



Ephemia Rimaldi: Circus Performer Extraordinaire

Linda DeMeulemeester

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In Linda DeMeulemeester's historical novel *Ephemia Rimaldi*, a lonely girl searches for her estranged father.

In Canada in the early 1900s, Effy dodges rotten tomatoes and insults on the streets of Toronto alongside her suffragist Aunt Ada. However, her protesting life is cut short when Ada passes away. The reading of Ada's will reveals that a large share of her fortune was left in a trust for Effy to use for college. Only Phineas, Effy's estranged father and a circus ringmaster, can release the money to her now. Determined to be free from her family's clutches, Effy leaves to find Phineas's circus and start a new life in Ontario.

Effy narrates, detailing her conversations with a bevy of new people during her trip. She is belittled and ignored by several. A girl tells her she is foolish for reading a book without a love story; a conductor criticizes her for traveling alone; circus men tell her that women shouldn't ride bicycles. But despite the negative treatment she receives, her personal growth is unstoppable.

Effy's perspective widens after she finds a place within the circus. At first, she is horrified by the flamboyant outfits that the circus performers wear, which exist in stark contrast to her own modest dresses. Still, she works on building a relationship with her father and the circus members. Soon, she comes to recognize that there is more to equality than the right to vote: the circus workers are treated poorly based on class, heritage, and their ambitions. They also deal with the small, dirty living conditions. Thus, Effy takes a stand to defend them.

Inside her father's circus, a spirited girl fights for equality and the right to her inheritance in the historical novel *Ephemia Rimaldi*.

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