

**BILLY WHISKERS  
AT THE CIRCUS**

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**THE BEARS BEGAN TO PUSH APPLES, CAKES  
AND PEANUTS  
THROUGH THE BARS OF THE CAGE TO BILLY.**

# *Billy Whiskers at the Circus*

# CHAPTER I

## BILLY FIRST HEARS OF THE CIRCUS

WHEN Billy Whiskers settled in Farmersville he fully expected to end his days in that quiet little community where he had a good home, plenty to eat, many friends and enjoyed the reputation of being the wisest of the animals at Cloverleaf Farm.

Those of you who do not know his earlier adventures had better read them in the other Billy Whiskers books. There is no time to tell them now for so much happened at the Circus we shall have to hurry in order to get through telling about it by the time this book comes to an end.

Even Billy himself, in after years, when he amused his great grandchildren with stories of his earlier life, used to say that the day at the Circus and those that followed were the most exciting and interesting of all his life; and although he was asked to repeat the story very often he generally refused, keeping it for special occasions like birthdays, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving or Christmas. He said if told too often, it would become an old story and all the kids in time would begin to regard their grandfather an old bore, just as they did the Mexican parrot who was forever telling the same thing over and over again. Billy Whiskers, you see, was very wise. He knew that good stories are just like good clothes or anything else choice, that in order to keep them good, they must not be brought out every day.

Billy Whiskers, many of you remember, was a very remarkable goat, larger and stronger than others, with a beautiful white coat that when cleaned and well combed was the color of ivory and shone like silk. His horns, too, always attracted attention, they were so long and shiny. He could run faster, jump higher and butt harder than any goat he ever met in all his travels, so that wherever Billy went he very soon became a leader, though he often had to fight before the other goats found out that they had far better mind than take the consequences of disobedience.

He was saved from being a bully, conceited and cruel, by a kind heart and sunny disposition. As soon as he succeeded in establishing his right to leadership, instead of abusing his power by taking the best of everything for himself, he would protect and help the weak, kindly look after the little kids and always see that the old goats were fed before he ate himself.

It was a sorry day for any dog who bothered the flock when Billy Whiskers was around. Many a one went howling home after Billy got through with him. Small boys, too, learned that it was safer and better not to throw stones in his direction. Probably there are as many as twenty of them who have had the awful feeling that comes of trying to run fast enough to get away from the biggest goat that almost anybody ever saw, knowing that he was losing ground every second, hearing plainer and plainer every jump of his pursuer, and the last dreadful moment just before the shock came, and then flying through the air as though fired out of a gun, believing his end had surely come. But it never did. Billy Whiskers looked out for that and so timed his attacks

that he could land his victim in a soft place, though he did not in the least mind if it happened to be a mud puddle.



One day he tossed a particularly mean boy right on top of a hedge where he staid until his yells attracted the attention of the hired man ploughing in a near-by field who made no haste, Billy noticed, to pull him out of his prickly nest.

You must not suppose from this description that Billy Whiskers was a model of good behavior for he certainly was not that. When he was hungry, he would eat whatever he could get hold of, whether it was intended for him or not. He preferred a lettuce bed or garden generally but did not draw the line at eating clothes hung out on the line to dry, or going into a pantry, no matter whose, and helping himself to everything in sight.

Of course, tricks of this kind got Billy Whiskers into serious trouble more than once, but he never said much

about it and the animals at Cloverleaf Farm either didn't know or wouldn't believe such stories of their Billy even if they had leaked out and been whispered around.

Ever since he had been living at Cloverleaf Farm, which is near Farmersville or "The Corners," as the place was more generally called, Billy had behaved himself, had stopped stealing things to eat, had quit fighting, which it must be confessed he dearly loved, and in less than a year had established himself on the friendliest footing not only with his master and mistress and all the children, but likewise with the black cat, the dog, the colt and his mother, as well as the other horses, the cows and calves and even Big Red, the bull, said to be very fierce, also the flock of sheep with Old Buck for leader.



As was stated at first, Billy Whiskers had found life so pleasant of late that he had fully made up his mind to stay where he was as long as he lived. The work he had to do was much to his liking. It consisted mainly in pulling little Dick around the place in his express wagon when Tom or



Harry usually did the driving. Now and then the drivers would want to ride, sometimes both of them, when the load would be pretty heavy and more than once, at such times, Billy was tempted to run away as he used to do in his earlier years, upset his load and smash the wagon all to flinders; but he stoutly resisted these promptings of rebellion, knowing well by long experience that it is with goats as it is with boys and girls better to take things as they come; that it is the hard work now and then, the giving up to others and readiness to do one's share of whatever comes along that tells whether he is made of the right kind of stuff.

