

He looked sidelong at me. "You're to go off with that circus fellow then?"

George's cough may not have been severe enough to keep him from being packed off to the circus with me, but being half-blind in one eye certainly was. Only I would be leaving today.

He squinched up his eye, staring at the cap, now in his lap. "I shall miss you."

I put my arm around his shoulder. "I know."

"I'll ask Mother when we can visit."

"I wish you could come with me. Brothers together."

George sighed. "He only wants one of us. You, Ted. And why wouldn't he? *You're* in working order." He coughed hard, wincing. "Wish I was off to the circus."

He slowly walked up the stairs.

I stared after him sadly, wishing I could think of something funny to say, but my mind was as empty as my heart.

Clutching my cloth sack, I walked into the living room where William Darby, the circus owner, the father I had never met until today, was waiting to take me away.