



Library podcast

Thrilling Tales, A Storytime for Grownups presents: “Spurs” by Tod Robbins

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[00:00:40] Noon, everybody, welcome to Thrilling Tales are Story Time for Grownups. My name is David. I'm a librarian here. I work on the third floor in Reader Services. Come and see us some time. Thrilling Tales happens on the first and third Monday of every month right here. And we've got.

[00:01:00] One story today, I think.

[00:01:03] Has anybody here seen the cult classic 1932 film *Freaks*?

[00:01:12] If you'd seen it, you'd remember it's pretty weird and I won't I won't dwell on it, but that film was based on a story written in 1923. It's a very memorable film because it used real circus freaks as part of the cast. And I'm not necessarily recommending it, but there it is. That's that's the sort of film it is. In any case, it was based on this story, which is called “Spurs” and was written by a man named Tod Robbins.

[00:01:42] Jack Cabaye was a romanticist.

[00:01:47] He measured only 28 inches from the soles of his diminutive feet to the crown of his head. But there were times as he rode into the arena on his gallant charger's saggars stash when he felt himself a doughty knight of old, about to do battle for his lady. What matter that signed Eustache was not a gallon charger except in his master's imagination. Not even a pony. Indeed, but a large dog of a nondescript breed with a long snout and upstanding aura of a wolf. What matter that Miss Hiroku Obey's entrance was invariably greeted with shouts of derisive laughter and bombardments of banana skins and orange peel. What matter that he had no lady and that his daring deeds were severely curtailed to a mimicry of the bareback riders who preceded him? What matter all these things to the tiny man who lived in dreams, and who Resolute closed his shoe button eyes to the drab realities of life? The dwarf had no friends among the other freaks in Copas Circus. They considered

him ill tempered and egotistical, and he loathed them for their acceptance of things as they were. Imagination was the armor that protected him from the curious glances of a cruel, gaping world, from the stinging lash of ridicule, from the bombardments of banana skins and orange peel. Without it, he must have shriveled up and died. But those others, they had no armor except their own thick hides, the door that opened on the kingdom of imagination was closed and locked to them. And although they did not wish to open this door, although they did not miss what lay beyond it. They resented and mistrusted anyone who possessed the key.

[00:03:44] Now, it came about after many humiliating performances in the arena made palatable only by dreams that love entered the circus tent and beckoned commandingly to miss your shock. Courbet. In an instant, the dwarf was engulfed in a sea of wild, tumultuous passion. Mademoiselle Zhaan Marie was a daring, bareback rider. It made Monsieur Jacques cubase tiny heart stand still to see her. That first night of her appearance in the arena, performing brilliantly on the broad back of her aged mare, Sappho, a tall, blonde woman of the Amazon type, she had round eyes baby blue, which held no spark of her avaricious peasant's soul, carmine lips and cheeks, large white teeth, which flashed continually in a smile, and hands which, when doubled up, were nearly the size of the dwarfs head. Her partner in the act was Simon LaFleur, the Romeo of the circus tent, a swarthy Herculean young man with bold black eyes and hair that glistened with grease like the back of Solan, the train seal. From the first performance this year is Jack Courbet loved Mademoiselle John, nearly all his tiny body was shaken with longing for her, her buxom charms so generously revealed in tights and spangles made him flush and cast down his eyes. The familiarities aloud to Simon LaFleur. The Butterfly acrobatic contact of the two performers made the dwarfs blood boil mounted on sand Eustache awaiting his turn at the entrance. He would grind his teeth in impotent rage to see Simon circling round and round the ring, standing proudly on the back of Sappho and holding Mademoiselle John in an ecstatic embrace while she kicked one shapely bee spangled legs skyward.

[00:05:56] I have a dog. Miss your job? Courbet would mutter. Someday I shall teach this hulking, stable boy. His place. math.floor. My will clip. Easy years for him.

[00:06:10] San Eustache did not share his master's admiration for Mademoiselle Zemurray from the first, he evinced his hearty detestation of her by low growls and a ferocious display of long, sharp fangs. It was little consolation for the dwarf to know that Sang Eustache showed still more marked signs of rage when Simon LaFleur approached him. It pained Measurers Jacobi to think that his gallant charger, his sole companion, his bedfellow, should not also love and admire the splendid Giantess who each night risked life and limb before the odd populace.

