**The Night Circus**

**by Erin Morgenstern**

The circus arrives without warning.

No announcements precede it, no paper notices on downtown posts and billboards, no mentions or advertisements in local newspapers. It is simply there, when yesterday it was not.

The towering tents are striped in white and black, no golds and crimsons to be seen. No colour at all, save for the neighbouring trees and the grass of the surrounding fields. Black and white stripes on grey sky; countless tents of varying shapes and sizes, with an elaborate wrought iron fence encasing them in a colourless world. Even what little ground is visible from outside is black or white, painted or powdered, or treated with some other circus trick.

But it is not open for business. Not just yet. Within hours everyone in town had heard about it. By afternoon the news has spread to several towns over, it is impressive and unusual news, the sudden appearance of a mysterious circus. People marvel at the staggering height of the tallest tents, they stare at the clock that sits just inside the gates that no one can properly describe. And the black sign painted in white letters that hangs upon the gate reads:

*Open nightfall*

*Closes at dawn*

“What kind of circus is only open at night?” people ask. No one has a proper answer, yet as dusk approaches there is a substantial crowd of spectators gathering outside the gates.

You are among them, of course. Your curiosity got the better of you, as curiosity is wont to do. You stand in the fading light, the scarf around your neck pulled up against the chilly evening breeze, waiting to see for yourself exactly what kind of circus only opens once the sun sets.

The ticket booth is clearly visible behind the gates is closed and barred. The tents are still, save for when they ripple ever so slightly in the wind. The only movement within the circus is the clock that ticks by the passing minutes, if such a wonder of sculpture can even be called a clock.

