

charming narrative pairs seamlessly with the colorfully detailed art, which utilizes a bright palette, conjuring up the feeling of sunshine upon a new snowfall. Gabo, not having winter gear or clothing—and, worst of all, no sled—is shy about approaching the other children, but, with some encouragement from friendly neighbors, help from his Mami, and unexpected gifts, he learns that being creative and open-minded can lead to new friendships and an unforgettable day outside. Otheguy's dialogue, mixing Spanish and English, captures the tentativeness and reluctance of many children, like Gabo, to try something new and put themselves out there, while the illustrations offer a nostalgic take on winter playdates and the brilliance of childhood. In the end, after a long day of playing, Gabo looks forward to sharing some sweet treats with new friends. —*Stephanie Cohen*

Stuck Inside.

By Sally Anne Garland. Illus. by the author.

Jan. 2021. 40p. Phoenix International/Sunbird, \$12.99 (9781503758667). PreS–Gr. 1.

Tilly's dog, Toby, has an injured paw, plus it's storming, which means staying indoors, something neither is happy about. But when Toby draws Tilly's attention to his leash, she's inspired to search the house for other outdoor-related things. After rediscovering abundant objects and toys designed for outdoor fun, they "decided to make something good out of what they had." With a bicycle, wading pool, balls, and a broken umbrella, they assemble "the most amazing, astounding, and spectacular Dog-Walking, Storm-Protecting Machine"—and they imagine fun outdoor activities to come once the weather clears, all while enjoying and making the most of their time inside. Expressive, colorfully detailed, soft-textured illustrations are a mix of muted and cheery hues, incorporating some whimsy and extending the text. Though adults might be bothered by the lack of parental supervision at Tilly's house, or her somewhat risky choices, like standing on a skateboard while *also* wearing roller skates and balancing numerous objects, kids will likely still appreciate her creative endeavors and be empowered to bolster their own moods by finding entertainment through imaginative play. —*Shelle Rosenfeld*

The Tale of the Valiant Ninja Frog.

By Alastair Chisholm. Illus. by Jez Tuya.

Jan. 2021. 32p. Kane Miller, \$12.99 (9781684641796). PreS–Gr. 1.

This follow-up to the author's *The Prince and the Witch and the Thief and the Bears* (2019) once again shows a father completely at the mercy of his kids' demands as to what should be included in the story he's telling, with hilarious results. This time, the book's framing device is the family camping out. The father starts a campfire story, with his

son and daughter demanding that it should have a prince, a princess, a monster, bears, and a frog. The father starts a basic ogre-terrorizes-town story, with the keys to the kingdom hidden in the ogre's castle. At the kids' insistence, a host of other characters appear, including a frog who morphs from the daughter's toy frog into a tiny frog in the witch's pocket into the save-the-day ninja frog. The boy and girl themselves appear as the brave and resourceful prince and princess. Tuya's illustrations have the bright, comic fairyland look of *Shrek*, complementing this fun fairy-tale riff, an effective model of collaborative storytelling. —*Connie Fletcher*

This Small Blue Dot.

By Zeno Sworder. Illus. by the author.

Jan. 2021. 32p. Thames & Hudson, \$17.95 (9781760761110). PreS–Gr. 1.

This debut picture book begins with a little girl's greeting to a baby: "Welcome to Earth." Using a lot of crayons and some pencil drawings, she tries to orient the baby as to where they are and what to look forward to, beginning with a beautiful skyscape and the knowledge that, among billions of stars, only our planet has life. The story often breaks into humor, as when the girl includes broccoli as an example of the unfortunate variety of life, or when she tosses in her opinions on the best Italian, Chinese, and Indian desserts. Ultimately, she has two big messages: we have to take care of the Earth, and we should delight in exploring it. She emphasizes that the best part of being young is having "a wild imagination," as slashes of swirling crayon colors show her singing, dancing, and drawing. The illustrations superimpose a photorealistic pencil drawing of the girl over her own crayon doodles, keeping her present throughout. A beautifully illustrated, quirky guide to life on Earth. —*Connie Fletcher*

Trying.

By Kobi Yamada. Illus. by Elise Hurst.

Feb. 2021. 48p. Compendium, \$16.95 (9781970147285). K–Gr. 2.

To learn, we first must try. To improve, we must accept failure. To gain mastery, we must invest time and patience. These simple truths are expressed artfully through the story of a young boy and a sculptor. The boy visits the sculptor's studio and is drawn to his works, his mind filling with images he dreams of creating, but the work proves harder than he imagined. Frustrated, he wants to give up, but the sculptor gives gentle encouragement by showing his own failures, explaining how each attempt helped teach him a better way. Full-bleed illustrations, rendered in shades of gray with washes of color on some spreads, use light and shadow to show the impressive heft of the sculptures. The narrative's serious tone is balanced by the inclusion of several cats in the studio, moving around the statues, unintimidated by their size or subject,

which adds a touch of humor. The ending finds the boy grown, welcoming a young girl into his own studio, ready to pass along his kind mentor's message about the importance of perseverance. —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

Venetian Lullaby.

By Judith L. Roth. Illus. by Kendra Binney.

Jan. 2021. 32p. Page Street, \$17.99 (9781645670841). PreS–Gr. 1.

Venice provides the setting for this charmingly illustrated, enjoyable, and ultimately restful read-aloud. Somnolent verses ("Drop the oar in deep, deep. / Time to go to sleep") nicely pair with softly colored spreads depicting a family aboard a gondola—Mom the gondolier; Dad holding the baby close—wending their way through the city's canals. There's much to see around them, such as a baker making pizza, people gathered on arched bridges, and a festive display of masks. Progressively, day becomes night, baby finally closes their eyes, and, once ashore, the trio set off together under moonlit skies. Enchanting, intricately detailed art in gentle hues interweaves whimsical touches, such as swirling seahorses, stars, and angels, fancifully evoking a sense of place. Direct-address stanzas range from lyrical ("Float like kites of drying laundry / lifting in the air") to more informal ("Bells are gonna swing and ring"), and the repetition reinforces the quiet elements and lends cohesiveness. Adults and young ones will also appreciate the rocking rhythm throughout, not to mention the reassuring depiction of family love. —*Shelle Rosenfeld*

Waiting for a Warbler.

By Sneed B. Collard III. Illus. by Thomas Brooks.

Feb. 2021. 36p. Tilbury, \$18.95 (9780884488521). PreS–Gr. 2.

In early spring, Owen and his younger sister, Nora, are outdoors talking about migratory birds in general and watching for her favorite, the cerulean warbler, in particular. The locale shifts from the U.S. or Canada to the Yucatán Peninsula, where many bird species, and one cerulean warbler male in particular, gather and prepare to migrate northward. The narrative traces the path of these birds as they make their way in a tiring migration that includes a perilous 18-hour flight over the Gulf of Mexico. Later, Owen and his family often watch two cerulean warblers as they arrive in spring, nest in a tall backyard tree, hunt for insects, and raise their young. A wildlife painter, Brooks illustrates a variety of subjects skillfully, from close-ups of individual birds to a stormy seascape. The book's extensive back matter introduces novices to birdwatching and suggests ways of protecting birds. Written with a friendly tone, the text incorporates more facts than most fictional picture books. For kids who enjoy observing birds, here's an informative introduction to birdwatching. —*Carolyn Phelan*