

NICKELODEON STAR

Memoirs of a performing hound.
Computeranimated feature film.

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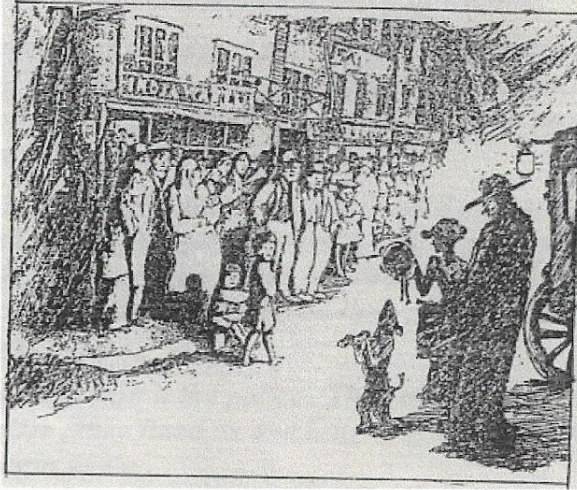


Illustration : Hamid Navim.

PROLOGUE

*As they cut into my brain and I look beyond their lights and masks ; I see Dorah ,
crying and smiling . It's not fair to Granz ; he gave his mind and made me what I am .
In return he got my money . He never wanted my love .*

*All week the snow has been breathing chills into this huge greystone building .
This first week of the new twentieth century . Tiny flakes of life against mighty stones
of death . And I see in the scalpel ... only my life .*

*The incision made and the skin strung together , I am returned to the basement .
And there from the other cages only silence and contempt . To volunteer for death only
to save the human race !*

It's an old trick . It has been tried before . I share their misgivings .

*And from an artistic point of view it's slightly ridiculous that my final kicks should
appear in the operating theater for a vivisecting audience of an indifferent New York
hospital .*

ACT 1

1897 . We were touring the small villages along the southeastern coast England, two days ride from London . It was in the fall and Granz temper worsened with the weather . Ours was primarily an out-of-doors act . For the milling crowds of the market day . For village celebrations and country fairs . When ten performances in one lucky afternoon would feed us a week and pay for a dozen of whores .

With the drizzling winterrains we moved into the taverns with their gushing beer and drunken gasps . Granz hated it . He couldn't stomach the liquor , although every other week he went on a binge ; just to swallow the crowd and puke up their sordid faces into the gutter . As he used to express it .

The thundershowers drowned the village square . And then a sudden break and the market activities began anew . We got our paraphernalia together , and soon the horse but loud voice of Granz beckoned the crowd to stare at my twoleged walk with that dumb dove on a stick in my mouth . A whistled tune , a howling . A clap , playing dead . A kick , a summersault .

Then the rain returned and with it the police . They ushered us to a backstreet . The few coins we attracted earlier , they fined us and laughing split a dram , while waiting for our performance to begin again .



The performance that evening was a disaster . Granz got drunk and kicked my tail several times for no reason . The few people gathered jeered and laughed mercilessly as Granz tried to fetch the frightened dove from a window's ledge . He climbed , reached for it swaying dangerously; got hold of it , but fell backwards with a clash . They applauded and threw a few coins at his bloody hands .

He looked at them from under his hat , the face as always in the dark ...

The suddenly in one merciless blow he broke the pidgeon's neck against the shiny cobblestones .

That night he almost strangled the poor whore for something she whispered , and we had to take him down into the closed tavern and calm him with more booze . Long after midnight he sat frozen in the deserted room . From somewhere above came a weak singing tune . like the voice of an angel . Soothing .

I put my nose to his hand and let it rest . Then in a sudden rage he flew at me and his boots kicked me around the room . I wasn't trained to fight back . I didn't want to .

I was then given the limp on my left front leg that greatly added to the artistic impact of my act; "Look at that crippled bastard juggle !" .

Then the beating came to an end ; A wooden jug had broken Granz' jaw . From my hiding-place I could see him sprawled on the floor , bleeding nonsense words out of his mouth , his nostrils snorting the sawdust on the floor . Someone was standing next to him . Darkness , then flashes of light . Eyes found me . Arms embraced me . The hurrying clouds saw a dark shape crossing

the yard from the inn to the stable .

The moon found a small chamber around an improvised bed . A dog breathing sleep into the breasts of a young woman . By the name of Dorah . Again she was singing . Soothingly .

