



The Emperor's Ostrich

Julie Berry

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*A classic madcap romp of a fantasy adventure from the author of **The Scandalous Sisterhood of Prickwillow Place**.*

Young dairymaid Begonia has lost her cow, Alfalfa. So she has set off on a search across the countryside even though she has nothing but a magical map to guide her. Along the way she meets a mother and baby, a woodcutter, a very dirty young man, and an eight-foot ostrich.

Meanwhile, the Emperor has gone missing from the royal palace in a most mysterious manner. Was it murder? Was it magic? It will take all of Begonia's wits to save the empire and get Alfalfa home safely.

The Emperor's Ostrich Details

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Author : Julie Berry

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Alexa says

While this book and I had a shaky start, it wound up being entertaining in the way fairytales are entertaining to me. It's out of this world over the top magical whimsical and fun to read, though it takes a little time to really get going.

Jessica Petersen says

This book caught my eye on a display at our local library, and the blurb on the back suggesting fans of Lloyd Alexander and Miyazaki would love it sounded promising. I decided to bring it home on the off chance that my highly-sensitive 8-year-old would give it a try (though my hopes weren't too high because of the fact that I know he's not read for Lloyd Alexander yet and won't try watching most Miyazaki films). I just bought a copy of it for his bookshelf (by his adamant request). He says it's the best book in the world, and between all the laughs he had while reading it and all the discussions about the characters he initiated, along with how much I enjoyed it myself, I'm not inclined to argue with that. This is a funny, fun, and delightful book, especially as a read aloud! And it opened up a lot of conversations about the way people are in the real world, especially about growing to like people that at first seem bothersome and why on earth someone would lie and deceive people the way one of the antagonists does.

Jasmine says

I picked this up thinking it was a graphic novel, which it wasn't (but do you blame me? That cover screams graphic novel) but wow I am glad I did, because this was fun and absurd and hilarious. Did you watch Mulan and wish the ancestor spirits had a bigger role? Wish there were more Prince and the Pauper style books where a rich person learns to person? Think that what every book needs is a romance between a cow and an ostrich? DO I HAVE THE BOOK FOR YOU.

Shoshana says

Much more "younger middle-grade" than Berry's usual - this is sweet and funny, if perhaps lacking some of her usual wit and richness. But still very enjoyable, and great for younger readers, or as a read-aloud!

Julie says

Here it comes, my next little offering, for the young and the young at heart. I wrote this as a love letter to Lloyd Alexander. The idea emerged in a writing workshop conducted with elementary school students in Ashland, Massachusetts. I hope that you and they enjoy it. This middle grade adventure fantasy features a truly strange cast, but every one of them is dear to me. It's fun reading your reviews and thoughts so please

do chime in.

Ann says

Delightful!

Sarah says

This was a light-hearted adventure very much in the style of Lloyd Alexander. (If only more books were in his style!) Loved the characters, the adventure, the full menagerie of animals, the setting, the depth, and most of all Key's self-proclaimed epithets.

Stacie says

The Emperor's Ostrich, by Julie Berry, is a whimsical adventure with humor and quirky, lovable characters. While its intended audience is middle-grade readers, it will also appeal to younger readers as well as adults who are young-at-heart. Set in the Empire of Camillion, it is a fun romp through both the castle and the English countryside, and is reminiscent of both fairy and folktales of yore. Even so, this story is also both contemporary and unique in its telling.

The adventure begins when the spoiled, self-obsessed Emperor of Cendrillion goes missing from the castle. Soon after we are introduced to Begonia, who lives in the countryside and has lost her cow Alfalfa. Begonia, far from being a damsel in distress, embarks on a determined search to find Alfalfa. Along the way she encounters a mustard maker and a mapmaker that are really ancestral spirits in disguise - and a poetic, aptly self-defined "hopeless romantic" boy named Key. These characters, in addition to being both funny and kind, are helpful to her on her journey, even though Begonia is at first quite certain she will travel alone.

