

Librarian's Shelf by Brad Hruska

### "The Perfect Escape"

I have to be honest, I am very pleased to see 2020 coming to an end (and I know I am not the only one). This year has been filled with more than its share of lows for my family and me, most of which can be attributed to the COVID pandemic. That said, I still consider my family and myself blessed beyond measure.

With the numerous COVID-related restrictions that my family and I had to endure, my bride and I tried our best to make their effects less disruptive and intrusive as we could for our children. One way we accomplished this goal was by making trips to the Columbus Public Library. The ventures out afforded my family the chance to check out books, either in person or through the library's curbside service, that provided us with avenues of escape from the reality we faced. For me personally, I find comfort in nature, so when I look for books to help me decompress, I often navigate to titles like "Dogboy" by Christopher Russell, "The Magician's Elephant" by Kate Dicamillo, "The Familiars" by Andrew Jacobson, and "Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH" by Robert O'Brien. One of the recent books I sought refuge in during the pandemic was "The Secret Zoo" by Bryan Chick.

In this novel, readers meet Noah, a young boy who is on a mission to find his missing sister, Meg. Many in the community were determined to locate her; however, after a year of searching, people slowly gave up hope of ever seeing her again. That all changed one evening when a small bird flew through Noah's open bedroom window. The feathered creature flew about for some time, but eventually made its way out the window from whence it came. Noah then notices a tiny sheet of folded paper in the middle of his tidy bedroom floor.

When Noah unfolds the paper, he notices that it is from his sister's diary. The lad thinks it strange; however, he soon dismisses it as a coincidence. But when another creature comes knocking on Noah's window with yet another portion of Meg's diary, the young detective takes notice and embarks on an adventure, which leads him and his friends from the Action Scouts to a secret zoo within his hometown's zoo. To find out if Noah reunites with his beloved sibling, or if all of this is just a wild goose chase, check out Chick's "The Secret Zoo."

If 2020 has been a bit crazy in your neck of the woods due to quarantining or not being able to interact with family and friends, be sure to visit the Columbus Public Library. I guarantee you will find items that will provide you and yours with the needed escape from the craziness of this year. If you have any questions about the books mentioned, please contact me at (402) 564-7116 opt. 4. From my family to yours, have a safe, healthy, and blessed New Year!