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# MONSTERS



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STÉPHANE  
SERVANT

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH  
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PUSHKIN CHILDREN'S









Our village lay at the end of the world.

Truly, the end of the world.

Beyond it was nothing, apart from the shadow cast by the mountains, a sea of dark mossy trees and lakes as deep as night.

The only way to reach our village was by a dusty, back-breaking track.

Meaning hardly anyone ever made it there.

Sometimes, a blind peddler might pass by selling ointments and potions, or books nibbled at by rats.

Sometimes, a few foolhardy walkers strayed this far: it was fun terrifying them, and they were gone in a flash.

But it was rare indeed for anyone to venture along the treacherous stony path.

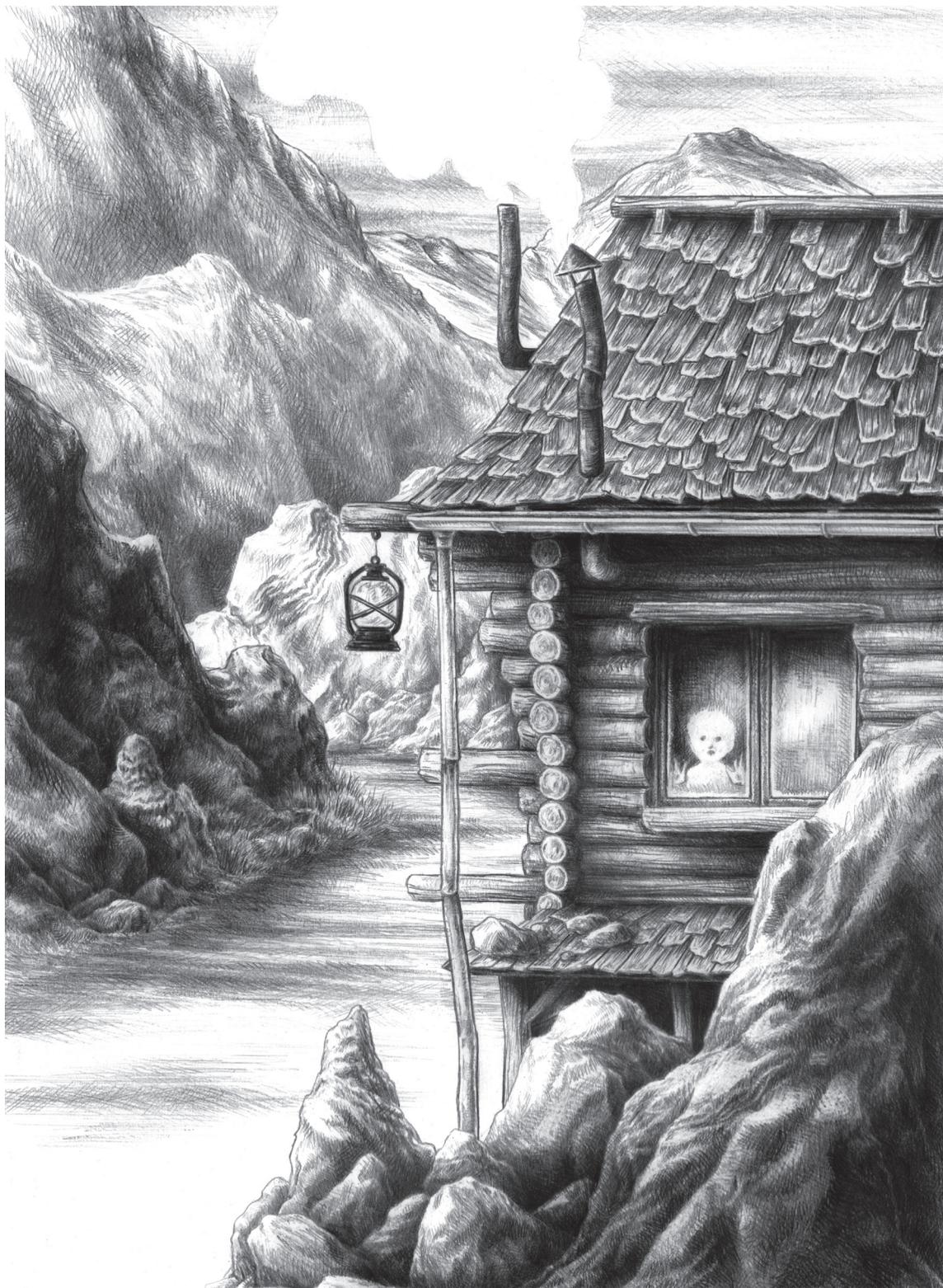
Pa, Ma and I lived in the house at the end of the village,  
by the silent road where only the dust danced.

