ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Chelsea's New Home
Kimberley M. Levy
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Chelsea Fish wants more in life than an artificial pond in the window of a flower store called The Magic Garden. Her friends refuse to join her as she “follows [her] heart’s dream to roam.” With a little suspension of disbelief, readers can travel along with the determined goldfish as she leaps onto the sticky tape of a flower box to make her escape. During her escapades, Chelsea clings to a taxi antenna and speeds down the street, flees from a frightening shark in a movie theater, and lands in a smelly trash pile.

These terrors pale in comparison with the “menacing four-legged thing” and the “rolling monster made of wood / on top of which a giant stood” she encounters. Readers of all ages will enjoy this fish’s eye view of a dog and a rider on a skateboard. Finally, Chelsea escapes the grime of the city to swim in the crystal blue of a natural pond with a waterfall.

While quick to note that Chelsea somehow travels without water or swimming, children still find her an appealing character with her huge, limpid eyes, curling eyelashes, lipsticked lips, and teal bow. The book is likely to prompt discussions in which adults and children can share their own dreams and experiences with new homes.

The author, a graduate of Smith College, encourages her own daughters to follow their dreams like the little goldfish does. She has brought Chelsea to life with lively rhymed text that works well, although the rhythm is sometimes strained. Illustrator Herman, who has a BFA in Visual Communications from the University of Wisconsin, used prominent black borders and bold colors in his ink and gouache wash-off illustrations, giving the feel of woodcut blocks, which fleshes out the story nicely.

Peggy Beck