



Jumbo: The Unauthorised Biography of a Victorian Sensation

John Sutherland

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Born in 1861 in French Sudan, imported to Paris as a two year old calf, then later sold to the London Zoo at Regent's Park, Jumbo the elephant delighted countless children (including Winston Churchill and Theodore Roosevelt) with rides and treats gently taken from outstretched hands. Each night, after the children and their families had gone home, he was mistreated in an attempt to keep him docile. By the time he reached sexual maturity, the abused and isolated animal had become dangerously unstable. He was sold to showman P.T. Barnum in 1881 (despite letters from 100,000 British schoolchildren who wrote to Queen Victoria begging her to prevent the sale) and brought to America. There, in the company of other elephants and amid greater physical freedom, Jumbo stabilized and went on to become one of the most lucrative circus acts of all time - as well as the most beloved. The world mourned when his life ended in 1885, with a storied (and most likely embellished) act of animal heroism. Jumbo reportedly rushed in front of an oncoming train in an effort to save a smaller elephant - his companion "Tom Thumb" - then perished while reaching his trunk out toward his longtime handler Matthew Scott - whose intense connection with the pachyderm spawned legends of its own.

Integrating the history of elephants in captivity along with the details of Jumbo's celebrity life, dramatic death, and lasting cultural legacy, John Sutherland has written the first comprehensive "biography" of this incredible animal - one whose name has given us one of our most common and hyperbolic adjectives.

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