[00:06:50] Often, when they were alone together, he would try and sound Eustache on his churlish ness. Oh, you devil of a dog! The dwarf would cry.

[00:06:59] Why must you always growl and show your ugly teeth when the lovely young Marie condescends to notice you? Have you no feelings under your top hide? She is an angel, and you snarl at her. Do you not remember how I found you starving puppy in a Paris gutter? And now you must threaten the hand of my princess. So this is your gratitude.

[00:07:26] Great. Henry Pig.

[00:07:29] Miss Georgia Courbet had one living relative, not a dwarf like himself, but a fine figure of a man, a prosperous farmer living just outside the town of Roubaix. The elder who Bey had never married. And so one day when he was found dead from heart failure. His tiny nephew, for whom it must be conversion, fell heir to a comfortable property.

[00:07:56] When the tidings were brought to him, the dwarf threw both arms about the shaggy neck of Sang Eustache and cried out. Oh, now we can retire, marry and settle down, old friend. I am worth many times my weight in gold.

[00:08:15] That evening, as Mademoiselle Samari was changing her gaudy costume after the performance, a light tap sounded on the door. Enter, she called, believing it to be Simon LaFleur, who had promised to take her that evening to the sign of the wild boar for a glass of wine to wash the sawdust out of her throat and to most city. The door swung slowly open and in stepped Mr. Jack could be very proud and upright in the silks and laces of a courtier with a tiny gold Hilton sword swinging at his hip. I became his shoe button eyes, all glitter to see the more than partially revealed charms of his robust lady uppy came to within a yard of where she sat and down on one knee.

[00:09:07] He went and pressed his lips to her. Red slipped foot. Oh, most beautiful and daring lady. He cried in a voice as shrill as a pin scratching on a window pane.

[00:09:20] Will you not take mercy on the unfortunate Jack are. He is hungry for your smiles. He is starving for your lips all night long. He tosses on his couch and dreams of John Kerry.

[00:09:38] What play acting is this? My brave little fellow, she asked, bending down with a smile of an ogress as time on the first sent you to tease me.

[00:09:47] Maybe the Black Plague have Simon, the dwarf cried, his eyes seeming to flash blue sparks. I am not play acting. It is only true, true that I love you. Mademoiselle, I wish to make you my lady.

[00:10:01] Now that I have a fortune and enough that he broke off suddenly and his face resembled a withered apple.

[00:10:10] E-d, mademoiselle! He said in a low droning tone of a hornet about the sting.

[00:10:16] Do you laugh at my love? I warn you, mademoiselle, do not laugh at Shukla de Mademoiselle.

[00:10:24] Jamborees large, florid face had turned purple from suppressed merriment. Her lips twitched at the corners. It was all she could do not to burst out in a roar of laughter. Why, this ridiculous little mannequin was serious in his lovemaking.

[00:10:40] This pocket sized edition of a courtier was proposing marriage to her. He this splinter of a fellow, wish to make her his wife while she could carry him about on her shoulder like a like a trained marmoset.

[00:10:55] What a joke this was, what a colossal corset creaking choke wait, she told Simon LaFleur she could fairly see him throw back his sleek head, open his mouth to its widest dimensions and shake with silent laughter.

[00:11:10] But she must not laugh.

[00:11:12] Not now. First, she must listen to everything the dwarf had to say. Draw all the sweetness of this bone ball of humor before she crushed it under the heel of ridicule.

[00:11:25] I am not laughing. She managed to say, you've taken me by surprise. I never thought I'd never even guessed. That is well, mademoiselle, the dwarf broken, I do not tolerate laughter in the arena.

[00:11:40] I am paid to make laughter, but these others pay to laugh at me. I always make people pay to laugh at me.

[00:11:50] But do I understand you all right, miss your could. Are you proposing honorable marriage? The dwarf rested his hand on his heart and bowed.

[00:11:58] Yes. Mademoiselle. Honorable. And the wherewithal to keep the wolf from the door. A week ago, my uncle died and left me a large estate. We should have a servant to wait on. I wants a horse and a carriage. Food and wine of the best and lesar to amuse ourselves. And you. While you will be a fine lady, I will clothe that beautiful big body of yours with silks and laces. You will be as happy memories and as a cherry tree in June.

