

## AMETHYST EYES

a review by Abby Trzepacz

Micki Bare. *Blind Fairy*. Level Elevate, 2023.



Micki Bare's book *Blind Fairy*, the second volume in her *Zahra of the Uwharries* series, picks up right where she left off with the first book, *Society of the Sentinelia*. *Blind Fairy* is set in the Birkhead Mountains Wilderness in central North Carolina, and Bare successfully weaves magical elements with characteristics of her home state, exploring environmental stewardship, friendship, and self-confidence within this fantastical coming-of-age story

Zahra is a scraebin and a fairy, which grants her more powers and benefits than what regular scraebins get. Scraebins are the size of sprites and have powers that allow them to sense the weather with their feet and thrive in their home tree, while fairies get heart animals with amethyst-colored eyes that guide and help them on their journeys. A new fairy quality that Zahra acquires in this book is the ability to see the future through her dreams.

*Blind Fairy* begins with Zahra at her home tree reunited with her family after her adventures in *Society of the Sentinelia* (2022). When she spots a turtle with amethyst eyes roaming

around the stream by her tree, she thinks she has found her next heart animal. So when the turtle is stolen by the new neighbor, she devises a plan with her best human friend, Danni, to get it back. Alas, Zahra discovers the turtle has escaped, and now she's on the hunt to find it.

Just when Zahra begins to have hope about uniting with her new heart animal another threat emerges. Strange cicadas emerge from the ground by their tree and place her colony in a deep sleep. She hears her mentor fairy, Miss Jellisia Levion, call to her in her mind, and she and Gigesdi, her cat heart animal, travel together to find her mentor. When she gets the opportunity to ask questions, she first thinks to ask about the odd cicadas. Miss Jellisia Levion responds, "They warn of the probable extinction of scraebins" (45). Zahra is panic-stricken, concerned about her own family.

Miss Jellisia tells Zahra that she is "The Convener" and that "Conveners bring other fairies, animals, and sometimes humans together. They have the ability to master all the fairy skills,

but become acutely adept at the ones they use and need the most. In special cases, a Convener may develop a specific skill suddenly – it emerges out of nowhere" (46–47). To assume her role as The Convener, Zahra is tasked to unite the Trilaterian, three fairies born on the same day, at the same moment. She will recognize them by their "Amethyst colored eyes, a red wart on the left foot, and a blue pinky fingernail on the right hand" (48). Zahra and these three fairies can save all of scraebin kind.

Before Zahra can start her quest to find the three fairies, she needs to work on her special fairy skills. For example, she must learn how to coax and camouflage and focus on her fairy connection with lightning bugs. Zahra is a natural, and in no time, she masters these skills. With the help of her mentor and Danni, she is ready to start her duties as The Convener.

When Zahra is led to the first fairy in the Trilaterian, she is shocked to see that the fairy is blind and missing her left foot and two of her fingers, including the right pinky. This made her doubt if she had the right fairy. But Zahra listens to her heart, which tells her this is the fairy she is looking for. Zahra and her new fairy friend Aoife endure many obstacles, but one thing will always remain a fact: they will be best friends. Always.

Within the story's adventures, Bare reminds readers that we have only the one Earth, and we should not take advantage

of it; as Ms. Clara Festimire, a member of the Society of the Sentinelia, says, "That boy and his family have to decide on their own that the Earth and its resources are valuable. Many people have lost sight of that. But you can't force them to believe what you believe." (10). Bare's book suggests that the earth is at least as important as those who inhabit it.

Another main theme of the novel is following your heart and having hope. There are many times when not only Zahra but everyone around her doubts her ability to be The Convener. Zahra overcomes that doubt when she believes in herself. She accepts that she was chosen to do her job as The Convener for a reason.

Bare reminds her reader that we reach our potential with the

help of friends. Danni is there for support of all Zahra's scraebin problems and provides help when a human is needed. When Zahra's colony is put to sleep, it is Danni who helps Zahra on her quests. Once Zahra meets Aoife, her new friend helps Zahra avoid the humans trying to capture her and to wake up her colony. These friends help shape Zahra into the girl she becomes in this novel.

In spite of the magical world of *Blind Fairy*, readers will relate to Zahra's self-confidence issues and find her friendships familiar. And Bare introduces readers to environmental awareness and appreciation. *Blind Fairy* ends on a happy and uplifting note but with enough unanswered questions to make the reader look forward to the next volume of the series. ■



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OPPOSITE AND ABOVE Micki Bare receiving, from Lori Bunton representing the AAUW of North Carolina, the 2023 Young People's Literature Award at the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association Awards Ceremony in Raleigh, NC, 8 Dec. 2023