

FLYING HIGH





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CIRCUS FOR

Ever wanted to be in a circus?

Circus artists perform a whole range of complicated and exciting acts. Now you can learn lots of these amazing skills right here in your home town!

To become a good circus performer, you need to be taught by experts. You need to learn the important basic skills before trying out more difficult moves. By coming along to the circus school you will soon learn how to fly through the air on a trapeze, perfect your balance on a tightrope or pedal a unicycle. Or you could keep your feet firmly on the ground and give your brain cells a workout by learning to juggle.

Whether it is something you have always wanted to do, or just something you want to have a go at, we offer courses from the all-important beginner level right up to advanced level. We encourage you to choose one area to start with – acrobatics, juggling or trapeze. The courses run for half a school term and they are taught in small groups, giving you the best chance to practise and improve your skills quickly. All our classes are taught in a safe and supportive environment using the latest safety equipment.

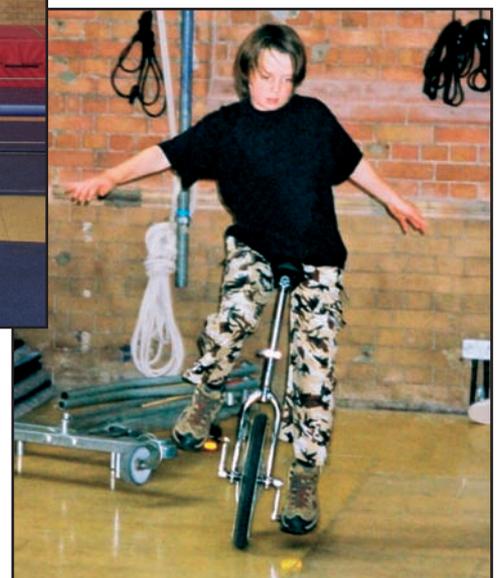
Balancing



Juggling



Unicycling



YOUNG PEOPLE

ACROBATICS – This course will help you perfect your cartwheels, handstands and tumbling abilities – but you do need to be flexible! You'll amaze yourself with what you can do with your body and how fantastic a well-controlled sequence of acrobatics can look. This course also includes group acrobatic balancing, where you work with others to produce human pyramids and towers. Whether you are on the top or the bottom, you really have to work together to get it right.



Human pyramid

JUGGLING – Once you have learnt how to throw and catch one or two balls, you will begin basic three-ball juggling. As you improve, you can learn to juggle all sorts of things including rings, hats and scarves, or anything you like really. Juggling is the most adaptable of the circus skills – you will learn tricks that you can take home and perform for your friends and family. Juggling also increases mind and body co-ordination.



Static trapeze

STATIC TRAPEZE – This is a trapeze that hangs down but does not swing. It is used to help you to learn how to move around the trapeze and practise set moves. In performance you need to make the moves look easy, even if they hurt – to be able to smile through gritted teeth. You also need a lot of upper body strength. Once you have learnt the solo moves, you may want to work with a partner to develop a doubles routine.

FLYING TRAPEZE – After completing the static trapeze course, you may want to try the flying trapeze. This trapeze moves as you swing on it. This skill is usually the one which springs to mind when you think of the circus. It will give you a feeling of excitement that is hard to put into words – you'll know once you've tried it! To attempt this you need to be fit and in good health, as well as quite brave and confident in your abilities.

—THE TRIPLE SOMERSAULT—

The triple somersault is one of the most difficult tricks for an acrobat to

TRAPEZE 1

2

When she has enough speed the acrobat tucks her legs in and starts to somersault.

3

For one somersault she goes all the way around in the air. For the triple somersault, she does this three times.

1

The acrobat swings backwards and forwards on the trapeze several times before starting the somersault.

perform on the flying trapeze. This diagram shows how it is done.

TRAPEZE 2

4

The acrobat then untucks her legs and comes out of the somersault position, ready to catch the second trapeze.

5

Someone else pushes the second trapeze so that it is in the right place for the acrobat to grab it.

The Catch

The flying trapeze is a very exciting circus act. The acrobats swing high above the crowd in the roof of the circus tent, the Big Top. The Fratelli family works in the circus and performs on the trapeze as the 'Flying Fratellis'. In this story you will read about how Bella wants to get involved in the act...

