



The Littlest Matryoshka

By Corinne Demas Bliss

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Nina, the smallest of a group of Russian nesting dolls, is separated from her sisters and swept along on a dangerous journey that eventually brings her back home.

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The Littlest Matryoshka By Corinne Demas Bliss Bibliography

- Rank: #38797 in Books
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- Original language: English
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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

With illustrations quaint enough for Christmas cards, an author's note that explains the history of nesting dolls, and a story reminiscent of *The Tin Soldier*, Bliss's (*Matthew's Meadow*) picture book will especially please collectors of Russian matryoshkas. The story begins "in a small shop in a snowy village in Russia," where Nikolai the doll maker, a Geppetto-like wood carver, fashions a set of six nesting dolls. He tells them, "You are six sisters," and names each one. Anna, the largest doll, watches as they travel to America, where they are lined up on a shelf, and the smallest doll, Nina, is accidentally knocked to the floor and kicked outside into the snow. After a plow scoops up Nina and a snow truck dumps her outside of town, the shopkeeper sells the remaining matroyoshkas to a girl, Jessie, for half-price. Nina rides a river of melting snow to a stream, is picked up by a heron, found by a squirrel, tumbles down a rain pipe and is eventually found by Jessie and her cat, who reunite the six sisters. "How they rejoiced to be together again!" as "Anna smiled the smile that had been painted on by Nikolai the doll maker in Russia, so long ago." Brown's (*Tough Boris*) paintings are sweetly old-fashioned, the images perceived as if behind a scrim of fantasy. They suit the nostalgic mood of the narrative. What this story lacks in originality, it makes up for in neatness. The elements fit together as cozily as the dolls nesting one inside the other. Ages 4-8. (Sept.)

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From Library Journal

Kindergarten-Grade 2-Created by a doll maker in Old Russia, a set of six nesting dolls travels to America and finds its way into a toy shop. When Nina, the littlest "sister," is accidentally brushed off a table, she begins a journey that rivals the Perils of Pauline. She is lost in a pile of snow, survives a waterfall, is threatened by a blue heron, gathered up by a squirrel, jostled down a drainpipe, and played with by a cat before she is discovered by Jessie, the young girl who had purchased the incomplete set. Bliss's story and text are most successful when they incorporate elements of traditional folklore: Although the narrative tends to be long-winded, it nevertheless makes for an effective read-aloud. Brown adopts a representational style and a palette consisting mostly of soft shades of blue, brown, and green. Against this pastel background, the nesting dolls-with their traditional bold red and yellow coloring-become the focus of each picture. The art does a credible job of capturing the action of the text but is less successful in establishing a consistent sense of time and place. Still, the adventure has definite appeal. A note on the history of these dolls is included.

Denise Anton Wright, Alliance Library System, Bloomington, IL

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From Booklist

In a Russian village, Nikolai the *matryoshka* maker carves and paints six sister dolls, small to large, that will nest inside each other. Anna, the biggest, looks after her sisters during the long trip to an American toy shop. When Nina, the littlest doll, falls onto the floor and is kicked out the door, she begins an adventure that takes her through the snow, onto a dump truck, and into a stream. Plucked from the water by a heron and gathered and then discarded by a squirrel, she is discovered by a little girl who, miraculously, reunites her with her sisters. Similar in structure to Andersen's "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," this story also uses his device of giving the dolls perception and feelings without endowing them with undoll-like abilities, such as walking or talking. Unlike Andersen's story, this quiet adventure tale has no villain, though the hand of fate is apparent for ill as well as good. When the dolls are separated, the feeling of loss is intense. Children will share the character's satisfaction when the set of dolls is made whole again. The delicate sense of an orderly universe that shines through the writing is reflected in the appealing paintings. The illustrator of Mem Fox's *Tough Boris* (1994), Brown creates a series of double-page spreads and smaller illustrations that combine good

composition, clear delineation of forms, and appealing hues. Like Nina, who was "made of the heart of the sweet-smelling wood," this picture book was crafted of emotional heart wood, and children will respond to its essential goodness. *Carolyn Phelan*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Danielle Smith:

The ability that you get from The Littlest Matryoshka will be the more deep you digging the information that hide within the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but The Littlest Matryoshka giving you buzz feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood by means of anyone who read this because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this particular The Littlest Matryoshka instantly.

Amanda Furr:

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