* * *

A Memory returned in my dreams . The skeleton branches of a bridge . The still silhouette of a man . He reaches for the sack . It moves with whimpers as he opens it over the dragon-gulf below . In the waterfall mist disappears 2 puppy dogs . A miracle saves the third . The man curses and swings the sack to get him off the ridge . The second miracle is Granz . Out of nowhere flying his horse , he swoops me up and his laugh leaves the man standing paralyzed as we gallop to freedom .

* * *

My whimpering and sudden spasms didn't wake Dorah . Her hand healed my bruised neck . Her chamber had the fragrance of her body . Her naked whiteness was soon colored by the morning sun ...

* * *

The horse was grazing next to the brook in a morning paradise . Granz and I shared the bread. A quick and faint smile was all I could see below that black hat . He stretched out and fell asleep . I layed down next to the knapsack . Sunbeams through the treetops carried me to sleep ... I remember the horse slowly walking down those glimmering waters ...

Then suddenly the butchers knife cutting through the hind legs of the hanging horse. The screeching of the skin unwrapped . Granz forces me to watch . His eyes black . And again the faint smile . And I wake up in an empty bed and the angel is not there . I run down to the tavern .

They carried him out in the gutter and i sat with him for hours before he moved and came to his senses . He tried to speak , but there was only a growl from a wolf. His eyes asked for the girl. They fought him all the way to her room. But she was gone . They chased us down the street . Out of the village. They laughed at his mutterings and the smile that a loving woman named Dorah had broke .

The autumn rains came . We walked several days , avoiding the villages , sleeping in improvised shelters and under bridges . Granz was silent and refused to eat the food I stole for us . One night he climbed a cliff right into the moon and tried to shout out his anger . His cry became the growl of a dying wolf.

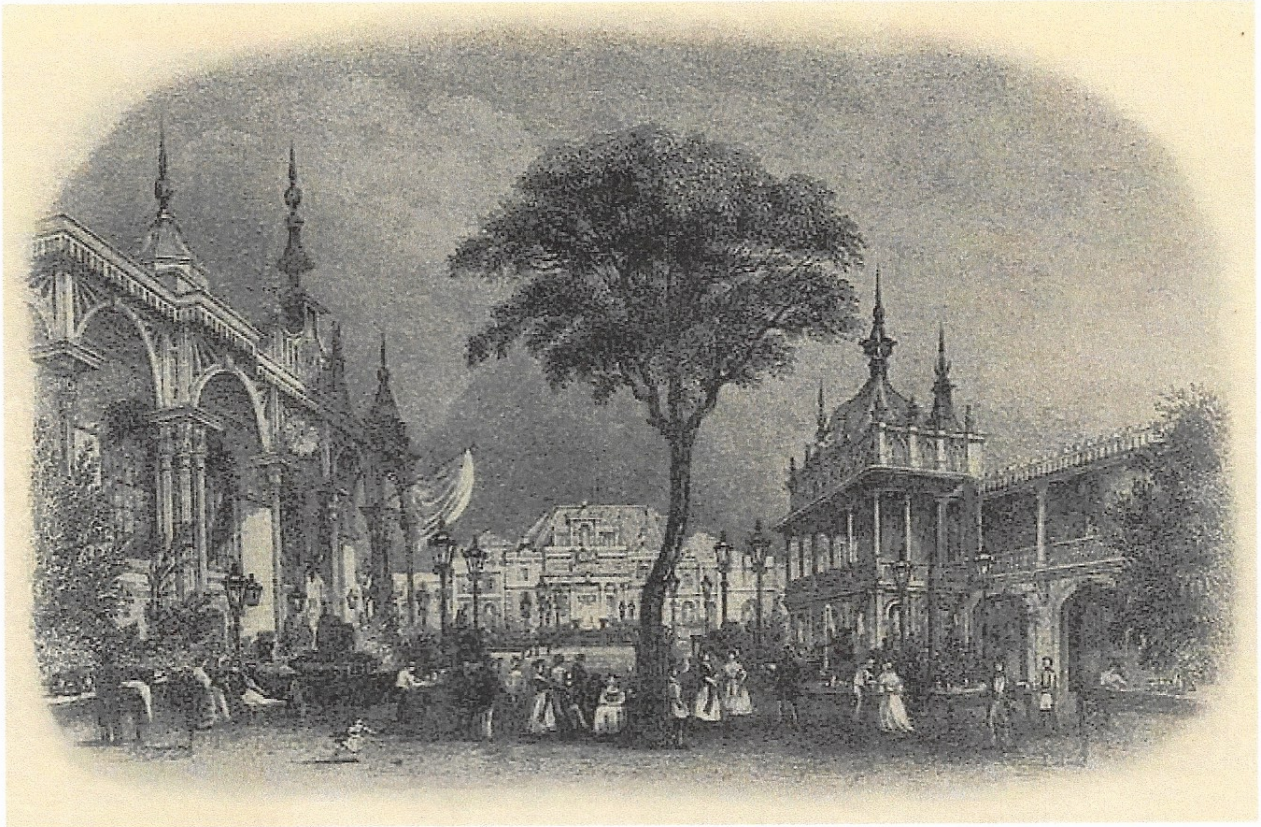
But the following day he whispered to me through his aching jaw and I could interpret most of his words through his eyes and hands . He checked my limp and in the middle of nowhere we did our act. Granz snapped his fingers and whistled and it all worked . The limp and the broken jaw became added attractions.

