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Little Rabbit Goes to School

Harry Horse
Peachtree Publishers (Jul 30, 2004)
Unknown $15.95 (32pp)
978-1-56145-320-7

Little Rabbit should have known better, but he is a very little bunny who is headed for his first day of school. Against his mother's advice, he decides to take Charlie Horse-a wooden horse on wheels, pulled by a string-with him. Mama also reminds him not to eat his lunch until it is time, but Little Rabbit, at his toy's suggestion, opens the box and finishes his lettuce sandwiches and carrot cakes on the way to school.

The delightful romp that follows is embedded with some valuable lessons to discuss as parents and children plan for that all-important step into school. Mama lets Little Rabbit make choices, which he discovers were not wise. He also learns to share through the example of others, not his own instincts.

Shy Little Rabbit in a bunny suit and Charlie Horse are welcomed by his teacher and introduced to the other students, but then the trouble starts. As his classmates listen to a story about bad rabbits, Charlie Horse wants to gallop. Little Rabbit, at the other end of the string, cannot contain him. The disobedient toy flies over other students and the teacher's shoes. Miss Morag, as teachers are wont to do, puts the toy on her desk. The time-out doesn't last, and Charlie Horse soon is back in the thick of things, causing more distractions.

Little Rabbit is possessive about his toy during recess, claiming that Charlie Horse wants to play only with him. By lunchtime, Little Rabbit has forgotten that he has already eaten his. The other children generously share their food with him. In return, Little Rabbit lets them play with his prized toy. He also comes to some other understandings, such as learning to be part of a group and to follow directions. Later at home, Little Rabbit says, "Tomorrow Charlie Horse can stay at home with you, Mama. He's too naughty for school."

The irresistible, whimsical illustrations (by the author) have the quality of a children's literary classic, as endearing as those in *Winnie the Pooh*. Horse, a resident of Scotland, has written and illustrated more than thirty children's books, including *Little Rabbit Lost*, which was named a Best Children's Book of 2002 by *Publishers Weekly*. He has also worked as a political cartoonist.

The combination of charming artwork and the gentle story about a first day at school and consequences of choices make this a delightful book for preschoolers. It is not preachy, but lets young readers think about what Little Rabbit might do differently to avoid trouble.

LINDA SALISBURY (August 18, 2009)

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