



Sadie's Shabbat Stories

Melissa Stoller

Lisa Goldberg, Illustrator

Clear Fork Publishing

(52pp)

978-1-950169-33-7

Emphasizing the ways that traditions bridge the future and the past, Sadie's Shabbat Stories is an awe-encouraging introduction to a storied Jewish holiday.

Every Shabbat ties into those that came before it in Melissa Stoller's lovely, family-centered rendition of a holiday introduction, *Sadie's Shabbat Stories*.

Every Friday night, Sadie helps Nana prepare the Shabbat meal. They bake challah together, set the table with traditional accoutrements, and recite blessings before dinner. Also every Friday: Sadie begs her grandmother, whose stories she loves, to repeat the histories behind their religious heirlooms.

Nana is happy to comply, relaying how their candlesticks were carried home from Europe before the world wars, and sharing how their kiddush cup was one of the few things that an ancestor was able to take with him when he fled Russia's pogroms. The meal and its blessings carry on after each tale, with Sadie's sense of holiness expanding to encompass and reflect her family's past. Eventually, her own stories form, making room for the ancestors from her grandma's tales at her table and developing as she grows, ages, and has children of her own.

Lisa Goldberg's illustrations are both evocative and complementary, capturing the wonder inspired by Nana's memories as they become Sadie's memories, too. Scenes with Sadie and Nana preparing for Shabbat dinner are illustrated in a soft, warm, folk art style; they feature muted colors, happy faces, and attention to detail, as with the steam that rises from the fresh baked challah, cheerful prints on the family's clothes that bleed into later scenes, a Magen David made of popsicle sticks, and a dove and vine motif that runs throughout. In a charming fourth wall break, Sadie's black cat is seen watching, and leaping toward, the bird.

Nana's tales are illustrated at the edges of the page first; they then expand, reflected in the heirlooms themselves, as when a scene unfolds in the kiddush cup, under Sadie and the dove's watchful eyes. These illustrations include dreamy, Chagall-like elements, like words in Hebrew enveloping the family table; flying creatures, brides, and violinists; departed relatives who join the meal as friendly spirits; and proportional exaggerations. The cumulative effect is cheerful and involving, ensuring new discoveries upon subsequent readings.

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MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (October 6, 2020)

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