What’s Really Scary (and Fun)? Find Out With Heide and Feiffer.

Ask any kid. What’s your worst nightmare? You’ve learned to skate downhill—but you can’t stop. You won’t be picked for either team. Your mother can’t remember where she parked the car. You discover that your best friend’s best friend . . . is not you.

**Some Books Are Extraordinary**

Some things are scary, and never before have childhood bugaboos been exposed with more comic urgency than in a new picture book by Florence Parry Heide, illustrated by Jules Feiffer, and published by Candlewick Press. A masterful mix of things horrible and humiliating, monstrous or merely unsettling, *Some Things Are Scary* is perfectly pitched to a kid’s perspective.

Award-winning author Florence Parry Heide has written more than sixty children’s books, including *House of Wisdom; The Day of Ahmed’s Secret*; and the classic *The Shrinking of Treehorn*, illustrated by Edward Gorey. *Some Things Are Scary* originally appeared in 1969 with illustrations by Robert Osborn. “When it was first published,” she says, “young children at schools I visited would draw pictures of their own fears, and it interested me that so many of them were fears of some THING outside the window or on the other side of the door. Hasn’t everyone at one time thought there might be something scary in the closet or under the bed? To share such fears—at whatever age—and laugh about them is one way of making them vanish altogether.”

*A Hand in the Kindling Box*

It was a very specific incident, says Heide, that inspired her to write the book. She recalls going to the garage one day to get some kindling for the fireplace. “I reached into the box and—good grief!—grabbed something soft and mushy! I fled back into the house, scared to death, and returned bravely to the kindling box to see that it had been a wet sponge. The kids had been washing a car. I thought, ‘Hmmm . . . some things are scary,’ and decided to write a book about things that children think about and are (pleasantly) frightened by, and probably would like to talk about.”

What does the author think of Jules Feiffer’s illustrations? “They’re witty and charming and perfect.” The acclaimed author-illustrator of several books for children, including *Bark, George; Meanwhile . . . ; and I Lost My Bear*, and the illustrator of *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster, Jules Feiffer is also a renowned editorial cartoonist, playwright, novelist, and screenwriter. He has been the recipient of an Academy Award, a Pulitzer Prize, a London Theatre Critics Award, and two Obie Awards, and a retrospective exhibition of his work appeared at the Library of Congress. Why did Jules Feiffer, after creating so many of his own acclaimed children’s books, decide to illustrate another writer’s work?

*A Wonderful Omen*

“When I first read Florence Parry Heide’s text,” he says, “it reminded me very much of the emotions and materials that I drew on for my early cartoons. Also, the original illustrator of the book, Robert Osborn, was an early influence—a major influence—on my work. We eventually became friends. Taken together, these things seemed like a wonderful omen.”

And they were—to say the least. Anyone who has worried about telling a lie, being laughed at, or growing up will find a funny and sympathetic friend in *Some Things Are Scary.*

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