

## Ride a white horse

### Witness

Eleanor Farmer, a thirteen-year-old girl who has run away to join the circus, stowing away in a wagon when the circus left her town. Her personality trait is curiosity and her source of strength is independence of spirit.

### Other characters

Madam Penelope, a comfortable matronly woman in late middle age. She rules the circus and all the people in it, in what appears to be a benevolent dictatorship. She staffs the front of house, taking punters' money, and acts as surrogate mother to everyone in the circus, keeping their secrets, tending their hurts and dishing out discipline as needed.

Susie, a girl about Eleanor's age who has lived all her life with the circus. She performs with the circus's signature act, the dancing horses, wearing a spangled leotard and leaping from horse to horse.

Gennaro, a young man working as a groom. His ambition was to perform with the horses, but he got seriously injured in his first performance and his left leg is badly mangled. He loves the horses but is bitter about his failure.

Mistress Octavia, the fortune teller. Like Eleanor, she ran away to join the circus in her youth, though she's not very clear on how long ago that was, or how old she is now.

### Location and era

Madam Penelope's Travelling Circus, set up in a field on the edge of a busy market town in the 19th century. The circus is famous throughout the land for its dancing horses, which perform every day in the big top. Its other, less famous, acts perform in many smaller tents arranged in a circle around the big top, and the crew live in tents, wagons and caravans around the outer edges of the circus.

### Other locations

The big top: a huge red-and-white striped circular tent with tiered rows of seating around the edges and a large open space in the middle, where the horses and their human partners perform twice daily.

The horse pens: out at the edge of the circus encampment, the horse pens are more luxurious than many of the human accommodations, and there are always people in attendance to take extravagant care of the star performers.

Madam Penelope's caravan is the largest caravan, beautifully patterned on the outside, and containing many strange and curious objects on shelves and in jars and boxes.

The dining tent, where the circus folk relax, eat and drink when they're off duty. There are trestle tables and benches, and a permanently-open counter serving stew and hooch. Punters are strictly forbidden.

### Sample clues

The horses all turn to watch any stranger passing the horse pens.

Someone speaks in anachronisms, with turns of phrase a hundred years or more out of sync with the other people around them.

A miniature horse, anatomically correct, in a jar.

A member of the public walks right past one of the off-duty crew without seeming to see them.

Someone shows no recollection of an earlier conversation.

No one ever declines a glass of the dining tent's hooch.

The punters always leave the big top after a horse show in complete silence.

Gennaro isn't the only potential horse dancer injured in his first performance with them.

Most punters come back to see the show every day the circus is in town.

Lots of people coming and going to an apparently-empty side show.