

but also counting back down to one. I found the rhymes zippy, with just the right jingle-jangle to please young listeners, and the illustrations, richly colored in blues and reds and golds, pleasing to all.

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### A Story of Friendship and Imagination

*The Cherry Pit Princess.* Lynn Manuel. Illus. Debbie Edlin. Coteau Books, 1997. 101 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 1-55050-118-6.

Being best friends is one of the great joys of childhood. With your best friend, you share everything and you can always be yourself. Trouble is, sometimes the person who wants to be best friends with you is not the person you want to be best friends with. Manuel adds to this conundrum the more pragmatic puzzle of how to save a cherry orchard from the realtor.

These two problems are woven together in the story of Dagny and Megan, who grow to realize that a person can have many kinds of best friends. Dagny's most outstanding trait is her imagination and her ability to invent stories. Throughout the book, her impromptu stories about princesses serve as catalysts for further action, as the girls try to come up with ideas to save Aunt Allie's cherry orchard. Megan, more down-to-earth and perceptive, desperately wants to be Dagny's best friend. She and Dagny often enjoy the cut and thrust of childhood debate, which demonstrates Manuel's keen observational skills:

'... When cherries turn black they taste like the night.'

Megan shook her head. 'The night doesn't have a taste.'

'Yes, it does,' said Dagny. 'It has a black cherry taste.'

'Does not.'

'Does too.'

'You just made that up,' said Megan.

Despite their brief arguments, as the girls come up with ideas such as fortune cherries and tree rentals, readers come to appreciate how people with different but complementary personalities can become close friends.

Manuel's writing is finely crafted with loving attention to the great design principles of unity and variation. Each chapter of the book ends with a refrain-like scrap of dialogue, in which the speakers and the topic vary, but the form remains the same. Touches of colour flicker through the pages — e.g., the pink of cherries in icing, pink lemonade, and princess garments; the black and white of a puppy in soapsuds, a cat, piano keys; and the yellows of gold coins, dandelion chains, and Megan Canary's surname. Images of swirling and twirling add energy, and the references to various imaginary kinds of cherry pits (e.g., giggle pits, spinach pits) serve as symbols of Dagny's fertile imagination. Even spitting appears in amusing and acceptable forms (spider's spit, spitting cherry pits). Manuel's delight in sound is contagious as the reader relishes the repetition of delicious phrases such as *lickety-split*, *splattering of pizazz*, *not one pinch*, *tickled pink*, and *double-dip*.

This is an entertaining story of friendship, imagination, and working together to solve problems.

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*Catherine Simpson's second picture book, Sailor: The Hangashore Newfoundland Dog, was published by Tuckamore Books. She lives with her husband and son in Lewisporte, Newfoundland.*

### Double Threat Talent Survives (barely) Designer Disservice

*The Strongest Man This Side of Cremona.* Georgia Graham. Red Deer College P, 1998 (Northern Lights Books for Children). Unpag. \$17.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88995-182-9.



Illustration from *The Strongest Man This Side of Cremona*