



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Published 22 June, 2023 in HB, £16.99

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# THE FIRST BRIGHT THING

By J.R. Dawson

**"This is the magic circus book that I have been looking for all my life."**

—Seanan McGuire, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Every Heart A Doorway*

**"A celebration of artistry and wonder as essential talismans we wield against despair—and with which we triumph against it . . . I, for one, am here for the show."**

—Travis Baldree, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Legends & Lattes*

*A spellbinding debut for fans of **The Night Circus** and **The Invisible Life of Addie La Rue***



Welcome to the Circus of the Fantastics.

Ringmaster – Rin, to those who know her best – can jump to different moments in time as easily as her wife, Odette, soars from bar to bar on the trapeze. With the scars of World War I feeling more distant as the years pass, Rin is focusing on the brighter things in life. Like the circus she's built and the magical misfits and outcasts – known as Sparks – who've made it their home. Every night, Rin and the Fantastics enchant a Big Top packed full with audiences who need to see the impossible.

But while the present is bright, threats come at Rin from the past and the future. The future holds an impending war that the Sparks can see barreling toward their Big Top and everyone in it. And Rin's past creeps closer every day, a malevolent shadow Rin can't fully escape. It takes the form of another Spark circus, with tents as black as midnight and a ringmaster who rules over his troupe with a dangerous power. Rin's circus has something he wants, and he won't stop until it's his.

***If you knew how dark tomorrow would be, what would you do with today?***

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** J. R. Dawson (she/they) is a writer and educator who has published shorter works in places such as F&SF, The Year's Best Science Fiction and Fantasy, and Lightspeed. She lives in Omaha with a loving spouse and three dogs. Having earned a BFA from The Theatre School at DePaul, and an MFA in Creative Writing from Stonecoast, Dawson works as a teaching artist. Her clients include assorted Midwestern non-profits that teach kids the power of performance and storytelling.





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**More praise for *The First Bright Thing***

"Trains leap across continents, trapeze artists fly through the air, and three women desperately hurl themselves through time and against the dark tides of history. This book takes the reader on an **audacious, bittersweet** journey, underpinned by the magic of theatre and the alchemies of grief and love.

**A masterpiece of the fantastical and the human.**"—Freya Marske, author of *A Marvelous Light*

"**Mesmerizing and magical**, *The First Bright Thing* gives **friendship, love, and found family** top billing, puts the audacity of optimism on center stage, and delivers a voice with artistry and flair worthy of the Ringmaster herself."—Rowenna Miller, author of the *Unraveled Kingdom* series

"**If this circus were real, I'd be in the front row**; it's the found family so many of us crave. Richly imagined and vividly depicted, *The First Bright Thing* shows both the joys and costs of power."—Sarah Pinsker, award-winning author of *We Are Satellites*

"This **magical** novel will invite you into an astounding circus and carry you along on its wild journey through time, struggling to survive in the shadow of world wars and the sinister threat of their greatest competitor. The cast of **colorful, endearing characters** will make you glad to know that, as the Ringmaster says, 'Circus people never say goodbye.'"—Louisa Morgan, author of *A Secret History of Witches*

"*The First Bright Thing* **will break your heart and stitch it back together, again and again**. A nearly perfect amalgam of *Mrs. Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* and *The X-Men*, this story is inhabited by beautiful and imperfect characters. It is a delicious tale of magical outsiders, determined to find love and light, beauty and family, in a world that fears and often hates them. **It is a wonderful tale of hope and heart and perseverance.**"—Rita Woods, author of *Remembrance* and *The Last Dreamwalker*

"Brimming with complex characters, *The First Bright Thing* is a **one-of-a-kind exploration of the deathless tension between light and dark, in the world and in our souls**. Dawson's debut, like the Ringmaster at its heart, commands your attention completely."—Greer Macallister, bestselling author of *The Magician's Lie*

"***The First Bright Thing* is pure magic**. It's a story of healing and becoming and truth, of finding our broken pieces and fitting them back together. A **beautifully woven** exploration of who we are, who we love, and who we choose to be in this world—the light or the darkness."—Liz Parker, author of *In the Shadow Garden*

"J.R. Dawson bids you step under the Big Top to witness **one of the most fantastic circuses in genre history**. The time-travelling stars of this show band together to form a unique family with Rin, the Ringmaster, at center stage in this vividly imagined world. ***The First Bright Thing* shines!**"—James Patrick Kelly, Hugo and Nebula award-winning author

"Like if *The Night Circus* smashed into the *X-Men* and formed a found family that welcomed every reader with open arms. **A beautiful novel.**"—John Wiswell, Nebula Award-winning author of "Open House on Haunted Hill"

