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The One and Only Ivan

Author:

Katherine Applegate

Illustrator:

Patricia Castelao

Grades 4+

Ivan (The Ape at Exit 8) is a downtrodden, has-been silverback gorilla living in a small, unkept domain within a shopping mall, occasionally accompanied by Bob, a stray dog who sneaks into Ivan's domain through a hole in the glass.

Stella, an aging elephant with a bad foot, dies from lack of treatment after Ruby, a baby elephant purchased from a defunct circus, arrives at the mall. The owner hopes Ruby will jumpstart visitor attendance again. Before Stella dies, she asks Ivan to promise that he will bring Ruby somewhere safe, knowing his devotion to protection of his friends is paramount.

Ivan's poetic narration is honest, painful, and heartbreaking; Applegate's insight into captive animal life is powerful. Don't miss this book, no matter how old you are.

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