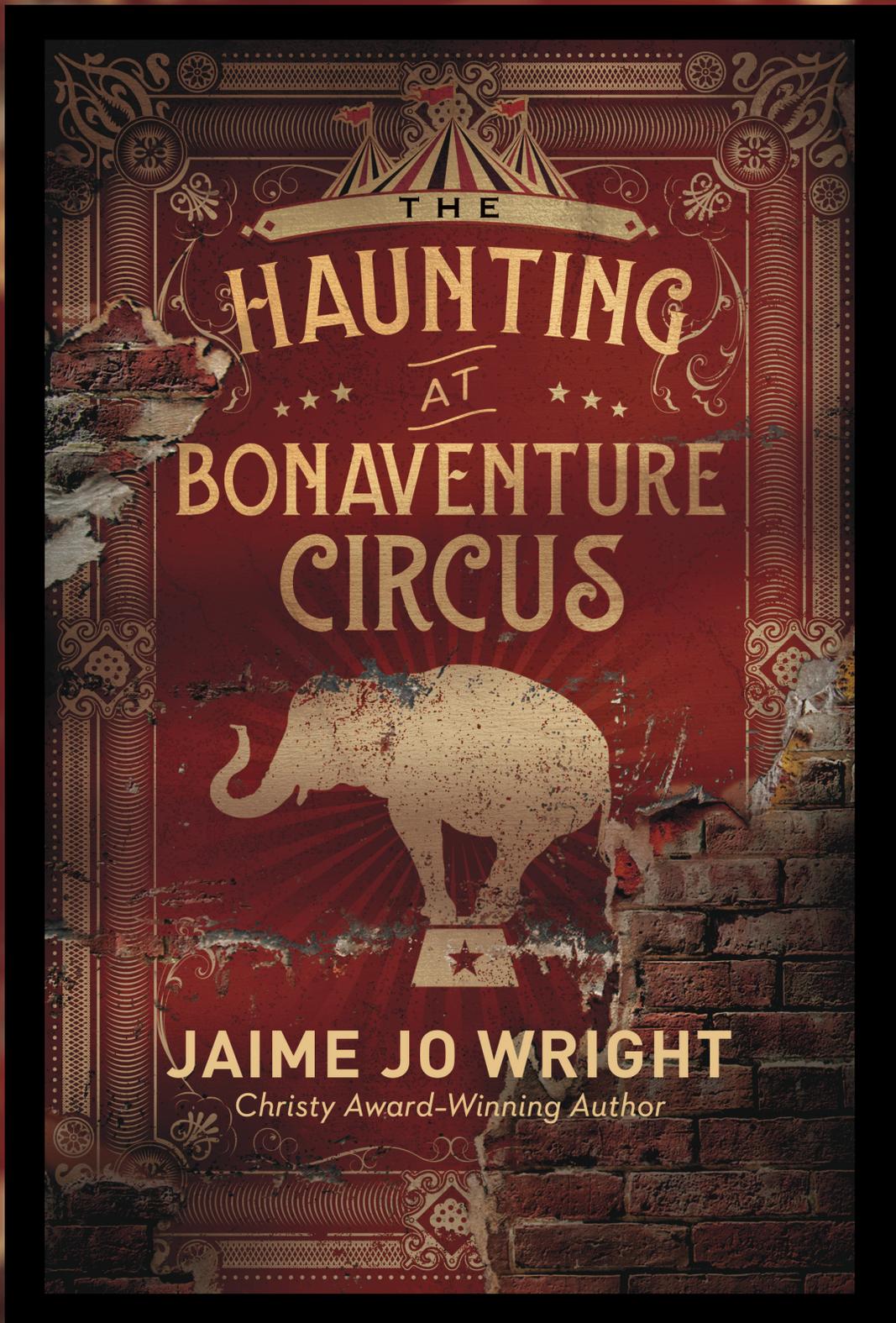


# BOOK CLUB KIT



**JAIME JO WRIGHT**

*Christy Award-Winning Author*

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# LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Welcome readers and book clubs!