[00:12:35] The dark blood slowly receded from mademoiselle jamborees, full cheeks, her lips no longer twitched at the corners, her eyes had narrowed slightly. She had been a bareback rider for years and she was weary of it. The life of the circus tent had lost its tinsel. She loved the dashing seim on the floor. But she knew well enough that this Romeo in tights would never espouse a dowels girl. The dwarf's words had woven themselves into a rich mental tapestry. She saw herself a proud lady, ruling over a country estate and later welcoming Simon the floor with all the luxuries that were so near his heart. Simon would be overjoyed to marry into a country estate. These pygmies were a puny lot. They died young. She would do nothing to hasten the end of Chakotay. Now she would be kindness itself to the poor little fellow. But on the other hand, she would not lose her beauty mourning for him.

[00:13:36] Nothing that you wish shall be withheld from you as long as you love me, Matt macenta, the dwarf continued your answer.

[00:13:46] Mama Zozo Marie bent forward and with a single movement of her powerful arms raised mutual Zopp Courbet and placed him on her knee. For an ecstatic instant, she held him thus as if he were a large French doll with his tiny sword cocked, coquettish Lee out behind. Then she planted on his cheek a huge kiss that covered his entire face from chin to brow.

[00:14:10] I am yours. She murmured, pressing him to her ample bosom. From the first I loved you, miss your job could be.

[00:14:22] The wedding of Mademoiselle Joan Marie was celebrated in the town of Roubaix, where Cobos Circus had taken up its temporary quarters following the ceremony, a feast was served in one of the tents, which was attended by a whole galaxy of celebrities. The bridegroom. His dark little face, flushed with happiness and wine, sat at the head of the board. His chin was just above the tablecloth, so that his head look like a large orange that had rolled off a fruit dish. Immediately beneath his dangling feet, sang Eustache, who had more than once evinced by deep growls, his disapproval of the proceedings now worried a bone with quick, sly glances from time to time at the plump legs of his new mistress. Coco Coppo was on the dwarf's right. His large round face has red and benevolent as a harvest moon. Next to him sat Griffo, the giraffe boy who was covered with spots and whose neck was so long that he looked down on all the rest, including Mr Air, Kewl Hippo, the Giant. The rest of the company included Mademoiselle Lupa, who had sharp white teeth of an incredible length, and who growled when she tried to talk the tiresome mesure John Engler, who insisted on juggling fruit plates and knives, although the whole company was heartily sick of his tricks. Mademoiselle Samsón, with her trained boa constrictors coiled about her neck and peeping out timidly, one above each ear. Simon LaFleur and a score of others. The bareback rider had laughed silently and almost continuously ever since shahmoradi told him of her engagement. Now he sat next to her in his crimson tights. His black hair was brushed back from his forehead, and so glistened with Greece that it reflected the lights overhead like a burnished helmet. From time to time, he tossed off a brimming goblet of burgundy, nudged the bride in the ribs with his elbow, and threw back his sleek head in another silent outburst of laughter.

[00:16:22] And are you sure you will not forget me? Simon, she whispered, it may be some time before I can get the little ape's money.

[00:16:31] Forget us'll, he muttered by all that dancing devils in champagne. Never. I will wait as patiently as Jobe until you have fed that mouth some poison cheese. But what will you do with him in the meantime, Joe? You must allow him some liberties. I grind my teeth to think of you in his arms.

[00:16:52] The bride smiled and regarded her diminutive husband with an praising glance. What an atom of a man.

[00:17:01] And yet life might linger in his bones for a long time to come. Miss Shahrizat Courbet had allowed himself only one glass of wine. And yet he was far gone in intoxication. His tiny face was suffused with blood, and he stared at Seim on the floor belligerently.

[00:17:19] Did he suspect the truth?