Gino glared at his sister and sighed. 'Stop going on about it, Bella. You know you're too young to join the act and, anyway, Mum's our flyer. We don't need another one.' He shook his head angrily and pushed open the canvas door into the Big Top, leaving Bella staring after him.



Bella knew he was right. Gino had not been allowed to join their mother and father on their flying trapeze act until he was fifteen, and she would just have to wait too. But three years seemed like forever, especially when she knew she was already as good as her mother.

Gino was usually pretty good to her, she had to admit. He'd spent hours helping her practise, but she was in no mood to think about her elder brother's good points. She stormed off to the caravan where they lived while the circus was on the road.

As Bella climbed the two steps to the caravan, she was startled by the sound of a moan from the other side of the door. 'Mum, is that you? Are you all right?' Bella pushed open the door so hard that she almost fell inside.

'I'm in the bedroom,' her mum called. 'I'm okay really but I've twisted my ankle.'

Bella raced the short distance to her parents' bedroom. Her mother was sitting on the floor, clutching her ankle, with her face twisted in pain. 'Don't worry, Bella. I don't think I've done anything terrible, but I need a hand to get up.'

Half an hour later, her mother was looking better; she was settled in a comfy chair with her ankle in a bandage and a cup of tea by her side. Just then, the door opened and Franco and Gino appeared. Franco looked at his wife in horror. 'What's happened? What have you done to yourself, Mia?'



'It was stupid, Franco. I slipped off a stool trying to pack away our winter costumes. Don't look so worried. Bella has looked after me brilliantly.'

Franco frowned in concern. 'As long as you're really all right, that's the main thing. But we'll have to cancel the act tonight to give you a chance to recover. I'll go and tell Victor. Young Klaus and Henrik can do that roller-skating act with their sister. They've been practising for months.'

'But it's the last show here tonight,' Mia interrupted, 'and the show's a sell-out. Victor has been saying that everyone's coming especially to see the Flying Fratellis. They've heard we're planning the big one – the triple somersault. We can't let them down. I'll just strap up my ankle and it will be fine.'

'No, Mia, I won't let you risk it. We'll just have to apologise to the crowd.'

Bella took a deep breath. This could be it.

It was the chance she'd longed for – but not like this. 'Mum, Dad. We don't have to cancel. I could take Mum's place.'

There was a long pause, broken by Gino. 'She's right, Dad. She's just as good as Mum.' He glanced apologetically at his mother, who smiled back at him.

'I know, Gino,' Mia said, smiling at him, 'but she's still much too young and she's never performed in the show before. Still, she is very good, and if that's what she wants...'

She paused, gazing at Bella.

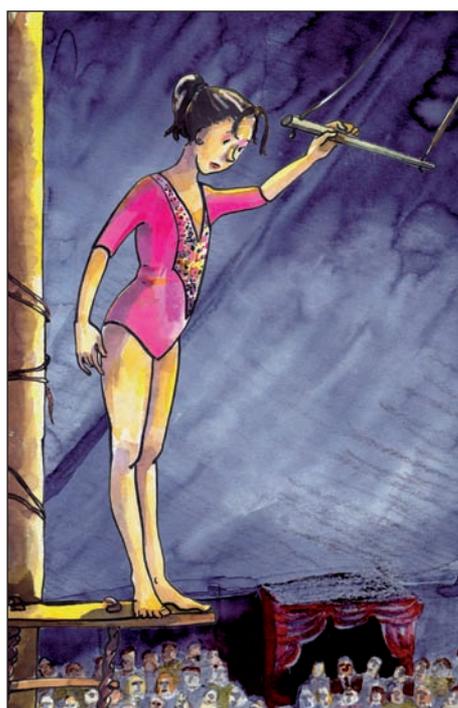
'Oh, Mum, more than anything in the world!' begged Bella. But Franco had still not said anything. Bella looked at him, then at her brother, who had so unexpectedly supported her. Please, please, let Dad agree, she thought.

Eventually, Franco nodded. 'Okay. That's what we'll do.'

Four hours later, Bella stood with her father and brother in the corridor leading to the circus ring. She could hear the applause for the previous act and then the curtains swept back. Her father pushed her forward gently. 'Let's go, Bella. You'll be fine. Good luck!'



