

his gigantic combinations with regard to the discovery of the assassin of the horse Sultan. Lola and I never spoke of him without pain; for in spite of his crazy and bombastic oddities, he had qualities that were lovable.

"And now," said Lola, "I must tell him that Hephæstus has been killed and the rest are again idling under the care of the faithful Quast. It seemed a pity to kill the poor beast."

"I wish to Heaven," said I, "that he had been strangled at birth."

"You never liked him." She smiled wanly. "But he is scarcely to be blamed. I grew unaccountably nervous and lost control. All savage animals are like that." And, seeing that I was about to protest vehemently, she smiled again. "Remember, I'm a lion-tamer's daughter, and brought up from childhood to regard these things as part of the show. There must always come a second's failure of concentration. Lots of tamers meet their deaths sooner or later for the same reason—just a sudden loss of magnetism. The beast gets frightened and springs."

Exactly what Quast had told me. Exactly what I myself had divined at the sickening moment. I bowed my head and laid the back of her cool hand against it, and groaned out my remorse. If I had not been there! If I had not distracted her attention! She would not listen to my self-reproach. It had nothing to do with me. She had simply missed her grip and lost her head. She forbade me to mention the subject again. The misery of thinking that I held myself to blame was unbearable. I said no more, realising the acute distress of her generous soul, but in my heart I made a deep vow of reparation.

It was, however, with no such chivalrous feelings, but out of the simple longing to fulfil my life that I asked her