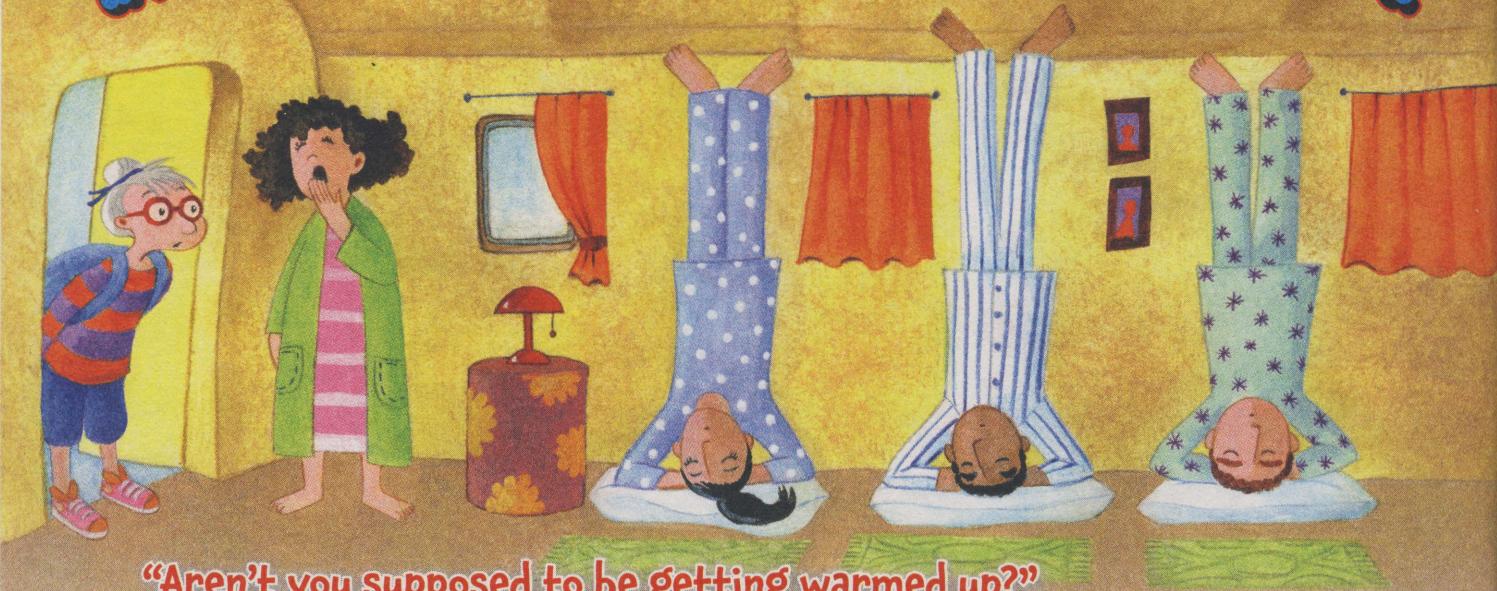


NADINE'S CIRCUS DAY

By Tim Lehnert

Art by Claudia Venturini



"Aren't you supposed to be getting warmed up?"

Nadine woke early, got dressed, and gobbled her breakfast. Circus day had finally arrived! The circus hadn't come to her town in many years.

"I can't be late," Nadine said as she hurried out the door.

She was the first one at the circus grounds. *Where's the circus tent?* she wondered. She looked down at her ticket. She was here on the right day.

Nadine found the parking-lot attendant. "Excuse me," she said. "Where's the big top?"

The man shrugged. "The tent guys haven't shown up yet."

"Do you know where they are?" Nadine asked.

The man pointed to a nearby trailer. Nadine knocked on the trailer door.

A man opened it. Five men in overalls were watching TV behind him.

Nadine smiled. "Um, you know the

circus is supposed to start soon, right?"

The man looked at his watch. "Not again! My watch stopped." He turned around and yelled, "Time to get going, guys!" They rushed out the door.

"You know the circus is supposed to start soon, right?"

Nadine watched the men put up the tent. "Nice job," she said. She looked around. "Shouldn't the acrobats be here by now? They're supposed to go on first."



"Probably slept in," said one of the men. "I better see what they're up to," said Nadine. She found the acrobats' trailer and called, "Hello, acrobats. Time to wake up!"

A woman wearing a nightgown opened the door. Behind her, acrobats slept while standing on their heads.

