

endearingly human with their tired feet, bulging waistlines, grumpy moments and consoling hugs.

A fairy tale with a cleverly modern flavour, this book reworks the theme of being careful of what one wishes for, in case the wish should actually come true. Frank and Zelda, who “were happy even though they didn’t know it at the time,” resort to magic to improve their circumstances. Their wishes are granted by a “little man” — a genie figure who is humorously understated in both text and illustrations. Magic leads Frank and Zelda through a series of catastrophes. Finally realizing that they need a rational plan, they create their own solution and achieve happiness again. “And this time, they knew it.”

Frank and Zelda have realized that magic is not always what it seems, that they are empowered to create their own happiness or misery, and that happiness is more a state of mind than a set of circumstances. Their trials and tribulations awaken our empathy, and delightfully harmonious illustrations bring the couple to life. Kovalski’s book withstands frequent rereading, and lodges in the mind as a “good story.”

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***Revenge of the Small Small.*** Jean Little. Illus. Janet Wilson. Pengui, 1992, 1995. Unpag. \$6.99 paper. ISBN 0-14-055563-43.

In this picture-book aimed at beginning readers, Jean Little unobtrusively draws upon her own childhood to relate how her youngest sister dramatically taught her older siblings, including herself, a lesson about respect. With the same sensitivity she brings to her novels, here she shows how cruel and thoughtless older children can be to the youngest. Patsy is depicted as a caring and thoughtful child and the child reader identifies with her perspective, no matter whether she or he has siblings or not. Similarly, the poetic justice of Patsy’s revenge is appealing to the child since it is the logical outcome of a steady build-up of frustration. The inclusion of the father’s loving support of her action is reassuring for the child.

The occasional three-fold repetition of comments by all three siblings lends a lyrical aspect to the brief text. The details which are included such as the contents of the box and the construction of the village are significant to the child and these are enhanced by the vivid illustrations. The double-page layout of “THE SMALL TOWN” is compelling: here, materials are included which are not mentioned in the text — notably the cotton-ball smoke from the chimneys. The final twist of the plot is effectively presented in the illustrations alone.

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