October Book Buddy

Barely Scary Picks

Clover has a confession to make. Your bee buddy is chicken-hearted—a “Halloweenie.” While she does love candy corn, a two-toned honey she shares with the drones, October howls with ghastly ghouls, witches on brooms and manic monsters send her antennae quivering with fright.

To that end, Clover’s been on the hunt for books to suggest this month that won’t make young readers’ timbers shiver. Her Halloween hunt has paid off with three “Barely Scary Picks” that kids are sure to relish. Page On, fear free, my young friends!

Books soothe the savage beasts, and a busy boy too, in Gideon Sterer’s new release “I Will Read to You,” a rhyming book with a main character who looks a lot like the star of the classic, “Where the Wild Things Are.”

The boy in Sterer’s book has energy plus, especially at night when it’s tuck-in time. This frustrates his mom as she readies herself to read her son his favorite type of book, always “something spooky.” Halfway into the story the boy asks questions about creatures that go bump in the night. Who tucks them in? Who reads to them? Shouldn’t they have a night time routine like he does? “… they need love and comfort too!”

There’s only one way to solve the conundrum—hunt down the vampires, skeletons, ghouls, dragons, ghosts, giants, witches and extend a literary invitation, which is exactly what the boy does, his mom following him on his adventure, flashlight in hand. Each time the boy discovers another group of creatures he exclaims “I will read to you,” until he has a mass gathering clamoring for a story.

Illustrations by Charles Santoso will ramp up readers’ anticipation for Halloween night, creatures coming to life with personality and emotion, set against a backdrop of creative nighttime scenes.

In a field a scarecrow stands, hat on his head, arms outstretched, “… he didn’t remember the very beginning of his days. He only knew he was created with loving hands….”

So begins “Hopefully the Scarecrow,” by Michelle Houts, a lovely tale about a scarecrow and his friend, a little brunette with braids who tends him each year, putting the scarecrow in place in the garden and later moving him to a shed when the air grows crisp in the winter.

When the girl first meets the scarecrow, she says, “Hopefully, the scarecrow will keep the birds away.” From that day on, the scarecrow mistakenly thinks his name is Hopefully.

The girl is reliable on her visits to see Hopefully, always bringing along a book to read to the scarecrow as she sits among the flowers at his feet. This fills Hopefully with joy, his pleasure apparent in illustrations by Sara Palacios that depict the growing friendship the two enjoy. The books the girl read enabled Hopefully to have lots of experiences as he “… journeyed over rocky cliffs, and sailed rolling seas, and met kings and queens and dragons and other scarecrows.”

Stories make the girl and scarecrow’s life richer. But as the years pass, changes occur —the girl suddenly stops visiting and the scarecrow begins to lose hope as his face fades and his clothing suffers the effects of time.

In the end, all is not lost. There are more books in store for Hopefully, whose future is bright in a brand new spot where he’s surrounded by stories and friends.

The repercussions of a fire in a town library years ago continue to haunt a community, the crime remaining unsolved, in “The Lost Library” a quizzical who-dun-it by Rebecca Stead and Wendy Mass.

Two people died in the tragic incident, one of whom was the beloved librarian. Many townspeople believe Edward McClelland was responsible for the fire. Edward is an exterminator, but the soft-hearted man doesn’t kill mice, instead he traps them and takes them across the river. Edward is the father of the book’s main character, Evan, a fifth grader.

Evan has never heard anything about his dad being suspect in starting the fire, but all of that changes when Evan finds some books in the town’s new Little Free Library. The books had belonged to the brick-and-mortar library that burnt to the ground.

A check-out list on the inside of the books shows the last person to check out the books was Edward McClelland, on the day of the fire. Seeing his dad’s signature on the list upsets Evan, as does another discovery he makes, leaving the boy to wonder what his father knows about the fire—and if, in fact, he has some connection to the event.

Evan’s concern escalates when he tries to talk to his father. Bringing up the library causes his dad to appear nervous, a subject he seems to want to avoid at all costs.

Readers will be captivated as they try to decipher clues and discover the culprit who caused the fire. They’ll also be taken with the library cat, Mortimer, and his unlikely mouse buddies, as well as some ghosts with unique personalities. “The Lost Library” is a smart, entertaining read that will keep readers guessing.