

# *CLOWNING AROUND*



Emmitt loved the circus. He was always excited when the circus came to town. It was not a big circus, but it was always fun to go and see the animals, actors, and most of all the clowns.

He lived in a small town in the middle of the country. Most of the people who lived there had been there for all of their lives. Most of the families lived on farms surrounding the town.

Emmitt's parents owned the small general store located in the center of the town. Everyone went there to buy things they needed from tools, to clothes, to seed. Emmitt knew all of the people and they knew him.

On the weekends, and during the summer, Emmitt helped his parents in the store. He saved his money from working to pay for the circus and all of the fun things to do there.

Summers were the best time of the year, and this summer was not going to be any different. There was no school and he could run and play with his friends. Usually they would pretend to be in the circus. His friends and he would become lion tamers, horseback riders, tightrope walkers, and clowns. Emmitt especially liked it when they played clowns.

He would go to the store and buy supplies to paint his face. His parents' general store had the things he needed to make wigs, and big shoes. His mother helped him make his costumes, and then he would be the best clown of all.

He thought the library would be a good place to look up information on how to be a clown, but he found out there was not as much information there as he thought.

He went to the internet and found many articles about clowns and he read the history of clowns in America. Soon he began to dream about traveling with the circus and being the best clown ever!

As Emmitt was walking to the store, he noticed a sign on one of the lampposts. The sign said the circus was coming in two weeks. There were pictures of animals, pretty ladies, clowns, and behind them, a picture of a large white tent.

Emmitt jumped in the air in excitement.

At the bottom of the sign, there was a special message: *'Apply at the general store to be in the circus. Many positions are open'*.

Excited to find out what the sign meant, Emmitt ran to his parents' store and only stopped when he got to the counter.

"Is it true?!" Emmitt exclaimed.

"Is what true?" his father asked.

Out of breath, Emmitt asked, "Is it true... that the circus... is looking... for people.... to help?"

"Yes, it is. The owner of the circus was in here earlier today and left some papers with me. Anyone interested can fill out one of these applications and then I will give it to the owner when he returns next week. He'll notify the people about working for him right away," his father explained.

"Can I fill one out?" Emmitt begged.

His father gave him one of the forms. Emmitt took it to the back room of the store and set it on a table. He looked for a pencil, but could not find one.

Emmitt yelled through the door into the store, "Mom, do you know where I can find a pencil?"

"Look in my sewing box. There should be one there. Remember to put it back when you're finished. OK?" Emmitt's mom answered him.

Emmitt found the pencil and filled in all of the spaces to answer the questions.

When he was done, he put the pencil back into the sewing box and then took the paper to his father.

“I finished it. I hope they have a place for me. I hope I can be a clown!” Emmitt said with excitement in his voice.

Emmitt ran out of the store and across the street to the café where his friend Christopher’s mother worked.

As he ran into the café, he almost ran into one of the waitresses.

“I’m sorry,” Emmitt apologized. “Do you know where Christopher is?”

“I think he’s in the kitchen. He’s doing dishes,” she replied.

“What did he do this time?” Emmitt asked.

The waitress answered while giggling, “I’m not sure, but I know he’ll be washing dishes for a long time.”

Emmitt knew Christopher would not be able to talk to him, but he went back to the kitchen anyway.

“Christopher! When you’re done, can you come over to the store? I have something to tell you,” Emmitt yelled over to Christopher.

Just then, he noticed Christopher’s mother looking at him. He knew he had better run or he would be in trouble with her as well. He left quickly and returned to the store.

It was difficult concentrating on his work. He was sure the owner would hire him to be a clown. He could hardly wait for the owner of the store to come and tell him if he would be hired or not.

The next day Christopher came to Emmitt’s room.

“Hi, Emmitt,” Christopher greeted him as he walked into the room.

“Oh, hi Christopher. I have something to show you. The circus is coming to town and I applied to work with them,” Emmitt told Christopher while showing him a copy of the advertisement he took from the store.

“You know that’s a lot of work, don’t you?” Christopher asked him. “My dad

helped with the circus last year and he was so tired when he got home, he decided not to do it again this year.”

They talked for a while and then Christopher went home.

