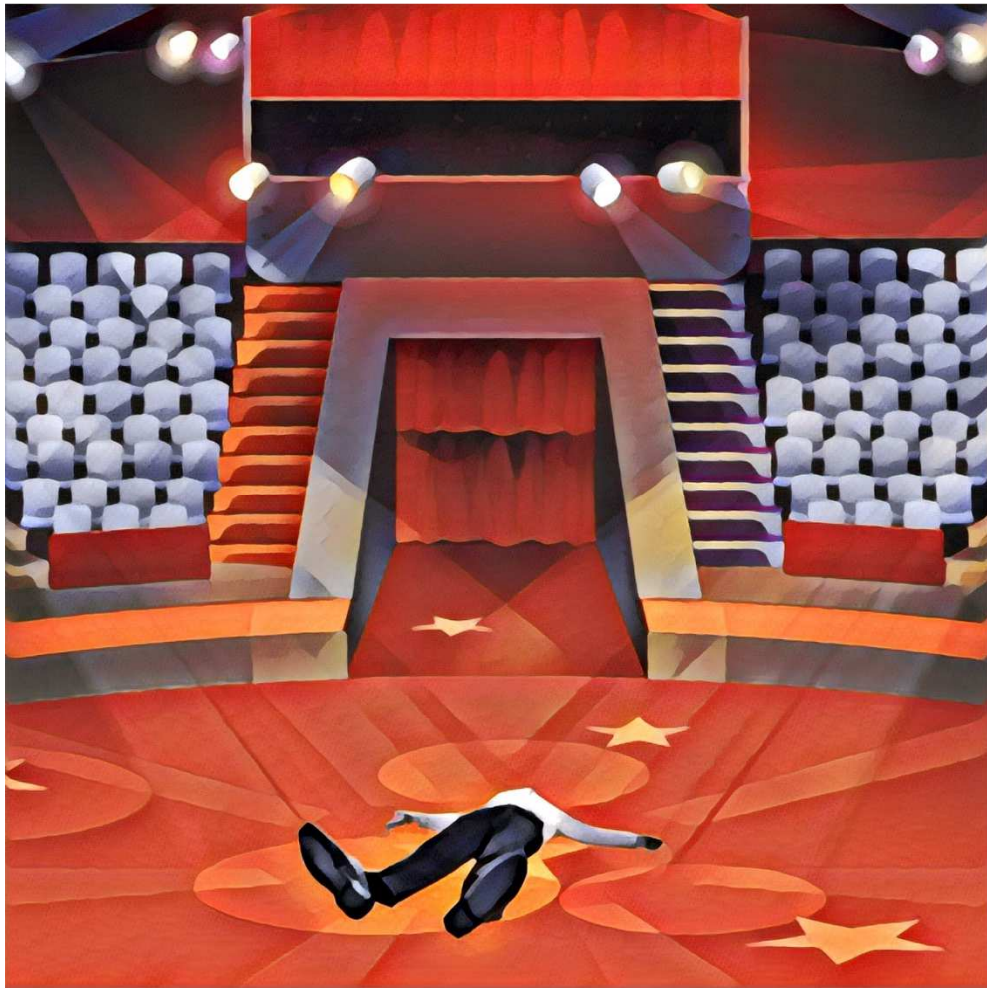


The Trapeze Artist



A Marquee Murder

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The Scene

Rola Bola Circus is a popular, traveling performance that is about to begin a series of shows in sunny San Diego! San Diego is always a popular destination, and all are excited for the first show to begin! The circus went through hard times for several years, as competition and small crowds threatened to close the big top once and for all. That appears to be a thing of the past now, as a fantastic human cannonball act was added 3 years ago, and the circus has enjoyed record crowds and ticket sales ever since. Some recent drama and infighting have caused rifts between some of the performers, but the first evening of the trip looks to make all forget about their cares on a most spectacular night! The circus has had some time off recently, and the performers are excited to see each other and once again exhibit their sensational skills in a breathtaking evening of entertainment, death-defying stunts, and... murder!

How to play

You are a character in a murder mystery game. Below you will see a detailed description of your character, followed by a brief description of the other characters in the game. Read through this information before the party so you have a basic concept of the different characters. Before the event, do not discuss any of your character's information or secrets with others who will be playing the game. You are encouraged to dress up as a circus performer, and your individual character may give you particular ideas about how to dress. Upon arrival at the event, the host will give you a sheet that you will use during Act 1. He or she will also provide additional instruction at certain points and will be able to answer questions about the game. The sheet the host provides will contain one or more announcements that your character will make during Act 1 as well as indications of how to respond to other characters. While parts of the game follow an exact script, others do not, and you will have the freedom to interpret your character however you choose. Everyone has secrets and knowledge as well as objectives of their own, so the more you talk to the other guests, the more you will learn, and the more fun you will have.

