

The Show

Natasha Ranawake

“That’s all, ladies and gentlemen, that’s all. Come again to the greatest show on earth. Bring the children. Bring the old folks...”

– *The Greatest Show on Earth* –

Impending rain or sun-kissed skies,
still crowds look on, the show’s in sight.
The crowd snakes through to see the show,
praised in bold, in headlines galore.
Flaking banners in each street;
bold, uncharted, a vibrant feast.
A visceral madness at lampposts,
crowding flyers with eloquent boasts.
“Come one, come now,” they call to all;
they flaunt past feats, those old tales tall.
A sea of faces, craning necks,
waiting, taking in all aspects.
Streams of murmurs music becomes,
till he, in spotlight, waves and comes.
Music swells as people see
the front man, Barnum; with cadence he
raises a hand to usher applause
till stifled coughs dawn a pause.
The front man gestures, with a hand,
to men and women who play his band.
The bellies of their words are sweet,
familiar screams, those words repeat.
There’s music as they bring forth words,
of their own deeds, they did in herds.
“Let children have our show today,
and tomorrow as a glory day!”
And in attempt to stay the doubts,
the front man stirs, and then he shouts.
“Same old recipe, will it sustain?
let this be change, for all again!”

“I vow this oath to bring no grief,
the show shall flourish with your belief.”
The crowd, they watch as rain drips slow;
the fire’s not killed, there’s not one blow.
Sun-touched carpet unrolls at their feet;
beneath the canopy, a tender heat.
Tumultuous applause, it bursts and pops,
as kernels fry, it rises, drops.
The air it gasps as words collapse,
cheers are rampant in sounding claps.
In after shows they will revise;
what works for crowds,
what truths, what lies.
What would be that on-screen feature,
and what would make a people pleaser.
Another day’s end: as night crawls in,
some crowds leave and sounds grow thin.
Barnum calls to the crowds, he smiles,
“This circus counts on you tonight.
Rest your hope here, and you won’t fall,
this show’s for all, come one, come all!”

Natasha Ranawake is a 22-year-old student, who discovered the power of poetry during the pandemic. She hopes to use poetry to convey the stories that really matter and bring unheard stories into light.

Reference

The Greatest Show on Earth. (1952). Directed by Cecille B. DeMille. USA: Paramount Pictures.