So things were moving smoothly with Billy Whiskers and he had no thought of not spending the rest of his life with the Treat family, when one June day he heard Tom Treat ask Jack Wright, his playmate and chum, if he were going to the Circus that was coming to Springfield the next week. Jack said that he had not heard about it. Tom, who had just returned from The Corners where he had gone on an errand for his mother, then told him about the show bills that some men were putting up on the sides of the post office and blacksmith's shop. He said that he had waited so long to see them all that he had forgotten all about his errand—he called it his “old errand”—that his mother was waiting for the baking powder and that he had caught “hail Columbia” when he finally got home.

Jack said that was nothing, it did not hurt when a fellow was used to it as he was, and that if he had been in Tom's place he wouldn't be home yet.

From this you can see what sort of a boy Jack was.

Billy Whiskers, who was standing near by at the time, smiled to himself for only the day before he had both seen and heard Jack Wright, who was now talking so bravely, spanked for going in swimming after his mother had told him he mustn't because the water was too cold and likely to make him sick. Jack hadn't acted then as though it didn't hurt. In fact, it had hurt so much and made him so mad that he had almost decided to run away from home and join the gipsies who were then camping at the river not far away.

But he hadn't gone after all and was now waiting for his friend Tom to tell him more about the Circus. It made him almost sick when he thought that very likely his mother might, as further punishment for his disobedience, not only not let him go to the big Show but put him to catching potato bugs instead. "If she does," thought wicked Jack, "I certainly will run away and never come back." He got some consolation out of imagining how much they would miss him.

While he was planning this revenge, Tom was talking as fast as he could and his stories were all the time getting bigger and bigger. By that time he said that the elephant was as big as the corn barn, that the giraffe was as tall as the old oak, that the boa-constrictor could swallow Jeff, the hired man—he wished in his heart he would, for Jeff had told his father that Tom had made a mighty poor job of hoeing corn the day before—that there were bears and tigers, lions and hyenas, wolves and wild-cats, ostriches and eagles, and everything else. He then began to talk about

clowns and beautiful lady horseback riders, Arabian steeds and the wonderful doings of the trapeze performers.

All the time Billy Whiskers was listening with might and main. He had never in all his eventful life been to a circus, didn't know what it was, hadn't even heard of such a thing before.

The stories Tom Treat was telling Jack Wright excited him and the first he knew he had forgotten all about his resolve to never run away again and had fully made up his mind that come what might and cost what it would, he, Billy Whiskers, goat, would attend the Circus at Springfield.

## CHAPTER II

### MAKING PREPARATIONS

BILLY WHISKERS had more than a week in which to make his preparations to go to the Circus. The morning after he had heard Tom Treat, his young master, telling Jack Wright about it, he almost decided to give up going.

In the first place he didn't know what might happen to him, and more than once the thought entered his mind that he would be running into all sorts of danger. You see that Billy was no greenhorn. He had knocked about a great deal and had been in some awful tight places. There had even been times when it looked as though he must pay for some of his escapades with his very life. Those of you who have known him before this remember his adventures in the Rocky Mountains and in Old Mexico, and how he was once lost overboard in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Well, all of these things tended to make him cautious, so that while he had been quick to make up his mind to see for himself this wonderful Circus, he did not finally start on the trip until he had thought it all over very carefully and counted, as he supposed, the cost. Whether he had or not we shall see as we go on.

As the first step in making ready, he decided to ask his animal friends at Cloverleaf Farm to tell him all they knew about circuses, for, thought he, certainly some of them must know and can just as well give me pointers as not. He did

not propose to tell anyone, however, not even his best friend, Rex, the colt, what his plans were.

With this scheme in mind, he first approached Abbie, the black cat. Her real name was Abigail, and while the boys called her Ab for short, sister Emma and Billy Whiskers always addressed her as Abbie, “for,” said Billy, “it isn’t so hard a name to pronounce as Abigail and sounds very much more friendly than just Ab.” He knew that it was well worth his while to be on good terms with her.

“Abbie,” he said, when he found her napping the next morning on the mat before the front door, “what’s a circus?”

