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Juvenile Fiction

Take a Bow Winky Blue!
Pamela Jane
Debbie Tilley, illustrator
Mondo Publishing
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After winning a blue ribbon in the pet show, Winky Blue vanishes in a puff of smoke. Rosie's feeling of pride in her pet's achievement quickly turns to one of dismay when her parakeet does not reappear at the conclusion of a magician's trick. The bewildered magician hurries away to another show, leaving behind his top hat, a distraught Rosie, her supportive friend, Michael and an empty birdcage.

The sequel to No Way, Winky Blue! (1996), continues the adventures of Winky Blue and his devoted owner. Rosie's expectations for her pet border on the grandiose and usually turn out differently than she plans. In the first Mondo chapter book about Winky Blue, Rosie tries to teach the bird to talk. Although, Winky Blue does not learn the phrase Rosie intends, he does become skilled at repeating Rosie's favorite expression, "No way!" Winky Blue wins his blue ribbon in much the same way. Rosie works diligently to teach Winky Blue to roll over on command, but at the critical moment during the show, Winky Blue seems to have stage fright and responds to Rosie's command with the prize-winning comment "No way!"

Winky Blue also is prone to disappearing. In No Way, Winky Blue! Rosie fears that the bird has flown out an open window when she forgets to latch his cage. After an unsuccessful search outdoors, Rosie is relieved to hear Winky Blue in an unlikely spot not far from his empty cage. When the magic trick in Take a Bow, Winky Blue! goes awry, the search is again fruitless. However, thanks to a forgetful magician and helpful Michael, Winky Blue is once again located in an unexpected, but nearby place.

Readers ready for an introduction to chapter books will enjoy both of these fast-paced tales of friendship and pet ownership. It is not necessary to have read the first book to understand and enjoy the sequel; background details are smoothly incorporated into the story. The original title is illustrated by G. Brian Karas in his distinctive, cheerful style. Tilley's

illustrations for the sequel will also appeal to children. The ethnic diversity of the characters enhances the value of the books for many students. Rosie is a Hispanic orphan being raised by her single aunt while her friend Michael is African- American with a younger sibling and a stay-at-home mom. Suggest these books to readers interested in the universal themes of pets or friends and soon they'll be asking for an encore from Winky Blue.

Janis Ansell