Otis by Loren Long

New York Times bestselling author/artist Loren Long creates an unforgettable children's classic. Otis is a special tractor. He loves his farmer and he loves to work. And he loves the little calf in the next stall, whom he purrs to sleep with his soft motor. In fact, the two become great friends: they play in the fields, leap hay bales, and play ring-around-the-rosy by Mud Pond. But when Otis is replaced with the big yellow tractor, he is cast away behind the barn, unused, unnoticed . . . until the little calf gets stuck in Mud Pond. Then there is only one tractor—and it's not big or yellow—who can come to the rescue. It is little old Otis who saves his friend. It is Otis who saves the day. In a wonderful new palette, and in the tradition of classics like Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel and The Story of Ferdinand, Loren Long has crafted an unforgettable new story—and character—celebrating the power of friendship and perseverance.

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My Personal Review:
Otis was a wide-eyed happy little tractor who loved to help the farmer work the land. After a day of work he was ready to let loose and let his playful side take over. He buzzed up and down hillsides and skirted "Mud Pond down by the corn" rousting the ducks from in between the rows. He jumped over the haystacks and whooops . . . burst through some of them blasting the hay all over the field. Otis would sometimes "chase a rabbit or play ring-around-the-rosy with the ducks." Sometimes it was just nice to nestle up underneath the gnarly old branches of the apple tree and watch the goings on of the farm.

At night he would putt putt putt himself into the barn and fall fast asleep in his stall. One night there was a bit of unexpected company. It was a frightened little calf who was determined to bawl the night away. Otis's "soft putt puff puttedy chuff" slowly calmed the calf and she "drifted off to sleep." Zzzzzz! Soon they were fast friends and you didn't see one without the other until one day Otis himself was put out to pasture when he
was replaced with a newfangled yellow tractor. They were both lonesome without the other because a yellow tractor split them apart. On one warm day the little calf ambled on down to the Mud Pond to cool off, but when she "waded into the muddy water," she got mired in the muck. No one, including the fire truck nor the yellow tractor could save her. What would become of Otis's best friend?

I loved the story of Otis and the little calf, a story of an unlikely friendship if there ever once was, except perhaps that one of Bella and Tarra. We all have unlikely friendships or things that we value and children can easily relate to this fact. Some things are tangible like the attachment to a toy, but extra special are the friendships they make. The old-fashioned looking artwork is marvelous and contributes a great deal to the appeal of the story. Otis is one story that is almost guaranteed to become a classic. Just get used to the fact that you'll be reading this one to your youngster over and over again!

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