

Dillie's Encounter with The Bucket Man

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In an age when books too often fail to capture a reader's attention, the author of *Dillie's Encounter with The Bucket Man* does well to begin her story with action: at her mother's urging, Dillie is running away from someone towards her underground home. After this memory, the story returns to the present when Dillie recalls that the night she was running was also the night her brother Artie and other armadillos went missing. While it is clear that Dillie and her family are animals threatened by humans, the fact that they are armadillos is not mentioned until near the end.

Dillie's family and other groups of armadillos live underneath a golf course. The dreaded Bucket Man is a employee who takes care of the grounds and collects stray golf balls. As far as Dillie and her family are concerned, the Bucket Man is terrorizing them, while they are trying to live peaceful lives. Like many a child protagonist before her, Dillie (with the help of her brother) takes matters into her own hands, sneaking out to investigate. She and her brother end up helping the Bucket Man after he crashes his golf cart.

Alas, the story jumps through time, making it difficult to follow. The initial flashback with Dillie running is followed by another layer of memory, a story from Dillie's mother and then a return to the present.

Additionally, Dillie has two siblings with similar names: Artie (who disappears) and Armie (who helps Dillie come to the Bucket Man's aid), and this may be confusing for some readers. These things, plus the fact that what exactly happened to Artie is not explained, are things that get in the way of what could be a very amusing story. Perhaps the author presumes that readers will assume that Artie and the others died (illustrations show that the Bucket Man has a rifle in his golf cart), but not having an answer may leave young readers (and their parents) wondering.

The concept of telling the story from an animal's point of view is clever. Readers will be entertained, for example, when Dillie guesses that the Bucket Man's post-crash neck brace makes him an "armadillo man." But overall, the story is difficult to follow and does not come together.

JADA BRADLEY (June 27, 2011)

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