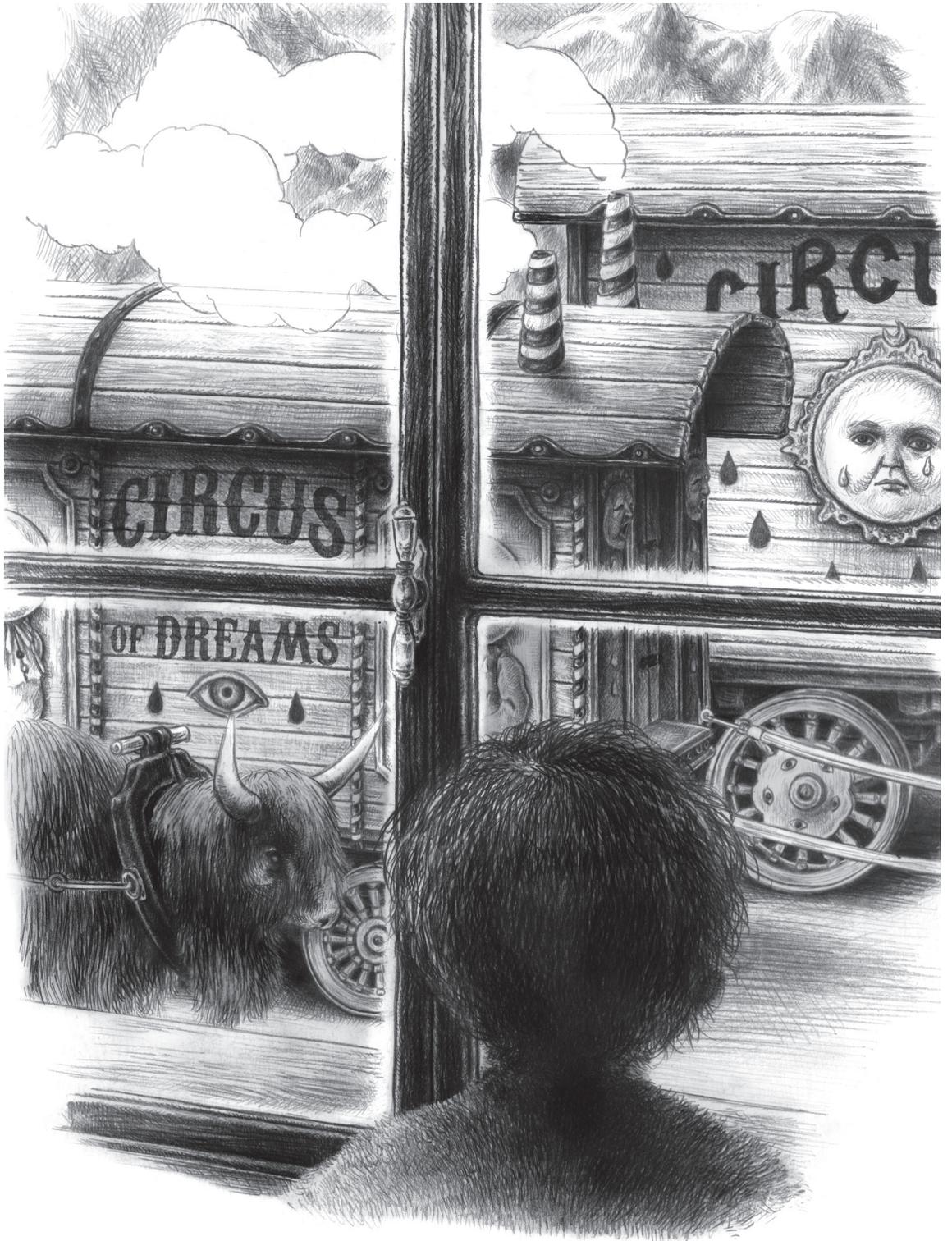
Perhaps that's why, on the day I was woken by the noise,  
I knew something unusual was afoot.

It sounded like tumbling stones.

Except it wasn't coming from my dreams, or from the  
house. Although it felt that close.

I stood on my bed and pressed my nose against the  
cold windowpane.







Outside, day had yet to fall.  
That's when I saw the horse-drawn waggons.  
Ten of them, painted in every colour imaginable.  
They were towed by vast beasts with steaming pelts,  
and their metal-rimmed wheels made the stones on  
the path explode and scatter.  
On each waggon was written:

