



Finding Black Beauty

Books Reviewed:

[Finding Black Beauty](#) [1]

Issue:

[221](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Lucy Staines](#) [3]

News & Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

In her author's note, Lou Kuenzler describes reading **Black Beauty** as a little girl and the effect it had on her. Many other readers, who also spent their childhoods imagining themselves galloping across fields on Beauty's back, will understand exactly how she felt. Now Kuenzler has returned to [Black Beauty](#) [4] to tell its 'hidden story', that of Joe Green, the young groom who almost kills Beauty through his inexperience, but who is there at the book's end to take care of the horse in his final years, 'the best and kindest of grooms'. What happened to him in between?

The story Kuenzler invents is full of excitement, action and adventure; like Sewell's classic it highlights the cruel treatment of horses, through overwork, carelessness and notably the fashion for bearing reins. With a human as narrator, she can examine too the almost equally difficult lives of servants in Victorian England. She gives the story a terrific twist: her 'Joe' is actually Josie, a headstrong, horse-mad young girl who runs away following the death of her father in a hunting accident, when her home is given to a nasty cousin and his mean mother. Joe/Josie loves Beauty as passionately as any reader, and Kuenzler puts her at the heart of the action. Josie is there to help lead Beauty out of the burning stables, and even to give some comfort too to poor Ginger as she dies. A subplot involving her absent mother, an actor on the stage, means that Josie is in London at the same time Beauty is there working as a cab-horse, though she fails to find him, and the story is always at its best when knee deep in straw. The ending stretches credulity a little but will be just what readers want, and Kuenzler has skilfully and imaginatively remained true to the classic she and so many others love.

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[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/221>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/lucy-staines>

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