



# Nell & the Circus of Dreams

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Currently living in the Cotswolds near to the home of the wonderful Gifford's Circus, I was instantly drawn to this book written by its founder Nell Gifford. She names her main character Nell too and the story begins one summer when Nell's mother is so poorly she's unable to get out of bed. Feeling sad, the little girl wanders into the farmyard and comes upon a tiny, lost chick that she names Rosebud. The two are soon great friends and Rosebud becomes the keeper of Nell's dreams and fears but one night the chick disappears.

Next morning on discovering the loss, Nell dashes outside and through the meadows until she finds herself surrounded by huge wooden wheels. She smells breakfast cooking and hears hammering sounds: Nell has walked into a circus just in time to watch the big tent going up. The circus folk are friendly and invite her into one of the wheeled homes to share a meal with them. Nell tries to explain that she's looking for her lost chick but is interrupted by the sound of music that causes the entire family to get up and rush out into the big tent. She's totally entranced by the magical performance but suddenly she discovers something that fills her with even greater joy: a small chicken standing on a rostrum in a circle of light ?

Although the circus soon has to depart, Nell carries those wonderful memories with her always and finds her own ways to relive them. A mesmerising tale that truly captures the wonders of the author's particular circus community; it's made all the more magical by Briony May Smith's richly detailed scenes, every one of which is an absolute delight. I'd love to have any of them framed and displayed in my home.

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