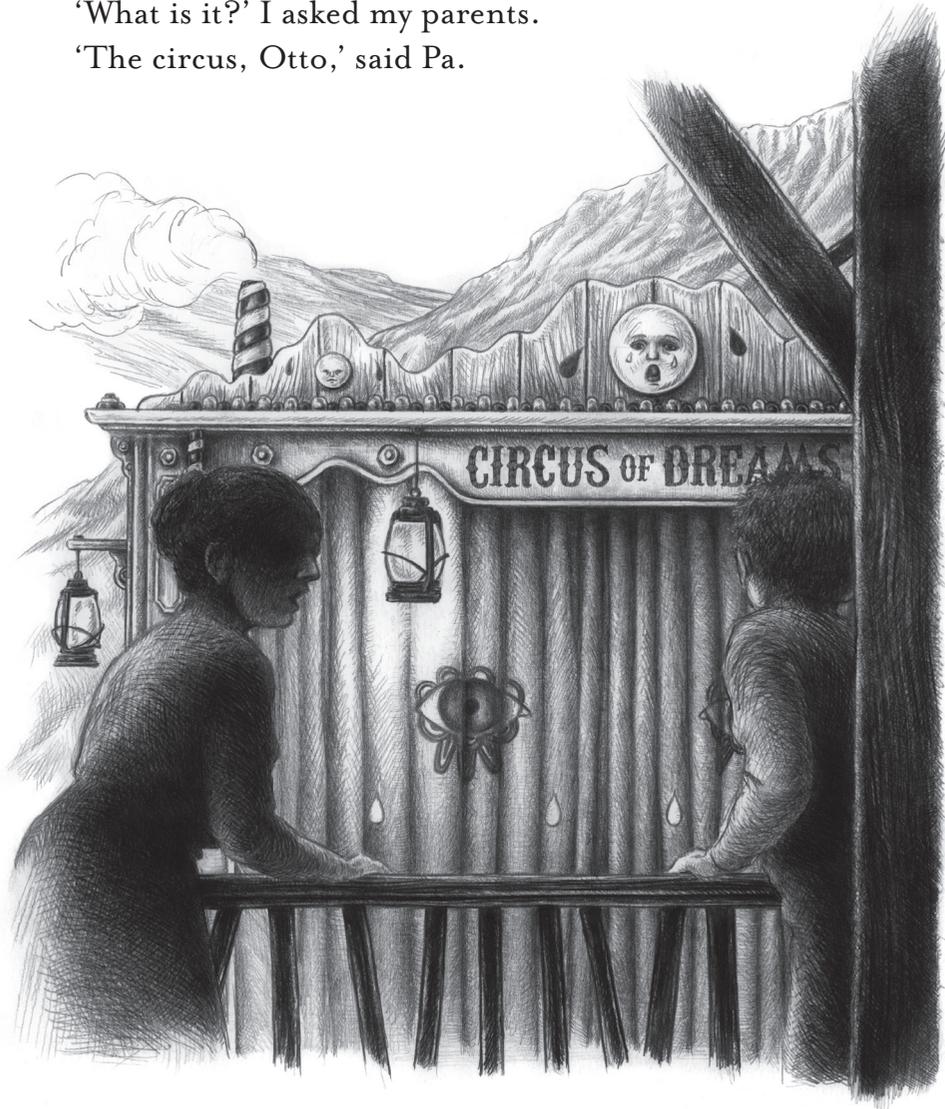
**'THE CIRCUS OF DREAMS'**

I ran out of the house.

Pa and Ma were already on the terrace.  
They rubbed their eyes as they watched the convoy: it  
was as if they too could scarcely believe what they were  
seeing.

‘What is it?’ I asked my parents.

‘The circus, Otto,’ said Pa.

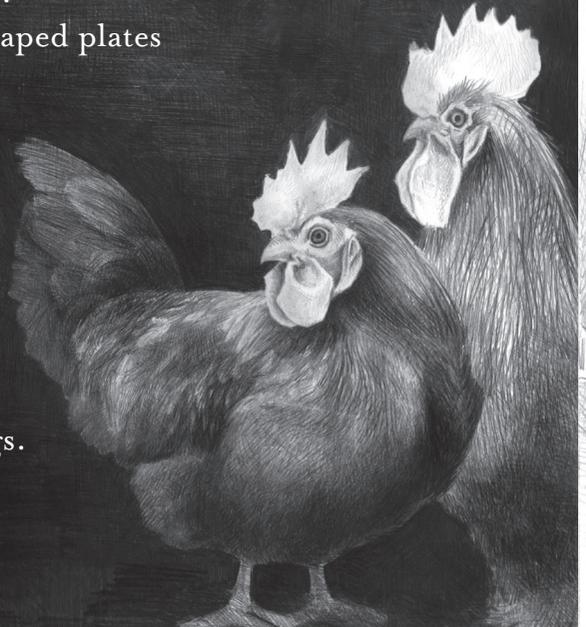


I had never heard of a circus before, let alone seen one. ‘A circus,’ Ma explained, ‘is somewhere feats are performed. Extraordinary feats.’ I didn’t doubt her. I had never left our village, but what with the noise, the animals, the colours, all of this was already extraordinary.

On the bench-seat of the first waggon, a man dressed in red held up a speaking trumpet: ‘Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, after touring the world, after entertaining kings and queens, fools and wise men, the Circus of Dreams has arrived here today. For your delight and delectation, our artists will perform astounding acts of skill and daring—acts to make you roar with laughter and blush in fear, to make the stars tremble! Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, roll up, roll up to discover the Circus of Dreams!’ I was trembling already. Like a star.



Never had I gobbled my breakfast  
so quickly as I did that day.  
I usually baulked at the heaped plates  
my father served me,  
but not this time,  
I didn't leave a crumb.  
I was so impatient to  
find out what was  
happening in the village.  
With a wink, my mother  
released me from my  
chore of collecting the eggs.



‘The hens can wait. They won’t make any omelettes without us, so be off with you.’

I flew like the north wind over the dusty path.

When I reached the spot, night had barely risen.

