Silver Shoes by Paul Miles Schneider

You Won't Put It Down!

When Donald Gardner’s parents tell him they'll be taking an exciting road trip through Kansas, he openly cringes. He is sure it will be a boring summer vacation. But at one of their final roadside stops, they are approached by a poor woman offering to sell a strange item—a silver shoe. While Donald’s mother is initially reluctant, she is smitten with the shoe and buys it. Wanting to impress his classmates, Donald brings it in for show-and-tell when the new school year starts. His friends liken the shoe to something out of The Wizard of Oz, and his teacher agrees the idea is not farfetched considering author L. Frank Baum wrote about silver shoes, not ruby slippers, which were strictly in the movie. Donald is skeptical that the shoe is anything more than a relic, but when he accepts a dare from his two best buddies to try it on, frightening and incredible things begin to happen. And when he meets George Clarke, a reclusive man who has been in hiding for many years, Donald finds out there is a lot more to Baum’s story than he thinks. Join Donald as he unravels Baum’s earth-shattering secret in Silver Shoes.

My Personal Review:
When I was in grade school in the early 1970's, there was one author who utterly captivated me by her gift for telling her tales from the perspective of the children who served as her protagonists. This author was Wilson Gage (Mary Q. Steele). Gage knew just how much to tell without giving away the plot’s great secret, yet made the immediate narrative too fascinating to skip to get to the end. She knew how adults and children interact—that the latter live in an entirely different plane of reality, one they unfortunately forget how to access with the onslaught of puberty and pop culture. Above all, she knew the complex emotional crazy quilt of childhood feelings, hopes, dreams, fears—how children assign power to objects which to the adults in their lives are inanimate and lifeless. If those adults only knew. Well, move over Wilson Gage. Paul Miles Schneider, in his first novel, has written a book about a boy’s adventure which works not just for children but for adults, because it shows how often adults don’t check in to a child’s reality, his inner world that he is trained to keep out of sight, and it shows how
much of that world still lives in even the most jaded grown up. In "Silver Shoes", Schneider takes the silver slippers of L. Frank Baum's Dorothy in his 1900 novel "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" and frames them as talismans not of fiction but reality, lifting them off the page into everyday American life, with all the ramifications - magical and otherwise - that that transfer entails. Schneider's masterful technique lends a tautness and mystery that will keep the book in your hands from first page to last. To reveal anything more about the plot would be to rob the reader of experiencing what to me was one of the most pleasurable reading experiences I've had in years--since reading the masterworks of Wilson Gage, to be precise. The book begs to be made into a film, but don't wait for Hollywood. "Silver Shoes" is a fantastic journey that has to be read to be believed.

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