

Librarian's Shelf by Brad Hruska

The Magician's Elephant

The juvenile fiction genre overflows with great talent! Gifted authors like Gary Paulsen, Lois Lowry, Dan Gutman, Beverly Cleary, and Judy Blume have penned incredible books like "Brian's Winter," "The Giver," "Satch & Me," "Ramona Quimby, Age 8," and "Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing," but there is another author who has fans flocking to bookshelves and that is Kate DiCamillo. This two-time Newbery Award winner is best known for the novels "Because of Winn-Dixie" and "The Tale of Despereaux."

Individuals will notice DiCamillo's uncanny ability to generate realistic storylines, emotionally-packed dialogues, and exquisite imagery; an example of this is "The Magician's Elephant." In this tale, readers meet Peter Duchene, an orphan who rooms with an elderly soldier in a small apartment, located above the home of the town's law enforcement officer, Leo Matienne.

One afternoon, Lutz sends Peter out to purchase fish and bread for the evening meal. But instead, the young lad spends the coin on a fortuneteller, who reveals to him that his deceased sister is actually alive and can be found by following the path of the elephant. Peter, who surprised by this revelation, is also confused because no elephants are in or around the city of Baltese; however, the fortune teller insists that the beast will indeed lead Peter to his lost kin.

Later that night at the Bliffendorf Opera House, a magician performs his final trick of the evening, involving a bouquet of lilies; however, he is suddenly distracted and summons a pachyderm instead.

News of the elephant reaches Peter and he is determined to view the creature, hoping that it will lead him to his sibling, but the boy soon realizes that getting close to the elephant is more difficult than he had originally thought, so Peter enlists the help of Mr. Matienne.

Within days, the boy and Officer Matienne meet with the magician. After hours of discussion, the trio decides that it is best to send the elephant back home (wherever home is), so the group waits until after midnight and walks the gentle giant back to the music hall.

As the travelers make their way down a dimly lit street, a young girl, named Adele, spots them from the window of the town's orphanage. Wanting to see a real-live elephant for herself, Adele rushes down the block towards the caravan.

The group soon notices the new arrival and begins conversing with her. It is not long before Peter makes the correlation that the stranger is actually his lost sister! He then comes to the conclusion that the fortune teller was right...the elephant would indeed lead him to her!

If you're looking for a heartwarming tale for the chapter book reader in your home, consider "The Elephant's Magician" by Kate DiCamillo. This novel has an adventurous plot that will appeal to boys and wonderful character chemistry that the fairer sex will find quite charming.

If you have any questions about the authors mentioned in this article or would like the titles of other great books, please contact me at (402) 564-7116 opt. 4.