

The Girl Who Walked On Air

The Girl Who Walked On Air is written by Emma Carroll, an author and English teacher. It is about a girl called Louie who works in the ticket office of a circus, but dreams about performing in the circus herself. In this extract, she can't wait to see an evening performance...

The bigger the danger, the bigger the crowd. One look at tonight's punters said it all. With just minutes till show time, the big top was almost full and I was quite ready to burn with excitement. Every last ticket was sold. And still the queue snaked out of the field and down the lane until all you could see were people's hats bobbing above the hedgerows.



First thing this morning, the posters had gone up all over town. 'MORE DARING THAN EVER!' they'd said in blue and gold letters. 'WATCH MONSIEUR MERCURY DEFY GRAVITY ON HIS TRAPEZE!' To me, M. Mercury was good old Jasper, who I lived with in a tiny trailer, and who drank lapsang tea* out of dainty cups and let me have first dibs on every piecrust. Which was more than could be said for my mam. When I was just a baby she left me at the circus, the way most people forget an umbrella.

Inside the ticket booth where I worked there wasn't space to swing a cat. I felt it specially tonight, jiggling from foot to foot, impatient to get finished so I'd be free to watch the show. My dog Pip sensed it too; sat beside me, he watched my every move. At last, the final punters filed past to claim their tickets. They were a noisy bunch, laughing and nattering, their breath like smoke in the evening air. They'd be quiet soon enough. Once they were inside the big top, they'd squeeze onto a bench and look upwards. And what they'd see would leave them speechless.

A little shiver went down my neck. *Imagine if I was about to perform. All those eyes gazing up at me. Just imagine it!* I came back to earth with a bump. The circus owner, Mr Leo Chipchase, was in the doorway. He'd put on his best tartan waistcoat and was smiling, which made a change.

'Think of all those backsides on seats, Louie,' he said as he squeezed in beside me to count the takings. 'The bigger the danger...'
'...the bigger the crowd,' I finished for him.

He did have a point. There were grander circuses than ours, with more animals, more curiosities, more sparkle. Backsides on seats mattered. So, what better way to draw the crowds than a thrilling new routine. And tonight that's exactly what they'd get. Jasper would perform not a double but a TRIPLE somersault from his trapeze. No other circus boasted such a stunt. It was genius.

An extract from *The Girl Who Walked On Air* by Emma Carroll.

Glossary

lapsang tea — a type of black tea with a smoky flavour