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## An Elephant's Wanderings

*Mary Graham Bonner*

There was once a circus elephant named Jumbo who grew tired of circus life — the performances, the parades, the food — and decided he wanted to be a gentleman.

He had overheard two small boys arguing about what they would be when they grew up. One was going to be an engineer and build bridges. The other announced he was going to be a gentleman and do nothing at all. The first boy thought this ridiculous. But Jumbo thought it sounded wonderful.

So one night, when the circus was packing up to move to the next village and no one was paying attention, Jumbo walked away.

By morning he was in a farmyard, where he had already made friends with a large brown dog, a mother hen, and a great many small chickens. He sat very still in the middle of the yard — enormous and quite out of place — while the hen sat proudly on one of his ears, the chicks raced up and down his trunk, and the dog climbed onto his back and jumped off again, over and over.

Jumbo was very careful not to move suddenly. Stepping on a friend, he felt, would not be gentlemanly.



A little girl named Betty came out to feed her animals and stopped short at the sight of the elephant. But if the chickens weren't afraid of him, she decided, neither was she. And so Jumbo stayed — for days and days, doing nothing, which was precisely what he had planned.

But doing nothing, it turned out, felt less and less satisfying as time went on.

One morning Betty found Jumbo in the yard with an old bat and ball balanced in his trunk, quietly practising baseball. He had been thinking about the circus for some time. He missed his friends. He missed having something to do. That night he had heard the circus arrive in the village, and he had made up his mind.

"I've had a wonderful time," Jumbo said to Betty — though of course she couldn't understand elephant — "but I'd rather be an elephant doing useful things than a

gentleman doing nothing. And being an elephant is quite easy for me, as it turns out, since I am one."

That afternoon Betty went to the circus and saw Jumbo in the baseball act, playing better than any elephant she had ever seen, tail whisking with happiness.

She missed him a little. But she was glad he was back where he belonged.

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