Your Background

Your name is Lillian Lewis, and you've been around the Rola Bola Circus your whole life. Your parents are distant relatives of the owners, the Hunts. Harry Hunt, the son of the owners, is about your age. As a child, you were especially captivated by the flying trapeze. From the moment you first saw the trapeze artists, you knew you had found your calling. Shortly before your parents retired, they managed to talk Harry's father into making you a trapeze artist. You were ecstatic!

Harry took over as owner and ringmaster shortly after you were brought on. You relished your new role. Unfortunately, your skills were somewhat lacking, and you needed to keep most of your tricks basic. Harry eventually approached you and told you that the circus was struggling to make ends meet. He also said it was essential that all performers and acts excite the audiences and that it was vital that you improve so you could do more impressive tricks. You assured him you would. While Harry didn't go into more detail about the struggles of the circus, rumors among the other performers increased over the next two years. Rola Bola was on the verge of collapse.

Finally, Charles Chipwood arrived on the scene and brought the circus back from the brink. Charles's unique athleticism and showmanship made his act an immediate success with the audiences. Word got around quickly, and record setting attendance followed. You found yourself drawn to Charles. He was good-looking and every bit as charismatic in person as he was in front of the crowds. Emma Ericson, the tightrope walker, also took a liking to Charles and took every opportunity to flirt with him. However, he started asking you out, and the two of you quickly became exclusive. As Emma had gotten under your skin with her overt attempts to flirt with Charles, you began taking opportunities when she was around to grab onto his arm and cast her meaningful looks.

For a while, everything was perfect. While you still hadn't learned any new tricks well enough to use them in your routine, you were getting close, and Harry didn't say anything else about your need for improvement. Then, three weeks ago, Charles decided to break up with you in a text message when you were out of town! You were stunned. He hadn't given any hints of wanting to break up and to do it with a text message after dating for almost 3 years...! You went to his home to talk to him. However while the lights were on, the coward wouldn't come to the door.

You had some time off at the circus, so two weeks passed before you crossed paths with Charles at work before a rehearsal. You ripped into him for several minutes before he made an excuse about having someplace he needed to be and hurried away. Emma Ericson and Anna Atkins, the mime, witnessed the exchange. Emma immediately approached you and asked in a falsely sympathetic voice if there was anything she could do to help. You told her to get lost, and stormed away.

Several days later, you decided to make another trip to Charles's house, during the evening, to talk to him. When you were a half mile from his home, you were shocked to see Charles's car run a red light, hit a teenage boy on a motorcycle, then drive away! You considered stopping to make sure that the teen was ok, but several people got there quickly. You drove to Charles's home and parked in front of the house of one of his neighbors. You saw Charles pull into his garage, but he didn't turn on any lights. You were so surprised by what had happened that you just sat in your car for an hour before thinking better of confronting him. You drove back the way you had come, but the accident scene had already disappeared. You considered calling the police, but you were hesitant, knowing that the whole circus could easily go under if Charles's actions forced him to leave.

The next day at rehearsal, George Grant, the lion tamer, spent much of the day criticizing the "random hooligan" who hit his teenage son the night before, then fled the scene. You were shocked again! You are now even more torn about what to do. You know that Charles needs to be brought to justice, but speaking to the police could cause everyone at the circus, yourself include, to lose their jobs!

Shortly before going home, you were walking past Harry's office when you heard raised voices. Intrigued, you pressed your ear to the door. While you couldn't make out everything, you distinctly heard the words "fugitive", "tax fraud", and "blackmail". Moments later, Anna Atkins shot out of the office. She saw you standing outside and gave you a concerned look before hastily walking away.

The Performers

The Trapeze Artist – Lillian Lewis. Distant relative of owner, Harry Hunt. Has been with the circus just over 6 years, though all can see that her routine and acrobatic skills are unimpressive. Girlfriend of Charles Chipwood.

The Lion Tamer – George Grant. Best friend of Harry Hunt. A performance in Chicago was canceled two months ago at the last minute because George had a sudden illness right before the show was about to begin. George's son broke his leg just days ago while riding a motorcycle. An unidentified hit-and-run driver crashed into him at a stoplight.

The Tightrope Walker – Emma Ericson. Joined Rola Bola Circus 6 years ago when Harry paid her a large amount of money to pry her away from a competitor. Considered one of the best tightrope walkers in the business.

The Human Cannonball – Charles Chipwood. Arrived at Rola Bola Circus 3 years back when the company was on the verge of collapse. His amazing act and stage presence brought the circus back from the brink, and crowds began pouring in to see him perform. Boyfriend of Lillian Lewis.

The Mime – Anna Atkins. Hired by Harry 5 years ago. Mostly keeps to herself but is friendly with her fellow performers. Has a decent, though unspectacular act that serves the purpose of keeping the audience entertained in between bigger acts.

The Ringmaster – Harry Hunt. Both owner and ringmaster of the circus. Generally well liked by the other performers. Best friend of George Grant. Managed to weather the storm years ago when the circus faced dire financial problems.