

9 May 2005

Dear Maine Readers,

Thank you for liking my little mouse! Thank you for voting for *The Tale of Despereaux*. I wrote the story because my best friend's son (his name is Luke) asked me for the story of an unlikely hero with exceptionally large ears. It wasn't a big leap of imagination, then, for me to think that Luke's story should be about a mouse. After all, can you imagine a more unlikely hero than a small, sickly, odd mouse?

I had a very hard time writing the book. It was different than the other books I had written (*Because of Winn-Dixie* and *The Tiger Rising*) and I was afraid that I would fail miserably at telling such a complicated (and at the same time, silly) story.

Often, as I worked at telling the story, I felt exactly like Despereaux—as if I were journeying into a deep, dark, rat-filled dungeon. I was lost and afraid. And also like the mouse, I didn't feel up to the task. But I kept going. I kept taking tiny step after tiny step into the darkness. And eventually, I found my way back to the light.

Can you imagine, then, how much it means to me that you like this story? I am deeply grateful to you for reading it, for venturing into the dungeon (and back out again) with Despereaux and me.

Your happy friend,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate DiCamillo