

## THE LION TAMER

When the Circus Miguelito  
came to town, with its one  
battered and much-patched  
tent, a pair of old lions,  
and three clowns including  
the owner, Miguel,  
Ernest went down to talk  
to the animals, idly remarked  
as he stood by the lion  
that he might just arrange  
to get in with them—  
he'd done that sort of thing  
out in Africa. Word spread  
*muy rapido* that "Jeminguey"  
was going to tame lions.  
The owner got very excited  
and raced about puffing  
the event with a loud-  
speaker. All San Francisco  
de Paulo turned out.  
On the night which had been  
announced, Ernest turned up  
as promised, wearing his boots,  
his African hunting garb,  
a chair in one hand, a whip  
in the other. He climbed  
in the cage and spent  
two hours working the lions.  
(Although he was brave then,  
and also when he acted  
the matador in Spain,  
fighting the youngest of bulls,  
this scene still reminds me  
of the one in *Don Quixote*

where the Don insists  
that caged lions be let out  
of the cage, then has to deal  
with them.) The next day  
Ernest sent for Miguel,  
owner of the Circus Miguelito.  
He told his servant Rene  
to give the man a drink,  
then from where he lay,  
his massage by Kid Mario  
in progress, he said, "You know,  
Miguel, I only did that  
because you announced it  
without my permission,  
and I don't like to cheat  
or disappoint my public. I put  
on a good act, but now  
you owe me my fee, which  
my lawyer can collect today  
or tomorrow. My fee is ten  
thousand dollars per perform-  
ance. Do you want me  
to stay on? I'll be glad to appear  
every night at that rate."  
Miguel, owner of the Circus  
Miguelito and its top clown,  
passed out, fell to the floor.  
Kid Mario stopped the massage.  
Rene picked up the pieces  
of glass Miguel had dropped,  
mopped up what was left  
of the drink—the best cognac—  
and revived him with a few  
slaps and pokes. Still shaken  
when he got up, trembling  
Miguel protested that he had

never in his life even seen  
ten thousand dollars—  
in fact not even one thousand  
in his entire life. Ernest said,  
“In that case, I will release you  
from our contract. Go in peace,  
my friend, but never, never  
use my name again.”

### THE SOLUTION

“Only a white poodle could replace Ernest,”  
said the newly widowed Mary Hemingway.

“So fine,” said her friend, “buy a white poodle.  
I find mine rather easy to live with.”

Yet no one recalls seeing Mary with any  
white poodle. The scholars are still seeking.

Though I don't know its name, I think it's the one  
Ernest would have thrown out the train window.