

The Adventures of Rhumba and Tuba: First Visit

Carl Wetzel

Brett Alexander, Illustrator

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The familiar becomes new again as ceramic cats experience the four seasons for the first time.

When inanimate objects come alive, imagination runs rampant. Carl Wetzel's children's book, *The Adventures of Rhumba and Tuba: First Visit*, follows two ceramic mantel cats as they journey through the four seasons and experience the outdoor changes through new eyes.

One "dull and dreary day," an old man settles into his chair for a nap when he watches the ceramic cats come to life. He quickly realizes it will not be an ordinary day. At first, the misadventures are a nuisance, but the old man soon develops an appreciation for Rhumba and Tuba. They offer him a chance to relive childhood memories like playing in the snow, and his life is forever changed.

The two characters might be inanimate objects, but their personalities are well shaped thanks to careful characterization. Like their names suggest, Rhumba is charismatic with a quick sense of humor, whereas Tuba is observant, deep like a tuba's sound, and logical. They complement each other in many ways, making it enjoyable to accompany the pair as they experience the world. Readers will grow as fond of the cats' hijinks as the old man does.

The book's sing-song rhymes are reminiscent of such great authors as Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl. Wetzel's word play and quick yet focused chapters propel the story forward. Similarly, Brett Alexander's illustrations perfectly depict the cool colors of winter and warm oranges of fall. The uniqueness of each cat—Rhumba's playfulness and Tuba's lumbering spirit—shines through thanks to specific descriptions and rich images. The cats' adventures could span many volumes or books; Wetzel even notes this with the closing, "The end. (Probably not!)"

Every day can be an adventure. Here, the familiar becomes new again watching Rhumba and Tuba experience the four seasons for the first time. After all, the modern world is a busy place, which is why adults often forget the joy of building a snowman or watching the leaves change. As Wetzel writes, "Imagination is the key" to waking up and truly enjoying all that life has to offer.

LISA BOWER (November 5, 2013)

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