ForeWord Reviews

JUVENILE FICTION

Burton the Kind Scarecrow
V. A. Boeholt
Nathaniel P. Jensen, illustrator
Little Five Star
978-1-58985-202-0
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Burton the Kind Scarecrow is a story about sharing and giving of oneself to others. To relay this message author V.A. Boeholt uses a lonesome scarecrow standing in a farmer's field and watching over his garden. A protector of the farmer's vegetables, Burton does his utmost to prevent the animals around him from reducing the crop to nothing. When mice show an interest in nesting in a pumpkin, he offers them his hat and when the crows peck at the lines of beans he suggests they take his overalls instead. Burton offers his clothing to the rabbits to prevent them from taking the rhubarb. When the harvesters arrive, the field is intact and the vegetables are ready to be picked for market.

"A heap of thanks to Burton for protecting the crop," the farmer says. "Our family will have enough food until the next fall harvest and we also have plenty to sell." Burton is happy to help, but as the fall turns to winter he keeps offering the hungry birds and animals pieces of his outfit and straw stuffing until he himself disintegrates. In Spring the farmer declares the garden will need "a whole scarecrow to watch over it, not parts and scraps of a ruined one."

As Burton sadly considers his fate, the birds and animals return to the field and are determined to help. "They realized that Burton's caring and kindness had helped them survive the long winter," Boeholt writes. So they band together and stuff his body with new straw, outfit him in new clothes, and pull him back up on his post. When the farmer arrives with a new scarecrow the next day, he is delighted. "Now we have two stylish scarecrows to protect the garden," he declares.

With colorful, bright illustrations by Nathaniel P. Jensen, this book discusses the virtue of good deeds, loyalty, and helping others in their time of need. It delivers this message in an uncomplicated, easy-to-understand format using a character children can easily relate to. The final pages of the book include a history of scarecrows that will be fascinating for adult readers, plus a resource guide delineating the story concepts, discussion points, and ideas for activities. Boeholt and Jensen are to be commended for creating a lively, fun, interesting book embedded

with an important lesson for young readers.

Lauren Kramer