

# JAMES



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# JAMES

Stuff For Rich People 2018  
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Stuff For Rich People 2018 Biennial Collaborators

Jack Kinsella  
WILD AMERICAN DOGS

S.Al

Marina Kozak

Giselle Gatsby

M. Olm-Shipman

Lee Costanza

L. Martin

Alan Epstein

Eva Swiecki

O.K. Pedersen

Nick Matsas

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# From the Editor's Desk

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Dear Reader,

What a strange situation, it is exciting to be here again.

IMAGINE: Lots of content lots of engagement lots of fastique lots of severin lots of least lots of children lots of screaming. You walk down the street it's beautiful outside, there are trees, are you scared, you are terrified, you are thinking What Do I Need To Brand And How Do I Need To Why.

r) Ladies and gentlemen close your eyes and imagine how much:

Happier you would be if you met someone who knew someone that went to highschool with your cousin

Stronger you would be if emails were made of candy

Healthier you would be if the NFL was played on horseback

I used to be a street performer and when I walk into a room it doesn't take people long to figure out I'm a scientist. But I'm not here to take over the world. First, I want to welcome you and thank you to the 2nd biennial Stuff For Rich People 2018 global conference. Merriam Webster defines global conference as a reclaim of rock and roll from corporations using websites. I love that.

I can hear....money.

The human voice, the human experience, like an instrument, sand.

Do you ever wonder about your destiny? Tonight, when you speak: DISAPPEAR.

People need to hear this, : Why is that? We're excited to get you and your brand some answers.

In the past two years since the first Stuff For Rich People global conference, we have all read many emails. Some of us became the new President of the United States. Many of us did not. Maybe too many. Amazon stock has nearly doubled. For this reason we invited Amazon to be our official corporate sponsor this year. They declined. SO now we--Amazon and Jimmy World Inc-- have deep, cosmic beef, which is why we decided to make this year's conference a book market, and by the end of the evening, with your investment, we will have overtaken the online book retailer giant and left them in our beautiful, rich-persons dust. Enjoy breakfast! we will tell them.

Sincerely,

*Jimmy Coyote*

Editor-In-Chief of JAMES  
CEO of Jimmy World Inc.

# EVERYONE DRIVE A POPULAR CAR

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Nick Matsas

Everyone put on Piero Piccioni “mexican dream”. I love books. Can you smell the air? My brother use to shoot up everyday and I didn’t care because I was reading. Can you smell the air?

Feel the wind. You’re driving thousands of miles down the beach in a ford f150. On the passenger seat is the only bag you brought and its full of books. Pink books, blue books, green books... thousands and thousands of words. You better pay attention. We are driving. Christ almighty we are driving and the sun is directly above us and it is making us sweat. We pull over and get out of our ford f150 the most popular car in the world and we grab our bag of books. We walk a little bit in the sand and find a coconut tree to sit under and watch the sun go from 12 to 6:30. The sun is setting, you grab a book and you start to read. You read as much as you can before the sun sets and you’re not in a rush because you’re lost. You’re lost in those pages and you are lost on this beach. Small sentences, long sentences, sentences of all sizes, you read them all chapter by chapter. You’re introduced to new characters, some which seem familiar and others you’ve never met before in settings both real and fabricated.

You stretch and watch the sunset. Eventually you pick up your bag of books and get back into your ford f150, the most imported American car in every market. Its dark and the highway signs flash across yours eyes like green candy. Looking for that exit. Looking for an exit with a diner... maybe one with a gas pump and a waitress who just clocked in. You pass an exit that says Lincoln Way and you get off there. You park your ford f150 under a red neon sign that says 24 hours. You walk in and everyone is quiet and beautiful. You’re thirsty. You get a coca cola and order a burrito or cheeseburger. You say thank you and stare out into the night from your booth. Everyone everywhere is happy and dying. Sad and living. This is what we are thinking. What we are feeling. You look down at the bag of books next to you in the booth, in that bag are a thousand memories, a thousand people, all crying and dying and living and eating and kissing and holding hands and looking at the night sky, just like the night sky above your head. You walk out into that night sky with your bag of books away from the neon lights and the most popular car of all time, the ford F150, and you stare at the night sky in a field and in that field you’re a tree that fell half a year ago, covered in green mosses and mushrooms. You shake it off and grab your bag of books and run your fingers through the pages and run back to your ford f150. You start the truck and you’re driving again. You’re good for a few hours but you get tired, like we all do, its true. Time to find a place to sleep, a place to rest, a place to pick up your book again, to know again, to get lost again. You start where you left before and it’s all brand new from here. You’re familiar. You’re in bed. What you gunna read again?