I am so grateful you've chosen to invest your time into the story of the circus. Having grown up blocks away from the Ringling Bros. Circus wintering grounds, the circus has always been a part of my life and my heart.

A few behind the scenes about myself and the circus and our ongoing relationship over the years:

- Yes, I have dressed as a clown and ran around the Big Top show ring throwing things at the audience and garnering as many smiles as I could.
- It is true, I have ridden elephants, and might I add, avoid their tails. Being hit by an elephant tail is a stinging experience.
- The train depot in this story is very real, very abandoned, and one might argue, very haunted. See the Bonaventure Book Club page for the video of the outside of the depot.
- My favorite food at the circus growing up was actually not the cotton candy, but rather, the popcorn. Partially because I liked to sneak some to the elephants from time to time. They're ginger soft when they eat out of your hand. Although, I'm not entirely sure I was supposed to feed them. What can I say? The elephants loved me.

As you venture into the depths of the circus, I hope you enjoy learning the lesser known elements of its story. The wintering grounds, the costume house, the girls who sewed the costumes, the menagerie workers, and even the little tales of escaped cats, snakes, and other animals.

While the circus may be a happy place, it also houses secrets. And remember, he is always watching . . . be sure to look over your shoulder once in a while. ;)

Happy reading!

Jaime Jo Wright



# AUTHOR INTERVIEW

## **What was the original inspiration for *The Haunting at Bonaventure Circus*?**

I grew up in the hometown of the Ringling Bros. Circus so the circus has been a part of my life since I can remember. So much of it is historical and vintage, while another element is the lives it touched in so many ways. Truly, for all the negative a circus may receive, there are so many positives. I really hope this inspires people to study the history of the circus and its beautiful, diverse past!

## **Your main character, Chandler, has an autoimmune disorder that she tries to hide. You also struggle with an autoimmune disorder – how did your experiences shape Chandler's in the novel?**

My experiences are very similar. In fact, I drew a lot on my real life experiences in regards to the symptoms and the daily struggle. I believe chronic health conditions are still misunderstood and the old idea of "if you can't see it, it must not be real", is still all too true. I hope Chandler's struggle helps bring it up into conversation so people struggling with chronic issues can be more understood.

## **If you could start a group text with three other writers, who would you choose? What would you name the group?**

Can they be dead? I'd like to group text with dead authors. It'd be cool on so many levels that way! Edgar A Poe, Charles Dickens, and Charlotte Bronte all come to mind.

## ***The Haunting at Bonaventure Circus* is your fifth release. What was it like writing this story? Was it easier or harder than your previous books?**

It was probably very similar to the others in regards to ease or struggle. Every book comes with its ups and downs during the writing process. I did find the circus elements to come very naturally, and researching for the novel was definitely easier since I just had to walk down the street a block or two to find circus history!



# HAUNTING PLAYLIST

Looking for music to play during your book club meeting? Below you'll find the perfect playlist. Check out this mix of songs! All are chosen specifically by the author, Jaime Jo Wright!

