



Cleo, the Curious Cat

Little Nickel

Xlibris

Unknown (pp)

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Any cat owner can relate to tales of quirky and endearing feline behavior, and most have a few of their own favorites to share. In this picture-book tribute to her deceased cat, Cleo, Nickel shares some of the special moments from her much-loved pet's eventful life.

The book begins with Cleo's arrival at Nickel's front door, and meanders through a series of memories related to the cat's life, narrated in the first person by Cleo herself. There is no specific plot or story arc; rather, a series of snapshot moments presumably in chronological order, which flesh out Cleo's feline personality. Readers familiar with cats will smile at some of Cleo's antics. She sees something she calls "that long and thin" and decides, "I will catch one and take it home to Ma." It turns out to be a lizard. Cleo is puzzled when Ma puts it back outside, but it doesn't deter her from catching more gifts. The "Christmas" section of the book includes similarly endearing moments of pet ownership, like Cleo hiding in the Christmas tree, and her first meeting with a baby.

The writing has some spelling and verb tense discrepancies, which can be confusing for the reader. The baby is inconsistently identified as Jozelyn, Joselyn, and, in the illustrations, Joszlyn. The story switches between past and present tense, sometimes within the same sentence. For example, the baby "puts her head on mine and said I love you." While these are small errors, the flow of the story is interrupted when the reader has to make sense of the writing.

The crayon and color pencil illustrations, drawn in a naïve, realistic style, have the appearance of a child's drawings. The endearing youthful artwork, and the love the artist clearly feels for Cleo, compensate for the lack of dimension and perspective in the individual drawings.

Cleo was not only a curious cat, but an active and loving cat, as well. Her personality is clearly portrayed through the individual episodes of her life. Cleo's story will appeal to a cat-loving audience of both adults and children.

CAROLYN BAILEY (June 24, 2011)

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