Bourne toWrite... creative writing workshops

# The Great Suprendo and Lily

by Jane Hill

Obviously, 'Magician's Assistant' wasn't her parents' first choice for their daughter's career, but Lily had decided long ago to run away to the circus, just as soon as she had the bus fare.

Lily had always loved sequins and, years ago, had received a smack from her mother for ruining a new swimming costume with glue and glitter. Lily was upset; she'd only wanted to make it pretty!

At school, Art and Drama were the only subjects she enjoyed. Her father complained regularly about her lack of application to her academic studies, but having heard the thrice-yearly diatribe since the age of seven, she was unabashed. Her paintings were bright and lively, and her acting (although not the best) was always enthusiastic.

After her exams, Lily gained 'A' grades for the two subjects, a 'C' for English, and scraped an 'E' for the rest. Lily considered her results excellent.

Her father then washed his hands of her, leaving the remainder of her 'bringing up' to her mother.

Lily's mother was like a tiny, chatty bird, spending most of her time consoling, cajoling or refereeing whoever she was with at the time. Any lull in conversation would always be filled with some suitably inane comment.

Lily, quite frankly, had had enough of the pair of them. Her two older brothers, high-flyers doing blah blah blah in finance, were anathema to her. As far as she was concerned, if she had a few quid in her pocket to buy shiny things, she felt happy.

So.

The Audition.

Here Lily sat by herself in a cold, grey corridor at the end of a long row of chairs leading to a single Door.

There were many others waiting, older and younger, all fidgeting, chattering, competing, each trying to outdo their neighbours.

Lily sized each person up, trying to decide who loved the Big Top more than she did—not one of them. They all carried huge bags or rucksacks, and she wondered why they felt the need to bring so much stuff.

Every so often, a black-clad character wearing a headset would appear through that Door and shout the name of the next person to accompany them to that place beyond.

Lily wasn't nervous, but she hugged her handbag ever closer to her chest, feeling the reassuring crunch of the coloured beads stitched to her vest… then her name was called.

Disdainful faces looked her up and down as she passed them by, and her heart was drumming through her chest with anticipation.

The door clicked shut behind her while she took in the room: three smiles behind a desk and a camera placed right there, staring at her.

Somebody asked her name. Lily responded, accompanied by a loud CRACK and a flash of green smoke. Lily didn't flinch. She'd been rehearsing for this all her life. Absolutely unfazed, she carefully removed her top, exposing her gaudy underwear.

An appreciative murmur emanated from the desk-sitters, together with another CRACK and more green smoke.

In front of Lily was the most beautiful man she had ever seen, with thick black hair and the whitest smile, wearing a flamboyant silver suit… he looked like Elvis… Lily nearly swooned.

He clapped his hands, shouting, 'At last, an INDIVIDUAL! My friends, I take her!' and threw his arm around Lily's shoulders.

Lily felt as though she'd reached the pinnacle of her dreams.

Everything that happened to her after that day whisked by in a blur.

So.

Now.

Teetering on scarlet heels, about to walk through the tinsel curtain to her audience. She, Lily, Assistant to The Great Suprendo.

The announcement came, and the previous act skipped past Lily, shouting, 'Knife thrower's assistant, eh, Lily? I'd watch my step if I were you; accidents are terribly punctual around here!'