Come to the River by Rhett Walker

Beauty from Pain by Superchick

I Need You to Love Me by BarlowGirl

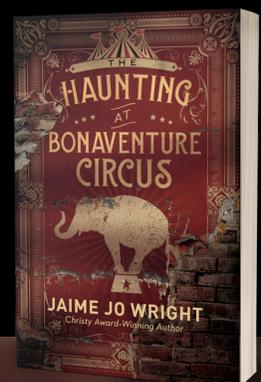
Fighter by Christina Aguilera

Fighter by Manafest

Beautiful by Christina Aguilera

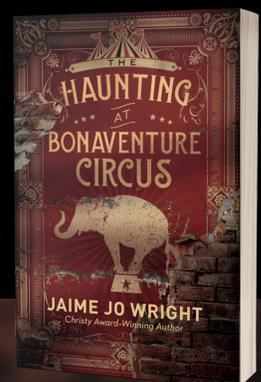
Hurt by Christina Aguilera

Kiss Me by Ed Sheeran



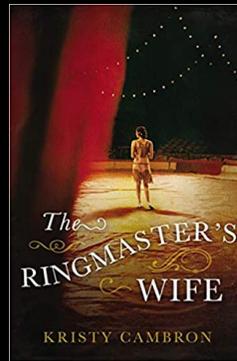
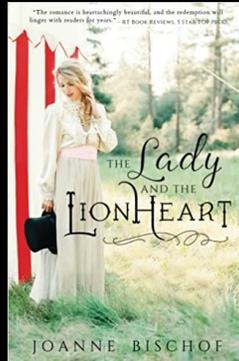
# DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. The circus was a foundational form of entertainment in the United States starting in the last half of the nineteenth century. When you think of circus, what images comes to mind?
2. Chandler tries hard to disguise her struggles with her autoimmune disorder for fear it will hijack the perception she is capable female in both the workplace and as a mother. How have personal health shortcomings impacted your self-confidence? What about others you know who suffer with health issues that threaten to compromise their view of themselves?
3. When Chandler meets Hank Titus, she draws conclusions about his trustworthiness based on his appearance and his lack of cultural etiquette. What parallels do you see regarding Chandler's fear that others will judge her based on stereotypes can shape our perspective of other people?
4. Pippa Ripley embarks on a journey, going from being a submissive, nonvocal daughter to finding her own path and independence. In what ways can women be independent and submissive simultaneously?
5. Much of Chandler's and Pippa's struggles are rooted in the fear of their being seen for who they really are. What has held you back from allowing people to know the real you? What are some of your greatest fears about being truly seen by others?
6. Georgiana Farnsworth approaches the controversial subject of animal rights as it relates to the circus and entertainment-based animal performances. What do you believe is the appropriate position on the inclusion of animals in entertainment?
7. The Watchman's motivation was one of possessiveness, while the other serial killer's motives were based on a need to dominate and control women. What was the difference between the Watchman's possessive nature and the nature of the serial killer?
8. How has your faith affected your sense of self-worth and how you view others? How does a relationship with Jesus Christ change your perspective when you learn of others' struggles?



# FURTHER READING

## Love this? Read that.



### ***The Lady and the Lionheart* | Joanne Bischof**

Raised amid the fame and mystique of the Big Top, Charlie Lionheart holds the audience in the palm of his hand. But while his act captivates thousands, it's away from the spotlight where his true heart lies. Here he humbly cares for his pride of lions as if they were his brothers, a skill of bravery and strength that has prepared him for his most challenging feat yet—freeing an orphaned infant from the dark bondage of a sideshow. A trade so costly, it requires his life in exchange for hers, leaving him tarnished by the price of that choice. As the circus tents are raised on the outskirts of Roanoke, nurse Ella Beckley arrives to tend to this Gypsy girl. All under the watchful eye of a guardian who not only bears a striking resemblance to the child, but who protects the baby with a love that wraps around Ella's own tragic past, awakening a hope that goodness may yet reign. When their forbidden friendship deepens, Charlie dares to ask for her heart, bringing her behind the curtain of his secret world to reveal the sacrifice that gave hope to one little girl—boldly showing Ella that while her tattered faith is deeply scarred, the only marks that need be permanent are his own.