[00:17:22] Your husband is flush with wine. The bareback rider, Weisburd mouthwash, madame. Later he may knock you about possibly he's a dangerous fellow in his cups. Should he mount teachers on? Do not forget that you have a protector in Simon the Fleur. You clown. Your Marie rolled her large eyes roguish early, and laid her hand for an instant on the bareback rider's knee. Simon, I could crack his skull between my finger and thumb like a hickory nut. She paused to illustrate her example, and then added reflectively, And perhaps I shall do that very thing if he attempts any familiarities. Oh, the little ape turns my stomach. By now, the wedding guests were beginning to show the effects of their potentials. This was especially marked in the case of Mr. Jack cubase associates in the sideshow Griffio. The draft boy had closed his large brown eyes and was swaying his small head languidly above the assembly, while a slightly supercilious expression drew his lips down at the corners. Missier Air Kewl Hippo's swollen out by his libations to even more colossal proportions, was repeating over and over.

[00:18:34] I do not like other men. When I walked Trimble's Mademoiselle Lupa, her hairy upper lip lifted above her long white teeth, was annoying at a bone growling unintelligible phrases to herself and shooting savage suspicious glances at her companions.

[00:18:55] Mischer junglers hands had grown unsteady, and as he insisted on juggling the knives and plates of each new course, broken bits of crockery littered the floor. Mademoiselle Samsón on coiling her necklace of baby boa constrictors was feeding them lumps of sugar soaked in rum measurers out. Courbet had finished his second glass of wine and was surveying the whispering Simon LaFleur through narrowed eyes. There can be no genial companionship among great egoists who have drunk too much, each one of these human oddities thought that he or she was responsible for the crowds that daily gathered in Cobos Circus. So now heated with a good burgundy, they were not slow in asserting themselves. Their separate egos rattled angrily together, like so many pebbles in a bag. Here was gunpowder, which needed only a spark.

[00:19:50] A big of very big man. Mishear air kewl, Hippo's said sleepily. Women love me. The pretty little creatures leave their pygmy husbands so that they may come on stare at aircrews, pool of couples, circus hook.

[00:20:07] And when they return home, they laugh at other men. Always. You may kiss me again when you grow up.

[00:20:14] They tell their sweethearts Fat Bullock. Here is one woman who has no love for you!

[00:20:22] Cried Mademoiselle Lupa, glaring sidewise at the giant over her bone.

[00:20:27] That's right. Cocks of yours. He's only so much food gone to waste. You have cheated. The butcher might find fool. Women do not come to see you as well.

[00:20:40] Mike. They stare at cattle being led through the street. They come from far and near to see one of their own sex.

[00:20:49] Oh, he's not a cow. Quite right! Cried Papa Coppo in a conciliatory tone, smiling and rubbing his hands together. Not a cut. Mademoiselle, but a wolf. You have a sense of humor. How droll. I have a sense of humor. Mademoiselle Lupo agreed.

[00:21:08] Returning to her bone and saw sharp teeth. Yet that unerring hand not say to near you.

[00:21:18] Monsieur Hippo remembers a loophole.

[00:21:20] Both wrong, said a voice, which seemed to come from the roof. Surely you did not know me? Whom the people come to stare at all.

[00:21:29] Raise their eyes to the supercilious face of Griffio. The giraffe boy who swayed slowly from side to side on its long pipe stem neck. It was he who had spoken, although his eyes were still closed.

[00:21:42] Of. Oh, the colossal impudence! Cried the matronly Mademoiselle Samson, as if my little dears had nothing to say on the subject. She picked up the two baby boa constrictors, which lay in drunken slumber on her lap, and shook them like whips at the wedding guests. Papa Koper knows only too well. That is on account of these little charmers, Mark Antony and Cleopatra, that the sideshow is so well attended.

[00:22:11] The circus owner thus directly appealed to found in perplexity he felt himself in a quandary. These freaks of his were difficult to handle. Why had he been fool enough to come to Monsieur Jacoby's wedding feast? Whatever he said would be used against him as proper. Coppo hesitated, his round red face wreathed in ingratiating smiles.