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# The Last Opportunity

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O. K. Pedersen *from Houseshow Magazine* (2017)

At the birth of a leisure market, in the adolescence of a leisure nation, the circus was like Christmas but with less rules. Between 1860 and 1920, when a circus came through town, schools shut down and employers gave people the day off. It was a day-long one-night-only pseudo-holiday. And this was all in a time when a bunch of smelly, full-grown adults—who, on top of it all, wore way too much fabric and who shit, like, directly into sewers—had literally nothing to do for fun because the idea of fun, a distinctly American invention, didn't exist yet. The French don't even have a word for it. Americans invented fun you can have, an object you can buy.

The circus was a new kind of spectacle for a new kind of time, a spectacle that held, at its gravitational center, the aesthetic of intimacy, of *Being-There-ness*. The spectacles of the circus *are exactly as they appear*. In 1956, Antony D Hippisley, emphasizing the absence of deception, wrote of the nature of circuses: "...few things are accepted at their face value. Yet the circus must always be accepted in this way, because it is the *spectacle of actuality*" (Coxe 414). The circus is a spectacle of feats and tricks and forms and acts that all really Are, spectacular in there Are-ness, in their mere essential Being. The fetishization of reality is the big paradox of the Spectacle. It implores itself to be what it cannot be: a *show* above all, certainly, but also something that you, the viewer, can behold as your own experience. For the viewer, the Spectacle is both their real life and entertainment.

And, the circus advertised, there was something gripping about this: that in sharing our BEING-ness (and our THERE-ness) with this other thing—this daring act or performer, when their own Being flirts so shamelessly with Non-Being, with otherness—it is possible that we, too, could peek with slightly more abandon at the unseeable, unthinkably immanence of mortality. We call this aesthetic experience thrill. Thrill, as a verb, is used with the preposition *at*, and comes from the Middle English word *thrillen* meaning *to penetrate*. The spectacularness of the Spectacle comes from the experience that comes from the thrill of the proximity—both existentially and physically—of the viewer and the Spectacle itself, the Spectacle being a grand old show of the possibility of Non-Being. Up until the last century, no aesthetic experienced rivaled the circus in producing such intimacy, such thrill.

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On May 21, 2017, the evening of the last ever presentation of the Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show On Earth circus, Long Island was still up and running. Emily, my friend and fellow spectateur for the evening, in the highest spirits of valediction, sucked down some pre-show mollusks at Peter's Clam Bar on the bay of Barnum's Channel in Union, NY, as a sort of circus-y last supper.

We sort of anticipated that the whole thing might be a bit depressing because no one would care to attend. It was ending after all. We had anticipated a light crowd. So when we alighted the Meadowbrook State Park Highway for the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum entrance ramp, we were were relieved to find a terrible clusterfuck of traffic caused by a bunch of

people just like us, acting crazy, because the show was about to start in ~six minutes. It was not a parking lot in which anyone should have been wandering around, cars were flying around like witches.

Outside the lot, right at the entrance gate, a modest but unrelenting group stood in protest. At first I thought they were protesting that it was the end of the circus, but of course they were protesting the evils of the circus on behalf of the animals, on behalf of the children. PETA was there too holding signs that said e.g. “DON’T GO IN THERE!”. (Sometimes PETA seems more like a group of folks who just don’t want any animals around. As if maybe they would stop all the fuss if humans just never ever made contact, ever, with any animals ever again. And honestly, sign me up.)

Mostly, though, I just wasn’t sure if the protesters knew that this was the last circus ever. They won, technically: It’s not going to be happening anymore. (I said this all out loud, by accident, but my not-clever garbage opinions were only met with cell phone rear ends up in my face, their cameras scanning my visage and license plate so they could hack my data and then key my car while I was inside. Protesting can really be a one-way conversation and you can really miss a lot of important memos if you’re always on the outgoing end—like for example that you won). Though I did hear a muffled but confident response: “Great, enjoy the cruelty one last time.” Which was appropriately haunting. And I can only really blame myself for crossing that picket line into the circus instead of just staying home and minding my own business.