It was the time of the wintry taverns. Granz had changed . He didn't drink because he never mingled with the audience as once . After the performance we retired to the room where he tended to the fire throughout the night . In the morning he slept a few hours and then we were off . Never two nights in the same tavern.

One morning he was gone . I could trace his scent up the eastern coast . Then he must have traveled by coach . I lost him .

It was an unhappy time . Stealing leftovers from a farm , I was chased by a band of children , screaming and throwing rocks . I found escape in the river and floated half drowned with the streams . The little bastards were still running along the shore hurling their rocks and hate . I was suddenly stuck between some rocks and now they had sticks and branches ...

*A sudden stillness . Their voices hushed . The commotion had brought the farmer's wife . They scattered . She brought me to the barn , prepared a bed and fed me milk .
In the morning brought me to London town .*



***I**t was the first time in the Capital . I felt like royalty . Even if I was arriving sitting on the top of some cages with chickens . And even if my new friend , the Farmer's wife drove the cart through the backstreets , there were glimpses of the magnificent castles , the monuments , the churches and the park with its lakes , where a different breed of people strolled like penguins and peacocks .*

The Farmer's wife went about her business and I watched the cart for her . She had a good day and by the end of the day we shared a dinner next to the park fence . Loving couples now walked the promenades . Again she checked my legs , brushed hastily my fur ... and surprised me with a bone . I made a small act catching it balancing on the empty cages . She laughed and threw some more meat into one of the cages , I got it , she applauded , one more , trickier this time , I got it , a final piece ... the cage slammed shut . A blanket blocked my view . But I saw clearly the betrayal .

***I** don't remember my price at that time , but the Farmer's wife didn't get much . I heard them argue . The hooves of the horse disappearing , the slamming of doors , keys turning , heavy steps , the man cursing under his breath and then a sudden explosion of animal cries .*

The blanket removed and in the weak light of the torch I saw their frightened eyes and then , thank God , it was darkness .

A bucket of ice-cold water brought me to my senses . The shadow of the man walked the dungeon walls . He was feeding the poor whimpering souls with some porridge hauled through the bars of the cages . I could smell their fear . Was he preparing them for experiments in hospitals , meat for poor taverns , furs for the rich ? At that time I didn't wonder . There was only one thought in my head ; never to trust a human being again .

Weeks passed in darkness and silence . Daily the door opened to the silhouette of the man and after the water torture and feeding , in the torchlight another creature was brought to his grim destiny .

I made a routine presenting parts of my old act every time he got to my cage . The first time he threw an extra bucket at me . I held my posture for the second one . And the third . Then this guardian of lost souls burst into laughter . And so to his surprise here was a jolly good prisoner . He started treating me with some respect . Came closer and closer to this circus cage . One day I licked his hand . The next I aimed for his throat . The famer's cage easily broken , he spun around with me as the wings of a windmill , digging deeper into his veins . Then he fell to his grave and the torch fell from his hand , the flames soon licking the cages . The crazed animals stomped at their prisons now tumbling to the floor and some found the way through the gate to freedom . Some didn't . From a side street I watched the building burn into the dawning of the sun .



ACT 2

I found Dorah in my dreams . Or so I thought . I had been spending the night under a folded sign outside the stage-entrance to a Variety theater . Light snowflakes woke me up and there she was on a photograph . One of the chorus girls .