[00:22:35] The long deferred spark suddenly alighted in powder. It all came about on account of the carelessness of Mr. Jungler, who had become engrossed in the conversation and wished to put in a word for himself. Absent mindedly, juggling two heavy plates and a spoon, he said in a petulant tone, You appeared to forget me scarcely with the words out of his mouth when one of the heavy plates descended with a crash on the thick skull of Measure Hippo and Mr. Jungler was instantly remembered. Indeed, he was more than remembered for the giant already irritated to the boiling point by marmoset, Lupo's insults at the new affront struck out savagely. Pastor and not the juggler head over heels under the table. Mademoiselle Lupa always quick tempered, and especially so when her attention was focused on a juicy chicken bone evidently considered her dinners. Companions conduct far from decorous, and promptly inserted her sharp teeth in the offending hand, but administered the blow hippo squealing from rage and pain like a wounded elephant bounded to his feet, overturning

the table. Pandemonium followed. Every freak's hands, teeth, feet were turned against the others. Above the shouts, screams, growls and hisses of the combat pepper. Copas voice could be heard bellowing for peace. Oh, my children, my children. This is no way to behave.

[00:23:53] Calm yourselves. I pray you. Members of Lupa remember that you are a lady as well as a wolf. There is no doubt that Monsieur Jacobi would have suffered most in this undignified farkus. Had it not been for St. Eustache, who had stationed himself over his tiny master and now drove off.

[00:24:10] All would be assailant's as it was. Griffio, the unfortunate giraffe boy, was the most defenseless, and therefore became the victim. His small Roundheads swayed back and forth to blows like a punching bag. He was bitten by Mademoiselle Lupa, buffeted by Monsieur Hippo, kicked by Mr. Xanga, called by Mademoiselle Sampson, and nearly strangled by both of the baby boa constrictors which had wound themselves around his neck like hangman's nooses. Undoubtedly would have fallen victim to the circumstances had it not been for Simon LaFleur, the bride, and half a dozen of her acrobat friends whom Papa Coppo and implored to restore peace roaring with laughter. They sprang forward and tore the combatants apart. Mr. Jacques Courbet was found sitting grimly under a folded tablecloth. He had broken a bottle of wine in one hand. The dwarf was very drunk, and in a towering rage as Simon, the floor approached with one of his silent blasts. Monsieur Jacques Courbet hurled the bottle at his head. How little wasp? The bareback rider cried, picking up the dwarf by his waistband. Here is your fine husband, John. Take him away before he does some mischief. Pablo is a bloodthirsty fellow in his cups. The bride approached her blonde face, crimson from wine and laughter. Now that she was safely married to a country estate, she took no more pains to conceal her true feelings. La la! She cried, seizing the struggling dwarf and holding him forcibly on her shoulder. What a temper! The little a pazz.

[00:25:34] Well, we shall spank it out of it before long. Let me down, Michou, Jack cubase screamed in a paroxysm of fury.

[00:25:41] You want me to grant this, madam? Let me down, Naysay.

[00:25:45] But the stalwart bride shook her head. Oh, no. My little one, she laughed. You cannot escape your wife so easily. What? You would fly from my arms. Before the honeymoon.

[00:25:54] Let me down, he cried again. Can't you see them laughing at me?

[00:26:00] And why should they not laugh, my little ape? Let them laugh if they will. But I will not put you down now. I will carry you thus perched on my shoulder to the farm. It would set a precedent which brides of the future may find a certain difficulty in following. But the farm is quite a distance from here, Zoll said. Similar fir. You are strong as an ox. And he is only a marmoset still. I will wager a bottle of Burgundy that you set him down by the roadside. Done, Simon. The bride cried with a flash of her short, strong white teeth. You shall lose your ways, your father. I swear that I could carry my little ape from one end of France to the other, and ensures there could be no longer struggled.

[00:26:41] He now sat bolt upright on his bride's broad shoulder from the flaming peaks of blind passion. He had fallen into an abyss of cold fury. His love was dead, but some quite alien emotion was rearing an evil head from its ashes.

[00:26:58] Come! Cried the bride. Suddenly I'm off. Do you any other Simon follow to see me win my wager?

[00:27:04] They all trooped out of the tent. A full moon rode the heavens and showed the road. Lying is white and straight through the meadows as the parting. And Simon the flowers, black, oily hair.

[00:27:15] The bride, still holding the diminutive bridegroom on her shoulder, burst out into song as she strode forward. The wedding guests follow. Some walked none too steadily Griffo, the giraffe boy staggered pitifully on his long, thin legs, Popper Coppo alone remained behind hottest, strange world, he muttered, standing in the tent door and following them with his round blue eyes.

[00:27:37] Are these children of mine are difficult at times very difficult.

