



The Misadventures of Sweetie Pie

Books Reviewed:

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

Dark humour is at the root of the latest offering from Van Allsburg and like its predecessors there is a lesson to be learned from the story, though there is much more colour in the illustrations herein. Told from the viewpoint of Sweetie-Pie, a somewhat grumpy hamster, it documents what happens when a girl buys him from the pet shop. She quickly tires of him and Sweetie-Pie is passed on to a series of young owners, all of whom mistreat him in some way, until he eventually becomes the class pet at a primary school. There he is tended by different groups of children until the term ends and a boy elects to take him home for the Christmas holidays. However, the boy stops in the playground on his way home and completely forgets his charge. Darkness falls, and snow falls. The distraught boy returns next morning to an empty, open-doored cage.

At the start of the next term, the other children soon get over the loss of their pet and move on: the hamster is replaced by a guinea pig. But Sweetie Pie too has moved on ? he now lives very happily in a tree with a pair of squirrels.

This story may well have animal lovers throwing up their hands in despair as they read of the repeated uncaring treatment of the small rodent. Although I didn't find the storyline particularly appealing I admire Van Allsburg's wonderfully expressive watercolour, pencil and pen and ink illustrations. They really give a feeling of Sweetie Pie's changing feelings. The sight of a dog leering in through the cage bars chilled me, let alone the poor hamster, and a picture of a very irritated Sweetie Pie clad in a pink doll's dress speaks volumes.

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