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The Lion Tamer

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THE LION TAMER

When the Circus Miguelito came to town, with its one battered and much-patched tent, a pair of old lions, and three clowns including the owner, Miguel, Ernest went down to talk to the animals, idly remarked as he stood by the lion that he might just arrange to get in with them—he’d done that sort of thing out in Africa. Word spread muy rapido that “Jeminguey” was going to tame lions. The owner got very excited and raced about puffing the event with a loud-speaker. All San Francisco de Paulo turned out. On the night which had been announced, Ernest turned up as promised, wearing his boots, his African hunting garb, a chair in one hand, a whip in the other. He climbed in the cage and spent two hours working the lions. (Although he was brave then, and also when he acted the matador in Spain, fighting the youngest of bulls, this scene still reminds me of the one in Don Quixote)
where the Don insists
that caged lions be let out
of the cage, then has to deal
with them.) The next day
Ernest sent for Miguel,
owner of the Circus Miguelito.
He told his servant Rene
to give the man a drink,
then from where he lay,
his massage by Kid Mario
in progress, he said, “You know,
Miguel, I only did that
because you announced it
without my permission,
and I don’t like to cheat
or disappoint my public. I put
on a good act, but now
you owe me my fee, which
my lawyer can collect today
or tomorrow. My fee is ten
thousand dollars per perform-
ance. Do you want me
to stay on? I’ll be glad to appear
every night at that rate.”
Miguel, owner of the Circus
Miguelito and its top clown,
passed out, fell to the floor.
Kid Mario stopped the massage.
Rene picked up the pieces
of glass Miguel had dropped,
mopped up what was left
of the drink—the best cognac—
and revived him with a few
slaps and pokes. Still shaken
when he got up, trembling
Miguel protested that he had
never in his life even seen
ten thousand dollars—
in fact not even one thousand
in his entire life. Ernest said,
“In that case, I will release you
from our contract. Go in peace,
my friend, but never, never
use my name again.”

THE SOLUTION

“Only a white poodle could replace Ernest,”
said the newly widowed Mary Hemingway.

“So fine,” said her friend, “buy a white poodle.
I find mine rather easy to live with.”

Yet no one recalls seeing Mary with any
white poodle. The scholars are still seeking.

Though I don’t know its name, I think it’s the one
Ernest would have thrown out the train window.