



This interspecies ode to the importance of friends from Herrick (*Ripley's World*) is an endearing backyard adventure that will resonate with younger readers. Calico cat Ripley is enamored with her brand-new shiny locket hanging from her collar, but in her excitement to show it off to her friends, the locket goes missing. Ripley bemoans the loss to her brother, Hariel the goldfish, who wisely counsels her to depend on her friends for assistance. Those friends quickly step in to help, each with a “special way of looking at the world,” kickstarting an entertaining search that culminates in a happy ending for all.

The heartfelt story builds from a simple premise, with a fast pace and intriguing details that all lead up to the author’s message of family and friends holding more significance than material belongings. Readers will be absorbed by the search for Ripley’s locket: the animals all do their own part, including Nash the squirrel, who tries to convince Ripley to accept a variety of nuts instead of her locket, and a regal turkey, the “Mayor” of the Oakland Rose Garden, who invites Ripley to dig through the contents of the Garden’s lost and found.

Mark Herrick’s watercolor illustrations are as vibrant and expressive as the cast of characters but tastefully never outshine them, working with the dialogue-driven text to create an immersive experience. Ultimately, Ripley comes to the realization that despite her love for the glittery locket, the lost item just isn’t “special like my family and friends.” That insight rises naturally from a story whose wonderland of creatures come together for a cause that requires their unique strengths to succeed. A preview of Ripley’s next adventure will entice eager fans, and this friendship themed read will be a welcome addition to any animal lover’s shelf.

Takeaway: Cat and critter lovers will savor the art and the message of friendship.

Great for fans of: Janet Stevens and Susan Stevens Crummel’s *The Little Red Pen*, Eric Rohmann’s *My Friend Rabbit*.

Production grades

Cover: **A-**

Design and typography: **A**

Illustrations: **A**

Editing: **A-**

Marketing copy: **A**