As we walked up to the entrance, a man selling programs outside kept shouting “Last opportunity! Last opportunity!” and so the night was.

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Once inside, I realized I had forgotten to bring a pen. Emily and I both, insulated by the warm hive of commotion, which was lit almost explicitly by extortionately high-priced ISIS-ransom-ly-high-priced—whirling neon toys, became quietly, intimately aware of how difficult it would be to find a pen at a circus. Every single pen was everyone’s only pen and they needed it VERY much, as if the circus MAY NOT GO ON if they were without it. And I wasn’t about to let anyone take that chance.

I spied two pens, which appeared to be under the authority girl named Deborah, standing behind a kiosk, from which she was vending Dippin’ Dots Ice Cream. Deborah had plastic pink nails and on her nose sat an on-purpose blob of glittery red paint that didn’t quite add up with her Dippin’ Dots frown. I said, Deborah, baby, I need that pen because I am stupid and have no pens and you are so so smart and beautiful with your two pens. She told me that I couldn’t have those pens because they were her favorite, but she actually had a lot of other pens with her because she was an art major. I asked her about which school she attended, and she explained that, hello, she *was with the circus*. I must have squealed, or maybe just died right there on the spot. My excitement pleased Deborah and she gave me her story quickly as she scooped:

“Well, I technically work for Feld Consumer Products,” Deborah said.

“I’ll have two banana splits,” said a customer.

“And Feld is the Ringling parent company. If you find Tina—” Deborah said to me. “That’ll be 30 dollars,” Deborah said to the customer. “—she’s over in programs and she’s been working with FCP for about 35 years. And then there’s Ricky over in snowcones, he’s a great guy to talk to also.” She scooped several more cups of Dippin’ Dots and collected several thousand more dollars. “But I would try to find Ricky before Tina because Tina is not very nice.”

She kept saying words to me but the Dippin’ Dots demand was too strong and the customers eventually boxed me out. From miles away, I made eye contact with Deborah one last time to express my gratitude for the pen.

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The usher in our section (upper level but not too upper, right on the railing) bound around section 211 with the energy of a young prize horse. He was an older man with not too much hair but just enough to have a little fun with. He pointed out our seats and shouted from behind us, “This is history, baby!”

Our seats were executive to say the least. We had two nice juicy end-seats, one row right up from the railing, with the kind of extra legroom that rarely comes free these days. No one sat in front of us, and behind us: two extremely negative people, surely in attendance on behalf of some publication for negative people and their opinions. Their commiseration provided us with an obliquely educational lens through which we could see the show: the point of view of huge assholes who don’t like anything. As Emily and I were making ourselves at home, the people behind us were discussing their exit strategy for the end of the show because, like most men, avoiding any kind of event-exiting-traffic situation is their number one priority at any given moment in their lives. (“There will probably be some speeches at the end,” said one guy to the other, “like, ‘Last Hundred Years Blah Blah Blah,’ or something. Let’s definitely skip that.”)

All the while, in true circus-show-starting-fashion, several large orbs had descended from the ceiling above the arena floor. They floated delicately as tinkly piano notes danced over the growing energy of the strings section. Two acrobats dressed as astronauts stood in the middle of the ring on a big circus-y acrobat-y contraption thing. Their movements were slow and calculated as they balanced on the thing, mimicking zero gravity. The performers moved slowly as the music built suspense, striking ever-intensifying, gravity-defying acrobatic poses. Emily, my fellow spectator, noted well that it’s all about the build up. You really have to be there with them, the acrobats, right at the beginning of the act and every second after, to appreciate each little move, each pose, as they slowly and spectacularly get from point A to point B.

Then, all of a sudden, the beat dropped and the floating orbs cracked open to reveal there had been people inside them the whole time. The orbs began spinning and the performers inside the orbs contorted their bodies in rhythm. The astronaut acrobats were joined by a third colleague and were all balancing on top of each other. At this point people were fully paying attention and the circus was on. (Obviously not enjoying the alternate reality in which they live, the guys behind me said to each other indignantly, “This is *not* the circus.”)

