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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ PICTURE BOOKS

Vegetable Dreams/Huerto sonado

Dawn Jeffers
Claude Schneider, illustrator
Eida de la Vega, translator
Raven Tree Press (August 2006)
Hardcover $16.95 (32pp)
978-0-9741992-9-0

Tears roll down Erin's cheeks as she grieves her broken dream of having a garden. The girl's parents insist that she is too young to do the work. Mr. Martinez, a neighbor, lets Erin plant vegetables in his garden. This re-release of a 2001 title presents Erin's story in English at the top of even-numbered pages and in a new Spanish translation at the bottom. The translator's previous work includes *My Pal, Victor / Mi Amigo, Victor* and *Alien Invaders / Invasores Extraterrestres*.

Old-fashioned, impressionistic illustrations in pastels enhance the odd-numbered pages. Intermingling various shades produces the effect of light and shadows. Blurring irrelevant aspects of the background puts the emphasis on people. The illustrator, a graduate of Layton School of Art, counts *Buried Treasure of Appleton, Wisconsin* and *Snyder and Baldy: Wisconsin Circus Elephants* among his credits. His prints have appeared in Harrods Department Store in London and across the United States in galleries and shops.

One page begins, "Together Erin and Mr. Martinez tilled the soil and bought seeds," with an illustration depicting Erin with her bun of reddish-orange hair and Mr. Martinez with his cane as they approach an old country store. A sign above the porch roof reads, "Farm & Garden."

After the pair finish their work, "they would sit on the three-legged stools and drink lemonade together." Sharing details about their lives leads to a meaningful friendship.

With a master's degree in administrative science, the author is the publisher of Raven Tree Press, originally a marketing firm that Jeffers helped turn into a bilingual-book publisher. *Vegetable Dreams* is a Midwest Independent Publishers Association's Children's Book of the Year and a Book Wholesalers, Inc. Top Pick.

Clear, concise prose teaches children ages four to eight to work hard and to value friendship with senior citizens. As Erin finds out, fixing a broken dream may not be easy, but it's gratifying.
(August 18, 2009)

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