



Kaya's Heart Song

Written by Diwa Tharan Sanders

Illustrated by Nerina Canzi

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The beautiful, vibrant, yet relaxing colors on the cover of *Kaya's Heart Song* invite readers to dive into a book that appears to be about music or song. The setting, though, is the natural inspiring beauty of the Malaysian jungle, and the story begins with young Kaya watching her mother meditate. Kaya wonders what her mother is singing and begins her journey to find a heart song of her own just as her mother.

Kaya's journey takes her to a part of the forest where she has never been when she follows a butterfly. She meets Pak, the keeper of the gate to an old, broken elephant carousel in the middle of the jungle. Though the carousel appears to be unloved, unused and forgotten, in Kaya's eyes it is beautiful. As Kaya removes the vines from the elephants, her thoughts turn to the princesses who could have ridden the elephants in the jungle. While she is working, her mind becomes quiet and still. Then she hears the sound of a soft melody and feels the music within her body. Upon hearing the music, the broken vine-covered carousel begins to move. The gatekeeper Pak, to his amazement, sees the carousel move and jumps on to enjoy the ride.

Kaya has discovered her heart song! She also understands her mother's words, "If you have a heart song anything is possible". Soon the pages of the book are filled with small children riding the beautifully colored elephants and enjoying the music. Kaya's heart song has created magic in the air. The book ends with the carousel slowing and the music quieting as the elephants curtsy and Pak thanks Kaya for bringing back the magic. Kaya thanks Pak for helping her find her heart song. The vibrant pictures allow readers to feel the emotions of the book and the calming cool colors add to this effect. Kaya agrees to share her heart song for all to hear.

Kaya's Heart Song reminds readers that being mindful of themselves and the things around them can impact not only their own lives but the lives of those around them. Humans might feel like broken and useless beings, especially in the pandemic and with social distancing. However, if we are in a mindful state, we can see the beauty in ourselves and bring that beauty out for others to see, giving them a sense of purpose and belonging. We must share our heart songs to keep hope alive along with the magic of being so we are not merely existing.

Other books that can inspire finding our heart songs include *What Does It Mean to Be Present?* (Rana DiOrio & Eliza Wheeler, 2020), *Visiting Feelings* (Lauren Rubenstein & Shelly Hehenberger, 2013), and *Meditation Is an Open Sky: Mindfulness for Kids* (Whitney Stewart & Sally Rippin, 2015).

Diwa Tharan Sanders is a Malaysian author of Indian-Filipino heritage. A keen yoga practitioner, she teaches meditation and breathwork classes, and makes mala necklaces and bracelets for healing, happiness, and inspiration. Like her necklaces and bracelets, her story allows people to understand that the beauty in their hearts can be shared to inspire others. Visit her website (<https://www.diwatharansanders.com/>) for more information.

Nerina Canzi was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and has created murals and done other decorative and artistic painting. She currently lives in Argentina. For more information, please visit her website (<https://nerinacanzi.com/!/-bienvenido-2/>).

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