When he was not working, Emmitt practiced his tricks. He had learned how to juggle three balls. He was trying to learn other tricks he had seen on the internet, but they were very difficult. He had taken some gymnastics classes when he was younger, so he knew how to do a cartwheel and a summersault.

The week passed slowly for Emmitt, but he was still excited.

Working in the store was not a lot of fun. He had to clean the floors, arrange the stock, carry things out to the customer’s cars, and do just about anything else his father or mother asked him to do. He did not like the work, but he did like the money they paid him.

“Emmitt, will you watch the front counter for me?” his father asked Emmitt, as he went to the back to get some supplies for the front counter.

“Sure, dad,” Emmitt responded.

He went behind the counter and climbed up onto the stool that sat in front of the cash register. He knew how to count money and he helped his parents by selling things to people when they were busy.

While he was sitting, daydreaming, a stranger came in the door. The bell on the top of the door rang, which got Emmitt’s attention.

Emmitt sat up.

“Hello, how may I help you today?” Emmitt quickly greeted the new customer the way his parents had taught him.

“Well, hello young man. Is your father here?” he asked with a big smile on his face.

He was a big man with white hair and a short white beard. He looked very friendly. He had a big strong voice. It was easy to hear what he said.

“Sure, let me go get him,” Emmitt responded.

Just as Emmitt was going to get his father, he walked out of the back room and walked toward the sales counter.

“Ah, Mr. Roberts, it’s good to see you again,” Emmitt’s dad greeted the man.

His dad introduced Emmitt to the man, “Emmitt, this is the owner of the circus, Mr. Roberts.”

“You’re just the person I was waiting to see!” Emmitt blurted out.

“Really, why’s that?” he responded.

“I want to join your circus. I filled out the paperwork and I’m ready to be the best clown you have ever seen!” Emmitt said confidently.

“Oh really? I’m glad to hear that. Actually, I have enough clowns right now. What I really need is people to help set up the tents and other equipment. Do you think you could do that?” the owner of the circus asked.

“When do you want me to start?” Emmitt asked.

“We’ll be here on Saturday. We’ll have the parade in the morning and then in the afternoon we’ll set up the tents. We need to be ready for the big show on Sunday afternoon. It’s hard work,” the owner warned Emmitt.

With a sad look on his face, Emmitt answered, “I guess I can do that, but I really wanted to be a clown.”

The owner looked at Emmitt and thought for a moment.

“Young man, if you do a good job helping with the tents, I’ll give you a try at being a clown. How’s that?” the owner said with a big smile.

“REALLY! That would be great! I’ll be the best worker you have ever had and then I’ll be the best clown as well!” Emmitt said, as he jumped off the stool to tell his mother.

Emmitt’s dad and the circus owner talked for a while. The circus owner took the other applications and left.

Saturday came and Emmitt and his friends were ready for the parade. This was one of the best parts of the circus. All of the performers and animals came through the middle

of the town and then went out to the large field by the school. It was the same every year, but it was still fun to watch, especially since Emmitt was going to help set up the tents.

Everyone cheered and clapped as the parade went through the town on Main Street toward the school. The last wagon had the tigers and on top was the owner of the circus. He had a on a bright red jacket and a tall black hat. He had a big smile as he waved at the townspeople.

“Come to the circus! See the amazing acts! Enjoy the circus!” he repeated over and over.

After the last wagon in the parade left, Emmitt ran to follow. He was ready to go to work and prove to the owner that he would be a good worker. Then he would get to be a clown.

When he caught up with the circus, he could not believe how busy everyone was. As soon as the circus had arrived at the field, the work began. People were running from place to place carrying the things that needed to be put in just the right spot for the circus to be its very best.

“Young man, come here. I have something for you to do,” one of the workers yelled over at Emmitt.

He ran to where the man was and asked what he could do. The man put a large box in his hands and pointed to where he wanted it to go. Emmitt was used to carrying boxes from place to place while he worked in the store, so it was not hard for him to do it.

When he set the box down, another man told him to grab a rope and pull as hard as he could. He picked up the rope and followed the other workers’ examples. As soon as the rope was tight and set into the ground on a big stake, he moved to another one and did the same thing. Soon he could see the tent going up. It looked so big and white. From rope to rope he moved until the tent was standing.

