

Praise for *Raymie Nightingale*

“Warm, witty and wise ... highly recommended.”

The Bookseller

“Poignant, insightful, and ultimately uplifting.”

School Library Journal (starred review)

“*Raymie Nightingale* is a tale filled with such wisdom and beauty that I found myself stopping to re-read sentences, marvelling at how Kate DiCamillo manages to get so many profound ideas across.” *Belfast Telegraph*

“Wistful, funny, tender.” *The Wall Street Journal*

“This sweet and rather mystical tale creeps up and envelopes you. It is totally charming – a classic in the making.”

School Library Association

“Once again, DiCamillo demonstrates the power of simple words in a beautiful and wise tale.” *Kirkus Reviews (starred review)*

“My standout novel of the year for age 8+.” *Irish Independent*

“DiCamillo shows that life’s underlying sadnesses can also be studded with hope and humor, and does it in a way so true that children will understand it in their bones. And that’s why she’s Kate the Great.” *Booklist (starred review)*

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Great Joy

**RAYMIE
NIGHTINGALE
KATE DICAMILLO**



WALKER
BOOKS

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For my rancheros ... thank you

One

There were three of them, three girls.

They were standing side by side.

They were standing to attention.

And then the girl in the pink dress, the one who was standing right next to Raymie, let out a sob and said, “The more I think about it, the more terrified I am. I am too terrified to go on!”

The girl clutched her baton to her chest and dropped to her knees.

Raymie stared at her in wonder and admiration.

She herself often felt too terrified to go on, but she had never admitted it out loud.

The girl in the pink dress moaned and toppled over sideways.

Her eyes fluttered closed. She was silent. And then she opened her eyes very wide and shouted, “Archie, I’m sorry! I’m sorry I betrayed you!”

She closed her eyes again. Her mouth fell open.

Raymie had never seen or heard anything like it.

“I’m sorry,” Raymie whispered. “I betrayed you.”

For some reason, the words seemed worth repeating.

“Stop this nonsense immediately,” said Ida Nee.

Ida Nee was the baton-twirling instructor. Even though she was old – fifty at least – her hair was an extremely bright yellow. She wore white boots that came all the way up to her knees.

“I’m not kidding,” said Ida Nee.

Raymie believed her.

Ida Nee didn't seem like much of a kidder.

The sun was way, way up in the sky, and the whole thing was like high noon in a Western. But it was not a Western; it was baton-twirling lessons at Ida Nee's house in Ida Nee's backyard.

It was the summer of 1975.

It was the fifth day of June.

And two days before, on the third day of June, Raymie Clarke's father had run away with a woman who was a dental hygienist.

Hey, diddle, diddle, the dish ran away with the spoon.

Those were the words that went through Raymie's head every time she thought about her father and the dental hygienist.

But she did not say the words out loud any more because Raymie's mother was very upset, and talking about dishes and spoons running away together was not appropriate.

It was actually a great tragedy, what had happened.

That was what Raymie's mother said.

"This is a great tragedy," said Raymie's mother.

“Quit reciting nursery rhymes.”

It was a great tragedy because Raymie’s father had disgraced himself.

It was also a great tragedy because Raymie was now fatherless.

The thought of that – the fact of it – that she, Raymie Clarke, was without a father, made a small, sharp pain shoot through Raymie’s heart every time she considered it.

Sometimes the pain in her heart made her feel too terrified to go on. Sometimes it made her want to drop to her knees.

But then she would remember that she had a plan.

Two

“Get up,” said Ida Nee to the girl in the pink dress.

“She fainted,” said the other baton-twirling student, a girl named Beverly Tapinski, whose father was a cop.

Raymie knew the girl’s name and what her father did because Beverly had made an announcement at the beginning of the lesson. She had stared straight ahead, not looking at anybody in particular, and said, “My name is Beverly Tapinski and my father is a cop, so I don’t think you should mess with me.”

Raymie, for one, had no intention of messing with her.

“I’ve seen a lot of people faint,” said Beverly now. “That’s what happens when you’re the daughter of a cop. You see everything. You see it all.”

“Shut up, Tapinski,” said Ida Nee.

The sun was very high in the sky.

It hadn’t moved.

It seemed like someone had stuck it up there and then walked away and left it.

“I’m sorry,” whispered Raymie. “I betrayed you.”

Beverly Tapinski knelt down and put her hands on either side of the fainting girl’s face.

“What do you think you’re doing?” said Ida Nee.

The pine trees above them swayed back and forth. The lake, Lake Clara – where someone named Clara Wingtip had managed to drown herself a hundred years ago – gleamed and glittered.

The lake looked hungry.

Maybe it was hoping for another Clara Wingtip.

Raymie felt a wave of despair.

There wasn't time for people fainting. She had to learn how to twirl a baton and she had to learn fast, because if she learnt how to twirl a baton, she stood a good chance of becoming Little Miss Central Florida Tire.

And if she became Little Miss Central Florida Tire, her father would see her picture in the paper and come home.

That was Raymie's plan.