murmured and looked at one another again, nodding their heads. The man standing on the tub had impressed their simple and limited intelligence and once more asserted the validity of his bossism. And they were all content to have it so. With his superior brain and ability to think things out, he lifted responsibility from their shoulders.

"I'll let you out of your contracts if you want, so you can get jobs with other circuses, but I'm telling you they'll all go bust if this keeps up—just like the cinemas. But you know where they ain't got the telly yet? Spain! And you know how I know? Because I been there!"

He stopped to let the magnitude of this revelation sink in. While they had been loafing the winter away, he, Sam Marvel, had been on the job and had gone ferreting out the situation.

"That's right," he continued, "Spain. There's telly in some of the big cities, but there's none out in the country. Why, there are some places there that ain't even got telephones! There ain't been a British circus on the Continent in the last forty-three years. Well, we're gonna show 'em. We're going where there ain't any bloody tellyvision!"

They were with him now, acquiescing, no longer feeling cheated. Besides which, they were all nomads and the thought of travelling and trekking their wagons through a new country added spice and interest. Also, they carried their dwellings about with them wherever they went and, like the turtle in his carapace, were at home no matter where.

Marvel saw that he had his audience with him and that there were not going to be any difficulties. He stood looking down at them, savouring his power for a moment, before he said, "We're gonna cut right down. Streamline. I've picked you people because you're bona and I know what you can do. But all of you are gonna have to double and triple and lend a hand setting up and pulling down as well. You clowns, for instance, are gonna get off your fat arses and stop running around, yelling and kidding, and do some work."

From where the clowns were grouped came the rude, anonymous note of the full-blown raspberry, which brought only a savage grin to the mouth of the circus boss, for a moment showing worn-down and tobacco-stained teeth. He had, for an old showman, a curious contempt for clowns and their work and considered them more of a nuisance than an asset, but this was probably because he was completely devoid of any sense of humour and never during a run-around or even an entree could understand what the flatties were laughing at.

"That's all then," concluded Marvel, "and we can get to work."

But later he saw the artistes by troupes or individually in his office, and from the vantage point of his old-fashioned roll-top desk made it clear how the operation had been planned to turn in a profit at the end of the season, and just what each of them was expected to contribute.

No other labouring class or profession in the world would have consented to have its work doubled, tripled, and in instances even quadrupled, without rebellion, but Sam Marvel knew his people and the vanity within their powerful and beautiful bodies. As long as it meant yet another opportunity to exhibit themselves and their skills there would never be any protest.

During the winter, Marvel had made a flying trip to Spain. In a brief motor exploration of the countryside within a two-hundred-mile radius of the capital, he had ascertained that there was town after town nestling in the folds of the hills or rising from parched plains, all within an easy night's march from one another, where not only was the ubiquitous television aerial not to be seen, but often not even wired communication. There was evidence of much poverty and badly paid drudgery, but the Spaniards were by no means gloomy and defeated by their circumstances. On the contrary, they were a hard-working, gay, independent people who looked after their children, liked to laugh, loved nothing better than a fiesta, and who, he felt certain, would not be able to resist the wonders of the Marvel Circus. His inquiries had led to the conclusion that small Spanish touring circuses did well. His own would have the added attraction of being British, and hence foreign.

To solve the logistic problems, he had found that a cattle



boat could transport the entire company and their equipment from Liverpool to Santander at minimum expense, after which, as in England, they would progress southwards by road. Three large lorries would be capable of carrying tent poles, canvas, and seating, as well as the necessary props. Sam Marvel owned several motorised living wagons in which he rented out space to performers who had none of their own. But most of the circus people in that modern day and age owned one, from the huge caravan of the Walters equestrian family which housed and travelled seven, to the smaller ones of the clowns and singles like Jackdaw Williams, who boasted of converted vans or simply lived like gypsies in doctored-up shooting brakes.

The cages and the beast wagons could be hitched in train behind the lorries since the pace of the circus would necessarily be slow. Judy, the single elephant scheduled to accompany the show, and the horses would walk between towns and villages; and where the distances were too great for an overnight march, they would allow several days for the trip and camp *en route*.

But what made the trip possible and potentially profitable, besides the streamlining of jobs and transportation, was Marvel's solution of the setting-up problem, stemming from his study of the situation at first hand. Labour in Spain was so cheap that there would be enough manpower available at practically no cost at all compared with wages in Britain. And to ensure swift and smooth operation Marvel was taking along a ground staff consisting of his tent boss, Joe Cotter, his mechanic, Pete Sprague, and three experienced British tentmen who were also roustabouts and general circus hands. These would be sufficient, when bolstered by unlimited local hire, to put up the show in each community and pull it down. This ground staff would sleep in the lorries. All of the living wagons were equipped either with small kitchens or Primus stove units and the various troupes fed and looked after themselves.

In his head Sam Marvel retained a catalogue of every act he had ever booked, or for that matter seen, including the specialties and capabilities of every member. The small company he had now gathered together was competent to present a programme of some twenty diverse and individual numbers, which collectively would add up to a per-