Moya and the Elephant Dance

Written by Julie McNamara
Illustrated by Boruch Simons
All Equal All Different
KS1/Early Years
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julie McNamara is a disabled person being a mental health system user. Julie is a performance artist and singer. She currently works for London Disability Arts Forum and organises the Annual Disability Film Festival. Boruch Simons is an illustrator, artist, ex-primary teacher of 27 years and a disabled person.

Elephant dance has been set to music and is on the CD at the back of the Guide for Practitioners and Teachers.
Moya is a lively little girl of five, disabled and fed up with her hospital stays. She thinks four times every year so far is just not fair!
She likes some of her friends in hospital. There’s Julie who sometimes talks to people nobody else can see. She often makes her laugh with funny jokes.

And there’s a small boy called Daniel who has very sore skin and it hurts and makes him cry sometimes.
Moya has to lie very still. She’s in a big plaster cast. It gets very hot inside and makes her skin itch. Daniel says his skin itches too, but you’re not supposed to scratch it.

Julie and Daniel have both drawn on Moya’s plaster. Julie can’t write but her picture of a wobbly yellow sun makes Moya smile.
One night, whilst lying in bed, Moya conjures up an elephant who sits at the foot of her bed.
Meet Finbar, a grumbling one-eared African elephant who is an elder of the herd. (That means he’s very old and very wrinkly.) He’s also very wise. Moya wonders why Finbar has only one ear but he says, “That’s just the way of it and two ears look a little odd to me!”

Finbar has been chosen by the elephant herd to become a special friend to Moya, her very own.
Moya is spellbound and Finbar, who has an ear only for the griefs and grumbles of a little one, gradually becomes her fierce protector and magical guide.
One by one, all the other children on the ward grow to like Moya and her elephant friend. Even the bigger children, who thought she was no fun at all at first. Each became part of the mystery of Finbar’s visits to her bedside.
Then one fierce windy night, when the air was cold with goose bumps and even the shadows had taken fright, Finbar shares the secret of the Elephant Elders of the forest.
Tonight is the night before her next operation, when Moya is sick with fear.
Finbar soothes her troubled brow and takes her away on a special visit to witness the mystery of the Elephant Dance!
On a moonlit night
when the silvered
stars shimmering
with delight
Are winking at the
towns below
sleeping out of sight.
The lumbering
sturdy elephants
Make through the
trees to join their
dance
With wrinkled flesh and baggy knees
They slowly gather in the midnight breeze

And side by side in fine array
The heavy ones begin to sway
Their rumbling pierces the clouds
As the wee ones trumpeting aloud
Step inside the gentle trance
Of FIFTY elephants who dance
And to this day we can’t know why
They meet to shiver heave and sigh
But the thunder of their wondrous thighs
Can move the storms to lullabies
Mesmerising all who feel the vibrations of their Ele-wheel
A circle of earth-bound big-eared beasts
Majestic movers to the feast
But when night has flown and day is dawn
The land lies empty and forlorn
They leave no sign
There’s not a trace
Of elephants dancing in that place
Well some believers celebrate
Historians haggle o’er their fate
And swear they’re quite dead and gone
But their dancing stories linger on
It is said that elephants roaming wild are witnessed only by a child who makes up all their Ele-dances and joins the mystery of their trances!
Copies available, as part of ‘all equal all different’ pack, from DEE: £75 including P&P

DISABILITY EQUALITY IN EDUCATION [Reg. Charity No. 1055287]
Unit GL, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP
Tel: 020 7359 2855 Fax: 020 7354 3372
E-mail: info@diseed.org.uk
Website: www.diseed.org.uk