[00:27:45] A year had rolled by since the marriage of Mademoiselle Marie and midshires Courbet couples, Serco's had once more taken up its quarters in the town of Roubaix for more than a week. The country, people from miles around, had flocked to the sideshow to get a peep at Griffo. The Giraffe Boy Mischer Air cute hippo, the giant Mademoiselle Lupa. The Wolf laid him and Mazal Samsón with her baby boa constrictors and mashers as Anglais, the famous juggler. Each was still firmly convinced that he or she alone was responsible for the popularity of the circus. Simon LaFleur sat in his lodgings at the sign of the wild boar. He wore nothing but red tights. His powerful torso, stripped to the waist, glistened with oil. He was kneading his biceps tenderly with some strong smelling fluid. Suddenly there came the sound of heavy, laborious footsteps on the stairs. Simon, the floor looked up, his rather gloomy expression lifted, giving place to the brilliant smile that had won for him. The hearts of so many ladies acrobats. This is my, he told himself. Or perhaps it is Rose. The English girl. Or yet again. Later, Francesca. Although she walks more lightly, no matter whoever it is, I will welcome her. By now, the lagging heavy footfalls were in the hall, and a moment later they came to a halt outside the door. There was a timid knock. SIMON The floor's brilliant smile broadened, perhaps some new admirer that needed encouragement. He told himself. But aloud he said, Enter, mademoiselle.

[00:29:22] The door swung slowly open and revealed the visitor. She was a tall, gaunt woman dressed like a peasant.

[00:29:30] The wind had blown her hair into her eyes. Now she raised a large toil worn hand, brushed it back across her forehead and looked long and attentively at the bareback rider.

[00:29:42] Do you not remember me? She said at length.

[00:29:46] Two lines of perplexity appeared above Simon, the fleur's Roman nose. He slowly shook his head. He who had known so many women in his time and now at a loss. What was it? A fair question to ask a man who has no was no longer a boy and who had lived. Women change in so brief a time. Now this bag of bones might at one time of appeared desirable to him.

[00:30:12] You do not remember me? She said again.

[00:30:15] Simon Ofir once more shook his head. I have a poor memory for faces, Madame, he said politely. It is my misfortune when they are such beautiful faces.

[00:30:28] But you should have remembered Simon.

[00:30:31] The woman cried, a sob rising from her throat. We were very close together, you and I. Do you not remember John Murray? John Murray, the bareback rider crier, John Barry, who married a marmoset and a country estate? Don't tell me. But damn you. He broke off and stared at her open mouthed. His sharp black eyes wandered from the wisps of wet straggling hair down her gaunt person, till they rested at last on a thick cowhide boots encrusted with layer on layer of mud from the countryside. It is impossible, he said at last. It is, indeed, only the woman answered, or what is left of her. Simon, what a life he has let me. I have been merely a beast of burden. There are no ignor amenities, which he has not made me suffer. To whom do you refer? Simon luffler demanded, Surely you cannot mean that pocket edition of a husband of yours that dwarf junk who obey to Simon.

[00:31:31] Alas, he has broken me.

[00:31:33] Hey, that toothpick of a man. The bareback rider cried with one of his silent laughs. It is impossible, as you once said yourself, John, you could crack his skull between finger and thumb, like hickory nut.

[00:31:45] So I thought once. But I did not know him then, Simon. Because he was small.

[00:31:52] I thought I could do with him as I liked. It seemed to me that I was marrying a mannequin. I will play Punch and Judy with this little fellow. I said to myself, Simon, you imagine my surprise when he began playing Punch and Judy with me. But I did not understand. Surely at any time you could have slapped him into obedience. Perhaps, she assented weirdly, had it not been for Sanger's stash from the first, that wolf dog of his hated me. If I so much as answered his master back, he would show his teeth once at the beginning, when I raised my hand to cuff Jack to obey.

[00:32:27] He sprang at my throat, and would have told me limb from limb, had the dwarf not called him off. I was a strong woman, but even then I was no match for the wolf. That was poised and what's there not Simon the first suggested. I, too, thought of poison, but it was to no avail. Sang Eustache would eat nothing that I gave him, and the dwarf forced me to taste, first of all, food that was placed before him and his dog. Unless I myself wished to die, that it was no way of poisoning either of them.

