

Timmy's Journey

Susan Von Tobel

Regina Atwood, Illustrator

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In *Timmy's Journey*, author Susan Von Tobel has created a gentle yet brave story that should help guide children going through the challenges of adoption.

Timmy, a young rabbit, is alone in the world. He lost his mother when she ran off in the night to defend him against something that was making a scary sound. A nice family takes him in, but they do not have enough room for him to stay long, so he goes to live with a family of porcupines who want to keep him forever. But the species divide causes discomfort and a desire for something more inclusive. Finally, Timmy finds a “forever family” made up of a medley of animals who love and accept each other just as they are.

Timmy's Journey is brief and told in rhyme. The topic, however, is a serious one that requires a great deal of honesty and sensitivity. The rhyming, which is naturally light and whimsical, creates a jarring contrast. For example, the author describes Timmy's separation from his mother:

“Wide eyed he watched as she vanished from sight
He ran to the hole, his chest tight with fright
He dashed into the night blinded by the dark
He lost his way, and fell asleep in the park”

The author skims the surface of the harsh emotional reality that her main character is dealing with. Timmy goes from having a loving mother to being all alone in the world, then from living as a foster child to being rejected by a potential “forever family,” until he finally finds a new family to call his own. The emotional roller coaster that Timmy experiences could have been explored a great deal more.

Illustrated by Regina Atwood, the muted color palette and innocent images nicely match the gentle tone of the text. However, the characters lack any sense of movement or emotion that would better connect them to the story.

Timmy's Journey is a courageous book. The process of adoption for older children can be heartbreaking, particularly if a promised “forever family” does not work out the way it is supposed to. The author is to be commended for attempting to create a story to help children who are dealing with the pain of a failed adoption. The writing is easy enough for a small child to read on his or her own, but young readers will get a great deal more out of the story if the reading is shared with a caregiver.

Children between the ages of three and seven who are currently experiencing adoption difficulties may find great comfort in a story that explores the realities of the process and reinforces the message that they are not to blame if an adoption does not work out. Most importantly, *Timmy's Journey* encourages children to not lose hope.

CATHERINE THURESON (June 14, 2013)

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