

The Cirque au Soleil

As told by

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For all our 'Friends', in spite of everything.

© avril 2022 Château Quoi Productions – Genève

ISBN : 978-2-35061-099-3

Conception et réalisation **Le Publieur**

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CHAPTER 1

The 'Cirque au Soleil' in a Sunny Cirque

High above the majestic town of Chamonix, but below the even-more-majestic summit of Mont Blanc, stands the almost-as-majestic rocky promontory known as the 'Aiguille du Midi'. Equally recognizable by mountain climbers struggling up the Mont Blanc and skiers descending the Vallée Blanche, the Aiguille also welcomes its daily dose of plain old tourists who arrive by cable car.

The tourists do not do much, apart from watching fearfully as the former climb high above or the latter ski far below. Some tourists are dressed in down jackets worthy of expeditions to the North Pole, while others wear sandals more typical of a Mediterranean beach.

Regardless of their footwear, they all come to the Alps in search of thrills. This relentless thrill-seeking atmosphere permeates the very walls of the mountain. Unwilling to do something risky themselves, the tourists prefer to watch others risk their skin.

Once upon a time, nestled not far from the Aiguille in the heart of all this mountain splendor, was the locally renowned 'Cirque au Soleil', meaning the 'Circus in the Sun'. The Cirque au Soleil, a local affair, could never be confused with that other 'Cirque', much larger and

deservedly more renowned, located on the other side of the ocean.

Because the Cirque au Soleil was a circus in a 'cirque', which is a concave hollow created by glacial erosion under the cliffs.

From above, a man could climb to dizzying heights and plunge into abyssal depths in front of astonished tourists.

This is what the Cirque au Soleil spectators expected. And, in return, Mr Jacques Machin, the owner of the Cirque, counted on their time, their attention, and especially their money, in order to earn a living.

So in the end, they all got what they wanted, more or less, and probably what they deserved.



CHAPTER 2

Jacques Machin's Profound Philosophy on Life

Jacques Machin, creator and director of the Cirque au Soleil, was a pleasant man, apparently gifted with prodigious talents in every way. As an entrepreneur and businessman, Jacques Machin knew he was (almost) without equal. He bragged of knowing 87 different trades, of which he could do 73 well !

The real Jacques Machin was basically a local boy from Chamonix, but, like many mountain guys, he was a bit distant, in that he had traveled to strange places, becoming a bit strange himself. This meant that, over time, he had become more 'native' than the natives, but more foreign than the 'foreigners'.

He got on well with everyone initially, as long as he kept it short. With time, he gradually began to forget whom he knew and what they knew about him, which was a problem in a small, but constantly changing, town like Chamonix.

He developed the habit of half smiling at everyone and nodding his head, so as to better hide his uncertainty about them. That way he was not obliged to recognize anyone, not even his own family.

Jacques Machin also had great faith, especially in himself, and extraordinary courage !