I waited for her several nights , hiding among the debris of some old sets in the backyard . Artists came and went . An impressive janitor guarded the gate and let no unauthorized admirer pass . Furthermore one morning they removed the dump and I had to find a new outlook position . I managed to sneak up to the attic in the neighboring building and among the complaining doves get a view through a small porthole .

And I could see the loft and apartment of the Theater manager . Shadows on the window showed the man clutching on to a woman . Weak noises . The harsh laughter . Then silence as the lights went out . Only the overture from the music-hall below . A dampened cry was heard . The lights on , the man hurrying past the window ... and then after minutes long as years , I could see Dorahs face behind the crying windowpane . I barked , I howled ... she looked at me but didn't see me . And she was gone . Lights out .

The smell of gas came suddenly . I gnawed my way through the bricks , jumped the fire-escape , balanced on the roof's ledge and threw myself crashing through the window . She was laying as dead on the bed . I could't wake her . I flew at the door and down the spiral staircase ... down below was the stage and a tableaux vivant in progress . They could not hear me through the pumping music . I gnawed the rope for ages and suddenly the idyllic backdrop slowly folded among the ballet . And now as the music stopped , people came hurrying up the steps .

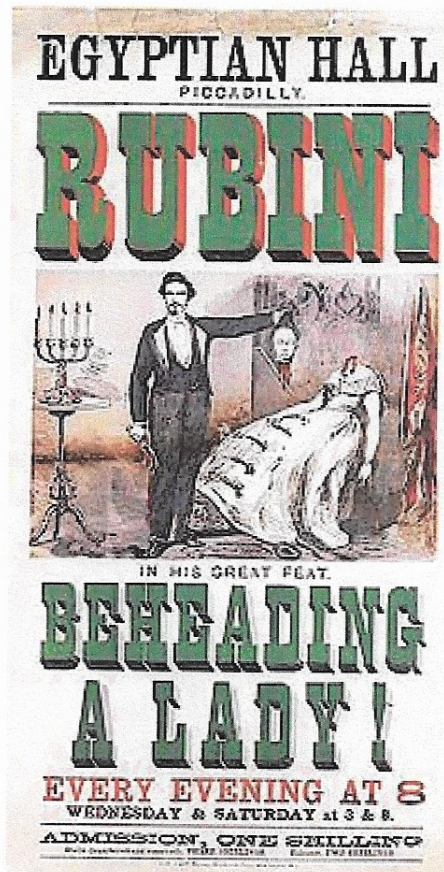
I backed up and found a hiding place in an old trunk with clothes . Through the keyhole I could see them carrying Dorah to the window ... and give her sniffing salt .

She was still unconscious . The manager was slapped by one of the girls , who cried out : "Murderer !" . And he sank down on the trunk pressing my tail into oblivion . She was dead! I held my breath and my cry . But when I saw one of the people holding on to Dorah shake his head , I burst into a desperate howl that sent the Manager tumbling to the floor among the exploding costumes . They turned to look at me in my pathetic stage of a trunk . Everyone frozen in amazement . I sat there howling madly draped in some tuxedo with some silly top hat pressed against my ears . They still didn't move . I howled till I saw the eyes of Dorah open .

***T**he sweaty face of the Manager stared at me . Out of his forehead stuck two horns . Under his cape rested his tail . He breathed slowly with the thunder of the drums . His hairy clawed hand reached out and corrected my bow and tie . Then suddenly I flew in the air as I was catapulted through the trapdoor up on the stage . I had closed my eyes this first time and heard only the heavenly music ... and in slow motion my eyelids opened to that divine Dorah appearing deus-ex-machina as a floating angel from the theater's ceiling .*

She caught me and held on to me on that swinging cloudy cart . We landed to enormous applause and cheers from the audience . I grabbed my sign announcing the act and Dorah gestured the ovations my way . Then in a puff of smoke the Magician devil appeared and I left the stage in my tuxedo . I watched their act as my dresser prepared me for the next number , a clown's outfit for some tumblers act .

Thus my artistic career continued as a between-numbers-presenter of vaudeville-acts , some of them not worth mentioning in his story . But I once more got to sleep in Dorah's room . In the afternoons we drank tea on a small balcony overlooking the world . One day my portrait was in the programe and in the cabinet next to the ticket office .