The circus has been many things over 200 years and I wondered what version of the circus they were picturing in their brains as the ‘real’ circus. The circus, above all, is and has always been

an enterprise: a business, a show, and an industry, all in one and all on the road. Everyone in the enterprise traveled with the enterprise. It was and is a mobile economy.

When the first known circus showed in the US in 1793 in Philadelphia, it didn't travel and it was inside a building not a tent. The ring married the tent in 1825 when New York circusman J Purdy Brown had a tent sewn for his show: this immediately allowed the show to go mobile and gave it its icon, the Big Top Tent (Apps). The circus is definitely romantic and makes me think of dry wood and the color yellow, stuff like that, but the circus—*Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey's Greatest Show On Earth*—as we know it today is the corporate lovechild of the three great robber barons of the Spectacle: PT Barnum, James A. Bailey (born McGinnis), and The Ringling Brothers.

In the early 19th century, there were basically two different enterprises that eventually merged into one Circus: the menagerie (an exotic animal display) and traveling troupes (tumblers, jugglers, acrobats) (Huey 2). PT Barnum had always been a “showman-cum-huckster”, displaying elephants and old people for money (Huey 2). He was selling the intangible experience of spectacle, which required serious marketing and hype. The spectacle essentially is its marketing: it's the promise of a feeling. PT Barnum championed entertainment marketing and, in 1841, opened the successful Barnum's American Museum. In 1872, a clown named Castello and a businessman named Coup, after touring their show Dan Castello's Circus for a year in the Midwest, realized the value of Barnum's name and approached him with a business proposition. In 1871, they launched *P.T. Barnum's Museum, Menagerie and Circus, International Zoological Garden, Polytechnic Institute and Hippodrome*.

Met with success, the three entrepreneurs enlarged their show in 1872. They launched *P.T. Barnum's Great Traveling Exposition and World's Fair*, a six tent conglomerate that made three significant innovations to the spectacle at large: a second ring was added that doubled the amount of displays/acts, they put the show on rails, and they invented/capitalized on new advertising opportunities (Huey 3).

Barnum and Bailey didn't get together until 1881. Bailey had run away to the Robinson & Lake Circus when he was a boy and went on to open his own show, *Cooper & Bailey Circus*, in 1873. He exhibited the first-ever elephant born in the United States. PT Barnum offered Bailey \$100,000 for the young elephant, and, not only did Bailey refuse, but he went on to advertise the fact that he owned an elephant that PT Barnum would pay \$100,000 to exhibit, “thus making Columbia [the elephant] a much stronger public attraction,” writes circus scholar and longtime Ringling Bros. strategist Robert A. Huey. “Bailey's shrewd marketing ploy piqued Barnum's interest, and the two circus magnates merged their circuses in 1881.” A third ring was added to their combined *Barnum & Bailey's 'Greatest Show on Earth'* in 1882, giving birth to the three ring circus as we know it (Huey 3).

In 1897, *Barnum & Bailey* left to tour Europe for six years, leaving the market open for the Ringling brothers of Wisconsin to hit the scene hard and pretty much become an unstoppable force du cirque. In 1906 the Ringlings purchased the *Barnum & Bailey* circus, and, in 1929, John Ringling purchased all the rest, becoming the “monarch of circusdom” (Davies 293). The circus fell on hard times in the 1950s, and in 1967 it was purchased and revived by the Feld brothers, concert and arena entertainment promoters from DC, who currently own the spectacle.

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After the opening act, an evil queen named Tatiana rode out on a horse and the crowd went wild. (An audible “YASSSS!!!!!!” came from section 211, at the very least.) The whole Evil Queen Narrative was a bit hard to grasp, but the gist is that the queen Tatiana confronts a child ringleader, announcing that she is trying to steal the circus. There is a magic telescopic viewfinder that is the key to the circus, and Evil Queen is going on an allegorical quest to get it because she wants to be the supreme ruler of the circus and take it away from the Ringling brother child.

