

I started breathing hard, remembering my only visit to the circus. I never wanted to experience it again. That hot July night at Aston Park had given me nightmares for months. George hadn't witnessed the woman fall to her death from the tightrope, but I had. After all the panic and screaming, I'd begged Mother that we never return. Although she seemed dismayed, she'd kept her word.

Until now.

I had to let this man know that I was no performer. "There's nothing I can do," I said archly.

William's voice boomed. "The horses, my boy. Riding horses will be in your blood. Both your mother and I have a talent for it. Trust me."

I'd rather not!

"I can't ride horses!" I cried.

I *hated* horses! Every time those huge stinking beasts trotted too near to me in the streets, I shied away. We'd never owned one for they were expensive to keep, and for that I was glad.

"You'll be light on your feet. I look forward to seeing you and the horses getting to know one another." William patted me on the shoulder. "You'll learn. I've worked with the biggest names: Young Hernandez and Jem Mace. I learnt from the best, toured with the best, and now . . . well now, I *am* the best. I'll teach you."