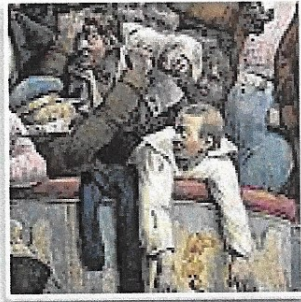


***E**l Diabolo the Manager called himself as a magician . But he also appeared in other roles throughout the Show . In Dorah's life he was no longer allowed to play any part . So his carnal appetite grew with his jealousy . He dared not take out his aggression on Dorah but I was an easier target .*

He devised a new comedy act , where I was dressed up in a sailor's outfit and the manager was a captain cursing and running about in the set of a pirate's ship . He was chasing me up between sails to a platform several feet above the stage . As a climax I dove down in the pit of the orchestra and a small basin .

We rehearsed and I tried to hide my fear in front of Dorah and obeyed somewhat reluctantly . I couldn't risk her career . In this skit she was one of the pirates but I could see her way to stardom . And her roles had been growing .

I was once more on that bridge as a frightened puppy facing death below in the gulf of that stream . I hesitated and the other characters came to a halt in their fussing and fighting . I caught Dorah's worried eyes and I dove out in the explosions of the lime lights ...I was forever drowned , till that captain's hook got me up on the stage . The auditorium exploded with shouts and hoorays . This was the grim act and I hated every second of it . I found no comfort in the procedure afterwards when Dorah was drying me off and I was shivering long into the night . Dorah had a talk with the manager to cut the scene or change it around , but it was too late ; the act was such a success that I had made the marquee outside the theater . A cardboard dog splashing into the barrel . Some mechanical device made it move . I wish I had that same device but it was blood and veins filled with anger and fear that made my hell every night .

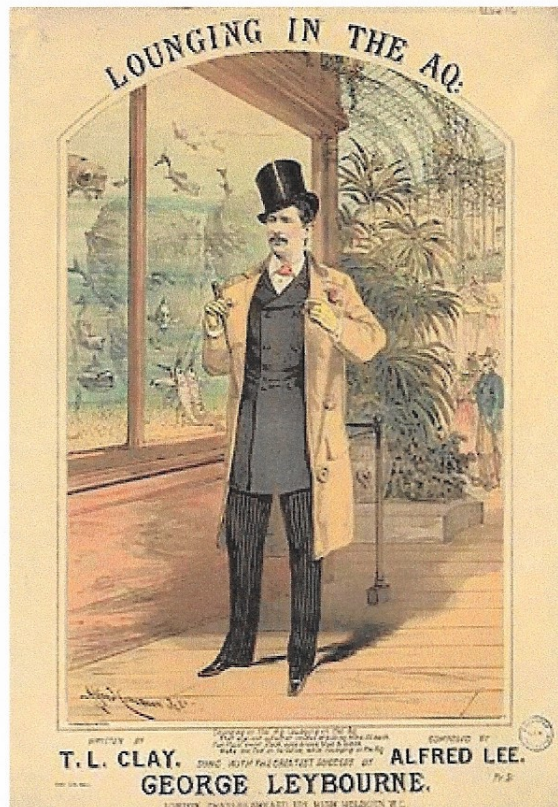


Then one evening before the jump I heard the whistle of Granz . And I saw him coming down the aisle . He was growling . He was drunk but steady . Two ushers came hurrying after him . They couldn't stop his climbing on stage and the commotion turned into regular fighting . The Captain was climbing the masts swinging his sword to get me to jump . It bruised my behind , but I sat frozen . The audience was screeching and booing and now Granz was grabbing the Captain and they fell with the sudden weight of the set down towards the fleeing members of the orchestra and was saved by the basin . Their struggle continued as the curtain went down .

The small shutter of the cell opened and there was the man that once was Granz . The months in prison had almost killed him . We saw into his hollow and burning eyes for an answer . He stared silently right through us and didn't seem to notice the small package of food wrapped in Dorah's handkerchief .

Guilt at first , then some sort of motherly instinct made her see him every day for a week . His condition didn't change much , but one day he returned the hanky neatly folded . And he looked at her for the first time . Till the jailer quickly closed the shutter and received his bribe . Dorah came out in the spring sunshine to where I was waiting at the gate . And for once as she and I briskly went down the alley I found a reason to wag my tail .





