



Last Chain On Billie: How One Extraordinary Elephant Escaped the Big Top

By Carol Bradley

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Last Chain On Billie: How One Extraordinary Elephant Escaped the Big Top By Carol Bradley

Against the backdrop of a glittering but brutal circus world, *Last Chain on Billie* charts the history of elephants in America, the inspiring story of the Elephant Sanctuary and the spellbinding tale of a resilient elephant who defied the system even as she struggled to conquer her past, who never lost sight of the life she was meant to have.

Left in the wild, Billie the elephant would have spent her days surrounded by family, free to wander the jungles of Asia. Instead, traders captured her as a baby and shipped her to America, where she learned to carry humans, stand on a tub and balance on one leg - the full repertoire of elephant tricks. For decades, Billie crisscrossed the country, dazzling audiences as she performed breathtaking stunts. But behind the scenes she lived a life of misery: traveling in trucks, chained for hours on end, barely able to move, giving eight-minute performances under harsh lights and to the sounds of blaring music. And worse.

Finally, she got a lucky break. As part of the largest elephant rescue in American history, Billie wound up at a sanctuary for performing elephants in Tennessee, able once more to roam through open meadows and share her days with a herd. She would never be beaten again.

But, overcome with anxiety, she withdrew from the rest of the elephants and refused to let anyone remove a chain still clamped around her leg. Her caregivers began to wonder if Billie could ever escape her emotional wounds.

The compelling story of Billie's battle to reclaim her old self is a testament to the intelligence, emotional complexity and remarkable strength of all elephants, captive or free.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review Like the majority of captive elephants, Billie was captured as a calf, surfacing in the U.S. in 1966 as a four-year-old. After several years in a private zoo, she joined the circus, where she was trained to perform. Circuses are an extremely demanding environment for elephants, with constant travel from one town to another, multiple shows per week, and continuous noise. Although she learned difficult tricks and was a star, Billie rebelled and began to be known as a difficult elephant, gaining a reputation for attacking her trainers. Meanwhile, two former elephant trainers had grown disenchanted with circuses and the distorted lives that circus elephants lived, and they decided to found a sanctuary for former performing elephants in Tennessee. The story of how Billie got to the Elephant Sanctuary, and of how the sanctuary overcame the prejudices of both the circus and zoo communities, is both heartrending and uplifting. Full of details of the brutal life endured by performing elephants, of battles between Billie's owner and the U.S. Department of Agriculture over her ultimate fate, and of Billie's eventual adjustment to a life of freedom, Bradley's newest (after *Saving Gracie*, 2010) has produced a well-researched winner. --Nancy Bent

Review

"*Last Chain on Billie* is powerful and haunting. I urge everyone to read and share this important – and beautifully written – book." — Jane Goodall

"Carol Bradley's *Last Chain on Billie* deserves a standing ovation! It is a heart-rending and, unfortunately, deadly accurate description of elephant suffering in circuses and zoos. ?Please read *Last Chain on Billie*. It will help you understand why the animal rights movement is sweeping the country.—Bob Barker

"*Last Chain on Billie* is a wonderful book. It is well-written, well-researched, and well thought out. You cannot read it without realizing how extraordinary elephants are and how extraordinarily bad humans, until only very recently, have treated them. To understand what has happened to change our attitude, I can think of no better book than this. It is a labor of love, and I know many people will respond in kind. Anyone who loves elephants will love this book."— Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, Ph.D., author of *Dogs Never Lie About Love and Beasts: What Animals Can Teach Us About the Origins of Good and Evil*

"*Last Chain on Billie* is a fact-filled page-turning biography of a magnificent circus elephant's long, painful, and unpredictable journey from reprehensible confinement to freedom. It is at once riveting, haunting, and inspirational. Billie's story kept me up at night - tearful and joyful - as she entered and then wouldn't leave my heart. I also was deeply moved by the selfless work of the wonderful people who ultimately were able to free her once and for all so she could live out her life in safety and peace and with the dignity she so deserves. This outstanding and groundbreaking book will make a difference for other circus elephants and other 'entertainment animals' who find themselves living horrific and hopeless lives filled with fear, stress, and uncertainty. It gave me hope." — Marc Bekoff, author of *Why Dogs Hump and Bees Get Depressed*, *The Emotional Lives of Animals*, and *Rewilding Our Hearts*

"Today, Billie must celebrate every day, for she enjoys a more normal life, thanks to caring humans who

spoke up for her and her like. Although the dream of returning to her homeland and her family can never be fulfilled, at least she has other elephant friends and caring humans who treat her kindly. Her story will go a long way towards helping others and saving them from a cruel life of bondage and servitude. Her story will educate people around the world about the nature of her iconic species, sparing many other young elephants miserable captivity." — Dr. Dame Daphne Sheldrick DBE, David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, Nairobi, Kenya, and author of *Love, Life, and Elephants*

About the Author

CAROL BRADLEY is an award-winning former newspaper reporter and the author of the critically praised *Saving Gracie: How One Dog Escaped the Shadowy World of American Puppy Mills*. She studied animal law at Harvard University, where she was one of two dozen journalists worldwide chosen in 2003 to spend a year as a Nieman Fellow. She lives in Montana with her family.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kevin Kennard:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with friends is thing that usually you may have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try point that really opposite from that. One activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition associated with. Even you love Last Chain On Billie: How One Extraordinary Elephant Escaped the Big Top, you can enjoy both. It is excellent combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout men. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its referred to as reading friends.

Leif Gibbs:

Last Chain On Billie: How One Extraordinary Elephant Escaped the Big Top can be one of your basic books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort that will put every word into delight arrangement in writing Last Chain On Billie: How One Extraordinary Elephant Escaped the Big Top but doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource details that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information can drawn you into new stage of crucial pondering.

Jeanie Hynes:

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