

The Girl Who Could Read Hearts

Sherry Maysonave

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This is an affecting story about believing in oneself, and perhaps even of the importance of the supernatural.

In Sherry Maysonave's intriguing and supernatural *The Girl Who Could Read Hearts*, a young girl with special powers navigates through the drama in her life with the help of her personal angel.

Six-year-old Kate is gifted not only with keen intuition, but with the ability to read human hearts. Her readings and intuitions are often guided and confirmed by Etta Ebella, her angel doll. A series of events leads Kate to Dr. Angelique Donahorn, a plastic surgeon specializing in pediatrics who also founded a company making angel dolls. When Angelique sees Etta Ebella, she knows immediately that the doll is Eve—her very first angel doll that disappeared six years earlier, after her mother died. As Angelique and Kate try to understand the power of the doll, family secrets and hidden blessings surface to reveal the strength of believing in magic.

The story has an immediate mystical tone, introducing its innocent young protagonist and the enigmatic doll that communicates with her. The narrative flows well and is filled with dynamic, rich imagery, such as the description of Angelique preparing to blow out birthday candles: "Wishes floated through her brain like brightly-colored tropical fish swimming in an aquarium." The communication between the characters conveys the angel doll's special powers and Kate's intuitive nature, including her somewhat telepathic communication with others that moves between dialogue and thought.

Kate proves to be a sweet protagonist, one who is very well developed. Descriptions like "[she] felt squirming in her skin" deftly capture her youth and are evocative of physical signs that she is having a premonition. Kate's innocence is also conveyed by her interpretation of the world around her, like mistaking words such as "Lamborghini" for "lamb-fettuccini" and then continually referring to her uncle's sports car as the "lamb-pasta" car, though these connections sometimes verge on being overdone and overexplained.

The use of the diverse family members from several generations creates the sense of a rich tapestry of history and of the scope of the secrets, adding appeal to the already seductive plot. Their interwoven stories further convey themes of believing in oneself and in divine intervention, though the sheer number of secondary characters dilutes and distracts from an intriguing main story, leaving a sense that the plot is not fully resolved.

The Girl Who Could Read Hearts is an affecting story about the importance of believing in oneself and trusting in angelic powers.

MAYA FLEISCHMANN (August 4, 2016)

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