This part of the show, the part where they do a little play, is technically the ‘spectacle.’ This part comes directly from the circus’s English origins. The first circuses were called Hippodramas and featured horse riding tricks and plays on horseback. In 1798 Philip Astley, an accomplished cavalryman with the 15th British Dragoons, staged the first open-air equestrian show that included some other little acts like tumblers, acrobats and strongmen. Though it wasn’t called a ‘circus’ until Astley’s pupil Charles Hughes established the *Royal Circus* in 1782, Coxe writes that the circus/hippodrama ring was and has always been key to the show: “The story of the circus, as we know it, goes back no more than 187 years, to the time when Philip Astley discovered that, if he galloped in a circle while standing upright on a horse’s back, he could use centrifugal force to help him keep his balance. In this way the ring was born; and the secret of the circus is the ring [...] The ring enabled them to perform in the midst of spectators, thus establishing the authenticity of spectacle.” (414). In 1793, Hughe’s pupil John Bill Ricketts moved to the States and presented what is considered to be the first circus performance in America. And until J Purdy Brown invented the tent and put the show on the road, early circuses relied primarily on trick horse riding displays and most circuses today still feature some form of the Spectacle Proper.

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After the narrative introduction comes the big group opening number, where every circus person comes out and does some crazy shit all at once, and where the Ringmaster, Johnathon Lee Iverson, introduces himself and his circus. It’s intense. And also, it’s all on ice.

The first featured act was the Big Cats act. The tamer stood in the ring with 10 tigers and 2 lions and, for half an hour, they basically all took turns jumping over each other.

Towards the end of the all the jumping, the tamer went off the script and addressed the audience directly. His voice cracked immediately and we knew he was crying. He gave this big emotional speech about his love for animals. He told us that we would never understand the love he has for the animals until we, too, live with them. He told us that we needed to continue supporting people who take care of wildlife: “Support good, well-run circuses,” he said, “and support good, well-run zoos.” (Someone near me yelled “Fuck you, PETA,” to no one in particular. It was a bit off-color for the moment.) He told us that he had joined the Ringling Brothers circus because it had the facilities and resources to allow him to take care of these special creatures, and that, because of their work and research, they alone can keep 30 different species of big cats up and running.

The whole thing was extremely emotional and we all sort of forgot for a minute that the animals (cats, nonetheless) had just been made to stand in a pyramid and do backflips while singing the national anthem, solely for our entertainment. The fact that the animals are all brainwashed into jumping through hoops is sort of the point of crisis for most people. It was hard to deny that the animals all really did look depressed about the fact that they have been brainwashed into not killing each other and doing work instead, just like me and you.

Next was the motorbikes! I know the whole thing is really scary and difficult, riding around a small cage with six other motorcycles, but honestly no one cared. I felt really bad watching the whole thing, especially when people didn't clap before the stunt because they didn't really give a shit if another guy jumped in there. Or another guy or another guy.

People see strangers do so much random crazy shit by accident on Youtube everyday (which is usually more entertaining because the Youtuber often fails to pull off the stunt). It's not that we are no longer entertained by this fear—by being close in proximity to mortality, both physically and existentially—rather, the spectacle of actuality no longer produces thrill. Maybe because there is no oxygen left for the small flames of such fears in a world where acts of terrorism occur regularly. Or maybe because presence—Being-there-ness—no longer has the same emotional currency. We are all definitely as obsessed with the truth as ever; we cling to it desperately, understanding that everything we know and believe is at stake. But our collective, global understanding of truth no longer inherently requires Being-there-ness as criteria. The Idea, *The Atlantic's* newsletter, reports that last week *The Washington Post* published its first augmented reality stories that profiled innovative buildings, and the *New York Times* has been publishing virtual reality stories since 2015. As a culture, we are extremely comfortable accepting virtual truths.

The Circus—the Spectacle of Actuality—didn't just fizzle out because people stopped caring. The spectacle imploded and ate us alive. The circus invented the spectacle of advertising, it pioneered lifesize hype and outdoor advertising (Flint 214). The marketing wasn't for the show, it was part of the show: the advertising presented the expectations (it promised to literally defy reality as one knew it) and the show presented the actuality—it delivered an impossible reality within one's own.