ACT 3

***E**l Diabolo had tears in his eyes . If it was for seeing his old godforsaken show wagon hidden in that decrepit stable or for his saying good-bye to his attractions of the season , me and Dorah , I suspect both . Anyway as he left in his rented four wheeler he was soon comforted by another one of the chorus girls . Crazy chickens flew out of the old shed and accompanied his departure . I and Dorah went into the darkness of the stable and there was Granz sitting on the coachman 's box letting an old whip dust the air with sunshine .*

What a time that early spring when we were preparing our travelling act . We made the wagon into a stage in the day and a home at night . Granz was repairing anything and everything . He worked around the clock . Then slept shyly among the hay . His love for Dorah became a passion and he was happy for his muteness that she once caused him with that blow once a long long time ago ; he was no man for shallow love dialogues . His eyes and motions spoke fuller well .

Dorah painted the wagon and she rehearsed our act among the daffodils next to the river . She had gotten an old hurdy-gurdy to accompany our antics . And Granz was the organ grinder behind the beard he had grown to further hide the scar and what once was .

***T**he summer breezes took us South to the best resorts . We were welcomed as a proper showbiz company with good entertainment for everyone and the rumor proceeded us . Dorah charmed everyone with her folksongs and I gave comic relief with leaps and tricks out of the old repertoire . Granz operated our special effects and was impressive in his tuxedo and top hat . We were even invited to appear in front of some gentry outside their mansions . And then more fairs . More celebrations .*

One night under the moon Granz went sleeping inside the cart with Dorah . I took his bunk on the driver's seat and lay there counting the stars .

Dorah had planned a home for us and our happy future . But the autumn winds in Granz mind would put an end to all that . When the summer season was over we returned to those old buildings on the outskirts of London . A new show was to premiere and we had struck a new deal with el Diabolo . The success of the summer had paid for the whole extravaganza of the travelling company and allowed for a first down payment on that property . While Dorah and I payed our dues on the stage in London Granz would work on the building . And so it was for a few months .

Then loneliness , jealousy and what else made Granz spend more and more time at the local pub and his drinking started anew . He was an appreciated fellow talking only with the tunes of his small harmonica , something he had added to our act that year . And in the company of sailors and their stories of the new country his passion grew . We should travel to America . Hit the peak of success in their Broadway Variety theaters !

That weekend we found him sleeping over the kitchen table and a brochure on the Cunard line to that land of dreams . Northly winds slapped the window lids and searched through the cringes of the unfinished walls .

Blankets held the warmth of the bedroom . Dorah held the warmth of the sleeping Granz . From the end of the bed I could see that she was still awake by that icy dawn .

It was during the Christmas extravaganza that Granz appeared out of nowhere and made me partake in that hideous crime I will now force myself to retell .

As the Pantomime came to it's end in the classical gospel tableaux of Jesu birth below on the stage , upstairs sat the Manager counting the receipts from the succesful holiday performances . From the wings I was enjoying the Haendel music sweeping the moonlit manger and Dorah as virgin Mary ; when the whisper of Granz lured me into the darkness . He motioned me up those hidden stairs to the office and the piles of money . It all happened in fractions of seconds and hours .

The surprised manager first offered something to drink and Granz took his time as El Diabolo went into a monologue , where the words were not heard since I had discovered the knife of Granz now preparing for the robbery and was only concentrating on that music below to come to it's finale . Granz had an old bag hidden and now whisked the money into it . El diabolito leaped forward but was stopped by the knife pressing against his throat .

The door had opened and Dorah was tried to get to Granz to free himself he swung around and the knife pierced into the Manager , who fell backwards profusely bleeding . Dorah fell to her knees next to him still in her stage clothes now ripped and bloody . Granz stood frozen as Dorah crying out spun around to attack him with the knife . I stopped her cutting motions and we tumbled to the floor , my jawbone deep into her hand . I could hear Granz steps down the spiral staircase and I let go of her hand . She lay down in a faint . Before I leapt into the darkness in pursuit of my master , I saw for the first time through those ripped garments her pregnancy .

Thank God for that thickening fog as we made our escape through those narrow back streets down to the harbor . The flashlights and whistles of the police came ever closer . Suddenly cart-wheels were heard against the cobblestones and the barks of approaching dogs . Granz was bleeding and it was easy to catch up with him . For me and would be for his pursuers .

So we were lucky to try an old trick . As it happened the Passengers were boarding the atlantic liner and in the crowd and blinding searchlights we could easily disappear and the hunt came to an end . From my hiding place I could see the police squad withdraw . And the liner leave for open sea .