This is a story, then, of friendship and the power of kindness as much as it is about having a grand adventure. It is also about embracing differences and loving each other not in spite of but because of them. This is also perhaps the only book in which you will find a cow and an ostrich in love. And why not? Berry is showing young readers that love is possible anywhere, between anyone - and that life is always better enjoyed with our friends. With fast-paced, witty prose, characters that jump off the page and frolicking fun, The Emperor's Ostrich is a unique tale with a big heart sure to be enjoyed by many readers.

*I received a free copy for review from Kidlit Exchange.

Ginger says

Wonderful, funny, classic Julie Berry writing.

Kathy says

A gentle adventure with lots of droll humor as the ostrich falls in love with the cow, the immortal ancestors squabble, the emperor is a whiny brat, and poor besieged practical Begonia has to put up with a boy insistent on rescuing her.

Keri says

We are big fans of Julie Berry's. This book is fun and fairytale-like with lots of unexpected twists. What I love most about it is the moral at the end:

Begonia: "It seems to me that the reward for being a good girl is that you get asked to do everything for everyone else. And the people who do nothing are rewarded by having less expected of them."

Grandmother Spirit: "Some things are just unfair. There's no getting around it."

Begonia nodded and wiped her eyes again. Of course. She knew that. The unfairness of life had made itself clear to her years and years ago.

"Know this my girl: the things you're doing now, at this marvelous age in your life, aren't going to waste. All your reliable responsible choices are building a brain, a heart, and a pair of hands ready to tackle anything life sends your way." Grandmother Spirit cradled Begonia's cheeks in her own soft, wrinkled hands. "The world will be so lucky to have your brain, heart, and hands in it."

Sara (sarawithoutanH) says

This book was so much fun! I'm not normally a fan of middle grade but the writing was done in a way that didn't feel dumbed down. The story itself was magical and fun and I loved it. I would highly recommend to anyone who really likes Ella Enchanted.

PictureBookPlaydate says

Thanks to the #kidlitexchange network for the review copy of this book - all opinions are my own.

This was an engaging, well-paced story that I really enjoyed. It starts off in the palace, where we meet the emperor's cupbearer's young second assistant, who is there to bring the emperor milk. The emperor, as it turns out, is a spoiled brat. By the end of the first chapter, both the emperor and an ostrich have gone missing (and we get the sense that something suspicious and/or magical is going on).

Meanwhile, we meet Begonia, the put-upon responsible daughter, sent off on a quest to retrieve a missing dairy cow. Along the way she meets up with Key (a boy) and other assorted characters who reappear later in the story. Eventually, Begonia and Key meet Lumi (the emperor, who has been enchanted and cannot say his name or the word "emperor"). Hijinks ensue though (of course) everything is eventually right in the end.

This was fun to read. It took me a few chapters to really find my groove but once I did, I was hooked. I wanted to find out how this crazy cast of characters would all come together and work things out. I wanted to know who the bickering spirits were - after all, they instigated the events that we follow. And I wanted to know how the horrible emperor could redeem himself. I thought the writing was very well executed and the pacing was excellent.

Finally, to fellow readers: pay attention to the chapter titles! I typically skim over them very quickly, but they really guide you through this story, so don't ignore them.

Chantele Sedgwick says

I thought this was going to be super weird. Which it definitely was, but more in like a charming fairy tale kind of way. I really enjoyed the characters and how different the story was. I'll read anything Julie Berry writes. :)

Jessica says

Such a fun adventure story! Julie calls it her love letter to Lloyd Alexander, and it certainly reminded me of Alexander, but also of Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli films, and a little bit of The Nightingale (the only Hans Christian Anderson story I can tolerate).

But I did more than tolerate this: I loved it! I was really not expecting the twists and turns the story would take, or the fanciful characters, but I adored how they all came together in the end. This book has one of the best jailbreaks in history, and also features the only case of cow-ostrich romance that I can think of! (Hey, before you get all judgy, I dare you to try and tell an angry ostrich that he cannot be with his beloved cow!)

I swear, every one of Julie's books gets even more amazing. Just when you think she's hit the pinnacle of her talent, she finds a new level of awesome, so this book holds the current title of Julie's Best Book.
