

★ **The Beatryce Prophecy**

Kate DiCamillo

Sophie Blackall, Illustrator

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Melding the language of prophecies with that of fairy tales and whispered dreams, Newbery Medal winner Kate DiCamillo's latest novel for young readers is both feminist and sweet.

The world knew Beatryce was coming before she arrived—in part, because a scribe predicted it to a tenuously positioned king; in part, because injustice cannot last forever. Still, her early years were bright and peaceful. Under careful tutelage, she learned to dream and story-weave—as well as to read and write, despite kingdom-wide edicts that girls and commoners do neither.

Beatryce's calm was interrupted when the king tired of waiting for her prophesied arrival, and sent vicious soldiers searching for her instead. Her memories of the ultimate clash are hazy; all she knows is that she woke up not at home, but feverish in a monastery stable. She was without her family, but was protected by Answelica, a fearsome goat who loves her dearly. She is now forced to hide her talents, and her femininity, from those who wish her ill.

Jack Dory, a gentle boy with his own grudge against the king, intrudes on Beatryce's period of hiding, forcing her on the road and toward hard revelations. Together, they encounter a runaway king who feeds on honeycomb and hosts bees in his beard; later, they reunite with an illuminator of manuscripts. Finally, this unimposing-looking crew heads to the castle, armed only with literacy, mermaid stories, and righteousness, but prepared to confront injustice together.

The Beatryce Prophecy is a gentle and wondrous tale that celebrates knowledge, kindness, and the boundless power of the imagination; its villains, despite their military might, are fast dispatched because they value no such qualities. Delicate illustrations and rich fairy tales run throughout the book, which stirs hope and joy at every turn.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (September / October 2021)

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