The circus didn't just end; it created a monster that simply became ubiquitous, paradoxically harder to spot, the same way your eyeballs can't see your own nose. It's possible that the spectacle of advertising, pioneered by the spectacle of actuality, simply outlived and outgrew its predecessor. The Ringling Bros Barnum & Bailey circus company became a giant corporate conglomerate blob of money and power, too large a growth to be in any way healthy or manageable, and the 1950s saw its decline: the circus failed to advertise on television or take advantage in any way of the spectacle of not-there-ness.

So the circus, in form, as I watched it in Long Island, hasn't died. It has just changed...into everything. Now everything is no less than a circus, virtually everything in sight is a spectacle. Towns don't have to shut down for the show anymore, the show is everywhere all the time and we are constantly checking Actualities off our never-ending lists of Expectations on our Spectacles To Note tab.

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The emotional high point of the show was the trapeze act. When watching trapeze artists, you can't help but appreciate the relationship between the flipper and the catcher. All day long, all year long, for their whole lives, they swing through the air, several stories above ground, in perfect syncopation. There is no time for hesitation, there can only be absolute trust that your partner is going to do their job perfectly and catch you, because you need all the focus and strength you can muster to flip rapidly through the effing air to catch a human's arms on the other side.

So the trapeze artists were doing their thing and then the announcer announced the big trick: the Feature Artist would flip through the air *FOUR TIMES!* and be caught by his partner who was swinging upside down from the trapeze on the other side of the arena. Naturally, there was a huge musical build up, (and again, not enough pre-vibe clapping from the crowd in my opinion. The concentration of the two artists as they made mental calculations, syncing themselves spiritually for the trick, was visceral. The Feature Artist mounted his trapeze and gave one giant swing to gain momentum, and then, on the next big swing, he released his grip and flipped high up into the lights—*one, two, three, four times!* counted the announcer—and then released his tumble, grabbed his partner—who had also reached the peak of his own swing—their hands touch, their spectacular parabolas break as their inertia jolts against the pull of each other's hands, and as the exchange is executed, their hands break and the flipper falls down, into the safety net below.

Now everyone was awake. After the first hitting the net, the tumbler involuntarily completed several pregnant bounces up and down into the air a few times, and the announcer's voice came through the speakers again, saying something about how sometimes in life there are second chances and that this was one of those times. Now there was energy in the crowd, now there were stakes. So the trapeze artist climbed the ladder again up to the top for the last last opportunity. And there was the same build up with the swings and the music, and people were giving some cheers (I, personally, was still at max generosity, cheer-wise) and he mounted the trapeze again, and he did another big warm-up swing again, and he did all the flips again, and again—he was dropped! He stayed down, crouched on the net below, for a little bit extra long this time. It was real intimacy, this failure, this intangibly cruel impossibility of redemption. If there cannot be redemption, there can at least be eternal forgiveness, and so people cheered anyway, loudly, and in that moment we all become a little closer. As an arena.

After this, all the trapeze artists dismounted. The final two to descend from the swings were the flipper and catcher. They meet in the middle of the net and hugged with abandon. This was, like, a five minute hug, an HBO limited series of a hug: twice it seemed like the hug might break but it did not. Finally they separated, and the thrill settled into the last shakes of a shiver.

Immediately after the hug, it seemed, a troupe of puppies came running through the floor's entrance and everyone's patronizing cheers turned into disgusting little squeals.

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Many more acts passed and we came to the end of the spectacle's narrative: Queen Tatiana and the child ringmaster faced off. For a minute, the queen thought she had won, having finally attained the object in itself. But when she tried to summon the powers of the magic circus telescope, she instead summoned the origins of the circus: the Hippodrama. A classic trick riding spectacle was the last act of the last show.

Then the narrative came to a soft close: Tatiana agreed to let the circus remain as it was and the child invited to join it herself, the denouement of the narrative being a kind of metaphorical fantasy corporate merger.

Following tradition, The Ringmaster came out again, along with the entire cast, to do the last big number together. Like, the last last big number. The Ringmaster told us we had just witnessed the final presentation of *The Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth*. He told us that he, a New Yorker, is proud he got to be the voice of these performers and this magic. *And though shows close down all the time*, he said knowingly, *the circus will never be over*.

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