He was not finished. Now he had to help carry more boxes inside of the tent. He followed the other workers as they changed the empty field into a real circus.

When the work was finished, it was dark. The workers thanked Emmitt and offered

him some dinner, but he was too tired to think about eating.

As he walked home, he began to think about how much work it was to be in a circus. Everyone had a job to do and they did them very well.

Every week they would set up the circus for two days, then take it down, only to move to another town and do it all over again. It was a lot more work than he had ever thought about.

When he got home, he went to his room and lay on his bed.

Suddenly he had a thought. The circus owner had not talked to him. He did not know if he would be in the circus the next day.

Emmitt was too tired to worry about it then. He thought he would just try to find the owner the next day.

It was early when Emmitt woke up. He was sore from the work the day before. He went downstairs to the kitchen to get something to eat.

When he opened the door, standing in the kitchen was the owner. He was talking to Emmitt's parents.

"Hello Emmitt, how are you this morning?" the owner asked.

"Actually I'm a little sore," Emmitt responded, rubbing his shoulders.

"You did a fine job yesterday. My men told me you were a big help. I'm here to offer you the opportunity to be a clown! Are you interested?" he asked.

"AM I?! You bet!" Emmitt yelled while jumping in the air with excitement.

"We need to leave now. Is there anything you need to bring with you?" the owner asked.

"Yes, hold on. I'll be right back," Emmitt answered, as he turned to go up to his room.

Shortly afterward, Emmitt returned with a bag.

"What's that for?" the owner asked.

"It's my costume. I'll be ready in no time!" Emmitt replied.

"That sounds fine. I'm looking forward to seeing you in your costume," the owner

chuckled.

The owner and Emmitt left the house and walked together.

As they walked out of the house, the owner questioned Emmitt, “Your parents have told me that you want to join the circus and be a clown. Is this correct?”

“That’s right, but I didn’t know how much work it was going to be though. Setting up the tents yesterday was really hard work,” Emmitt answered.

“Wait until we have to pack everything to go to the next town!” the owner laughed.

When they got to the tent, the owner had Emmitt follow one of the workers to the dressing room.

As he walked in, he saw people running everywhere. It was really busy. The man showed Emmitt where he should go to change his clothes, and then told him when he was ready, to go to one of the makeup tables along to wall. A makeup artist would put makeup on him when he was ready.

Emmitt did as he was told. He put on the costume his mother had made for him the summer before.

He walked over to the table as the man had told him to do. Many of the people looked over at him. They were smiling. One of the young ladies working in the circus. came to him and complimented his costume.

“I really like your clothes. Where did you get them?” she asked.

“My mom made them for me,” he responded.

“She did a nice job. OK, now let me get your face on,” the young lady said as she began to put white cream all over his face.

It took almost thirty minutes to finish. When Emmitt looked in the mirror, he was amazed. He looked so different and so funny.

One of the other clowns came over to him and told him it was almost time to start. When the music started, all of the performers were to go into the tent. He told Emmitt he looked great.

“Just go out there and have fun. The more fun you have the more fun the people



will have,” the clown instructed him.

Emmitt was nervous, but also excited. This is what he had dreamed about for a long time.

The music began to play. The big curtains opened, and all of the performers ran into the tent. Emmitt was smiling. He watched the other clowns and how funny they were. He tried some of the things they were doing, but he was not very good at it.

Not knowing what else to do, he took out the three balls from his pocket and began to juggle as he walked. Sometimes he would drop one and then the people would laugh. He threw the balls higher into the air, and the people clapped. He tried many different tricks. When they did not work, the people just laughed. They thought it was part of the act. Even though everyone was from the local area, no one knew it was Emmitt.

During the performance, Emmitt and the clowns went into the tent three times to entertain the people. The audience was laughing and enjoying the show. This made Emmitt very happy.

After the show, and after Emmitt was out of his costume, he began to help the workers take down the tent. Again, it was hard work, but Emmitt did not stop. He was thankful to the owner for giving him the opportunity to be in the circus.

Emmitt was exhausted when he got home. He fell asleep almost as soon as he got home.

