ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Tina y las Pieles de Espantapájaros
Ofelia Dumas Lachtman
Arte Pblico Press
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“Tina lived with her mother and her bother, Pablo, in a small brick house squeezed between tall buildings in a big city by the sea.” Amongst the hustle and bustle of the city, Tina silently wishes for a friend to spend time with. Then, Little Bell appears. Wearing a long flowy skirt dragging on the floor, softly singing and carrying a box of “bandlebond bones” (broken sea shells), Little Bell is the friend Tina has been waiting for. A search for missing cornhusks leads a blossoming friendship to a mysterious box of “scarecrow skins.”

The author, born in Los Angles to Mexican immigrant parents, has written four young adult novels and a series of children’s books about a little girl called Pepita. Lachtman is the proud mother of two children who inspire some of her stories. The translator did an exceptional job rendering the text into English to accompany the stimulating illustrations. The illustrator, a native of Venezuela, educated in the U.S. and Argentina, does an incomparable job re-telling the story in pictures. DeLange and Lachtman have worked together on a number of children’s books and it shows.

Tina asks Little Bell to accompany her on a trip to the store for her mother. She needs to get cornhusks for the tamales her mother is preparing. Luckily, Tina is able to purchase the last cornhusks in the store. As they return home, Tina sets the bag on the bench by the front door, and innocently asks her mother if Little Bell can stay for the tamale dinner. Providing convincing arguments, Tina finally gets her mother to concede. Oh no, the bag of cornhusks is missing!

The whole household turns upside-down in search of the missing cornhusks. Eventually the mystery is solved; Tina’s brother used the cornhusks to start a fire in the fireplace. Now what? The store was sold out of cornhusks. Wait! Little Bell appears in her long flowy skirt and in her silly non-sensical language she produces a box of scarecrow skins. Through all of the laughter and giggles, Tina’s mom opens the box and sure enough, “scarecrow skins” are cornhusks and the tamale dinner is back on! Yummy!

With such an honest story line of friendship and family, this book is significant for any

bilingual collection. There is an underlying message for children ages six to ten: ask your parents permission before you invite your friends over for dinner. Well written and beautifully illustrated, Tina y las Pieles de EspantapÃ¡jaros is a great children’s book.

Becky Rankens