The Mighty Miss Malone by Christopher Paul Curtis

Lauren Kristele McMullan
laurenkmcullan@gmail.com

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Everybody knows that twelve-year old Deza Malone is capable of doing great things. She comes from a great family. But achieving greatness always mandates a struggle, and being poor and black in 1936 requires exceptional fortitude. Tragedy leaves Deza and her family homeless. With her father MIA and ailing while searching for employment, Deza, her mother, and brother move into a community of shacks. Her brother leaves to become a famous singer, and he supports Deza and their mother. Money is mailed in, supposedly from Deza’s father, but when Deza’s mother takes her to a home for drifters it becomes clear that things have not been as Deza thought.

Following the life of a character from Curtis’s awarding winning novel Bud, Not Buddy, Deza is a vivacious and entertaining protagonist that makes the journey through the book’s tragedy an adventure. The power of this story is in the characters and the setting. As is his forte, Curtis seamlessly pulls in historical events to create a backing to his characters that compliments them and gives power to their situations that invites the reader into history rather than keeping them on the sidelines. If readers are not already in love with Deza from her role in Bud, Not Buddy it may take a few pages to fall for her, but rest assured that it will happen. The strong relationships Deza has in her family also make it a worthwhile read.

Reviewer: Lauren McMullan

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