A life-raft on an old steamer would be our cabin for the next month . A steward had been bribed by Granz and water and bread and some medical aid would cost us a fortune . The wound was infected and fever sent Granz into unconsciousness . Our closeness was the only warmth from the winter storms . I held on to the money and the steward could only get a bill at a time through my growling teeth .

Then a hurricane took the ship and sailors were crawling around and on the boat . But it was in my power to prevent them from throwing Granz overboard . I simply gave them the money . Then they kicked me with an oar and threw me to that cold death , I now was longing for .

*God's eye was a lens that mirrored my poor soul in a lifesaving buoy . It said "The Hope" . Flashes of light as His hand was motioning in the air ; more flashes and several hands were cranking forward pictures of my rescue . It was my first appearance on the Nickelodeons : **SHIP'S DOG ONLY SURVIVOR OF DISASTER AT SEA .***

I don't remember much more than that and the strange spider of a cameraman and glimpses of spread out figures far away on a beach wandering aimlessly round . Where was Granz ? Where was I ? How could I have survived ?

I remember waking up again in some heavenly landscape . Oak trees shadowing a flowering meadow . But it was all strangely swaying ... and suddenly the heaven opened for the full sunshine , but there were windowpanes cranking . Forgive me for confusing You ! In plain language : The Cameraman had taken me to his New York film studio , an attic high on a roof overlooking New York harbor and the Statue of Liberty . He carried me down one floor to his office and held me in front one of the Nickelodeons .

He cranked one picture , then one more , then quicker and to my amazement I could see myself raising from that life bouy , standing swaying , then for some weird reason like in a trance go up on my hind legs with my paws lifted in the classical applause pose ...then stumble backwards and play dead . I had actually been fainting into several days of unconsciousness . But this first film sequence could now be seen in movie parlors throughout the New country . Even the World . And as I turned my eyes from that flimmering porthole of the nickelodeon , I looked into the eyes of Granz .

His new name was George Grand and his title was to become Motion Picture producer . I was his new star . In that studio we photographed all the old acts in some afternoons . I was now reaching my late twenties , counting human years , but my body was that of an old man . My tricks were getting harder to achieve to fulfillment .But it didn't matter much now when they were photographed for posterity .

I was not well .Granz noticed . One day he took me to the city pond . A block away I could smell that fear again from once far gone . As the cab came to a stop I could also hear their lamenting howls . Granz got out first , I hesitated . He didn't wait for me but went up to the gate . I left the neighbourhood . He returned with a look-alike . It was a typical Granz joke . Maybe he missed me . But soon he started shooting "The new adventures of the Nickelodeon dog !" The audience never had a chance to miss me . That's showbiz !



I put on a new act that I wasn't too accustomed to, that of playing a dog. A dumb, lazy, halting and nonsocial rascal. I was dead tired and slept most of the day on the sunny and deserted beaches not far from Coney Island. At night I sometimes visited the pier with its amusement park and long walks with their restaurant trashcans filled with delightful leftovers.

One morning returning to my hideout I was run over by a bike and a avalanche of newspapers plus a teenage youngster fell on top of me. I crawled to an escape then ran madly as the boy chased me several blocks calling out and whistling. I heard him only weakly since my hearing had been getting worse. I could feel something numbing growing inside my brain.

Then he suddenly turned and disappeared.

I was back in my old bunker, listening to the inner voice of Dorah carried to me by the Atlantic waves.

The summer season came to an end. Food was getting scarce as most establishments closed down. Before the hibernation I had the opportunity to see myself in "The new adventures" ... only in close-ups, my double did the rest. I had made it to the silver screen, since the nickelodeons were marching into oblivion and the projectors were taking the stage. I had sneaked into one of the small variety theatres where live entertainment of everything from jugglers to female impersonators were mixed with the latest film strips of humour and drama. I was so taken in that I noticed too late the rope wrapped around my neck. I looked into a flashlight and the face of the Newspaper boy.

"Extra! Extra! Read all about it!" he shouted again and again. But when he presented himself the first time he was stuttering through his name and made no sense. I was chained to the newsstand, mostly relaxing and growling to show respect from time to time when the free reader's stayed to long. Some days later he forgot the chain and I was still there. This must have surprised him into a straight voice saying: "I'm Christopher!"