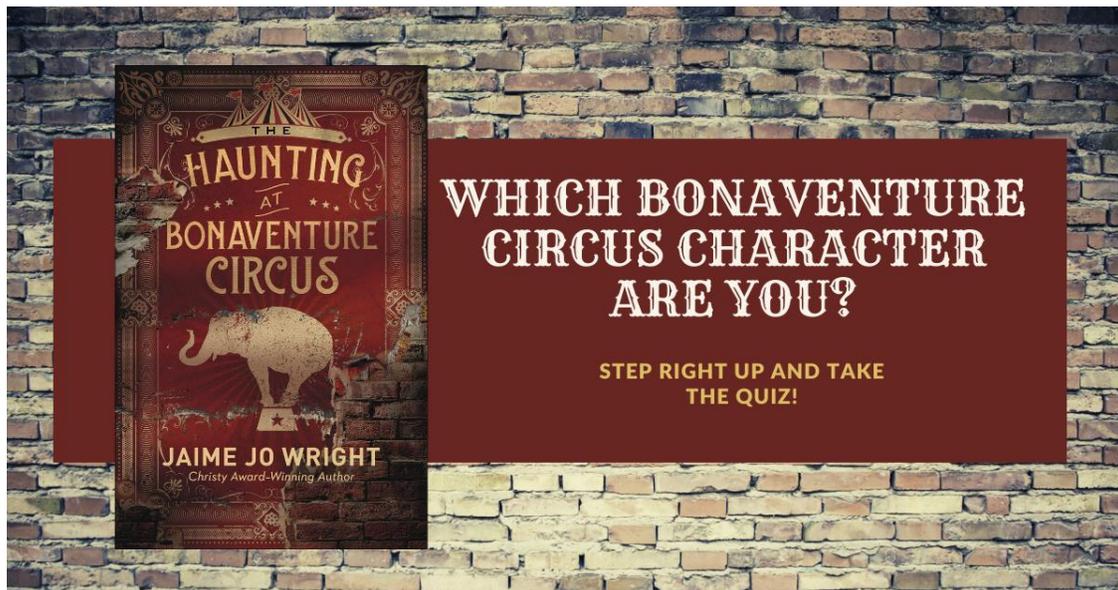
### ***The Ringmaster's Wife* | Kristy Cambron**

An ounce of courage.

A leap of faith.

Together, they propel two young women to chase a new life—one that's reimagined from what they might have become.

In turn-of-the-century America, a young girl dreams of a world that stretches beyond the confines of a quiet life on the family farm. With little more than her wit and a cigar box of treasures, Mable steps away from all she knows, seeking the limitless marvels of the Chicago World's Fair. There, a chance encounter triggers her destiny—a life with a famed showman by the name of John Ringling. A quarter of a century later, Lady Rosamund Easling boards a ship to America as a last adventure before her arranged marriage. There, the twenties are roaring, and the rich and famous gather at opulent, Gatsby-esque parties. The Jazz Age has arrived, and with it, the golden era of the American circus, whose queen is none other than the enigmatic Mable Ringling. When Rosamund's path crosses with Mable's and the Ringlings' glittering world, she makes the life-altering decision to leave behind a comfortable future of estates and propriety, choosing instead the nomadic life of a trick rider in the Ringling Brothers' circus. A novel that is at once captivating, deeply poignant, and swirling with exquisite historical details of a bygone world, *The Ringmaster's Wife* will escort readers into the center ring, with its bright lights, exotic animals, and a dazzling performance that can only be described as the Greatest Show on Earth!



Whether you belong in the 1920s or modern day, we bet you'll find some similarities between yourself and the women of Jaime Jo Wright's *The Haunting at Bonaventure Circus*. Find out who below!

**1. You hear rumors of a haunted location in a small town where you're spending the night. How do you respond?**

- A. Scoff at the idea of ghosts...but lock your car doors as you drive past.
- B. Stay very, very far away.
- C. Ask questions and try to learn more about the rumors.
- D. Visit the location to see for yourself.

**2. Which circus-watching snack best describes your personality?**

- A. Caramel apple: hard on the outside, but sweet inside
- B. Soft pretzel: warm and interconnected
- C. Giant lollipop: colorful and bold
- D. Animal crackers: straightforward with a wide variety of experiences



**3. You're the one your friends go to when they need...**

- A. A loyal advocate.
- B. Someone to listen and care.
- C. To brainstorm or create new ideas.
- D. Straight-talking advice.

**4. You're throwing a party! What's the theme?**

- A. A superhero-themed birthday party for a child in your life.
- B. A classy tea party with a few close friends.
- C. A luau or bonfire so you can invite anyone who wants to show up!

**5. If you were a 1920s dress, you'd be most like...**



A.



