



The Red Dolphin: Looking for a Friend

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Brittanie C. Jackson, Illustrator

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Like a familiar red-nosed reindeer Red the Dolphin is searching for a friend who will accept him despite his physical difference—red skin. Red swims the ocean asking creature after creature to be friends with him. Unfortunately no one will agree until Red sees a small red fish swimming towards him. All angst forgotten Red plays with the little fish Swimmer and the two part ways eager to play again the next day. Unfortunately when Red returns his friend seems to be gone. Unbeknownst to Red his friend Swimmer had merely painted himself red for the day. Red terrified that their friendship was based on nothing more than a similar skin color is sad until Swimmer assures him that he liked Red's personality best. The two begin to play again attracting other creatures with their fun and all ends well.

The author is eight years old a second grader from Michigan who told the story to her father. The story is cute if a sort of hodgepodge of other well-known message stories like *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. Still the message of friendship and acceptance is vital: love people/creatures for who they are rather than what they look like. It celebrates difference and shows Red's indomitable spirit in always seeking love despite many rejections. Illustrator Brittanie C. Jackson adds clever touches to her illustrations with rude fish laughing and thought bubbles for Red. She also uses a creative storyboard technique on a couple of pages as well as amusing road signs for undersea traffic. Jackson is almost certainly not an adult but the book offers little information about her.

The book also suffers from an odd piece of logic. Swimmer is somehow able to paint himself underwater and have the color adhere. It then mysteriously washes off by the next day. While some suspension of disbelief is possible enough fish have interesting camouflaging powers that this need not have been a problem.

Ultimately the book flirts with being derivative but the illustrations are fun and the message is valid.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (October 6, 2008)

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