

An American 'Tail'

Children's book aims to recast black cats as good luck.

By Susan Logan

Superstitions surrounding black cats have caused many of them to be overlooked for adoption at shelters. A person who is old enough to have adopted a black cat knows that they are definitely good luck to their loved ones.

Artist, musician and poet Carole Stevens Bibisi fell in love with a sleek black cat with a long tail, when she sat for her best friend's cat named Bronte (pronounced Brontee) when her friend went to Italy for a year. Bibisi lived in Australia at the time so the cat later became known as Australian Bronte. She was so inspired by Aussie Bronte that after moving to the United States in 2002, she adopted a look-alike black cat she dubbed American Bronte.

Bibisi studied art, design and lettering in college in New Zealand and worked in the commercial art and advertising field. When she moved to the United States, she focused completely on art. It was Miss Bronte's inspiring and playful actions that completely captivated Bibisi, and her observation of black cat discrimination firsthand as a volunteer in animal shelters, that motivated her to write "Tails of American Bronte: A Cat's View of Life," told from Bronte's perspective.

"The discrimination they suffer affects their ability to be adopted," Bibisi says. "I wrote the book to promote the idea that black cats are good luck. I want people to understand the suffering discrimination causes and hope the book changes the 'bad luck' label so these wonderful magical cats can find loving homes."

Like the beloved, classic children's book author Theodor Seuss Geisel (aka: Dr. Seuss), Bibisi wrote the entire book in rhyme. "I've always loved writing poetry, and children love the feel of rhythm and rhyme," she says. "It's an entertaining, interactive book."

The grandmother of five says she still thinks like a kid herself and filled the colorful pages of her book with details that couldn't possibly be discovered in one reading. "I want children to experience the satisfaction of searching, finding and discovering all the little creatures on each page," she says. "I also want them to love, play with, and be kind to all animals, and learn to take care of them."

For people interested in helping black cats, Bibisi recommends volunteering at shelters and encouraging black cat adoptions. "See how many black cats compared to other cats are there waiting to be adopted, decorate their cages and point them out. Describe them using words like 'magical' and 'sleek,'" she says.

Bibisi's black cat inspired each rhyming page in her book. Once she finalized the rhyme, she illustrated it using colored pencils and markers. "I write page by page," she says, then I illustrate." Bibisi has also handwritten the typeface in the book. In addition to this vibrantly colorful children's book, the Miss American Bronte series will also include greeting cards, a calendar, posters, and the Bronte Alphabet Book.