B.



C.



D.

**6. A circus role you'd be good at might be...**

- A. Ringmaster – you're a pro at multitasking and always project a professional image
- B. Horse trainer – animals and people alike know you care
- C. Acrobat – you don't mind risks and enjoy a little attention
- D. Advertiser – you make good decisions and trust your instincts

**7. When you're watching a scary movie, you...**

- A. Enjoy it, mostly, even though you roll your eyes at the terrified, too-dumb-to-live women.
- B. Were convinced to watch it by someone else and are probably closing your eyes.
- C. Get snacks or joke with the others with you if things get a little too tense.
- D. Figure out who the killer is and predict the plot twists ahead of time.

**8. Pick your favorite circus animal.**



- A. Horse
- B. Elephant
- C. Tiger
- D. None, animals shouldn't be in the circus.

**9. It's board game night! What type of game are you voting for?**

- A. Something competitive but not too complex.
- B. A cooperative game where everyone is on the same team.
- C. A hilarious social or party game.
- D. Strategy board game all the way, the harder the better.

**10. You're in a 1920s escape room with some friends. How do things play out for you?**

- A. You're great at organizing information and solving puzzles, but hate asking for clues if you get stuck.
- B. You notice lots of small details but sometimes don't speak up right away if you disagree with the team leader.
- C. You take charge and dive right in to look for hidden objects, but sometimes don't listen well to others' advice.
- D. You don't say much, but secretly are a master at solving the codes and puzzles, though sometimes you don't communicate well with your team.

Time to tally up your score! Mark how many you answered in each column, then go to the results page.

- A:
- B:
- C:
- D:

# RESULTS

**Mostly As:** You are most like Chandler Faulk. You're strong-willed and unwilling to ask for help until the last possible option has been exhausted. You love fiercely and would go to war on behalf of the ones you love. You're not certain if ghosts do or do not exist, but a large part of you prefers they don't. You're also a private person, and if you're struggling, people will need to gain your trust before you'll confide in them.

**Mostly Bs:** You are most like Pippa Ripley. You have a tendency toward being timid and can sometimes be taken advantage of because you'd prefer to avoid confrontation. When it comes to family, you're extremely loyal and will sacrifice yourself in order to make sure they are well-provided for and loved. A place of belonging is very important to you.

**Mostly Cs:** You are most like Georgiana Farnsworth. Justice for all, including animals, is your battle cry. You may tend toward being a flamboyant personality that can be fun and maybe overwhelming to some. You're the one people want on their side, and you're also the one people may steer away from because of your devotion to truth. You're not afraid to act for justice, and at times that may get you into trouble.

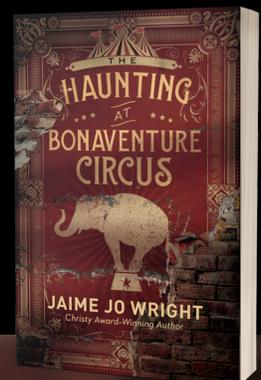
**Mostly Ds:** You are most like Patty Luchent. You say things as you see them. You're far from perfect, but at least your faith is real and honest. You are the type to watch from the sidelines and calculate a situation before reaching a conclusion. When you do reach a conclusion, you're usually right, and you can make a decision with confidence. People fall in love with you because you're real and what they see is what they get.

# RESOURCES

Fiction can serve as a mirror for real lives. Below are some resources for readers who want to dig deeper into some of the issues brought to light or if they just want further information on some of the history in *The Haunting at Bonaventure Circus*.

<https://globallymealliance.org>

<https://www.circusworldbaraboo.org>



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## Jaime Jo Wright

Jaime Jo Wright is the author of five novels, including Christy Award winner *The House on Foster Hill* and Carol Award winner *The Reckoning at Gossamer Pond*. She's also the Publishers Weekly and ECPA bestselling author of two novellas. Jaime lives in Wisconsin with her cat named Foo; her husband, Cap'n Hook; and their littles, Peter Pan and CoCo.



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