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Clarion Review

Quackless Duck and His Secret Pals
Jane Lowrey-Christian
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Quackless Duck, a toy rubber ducky, is left alone in the bathtub while his playmate and the playmate's family are away. Quackless gets a visit from two young bear cubs who appear in an oddly crooked window. The duck's "secret pals" are brother and sister bear cubs, Harley Ray and Haley May, who jump into the tub, displacing Quackless Duck and quite a lot of water. Quackless tells them that they have to do something about the mess before the family gets back.

The bear cubs call on their mother, a big bear cub with a soft voice. She makes no apology for her cubs' behavior, but she does clean up the water, leaving Quackless on a chair instead of in the tub.

Quackless Duck belongs to the genre of children's books that makes a child's toy the center of the story rather than the child. Readers never see the nameless boy who plays with Quackless Duck. This omission would have acceptable if only Quackless were given a bigger voice in this story.

The book, which is the first in a series, ends with a less-than-satisfying conclusion where readers learn that Quackless can only speak to "his pals who live in the tall, dark, green woods." The boy and his family will never know how he got out of the tub.

Author Jane Lowery-Christian begins her first children's book with a beautifully written dedication to the her children, in which she explains, "I wanted them to have a home life like I did growing up, with a feeling of security, stability and responsibility…That is love at its best, the feel of belonging." The story would be more compelling if the author had involved her own children. As it is now, the writing is repetitive, and young readers are never given a reason to identify with this rather passive rubber duck.

Jada Bradley