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# Freddie Mole: Lion Tamer

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Alexander McCall Smith's new book for children is a charming rags-to-riches story. There are few places more exciting for children than the Big Top and the dream of running away to join the circus is inherent in all of us. For one boy, Freddie Mole, the circus is not so much a dream as gainful employment to help his family.

Freddie's family are poor. Despite his dad's best efforts as a washing machine repair man, the Mole family struggles to pay the bills and mum is forced to earn a living on cruise ships. Freddy is a kind and friendly boy and his mates always make sure he is invited to parties and events but, of course, they have to pay for him. This feeling of being unequal to your peers is one with which all children will empathise, and it is described sensitively with humour and without sentiment.

Fate deals Freddie a well-earned slice of luck in the shape of a circus tent's broken washing machine. All of a sudden, an opportunity opens up as an apprentice and Freddie never looks back. He tackles the dizzying heights of the trapeze and the daunting task of an entire circus crew's pile of washing up, and impresses the ringmaster (and the reader) with his work ethic and positive attitude.

It is not just Freddie who impresses. Every character has endearing qualities of kindness, generosity and open mindedness, even the curmudgeonly lion-tamer who may or may not be about to abscond to Peru. It is this optimistic and sanguine quality of McCall Smith's writing that affords his books such lasting appeal. Freddie Mole and his new colleagues show us that hard work and good friends are all anyone needs to succeed in life—even if you can only afford one and a half pairs of socks! Some readers may be disappointed by the lack of any discernible villain or threat, but children looking for action and adventure should look elsewhere ? this is a simple, gentle, heart-warming story.

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