The next day, Christopher came over to see Emmitt.

“Where were you yesterday? We didn’t see you anywhere.” Christopher inquired. “You were so excited to see the circus, what happened? You didn’t even go.”

“I was there. Didn’t you see me? I was a clown. Didn’t you recognize my costume?” Emmitt said with a big smile on his face.

“That was you?!” Christopher asked. “You did a great job. You made me laugh.”

They talked while Emmitt began to do his chores around the store.

While Emmitt was cleaning the store, the owner of the circus walked in.

“Hello Emmitt, how are you today?” he asked with a smile on his face.

“I’m tired, but happy,” Emmitt answered. “Would you like to talk to my parents?”

“Yes, are they around?” he requested.

“Just a second, I’ll get them,” Emmitt answered.

He went to the storeroom, told his parents Mr. Roberts was in the store, and that he wanted to talk to them.

Mr. Roberts talked for a long time with Emmitt’s parents.

“Emmitt, come here a moment please,” Emmitt’s father called out. “Mr. Roberts has something to ask you.”

“Emmitt, how would you like to join our circus for the rest of the summer?” the circus owner asked.

“Really? Is it OK with you, mom and dad?” he turned completely around surprised at the question.

“Yes, it’s OK with us. You will travel with Mr. Roberts and he’ll make sure that you are safe. We’ll miss you, but we know this will be a wonderful experience for you,” his mom said to him.

Christopher was happy for Emmitt.

“You’re going to be gone the rest of the summer. It’s sure going to be quiet around here without you,” Christopher said to Emmitt.

“I’m going on a great adventure!” Emmitt said as he ran upstairs to pack his things.

He went with the circus for the remainder of the summer. When he returned he had grown taller and was much stronger, but he had the same smile on his face.

Best of all, the owner of the circus invited him to join the circus again the next summer!

**VOCABULARY:** (*Match the word to its definition*)

- |                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. inquire _____       | a. form used to ask for work |
| 2. lamppost _____      | b. tumble, forward roll      |
| 3. general store _____ | c. paint for the face        |
| 4. application _____   | d. ask, question             |
| 5. notify _____        | e. entertainer, performer    |
| 6. summersault _____   | f. place for merchandise     |
| 7. makeup _____        | g. amuse, have fun           |
| 8. entertain _____     | h. pole for street light     |
| 9. storeroom _____     | i. inform, tell              |
| 10. actor _____        | j. place to buy many things  |

**TRUE / FALSE:**

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. Emmitt wanted to be a doctor.                         | T / F |
| 2. The circus was coming to town.                        | T / F |
| 3. Emmitt would have to work very hard to be a clown.    | T / F |
| 4. The circus tent burned down in a fire.                | T / F |
| 5. The owner of the circus told Emmitt to stay home.     | T / F |
| 6. The clowns were jealous of Emmitt.                    | T / F |
| 7. Christopher wanted to work for the circus.            | T / F |
| 8. Emmitt's parents wanted Emmitt to stay home and work. | T / F |
| 9. Emmitt's parents owned a café.                        | T / F |
| 10. Emmitt became a clown.                               | T / F |

**MULTIPLE CHOICE:**

1. What did Emmitt want to be? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) clown
  - b) tightrope walker
  - c) lion tamer
  - d) owner of the circus
  
2. Where did Emmitt work? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) café
  - b) general store
  - c) on a farm
  - d) he did not work
  
3. Who asked Emmitt's father to help him find workers? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) sheriff
  - b) general store owner
  - c) mayor
  - d) circus owner
  
4. What did Emmitt toss into the air? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) sticks
  - b) three balls
  - c) hat
  - d) shoes

**COMPREHENSION:** (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*)

1. Where did Emmitt work?

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2. Who was Emmitt's friend?

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3. What did his friends like to do in the summer?

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4. Who asked Emmitt to work at the circus?

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5. What did Emmitt see that told him the circus was coming to town?

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6. Who collected the applications from people who wanted to work?

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7. What did Emmitt ask his mother for when he was filling out the form?

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8. Where did Emmitt find the information about circuses?

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9. Who asked Emmitt to join the circus?

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10. How long was Emmitt gone?

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