AMETHYST EYES
a review by Abby Trzepacz

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 environmental changes, grow in a deep sleep. She hears her mentor fairy, Miss Jellisia Levion, call to her in her mind, 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 these 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. She hears her new friend help Zahra with amethyst-colored 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 friend human, Danni, to get it back. Alas, Zahra discovers the turtle has escaped, and now she’s on the hunt to find it.

Within the story’s adventures, 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.

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.

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MICKI BARE is a graduate of NC State University. Her career in education spans three decades, with service as a teacher, administrator, and marketing director. She is the author of three early reader children’s books. She has also published in regional and state magazines and anthologies and has written a human interest column for almost twenty years. Her first middle-grade novel, Society of the Sentinelia (Best Level Books, 2022), and Blind Fairy both received the North Carolina AAUW Young People’s Literature Award.