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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ PICTURE BOOKS

The Policeman and the Dog Who Always Caught the Bad Guys

Miles M. Pines
Taillefer Long, illustrator
Pines Publishers
Unknown $0.00 (pp)
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The Policeman and the Dog Who Always Caught the Bad Guys has spirited drawings, imaginative settings, and characters with delightful names in a well-executed moral that crime will be punished. Yet the most amazing feature of this children's picture book is that its author is a first grader! This is the primary offering from Miles M. Pines, a student at the Collegiate School in New York City, but the overall quality of his initial effort is empirical: Master Pines will have a ready-made audience eagerly awaiting his next creation. The book's illustrator, Taillefer Long, presents the main characters in electrifying colors. The facial expressions of the townspeople, the police force, and even the bad guys imply a multitude of feelings, even without a lot of dialogue. Officer Cherries, whose blue eyes match his uniform, and Hunter—a droopy-eared, droopy-eyed yellow dog with brown spots—are always on the job and happily keep Pumpkinville safe.

Pumpkinville is built from orange pumpkins—sometimes single pumpkins high, sometimes several pumpkins high. All the buildings are orange: the police station, toy shop, residences, the school, a candy shop, and the jail. The story tells of the happy citizens of Pumpkinville, and how they treasure the feeling of being safe and sound. Officer Cherries makes pumpkin pies and a special mixed juice drink for the townspeople to celebrate every time he and Hunter send a bad guy to jail.

Readers will see police officers as kind figures. They'll learn to have an appreciation for intelligent authority figures that safeguard their well being. They'll learn that justice will prevail, and that humans and animals can have a loving partnership. Although the character names are whimsical, one of the bad guys is a baby named Smelly because he never bathes and the policemen are named after fruit—this may not be the best image for children. This shortcoming will be overcome as the young author matures. The construction of the story, the straight-forward simple and complex sentences, the originality of the character of Officer Cherries, and the sense of joyful fun imparted in the telling of the tale, make this book a winner for children.

Both children and their parents will be inspired to know that a first grader created this thought-provoking and entertaining picture book.

MARY POPHAM (June 22, 2011)

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