"Aren't you supposed to be getting warmed up?" asked Nadine.

"I'd better make some coffee," the woman said, yawning.

"I can do that for you," said Nadine.

Nadine met the acrobats in the circus tent with a tray of coffee. She looked around. "I wonder where the clowns are."

"They just called," said a woman who sipped coffee while hanging from a trapeze. "Their car broke down out on Route 6."

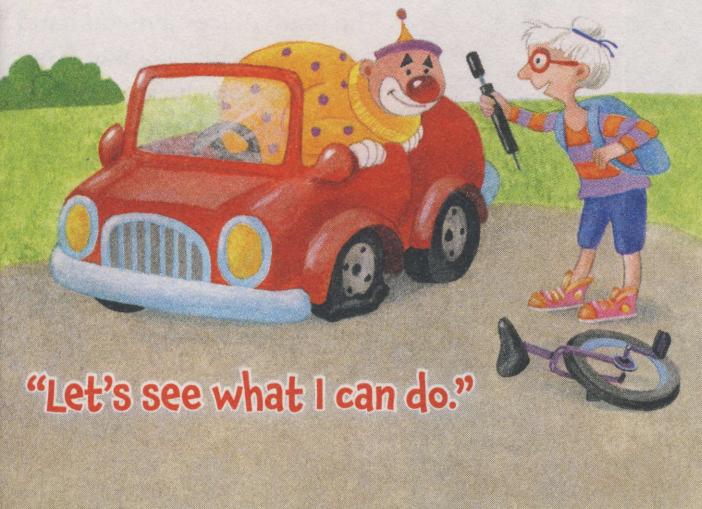
Nadine borrowed a unicycle and pedaled out to Route 6. She found a tiny car at the side of the road. Seven clowns were in the field next to the highway, juggling hubcaps.

Nadine said, "Are you aware that the circus is about to start?"

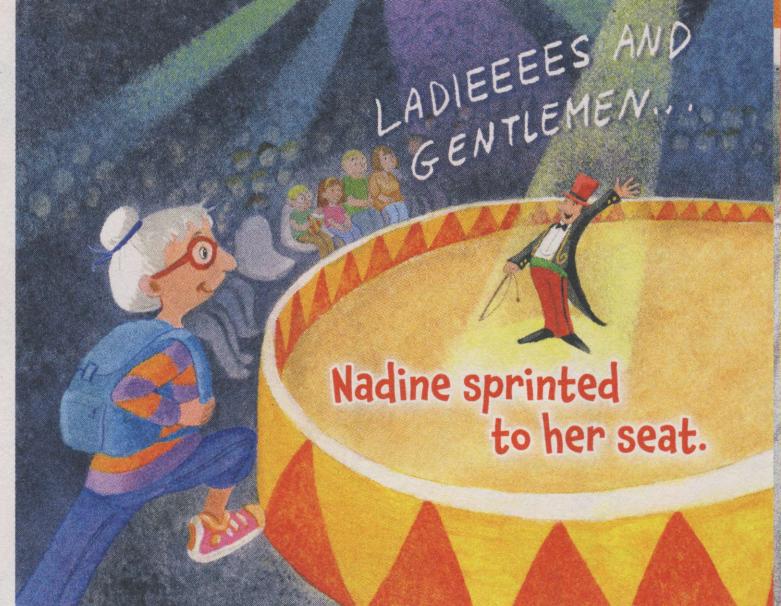
"Oh, we know," one clown said, "but we have a flat tire. I don't think we'll make it."

Nadine pulled a bicycle pump from her backpack. "Let's see what I can do."

She pumped up the tire while the clowns started piling into the car.



"Let's see what I can do."



"That will hold long enough to get you there," said Nadine. "If you hurry, you can still make it."

**"If you hurry,
you can still make it."**

"Thank you!" the clown-car driver called. He honked the horn as they sped away.

Nadine pedaled back to the circus grounds as fast as she could. The parking lot was now full of cars. In the tent, spotlights shone and music blared. The ringmaster stood in the middle of the ring with a microphone. "Ladieees and gentlemen, boys and girls, prepare for an afternoon of spectacular entertainment from the world's finest circus troupe!"

Nadine sprinted to her seat and sat down. She turned to the boy next to her. "You know how people say that you only really appreciate something when you have to work for it?"

"Sure," said the boy, crunching on popcorn.

Nadine leaned back in her seat. "Now I know what they mean." 