The three of them stepped forward into the circus ring. The spotlights swung onto them, highlighting the glittering sequins on their costumes as they moved towards the ladders leading high into the darkness of the Big Top. Bella took a deep breath and began to climb, aware of the applause of the crowd and the smell of popcorn and candyfloss drifting in from the refreshments tent. The music from the orchestra was becoming faster, with a steady beat as Bella reached the platform where her trapeze was waiting. She glanced down, relieved to see the safety net. Beyond that she could see the faces of the audience gazing upwards.



The music built to a climax and she knew it was time to fly. She grasped the bar of the trapeze firmly, pulled back and launched herself into the space at the top of the tent. The routine took over.

Swing...let go...fly through the air to the safety of her father's hands.

Bella and her father swung again, joined by their hands, until she had enough speed and she flew, somersaulting through the air to her brother waiting on the trapeze opposite. Gasps and cheers from the audience floated upwards, but the Fratelli family did not notice.

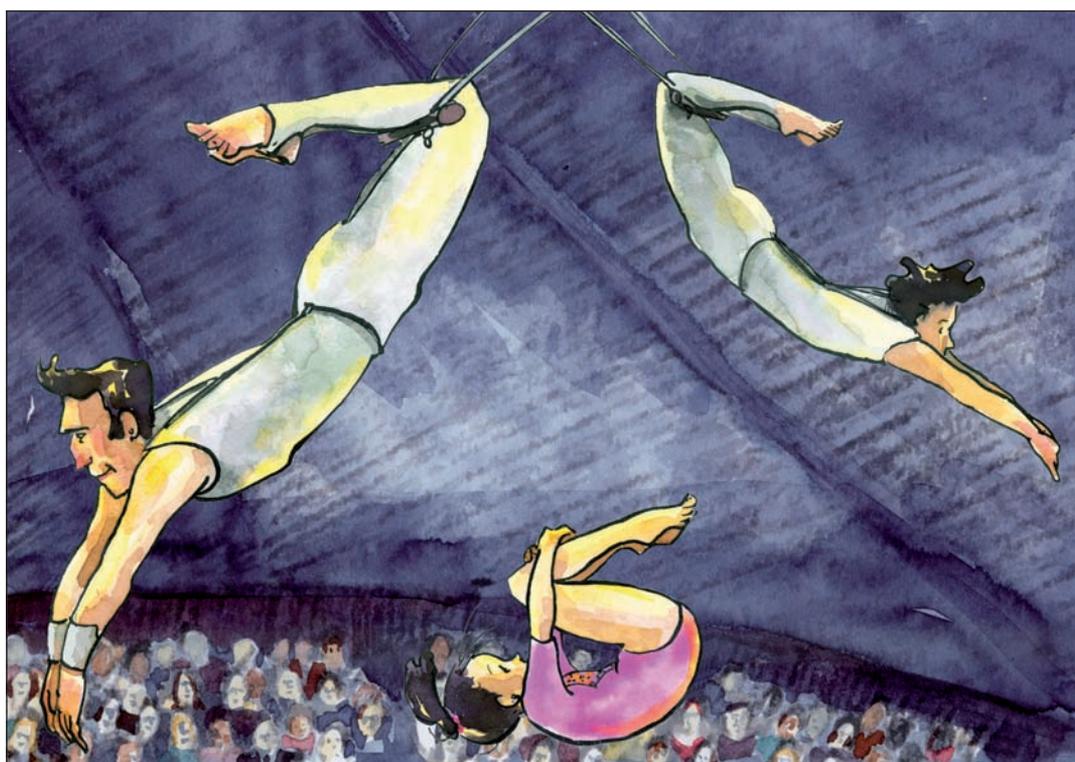
They were too busy concentrating on their act. Back and forward, tumbling from her brother to her father, Bella was thrilled. This was what she had waited for, for so long. And now, the final moments were coming. Could she do it?
Could she perform the ultimate trick?

It was now or never.

Her father swung her back as far as he could and, swinging forward, he launched her into the air with a final burst of energy. She spun in the air, not once, not twice, but three times.

The peak of the trapeze artist's art – the triple somersault.

Just as she began to think that she had fallen too far, she felt her brother's hands snap on to her wrists and they were swinging safely towards the platform. As she landed, gasping from the effort, she became aware of the audience far below, on their feet, shouting and clapping with approval. Her brother landed beside her. 'Well done, sis,' he said. 'You're a star – the new flyer with the Flying Fratellis!'



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