We lived in that newsstand at the end of Ocean View Boulevard. The owner was seldom there since Chris took care of it all. Easier now with me as guard. Chris had made the small rat's hole into a home. We kept warm with each other that winter. We took walks along the boardwalks checking up on different establishments. This gave extra cash. We ate well and had the places for ourselves. There were the regular newspaper vending and Chris sang out the daily news stories. In his own words. From the pictures. He couldn't read. He stuttered terribly with his customers but with me he could talk for hours at night. His dream was to run one of the newsstands around Times square. Then to travel the world as a journalist. I imagined it was the voice of a young Granz. Sometimes I lost him, since my headaches had been growing worse and the only escape was to flee into a sleep. One of those nights his embrace noticed my hump behind my left ear.

The somber church bells intertwined with the stormy winds . The small coffin sank into it's grave . The Manager held on to Dorah , now on her knees stretching her arms in a last embrace of the lost child . Under the dark capes against the rain one could catch a glimpse of the stage costumes of the theatrical company . They slowly withdrew from the grave and then hurried away from that small church yard cluttered in the midst of firewalls . The grave diggers went to work .

The Manager after awhile left Dorah sitting on a bench under a crying willow tree .Then the weel-cut silhouette of a man sat down next to her . He put his gloved hand on her white and frozen hand . She let it rest . The other hand was slowly squeezing the silver top of a cane . Rain drops ran down the outlined letters of G and G .

EPILOGUE

The cage was opened . I saw a fraction of Chris' face in tears . The professor checked my eyelids . Then shook his head . I could hear Chris stuttering something and the low voice of the doctor . Blackness . Then as my consciousness returned somewhat I could see the round operation theater and the audience of medical students glaring down with the lights . I stood up swaying for a while as the Professor continued his seminar and before they would continue with the operation .

"How's Nick ? " asked the Owner of the stand . Chris sat silent and the man packed his papers on a cart prepared to leave . Without knowing my true identity they had called me after that famous movie star . It was a joke because nobody could ever believe that crippled newspaper dog to be a hero . Chris was staring at a picture in the paper . Suddenly he ran like maniac after the Owner's cart . He pointed at the picture with the movie producer and his new star . And next to it an early picture of me ; "What does it say ?" - "Reward !"

At the Broadway office of George Grand a crowd had gathered with all kinds of dogs and people being represented . Even the police had arrived to the chaotic scene . Everything being documented by Granz news reels cameras . Chris and the owner had to fight their way but was turned away at the gate by some constable .

At the hospital they were preparing for the next performance in the operation theater . Would it be the final ? The professor and his proselytes were observing the x-ray photographs .

With a picture from the photo studio of me and Chris in between his teeth , Chris was crawling on the glass roof above the studio . Dogs and their owners were down there surrounding Granz and Dorah with a terrible noise . Then the picture slowly came through the air and landed in Dorah's lap . Seconds later the boy came tumbling down in the middle of the wild bunch .

A lethal injection was prepared and I was lifted gently upon the stretcher and wheeled down the long corridors .

The horses drives the cab in a maddening speed through the crowded streets of New York .

The operation is in progress . It's like on that deserted beach after the shipwreck . The doctors are seagulls attacking , their auditorium breathing like shadows and swarms of new birds of prey . Again I see the cameraman and I see Granz , are they two persons or one and the same . Are they fighting or protecting me from the stabbing beaks ...

I'm suddenly awake alone on that podium . The doctors in the shadows discussing their feat . People are leaving without applauding . I'm amazed . Then I see them : In the aisle , not far from me : Granz holding on to Dorah . Dorah holding on to Chris , who is trying to get to me . He looks pathetic in his bloody bandages . Dorah looks scared . Granz looks ... scared .

Then I call the public back . I sit up and I stand up and I prepare for the flip back summersault . And now I have their attention . And the love of my three loved ones , that holy family . They will tell my story in moving pictures .I know . Now I will give the my final trick .

The lights brighten . The music heightens . Here is that old Music hall . I fly backwards out of the orchestra pit , tumbles around in the air , passes by Granz who conducts the finale , is caught by Chris singing that heavenly Haendel aria , together we are bicycling up the sails above that manger , it's shepherds and angels ... and my summersault ends in Dorah 's lap as that deus ex machina lifts through the rafters and dimming lights , the three of them are left down there on the stage as my journey continues next to an eternal spiral staircase . Then the the heavenly door opens and I fly through it ...

*Then I sit down and watch the back of a fat naked man with silvery hair .
It is El Diabolo trying to get out of his devil's costume .*

THE END

