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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ PICTURE BOOKS

All on a Sleepy Night

Shutta Crum
Sylvie Daigneault, illustrator
Stoddart Kids (September 2001)
Unknown $15.95 (28pp)
978-0-7737-3315-2

Strange night noises are transformed into a soothing lullaby in this bedtime book for the very young. A little boy shares a bed with Grandma, Grandpa, and two cats. As he drifts off to sleep, the sounds of the bedroom, the house, and the world outside come to the forefront.

The text of this picture book is expertly patterned to hold the attention of small children. A scene is set—for example the kitchen, with its leaky faucet and noisy refrigerator—and then followed by an onomatopoeic refrain. In this case, “Hum, drip, hum, d-r-i-p. All on a sleepy night. Hum, d-r-i-p, hum, d-r-i-p. Under a northern sky.” The second and fourth lines of the refrain remain constant throughout the book, as does the author’s ear for night sounds. Pipes gurgle, logging trucks rumble, and Grandpa’s breathing is a “whiss.” Satisfying rhymes and a secondary refrain, “The house about him is singing—singing its sleepy song,” further captivate the reader and ensure the success of this picture book as a read-aloud.

The cozy tone created by Crum’s words is mirrored in the illustrations. Rendered in a soothing palette of blues, greens, and purples, the images of the story are gently whimsical. The refrigerator is seen dancing as well as humming. Although unmentioned in the text, a friendly-looking moon appears on nearly every page. Shining down on the characters, dancing with sleeping cats, peering in windows, it is the visual star of the story. From the glass of water on the bedside table to the cobwebs and mice in the basement, the details in these drawings are homey and easily recognizable to children. The engaging illustrations and musical text make this an ideal bedtime story to share with a pre-reader.

In addition to its strengths as a read-aloud, this book provides the perfect antidote to scary night noises. Caregivers will find it to be a natural springboard for discussions with children about unusual noises in their own homes. This book is recommended for libraries, and would also make an excellent addition to a new family’s permanent collection.

CAROLYN BAILEY (April 15, 2002)

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