

## **A handful of tightrope walkers**

Toby / Tommy / Lily / Ruby... and Baby were five mischievous, high-spirited brothers and sisters who could never sit still.

*Five little monkeys, acrobats all, bouncing around,  
and having a ball, having a ball.*

When their mother couldn't stand the racket any more, she said to them

“That's enough bouncing and jumping! No more acrobatics on the bed!”

...they all burst out laughing, because they loved that new word.

“Acrobatics, acrobatics, acrobatics!” they repeated, very excited.

And off they went, jumping and bouncing and making a racket...

If their father told them off, saying:

“That's enough jumping and bouncing! Enough! No more monkeying around!”

They were all as happy as can be, because they thought being monkeys was the funniest thing ever. And once again they jumped and bounced, singing together:

*Five little monkeys, acrobats all, bouncing around, and having a ball, having a ball.*

## **A HANDFUL OF TIGHTROPE WALKERS**

But their parents weren't in the mood for jokes and games. Things weren't going very well in the house, and in the country.

Because outside the four safe walls of their home, there was a war as terrible and as frightening as are all wars. There was fear. There was hunger. There was smoke and destruction on all sides.

Toby, Tommy, Lily, Ruby and Baby had no idea of the danger their family was in.

Until one day, their parents, with stern expressions on their faces, called them together and, as tenderly as could be, with all the loving care in the world, said to them:

Dear children, the war is getting worse by the day: / we don't have money to pay the rent, and we have no food left for you. This afternoon you must leave the house and walk across the city to the circus that has set up camp on the outskirts. The clown at the circus has promised us that she'll take care of you until you are in a safe country and far from all danger. We trust her, so don't worry - but you'll have to keep your wits about you until you reach the circus.

“To avoid arousing suspicion, Lily will leave first, then ten minutes later, Ruby, then Toby and so on until you are all outside. When the circus arrives in a safe place write to us, and if we're still alive, we'll come to join you, and once again we'll be the happy and carefree family that we were before the war.”

The five brothers and sisters looked very sad, their hearts sank, and all their appetite for monkeying around dried up at once. This was serious... and very dangerous!

One by one, before darkness fell, they left the house with tears in their eyes, and tried to find their way through the streets of a city that had been devastated by bombs, full of rubble and armed soldiers, trying to reach the edge of town, each following a different path, until they came to the circus. To stop themselves feeling scared... they sang, because singing always makes you feel a bit braver - and also, because they missed each other.

*Like five little fingers on one single hand, we'll travel united and we will be grand.*

When finally, each on their own, they reached the circus, Tommy, Lily, Baby, Ruby and Toby hugged each other as tightly as they could. They had been so afraid! They had felt so, so alone, that they solemnly swore they'd never let themselves be split up again. Never, ever, ever!

So when the clown stood before them and asked them what they could do, they said:

“Dad says we're mischievous monkeys, and mum says we're harum-scarum acrobats, but the truth is, we're like the five fingers of one hand, we're so close to each other, that when we're together we can face any danger and do all kinds of jobs and tricks, because it's only when we're together that we can have fun – and entertain other people too.

“Splendid!” said the ringmaster and the clown at the same time, “In that case you'll be an acrobatic act called “The Five United Fingers”. Do you like the name?

“We love it!” said the five brothers and sisters. “Just as much as we love our new job!”

And it was just then, at that precise moment, that the ringmaster and the clown took off their make-up and showed their five children who they really were: Tommy, Toby, Ruby, Lily and Baby's very own mother and father. Mum and dad when they were at home. Ringmaster and circus clown, when they were under the big top. Who would ever have guessed it? The five brothers and sisters had never suspected that their mum and dad had such an unusual job.

But none of that mattered! From now on the five brothers and sisters would become the famous acrobatic troupe, “The Five United Fingers”, who were said to move with the

delicate precision of an automaton, but, more than anything else in the world, they were a happy family, together again, protected from that moment on, by the canvas roof of a travelling circus.

And you see, sometimes, when faced by adversity, keeping a family as close together as the fingers of a hand calls is a real balancing act!

*Five fingers united and we will be grand.*

Script: Teresa Duran