

*The Bubble Wrap Boy* by Phil Earle

Charlie Han has never been accepted in any social circle. He's short, clumsy, and really hasn't proved to be good at anything. He still delivers his dad's chinese takeout on a tricycle, for pete's sake. But when Charlie discovers the thing he's truly great at, his mom's greatest secret, and his best friend's hidden talent right in a row, his life turns upside down. Will Charlie let the bullies win, or prove to himself what really matters?

*The Bubble Wrap Boy* is the type of book that pulls at your heartstrings without crushing your spirit. Charlie has literally been bullied in every conceivable way, his mom won't let him do anything with even the slightest amount of risk (she actually has a baby gate at the top of the stairs, and he's fourteen), and his only friend rides him harder than the bullies sometimes, but within all that he's the character with a quiet fire, fighting within his frustration.

Even though the kids at Charlie's school are cruel, the adults are deeply flawed, and many people keep meaningful secrets from each other, at its core *The Bubble Wrap Boy* is about family and humanity: the people that mean the most to you even when it feels like they don't. It's about conquering doubts, fears, and scorn from others and yourself. It holds the spirit of books like *Wonder*, with the candor and grit how some people's school experience can truly be, but also with hope for the future and admiration for resilience. It's not a book that pretends every victim is a hero, or has a savior; it's a book that sees the raw deals in life and tells them how they are without ignoring the healing that comes later. To me, that makes *The Bubble Wrap Boy* a book that's well worth the read.

*The Bubble Wrap Boy* contains many descriptions of bullying that some readers might find upsetting, however, there is no language or other questionable content.

Katie Kruger