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KIDS/SNEAK PEEK

One mouse's best-laid plans

Imagine a near-perfect world where cats and mice get along ... well, maybe it only happens in books such as "Rip Squeak and His Friends."

Author Susan Yost-Filgate tells the tale of young mouse Rip, his sister Jesse, Abbey the kitten and Euripedes the frog, four unlikely friends who venture into unknown territory when they discover their own back yard and a room filled with toys.

Illustrator Leonard Filgate, the author's husband, captures the innocence of — and brings humanlike qualities to — all the characters in his colorful and detailed artwork. The characters' acceptance of each others' differences allows them to interact without prejudice and sets the mood for this gentle tale.

As well as sharing Rip's story, the couple, along with illustrator Greg Shed and American Indian dance troupe Arley Washington and Family, will be celebrating the new exhibition "A Feast for the Eyes." The reception is from 5 to 8 tonight at Every Picture Tells a Story art gallery.

Enjoy rare drawings by Dr. Seuss and original "Peanuts" artwork by Charles Schulz, which are some of the treasures of the exhibit through Dec. 5, and then gather round to hear the tale of a curious mouse who makes two new friends as well as enjoying a great adventure.

Beda Schmidthues, who is

the director of Rip Squeak, Inc., will don an appropriate costume and read the book to visitors.

According to author Yost-Filgate, the book has a very soft message. "We want to show children that they can have an adventure in their own back yard if they use their imaginations. And we wanted to emphasize diversity — that you can get along with others who are different."

Although the book is most appropriate for children ages 4 to 8, older kids and adults will appreciate the playfulness of the characters and the exquisite illustrations.

All the illustrations are done from the perspectives of the characters, which is most noticeable when the quartet discovers the toy room.

"We wanted to create small creatures that could play with toys," Yost-Filgate says.

Euripedes the frog seems an odd creature to include but he acts as a mentor to the younger characters, the author says. "He is someone with worldly experience. These are cottage mice and a cottage cat living in the country."

Filgate will also be displaying some of his artwork, including a model of Rip's desk and a model of the pirate ship that will be featured in the couple's next book, "The Treasure."

"Rip Squeak and His Friends" retails for \$16.95 and is the first in the series of the

Roaring Adventures of Rip Squeak. To learn more about Rip Squeak, visit the Web: www.ripsqueak.com The gallery is at 7525 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Information: (323) 932-6070.