[00:33:00] My poor girl. The bareback rider said pityingly. I begin to understand. But sit down and tell me everything. This is a revelation to me after seeing you stalking homeward so triumphantly with your bridegroom on your shoulder. You must begin at the beginning. It was just because I carried him that's on my shoulder that I have had to suffer so cruelly. She said, seating herself on the only other chair the room afforded. He's never forgiven me for the insult, which he says I put upon him. Do you remember how I boasted that I could carry him from one end of France to the other?

[00:33:36] I remember when the little demon has figured out the exact distance in leagues each morning. Rain or shine. We suley out of the house. He on my back. The wolf dog at my heels. And I tramp along the dusty roads till my knees tremble beneath me from fatigue. If I so much as slacken my pace, if I falter, he goads me with cruel little golden spurs, while at the same time saying Eustache nips my ankles. When we return home. He strikes so many leagues of a score, which he says is the number of leagues from one end of France to the other. Not half that distance has been covered, and I am no longer a strong woman. Simon, look at the shoes. She held up one of her feet for his inspection. The sole of the cowhide boot had worn through. Simon Flore caught a glimpse of bruised flesh caked with the mire of the highway. This is the third pair that I have had. She continued hoarsely. Now he tells me that the price of shoe leather is too high. That I shall have to finish my pilgrimage barefooted.

[00:34:42] But why do you put up with all this song? Simon, the four asked angrily. You who have a carriage and a servant, should not walk at all.

[00:34:51] At first there was a carriage and a servant, she said, wiping the tears from her eyes with the back of her hand. But they did not last a week. He sent the servant about his business, and sold the carriage at a nearby fair. Now there is no one but me to wait on him and his dog. But the neighbours, similar for a purpose, persisted. Surely you can appeal to them. We have no neighbors. The farm is quite isolated. I would have run away many months ago if I could have escaped unnoticed. But they keep a continual watch on me.

[00:35:20] Once I tried, but I hadn't traveled more than the league before. The wolf dog was snapping at my ankles. He drove me back to the farm, and the following day I was compelled to carry the little fiend until I fell from sheer exhaustion.

[00:35:32] But tonight, you got away. Yes, she said with a quick, frightened glance at the door tonight I slipped out while they were both sleeping and came here to you. I knew that you would protect me, Simon, because of what we have been to each other. Get proper copper to take me back in the circus, and I will work my fingers to the bone. Save me, Simon. John Murray could no longer suppress her sobs. They rose in her throat, choking her, making her incapable of further speech, calling herself. Simon LaFleur told her soothingly, I will do what I can for you. I shall discuss the matter with proper copart tomorrow. Of course, you're no longer the woman you were a year ago. You have aged since then. But perhaps our good poppycock can find you something to do. He broke off and eyed her intently. She had sat up in her chair, her face even under its coat of grime, and turned a sickly white where troubles years.I. He asked a trifle breathlessly.

[00:36:26] She said, with a finger to her lips. Listen.

[00:36:31] Simon LaFleur could hear nothing but the tapping of the rain on the roof and the signing of the wind through the tree. An unusual silence seemed to pervade the sign of the wild boar. Now don't you hear it? She cried with an inarticulate gasp.

[00:36:44] Simon. It is in the house. It is on the stairs.

[00:36:48] At last, the bareback riders, less sensitive ears, caught the sound. His companion had heard a full minute before. It was a steady pit. Pat pit. Pat on the stairs, heard hard to dissociate from the drop of rain from the eaves. But each instant it came nearer grew more distinct.

[00:37:05] Safely, Simon cried John Levy, throwing herself at his feet and clasping him about his knees, saved me.

[00:37:12] It is sad, Eustache nonsense woman, the bareback rider said angrily. There are other dogs in the world. No, no, no. It is saying Ustasha step. My God. If you've lived with him a year, you would know it too. Close the door. Lock it. That I will not do. Simon, the said contemptuously. Do you think I am frighten so easily? If it is the wolf dog, so much the worse for him, he will not be the first cur. I have choked to death with these two hands pit pat.

[00:37:37] It was on the second landing pit Pat. Now it was in the corridor and coming fast. Pit. Pat nodded once it stopped. There was a moment's breath, the silence and then into the room trotted sang Eustache Miss Your Jock sat astride the dog's broad back as he had so often done in the circus ring.

