

EXTRAVAGANZA RISING



Joanne Boyd

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By Joanne Boyd

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With John Wizard

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Table of Contents:

Chapter One: In the beginning

Chapter Two: Nothing but a note

Chapter Three: The new town

Chapter Four: Minimum wage

About the Author

Chapter One: In the beginning

Lucy sat in her spot behind the curtain feeling the anticipation building inside her, waiting for the announcer to call her name. This was what she was born for, the only thing she'd known for years and the only place that made sense to her. All that was left to do was wait for the words.

“And now, ladies and gentleman... the daughter of the circus... the beast whisperer... give it up for... Madam... Extravaganza!”

Her music started playing and the smoke machines went off, her cue to walk out. She pushed through the curtains and crossed her feet at the ankles, putting her arms up in the air wide, holding her head up high in her signature pose. She wore a full length purple cloak with batwing sleeves, a matching eye mask and fake vampire teeth – she was supposed to look like an animal for her performance. As the fog began to fade she flexed her entire body, getting her pose just right. This was it. Show time.

“Madam Extravaganza!” She called and heard some light clapping and a single gasp.

Oh, not again.

The fog cleared and she counted a total of eight people sitting in the audience.

She marched forward, pretending that it was a sold out crowd cheering for her, not that she could remember very clearly what that sounded like. It had been a while...

She stood in the centre of the floor and called “Release the beasts!”

The sounds of the beasts, unlike the audience, was as loud as ever. Elephants, lions, tigers and monkeys all came stampeding out after her and this time the entire audience gasped. She spun her arms in a circle and the beasts followed her lead, running around her. She changed direction and so did they. She had a way with animals.

She began pointing in different directions and the animals separated into groups by their species. She pointed to the lions and they let out a roar, then she pointed to the tigers and they joined in. She pointed to the elephants who trumpeted through their trunks and finally to the monkeys who screamed while jumping up and down. She crossed her hands over one another and all the animals ran to the opposite sides.

Next, she pointed to the monkeys and the lions then pulled her hands in front her – all the animals followed. The monkeys mounted the lions and proceeded to ride them around like horses, circling her and jumping when she commanded it. She then pointed to the tigers and

the elephants and directed them in front of her. They formed a conga line, alternating between elephants on all fours and tigers holding onto them with their front paws so they could walk upright like people. They circled her going in the opposite direction to the monkeys and lions. Raising her hands in the air, she spun in time with them.

For her final trick, she began lowering her hands, her signal for the animals to slow down. She gradually slowed down with them until both she and the animals came to a complete stop. By the time she had her hands down by her waist, they were all laying down. “Madam Extravaganza,” she whispered.

The animals were all now fast asleep. Cue the smoke machines.

Chapter Two: Nothing but a note

Dear Lucy,

As you have no doubt noticed, the circus business is not as strong as it used to be. While we hadn't expected a large turnout since the nearby town, Greenville, is quite small; we thought that seeing as they had never seen a circus, nor had any idea what one was, every single member of the community would have come and bought lots of merchandise and food.

Our profits for the night were \$253, including food sales and merchandise (Your posters made up about 60% of that profit so I've left you \$20 and a sandwich as payment). Luckily, some businessmen showed up early this morning to buy us out. We think they might have been with our competitors, Landon Circus, but they made a very generous offer and bought all of the animals and equipment.

We've all agreed to go our separate ways and decided not to wake you because we thought you'd be mad. Don't worry though; the town is only a few miles east of where you are. If you walk there, we're pretty sure someone will give you a job.

On behalf of the entire Butterwing Circus, I'd like to wish you luck with all your future endeavours, and also, good luck finding your way out of these woods. There's some pretty weird and quite frankly, terrifying creatures here, but we figured you're great with animals, why not monsters!

Ringmaster Dave.

After she put the letter down, it took Lucy a few seconds to realise that she'd been abandoned – again. First her mother and now the only family she could really remember – the new family she'd always thought would have her back. But the worst part was that they'd sold off the animals. They were *hers*; she was the one who took care of them, who trained them, who made them what they were.

She looked around, wondering how they had managed to take down the tent around her and move 15 people and 45 large animals out of a crowded forest without her waking up. The area was completely empty, they'd even taken the pillow from under her head and replaced it with her small bag of belongings and the \$20 they left her with. She found what was left of the sandwich covered in ants and just kicked it away.

She sighed, got up and started walking east through the eerie purple fog on the forest floor.

Chapter Three: The new town

It was after lunch by the time Lucy reached the big Greenville sign with the smaller ‘No Swindlers’ sign attached. She awkwardly pushed past the shady looking characters who were hanging around, trying to get her attention. Suddenly, she didn’t feel so confident that this place would take her in.

The town was pretty small, especially compared with some of the other towns she had performed for with the circus, back in the golden days. She realised she might look a bit out of place, since all of her clothes were rather flamboyant and made for circus performances so the first things she did was look for a clothing boutique and buy a simple dress for \$10 because it was the cheapest thing they had. Although she needed to be careful with her limited funds, she also wanted to look good to secure herself a job. The cashier lady was rather snooty but she didn’t let that get her down.

