

**Jaden Stainforth (Grade 5, Birchwood School, Cleveland, OH)**

**Level I First Place Winner**

**Letter to author Kate DiCamillo concerning her book, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane***

Dear Kate DiCamillo:

My life has been a journey to find a forever home. I was born in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. My birth mother was infected with cancer so she placed me in an orphanage called Tam Binh One Orphanage. My nutrition level was low, and I had many health problems.

During my first three of four months at the orphanage, health problems started to appear. My condition became so bad that the orphanage took me to Cristina Noble Health Center across town. I resided there for two years while nurses and doctors cared for me.

When it was time for me to be adopted, the folks at the health center returned me to Tam Binh One because future parents couldn't adopt from Cristina Noble. At the orphanage, the nurses showed me pictures of unfamiliar people, and they gave me a blanket, which had a strange but appealing fragrance. Pictures kept flowing in, and in every one a beautiful lady smiled at me. I didn't know it yet, but she was about to become my mom.

Your book, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, in which Edward takes a long journey home, reminded me of my own adventure and has a similar happy ending. Your book was special to me, from the first time I read it. In his life, Edward was passed on to many people, just as I was. Some situations were joyful like when my mom picked me up, and others were miserable like when I developed serious health issues and everyone thought that I was about to rest in peace. Edward eventually was broken and was taken to a doll mender. Similarly, my condition became so severe at the orphanage that I needed special care. At the doll shop, Edward waited for years until someone bought him. One day a mother and her daughter came in. The little one wanted Edward. Her mother looked at him and realized this was the old doll she had lost when she was a child. In the same way, once the nurses realized someone was adopting me, they took me back to the orphanage. For both Edward and me, our lives became joyful after these twists of fate.

Many children, such as I, find themselves in a situation where they must wait for a new parent to take them as their child. Even if other people take care of them for a period of time, they may not feel at home. However, when they reach their final destination, as Edward did when he was sold to the lady who used to own him and as I did when my mom picked me up for the first time, they feel at home.

Thank you, Kate DiCamillo, for writing your magical concoction of words and sentences. It has helped me understand that even during troubled times there will eventually be an exit. This realization will help me when I become older and need to worry about making a steady income and paying bills. When I confront problems, I will remember your book and do my best to fix them, rather than grieve and moan about my situation.

Sincerely,

**Jaden Stainforth**