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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ PICTURE BOOKS

Little Boy and Mr. Scary Snake

D. A-Gravill
AuthorHouse (Dec 27, 2012)
Softcover $28.16 (56pp)
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D. A-Gravill has written an important book for children and parents. The excellence of *Little Boy and Mr. Scary Snake* lies in the simple, expansive, open-to-interpretation nature of its story.

Little Boy and Mr. Scary Snake tells the tale of a young boy whose age is unspecified and name unexplained. His single mother owns a pet snake that lives in her bedroom, which everyone believes to be harmless—everyone except Little Boy. Every night the snake slides into Little Boy's room and frightens him, and the distraught child tells adult after adult what's happening to no avail. Finally, someone believes him and helps him overcome his problem.

D. A-Gravill was born in Bologna, Italy, and now studies children's counseling and English literature in London. Her studies have borne fruit. *Little Boy and Mr. Scary Snake*, her first book, aims to help people of all ages better understand and address the unique fears and problems of children.

On its surface, the story might seem to indicate an abuse scenario—with the snake, trusted by Little Boy's mother, sneaking into the bedroom at night. But with its characters generically named (Miss Sweet, Miss Caring, Constable Wise) and the snake's specific actions described in a very broad way, Mr. Scary Snake's threat could echo that of a bully, a bad influence, or some less obvious problem.

"'We have much mischief to do, and I have much to teach you,' said Mr. Scary Snake. 'If you try to tell anyone about me, no one will believe you!'"

Developed as a therapeutic tool, *Little Boy and Mr. Scary Snake* offers brief sections designed as an interactive tool to help children relate to the story and its lessons. For example, "Why is Little Boy afraid to tell the nice bobby about Mr. Scary Snake?"

One negative is that American readers, especially children, might require explanation of several terms and situations used in the text, such as Little Boy calling his mother "Mummy," "bobby" for a policeman, and being served dinner at school. Despite the need for explanations, the story addresses issues that transcend cultural differences. With its clear and colorful illustrations, a difficult topic is handled with simple and straightforward language. *Little Boy and Mr. Scary Snake* will prove a valuable addition to any child's library.

PETER DABBENE (March 15, 2013)

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