

you?" she asks her parents, crying hard. "Not for a million, trillion dollars," her father assures her. Castillo's (*Nana in the City*) gentle scenes soften the family's sadness. And while the conclusion is a shade optimistic ("We don't really need anything we've sold"), Bunting captures the way loss can take a family's possessions while leaving their love for each other intact. Ages 3–7. *Illustrator's agent: Paul Rodeen, Rodeen Literary Management.* (Apr.)

## How to Draw a Dragon

Douglas Florian. S&S/Beach Lane, \$17.99 (42p) ISBN 978-1-4424-7399-7

"Drawing dragons isn't hard./ Drag a dragon to your yard," begins Florian, proceeding to offer tongue-in-cheek instructions in verse. Throughout, crayon scrawling and loose washes contribute to the feeling that children themselves have supplied the artwork. The dragons submit obligingly to their work as models, with some help. "Soothe your dragon with a song/ as you draw his teeth so long," Florian advises, as a girl with black hair and a floral print outfit sits inside her dragon's mouth, singing, drawing, and keeping an eye out for any unexpected movement. The spreads conjure landscapes that are half fantasy and half real, inhabited by children of all colors. Florian (*I Love My Hat*) offers pointers on drawing dragons' spines and spikes, and tames anxieties about their flaming breath ("Dragon fire has reds and yellows,/ and it's good to toast marshmallows"). A final gatefold imagines a school art exhibition made up of all the children's sketches, and the endpapers give even more advice. Behind the humor, Florian recognizes that children take drawing seriously and want to learn how to do it better. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Rubin Pfeffer, Rubin Pfeffer Content.* (Apr.)

## ★ Turtle and Me

Robie H. Harris, illus. by Tor Freeman. Bonnier/Little Bee, \$16.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-4998-0046-3

A stuffed turtle has been part of a boy's life since he was in utero—the title page shows his expectant parents opening up the gift in anticipation of the baby's arrival. And Turtle proves to be an enduring sidekick, offering comfort when the boy feels "lonely and sad" and taking in stride the slings, arrows, and stains of

childhood (which include spaghetti and throw-up) because, as the owner notes, "when bad things happen, I always make sure that Turtle gets sewn up, washed up, fixed up—and is okay again." But one day, in the midst of a fight with a friend, Turtle is badly—maybe irreparably—ripped, and the boy's friend declares that Turtle is a "baby thing." Is she right? Harris and Freeman take an almost reportorial approach; the language is direct, and the images follow suit, most of them composed on a single plane with minimal background. And yet there is nothing prosaic in these pages—it's a book of poetic, plainspoken beauty, resonant with deeply felt emotions about attachment, loyalty, and growing up. Ages 4–8. (Apr.)

## Night Circus

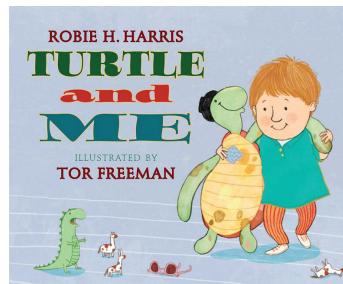
Etienne Delessert. Creative Editions, \$19.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-56846-277-6

This haunting collection of paintings represents Delessert (*A Glass*) at his most introspective, as he records the capricious activity of his own unconscious. "On a calm September evening, I was walking my dog along Route 44 when headlights flashed in front of me. My cat Pluto was driving past in an antique racing car, slowly pulling ten old-fashioned wooden flatbeds." The 10 visions, like demented parade floats, seem to leap out of the pitch-black night. The first pictures Kafka, Beckett, and Ionesco as clowns: "My friend, do you read poetry?" they ask. Angels around a chessboard ponder the pieces, small humans: "Want to play with us?" A lion leaps through a ring of fire: "Can you feel the heat?" After the others pass—fairy-tale characters, acrobats, imaginary creatures—Delessert and his dog follow them into the desert, toward a mirage. "Want to play now?" someone asks. "I approached the lion and his ring of fire. We lit a candle. It was my night circus!" The slow-motion encounter between the artist and the bright-eyed, grinning creatures of his own imagination is one readers won't soon forget. Ages 6–up. (Apr.)

## Hurry Up and Wait

Daniel Handler, illus. by Maira Kalman. MoMA (Abrams, dist.), \$15.95 (64p) ISBN 978-0-87070-959-3

This follow-up to *Girls Standing on Lawns* gathers vintage photographs of people moving quickly, moving slowly, and sometimes standing still. Accompanied by Handler's musings and enlivened by Kalman's paintings, the first group of



mostly b&w snapshots captures smartly dressed city-dwellers striding purposefully toward the camera or hurrying past it. "All childhood long they told me to hurry up, and now all this time later I can't imagine what the rush was," Handler

reflects. There's a pause, like an interlude: a page turn shows three awkward girls in bathing suits eating ice cream. "But then sometimes we're tired of moving and we want to wait for something else," he continues as the photographed subjects observe, ignore, gaze, snore. A horse-drawn carriage passes in the sunset, throwing long shadows. "Time to go. Everybody says it. Time to go. And then we do," Handler concludes. The commentary often leans on facile wit ("Somewhere in the world, always, somebody is twenty minutes late for something, and I am annoyed at them"), but Kalman's rich gouaches delight, and viewers may find themselves unaccountably moved, even haunted, by the images. Ages 10–up. (Apr.)

## Fiction

### The Detective's Assistant

Kate Hannigan. Little, Brown, \$17 (368p) ISBN 978-0-316-40351-1

In the summer of 1859, a recently orphaned girl named Nell is left with her Aunt Kitty in Chicago, her sole living relative. Less than keen on caring for a "gangly urchin," Kitty immediately begins looking for other living arrangements for 11-year-old Nell (she also blames Nell's father for her own husband's death). But Aunt Kitty relents after Nell foils a pickpocket, and Nell begins to help out at the boardinghouse where Aunt