She didn’t move though she heard every word that Billy said. The truth is she had been very restless the night before and didn’t want to be disturbed in her morning snooze. More than that, she had no idea what a circus was and didn’t want to let Billy Whiskers see that she couldn’t answer his question if it could be helped. Cats, you remember, have been considered very knowing creatures ever since the days of the Pharaohs in Egypt, and Abbie was very proud of her race and its reputation and didn’t propose to lessen it. So she lay perfectly still when Billy asked her about the circus.

He repeated the question in a louder tone. Still there was no reply. If his mind had not been so taken up with the matter, Billy would have known that there was something wrong and gone elsewhere with his question. But he did not stop to think, he was so bent and determined on finding out

about circuses. So he next, with more force than he probably intended to use, poked Abbie in the side with his left horn. Then there was a fuss. She jumped up as though she had suddenly found herself sleeping on a bumblebee's nest, and the first Billy knew she was looking at him for all the world as he had seen her look one day at a strange dog which had chased her into a corner where further flight was no longer possible and she had turned to fight him off if necessary. Billy Whiskers had appeared on the scene then just in time to rescue her, but Abbie had now forgotten all about that debt of gratitude.

There she stood with her front and hind feet close together, her back all humped up, her fur sticking out so that she looked twice as big as usual, her tail all swelled up and jerking nervously, while her eyes looked, as Billy said afterward, as green as old Croaker's back. (Old Croaker was the big frog in the pond behind the great barn.)

"Why, Abbie," exclaimed Billy, "it's me, your old friend. Don't look like that! I only want to ask you what's a circus."

Then he got a piece of Abbie's mind.



“Billy Whiskers, you are no gentleman. If you were, you wouldn’t be around here disturbing my rest. You know that I am half dead with neuralgia and that the only sound sleep I get is when the sun shines on my right side. Now you be off, and if you ever cut up like this again, you’ll get a scratching that you can’t forget to the last day of your life.”

She would probably have kept right on scolding for a long time, but as soon as Billy Whiskers realized what he had done, he turned and trotted off without even trying to apologize.

“She probably don’t know what a circus is and takes that way to conceal her ignorance. I’ll never believe in cats again,” thought Billy.

“There,” said Abbie, when Billy disappeared around the corner of the house, “he’s gone and I’m glad of it. He thinks that I know all about circuses but wouldn’t tell him because I was cross at being disturbed. Wasn’t that a good

one about my neuralgia!” and Abbie laughed as cats do, and washed her face.

Billy next asked his best friend and greatest chum, Rex, the colt; but Rex, who was quite young, owned up at once that he didn't know.

“Billy Whiskers,” said he, “how can I be expected to know about such things when you don't? You have been almost everywhere and I always thought you had seen everything. If you don't know what a circus is, there is no one at Cloverleaf Farm who can tell you.”

Some people would have been discouraged by this time, but not so Billy Whiskers.

“I'll have to ask old Polly Parrot and I don't want to one bit. She will probably laugh at me, and it is quite as likely as not she may suspect my plan and in that case she will blab it all over Cloverleaf and I'll find myself shut up and closely guarded by Tom and Harry. While I don't like Polly Parrot any too well, I must admit that she is as sharp as tacks and if I'm to get anything out of her I shall have to be very sly when I ask her about the matter.”

Billy was just saying these mean things to himself when he spied Miss Polly out in the grape arbor, swinging and chattering.

“Now is my time,” thought Billy.

“How do you do, Polly Parrot? Nice morning, isn't it? You have no idea how fine you look with the sun shining on



your beautiful feathers. I've always known that you are handsome but you certainly outshine yourself today."

"That will fetch her," thought Billy.

"What do you want now, Billy Whiskers? You can't fool me by your soft talk. You are up to some mischief. What is it?"

Billy, without replying, beat a hasty retreat, thankful that he had not asked Polly Parrot outright about circuses.

"She is a suspicious old maid," he said to himself, "and I can't afford to fool with her."

Billy then went to the stable to interview old Gyp, the horse that was said to have been in the Treat family for nearly thirty years.

"Billy Whiskers," she said, hearing his question, "I wish I could tell you about circuses, but I can't. My memory is no longer good. It seems to me that more than twenty years ago I heard a lot about a circus being in Springfield and a man by the name of Barnum who was connected with it, but I am not sure and it makes my head ache to try and recall the circumstances. I'm sorry I can't help you, and I am afraid that you will not come to call on me soon again because I am so old and forgetful."

"There, there, old Gyp, don't worry any more about it. I am sorry I asked you the question. I know you would gladly tell me if you could and that's kind of you, I am sure. Of course I am coming to see you every day. I make few calls that I enjoy so much."

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