After exiting the shop, she began exploring the town until she heard someone say “It’s Madam Extravaganza!” Lucy looked over to see a teenage girl with her parents and waved. The teenager waved back but her parents rushed her along with their eyes down.

“Glad you enjoyed the show,” she called to the girl and kept going. She was used to that; a lot of people didn’t like to associate with circus people. They would come to her show and cheer along with the crowd but one on one; no one wanted anything to do with the beast whisperer.

Despite the crowds and the fans, circus life was really quite lonely. It’s not like the other performers wanted much to do with her. In fact, that was how she had become the beast whisperer in the first place.

Eventually, she came across a cozy looking inn in the town and felt a lot better. She didn’t have a lot of money but maybe if she got a job quickly she could make an arrangement to stay there tonight and pay back her debt – anything would be better than sleeping in those woods with the monsters. Although none had confronted her on her walk to the town, she felt as though they were watching her. And that purple fog really creeped her out.

She kept walking until she came across a sign.

Help Wanted

Street sweeper needed, must be willing to get dirty for minimum wage.

See the mayor.

She knew where her next stop would be!

Chapter Four: Minimum wage

“I can’t say I’m happy about this, Madam Extravaganza, but that sign has been up for six months and not a single person has applied so I guess you’ve got the job,” Mayor Green said to her.

Lucy thought she’d better not say that the wording of the sign might be the problem because she didn’t want to ruin her chances of getting the job or get a bad reputation with the mayor so she just said “Madam Extravaganza is my stage name, my real name is Lucy.”

The mayor looked her up and down.

“Look, *Madam Extravaganza*, this is a nice town. You’re welcome to clean up after us for money but don’t think that you can just be one of us.”

“But... I don’t have anywhere else to go.”

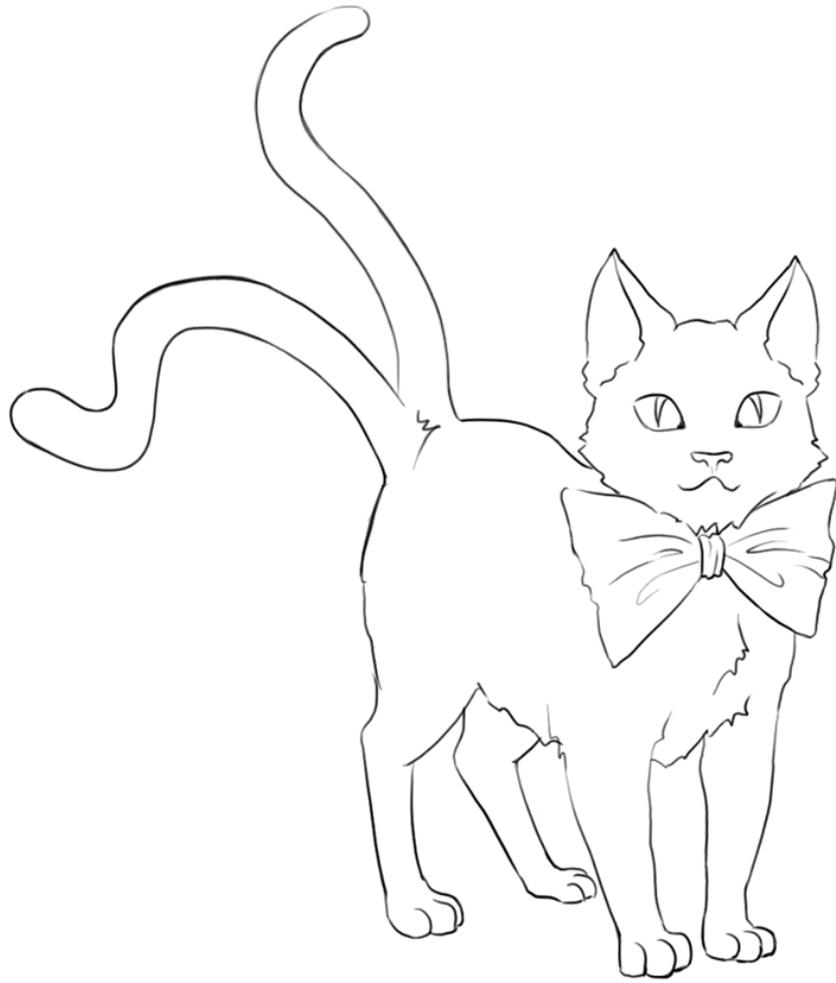
“I’m sorry about that, Madam Extravaganza, I really am, but I’m not trying to be mean. It’s just that, well... you’re a circus rat. We like things simple around here, not extravagant. We don’t want you summoning monsters into the town. We have enough monster problems as it is!”

“That’s just my act; I don’t do that in real life! Why would I?”

“It’s who you are, Madam Extravaganza. Now you can take the job or leave it but you’re not welcome to live in my town.”

"But there are monsters out there."

"Yes well, I’m sure you’ll find somewhere to hide."



Thanks for reading the sample!

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About the author

Joanne Boyd spends most of her time reading books or watching TV shows and calling it research. Sometimes she actually does some writing of her own; for example, this book.

Also, she writes on her blog: <http://www.bookwormkingdom.com>. Check it out!

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