Clarion Review

Picture Books

Lucky's New Family
Stephanie B. Hopkins
AuthorHouse
978-1-4343-7276-5
Two Stars (out of Five)

Choosing a new pet is an exciting experience. In this picture book, the suspense and anticipation of the event are heightened by a simple twist: The story unfolds from a pet's point of view. Lucky lives in a pet shop with a few other dogs of various breeds. As the story opens, he muses, "Maybe today it will happen, someone will take me home to live with them." He's right; today is, in fact, his lucky day.

As Lucky realizes he's being considered by one of the shop's customers, his excitement builds, and he wiggles, barks, and knocks his companions out of the way. The first-person, present-tense narration of the story fit Lucky's excitable canine temperament. The awkward computer-generated illustrations are less engaging, and look less professional than the cover artwork. The simple line-drawn cartoon figures lack vibrancy and dimension, and occasional discrepancies in scale and perspective are visually jarring.

At only eight pages, this book is about a quarter of the length of an average children's picture book, and there's simply not enough content to leave the reader with a satisfying experience. The reader meets Lucky and learns he wants a home, and then he's bought by a man, Mr. Hoppie. The story ends abruptly with his purchase, and no information about his future owner or his new home is provided. Additional pages would allow space to flesh out Lucky's character and beef up the skimpy plot.

An author's note indicates that this book is the first in a planned series. While Lucky is an enjoyable character, and his point-of-view is a fun vantage point for viewing pet ownership, future stories need more action. Collaboration with a professional illustrator would also greatly improve the series.

Carolyn Bailey