[00:37:58] He held a tiny drawn sword. His shoe button eyes seemed to reflect its steely glitter. The dwarf brought the dog to a halt in the middle of the room and took in at a single glance the prostrate figure of John Mary San Eustache to seem to take silent note of it. The stiff hair on his back rose up.

[00:38:18] So I find you thus, madame. Miss your job, Courbet said at last. It is fortunate that I have a charger here who can send out my enemies, as well as hunt them down in the open. Without him, I might have had some difficulty in discovering you. Well, the little game is up. I find you with your lover, Simon LaFleur.

[00:38:41] It is not my lover, she sobbed. I have not seen him once since I married you until tonight.

[00:38:46] I swear it once is enough. The dwarf said grimly.

[00:38:52] The impudent, stable boy must be chastized.

[00:38:57] Oh, spare him jamma re-employed. Do not harm him, I beg of you. It is not his fault that I came. But at this point, Simon, the floor drowned her out in a roar of laughter. He roared, putting his hands on his hips. You would chastise me, Ainun. Does she? Don't try your circus tricks on me. Why hoper my thumb? You who ride on a dog's back like a flea. Out of this room before I squash you. Begone! Note fade away. He paused, expanded his bare like chest, puffed out his cheeks, and blew a great breath of the dwarf below a insect. He bellowed, lest I put my here on you, Miss. Your Jack Kirby was unmoved by this torrent of abuse. He sat very upright on, say, Eustache, his back, his tiny sword resting on his tiny shoulder.

[00:39:50] You're done, he said at last. When the bareback rider had run dry of invectives.

[00:39:56] Very well, monsieur. Prepare to receive cavalry.

[00:40:01] He paused for an instant, and then added in a high, clear voice, even saying Eustache, the dog crouched, and at almost the same moment sprang at similar fleur. The bareback rider had no time to avoid him, and his tiny rider almost instantaneously. The three of them had come to death grips. It was a gory business sign on the floor. A strong man, as he was, was bowled over by the dog's unexpected leap. Sign your stashes clashing, jaws closed on his right arm and crushed it to the bone. A moment later, the dwarf, still clinging to his dog's back, thrust the point of his tiny sword into the body of the prostrate bareback rider. Simon LaFleur struggled valiantly, but to no purpose. Now he felt the fetid breath of the dog fanning his neck and a wasp like sting of the dwarf's blade. With this time found a mortal spot, a convulsive tremor shook him, and he rolled over on his back.

[00:41:00] The circus Romeo was dead.

[00:41:04] Measure Jack Courbet cleansed his sword on a kerchief of lace, dismounted and approached Zhaan Marie. She was still crouching on the floor. Her eyes closed, her head held tightly between both hands. The dwarf touched her imperiously on the broad shoulder, which had so often carried him.

[00:41:22] Madame, he said we can now return home. You must be more careful hereafter. It is an ungentlemanly business cutting the throats of Stieber boys.

[00:41:38] She rose to her feet like a large chained animal at the word of command. Do you wish to be carried? She said. Between livid lips.

[00:41:47] Oh, that is true, madame. He murmured. I was forgetting a little wager. Hi. Yes. Where you are to be congratulated, madame. You have covered nearly half the distance.

[00:42:00] Nearly half the distance?

[00:42:02] She repeated in a lifeless voice. Yes, madame. Monsieur Jack Jacobi continued. I fancy that you will be quite a Dussel wife by the time you have done.



[00:42:12] He paused, and then added reflectively.

[00:42:15] It is truly remarkable how speedily one can ride the devil out of a woman with spades.

[00:42:25] Papa Coppo had been spending a convivial evening at the sign of the wild boar as he stepped into the street. He saw three familiar figures preceding him a tall woman, a tiny man and a large dog with upstanding ears. The woman carried the man on her shoulder. The dog trotted at her heels. The circus owner came to a halt and stared after them. His round eyes were full of childish astonishment.

[00:42:56] Could it be? He murmured. Yes, it is.

[00:43:01] Three old friends.

[00:43:04] And so John Kerry is in. Oh, she should not poke fun at Mr. Zankou Obey. He is so sensitive. But alas, they are the kind that are always henpecked.

[00:43:28] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.

