

Modesty was clearly in short supply at his circus.  
“Are you ready then? To experience the adventure with me?” He sounded in good spirits.

This very moment? Mother must have noticed my panicked expression because she put her arm around my shoulder and pulled me close.

“Ted, let us gather your things.”

She only called me Ted in her most caring moments.  
“George, fetch Pablo some gingerbread.” George bit his nails on his way to the kitchen.

I followed Mother upstairs to the room we all shared. Once we were behind the door, I exclaimed, “I do not *want* to go with that man!”

She didn't flinch at my temper, just quietly collected an old cotton flour sack, my cap, two shirts and woollen trousers from the wooden drawers.

“Those trousers are George's.”

“He's too big for them now. You may have them.”

Mother sat on my lumpy bed and straightened the worn blanket. Seeing her hands so red and raw made me sad, but I still didn't want George's trousers! I didn't want to go anywhere – I wanted to stay here.

“In this life, there are many things we may not wish to do, and yet they must be done, all the same. Often, they reveal a life we've never seen. Do you understand, Ted? New experiences can be the making of us.”