



The Steadfast Tin Soldier

Cynthia Rylant (Retelling) , Hans Christian Andersen , Jen Corace (Illustrations)

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With her signature warmth and lyricism, Newbery winner Cynthia Rylant has crafted a new version of the classic Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale about a tin soldier who falls in love with a ballerina. As in the original story, the tin soldier's love for the beautiful ballerina is thwarted by a goblin. The tin soldier is separated from the other toys and washed down a sewer, where he encounters a rat and gets swallowed by a fish, but somehow, against all odds, he manages to end up back home only to be cast into the nursery fire. Rylant adds her own twist to the end of the tale, however, for in this version, the tin soldier and the ballerina are melded to each other, rather than melted, in the heat of the fire, so they'll never be parted again. Rylant's expert storytelling paired with Corace's stunning illustrations create a beautiful, unforgettable tale of everlasting love.

Praise for *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*

STARRED REVIEW

"Rylant preserves the story's character-building insistence on the soldier's decorum throughout his ordeal. At the same time, the sight of him in his dress uniform, bayonet at the ready, lodged upside down in a garden bed or lying patiently in the belly of the huge fish will make readers smile."

—*Publishers Weekly*, **starred review**

"Gracefully written... The book's large format gives plenty of scope for Corace's distinctive illustrations, precise ink drawings brightened with watercolor, gouache, and acrylic paints. Sometimes brilliantly colorful and sometimes more subdued, the scenes can be crowded with dozens of toys or other visual elements, but they show up well from a distance. The subtle depictions of the goblin and his shadow are particularly fine. A softened vision of the literary fairy tale."

—*Booklist*

The Steadfast Tin Soldier Details

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ISBN : 9781419704321

Author : Cynthia Rylant (Retelling) , Hans Christian Andersen , Jen Corace (Illustrations)

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Dolly says

We really enjoy reading fairy tales and our girls have been getting their fill of Grimm stories (Sisters Grimm and A Tale Dark and Grimm).

So, I thought this retelling of a Hans Christian Andersen tale by Cynthia Rylant (one of our favorite authors from years past) would be terrific.

We weren't familiar with the original story or aware of changes that Ms. Rylant made, but we were fascinated by the tin soldier's journey and ability to avoid certain death. The ending is very sweet, too. The watercolor, gouache, acrylic and pen and ink illustrations by Jen Corace are nicely detailed and help to show a little humanity in unmovable toys.

Overall, we really enjoyed reading this book together and I'm sure our girls would love to also read the original tale, even if the ending is heartbreaking instead of happy.

This book was selected as one of the books for the December 2016- Toy Stories discussion at the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Books Group here at Goodreads.

SamZ says

[the gust of wind that saved the soldier at the end (hide spoiler)]

Sasha says

Fun!

Angelica Chuklanov says

Genre: Fantasy/Folktale/Picture Book

Copyright Date: 2013

A cute story about a humble tin soldier and a beautiful ballerina. Teaches a great lesson on being steadfast, patient, and brave. Students can read this book for pleasure. Grades K-3.

Kathryn says

A sweet Christmas retold from the Hans Christian Andersen classic tale. I never like gremlins, trolls or bad guys, but realize they are often part of a happy ending story. The artwork was beautiful although a bit subdued in color. It is a good Christmas book to read this time of year.

Shawn Thrasher says

Why did the story need to be retold? And then why change the ending so much? Every story doesn't need a happy ending. The two don't belong together; the love was unrequited; that's the point of the story, right? In the original, the tin soldier - like Andersen himself - fell in love with women (and men) who were unattainable and let fear and convention get in the way of his relationships, so that they were never consummated. The Tin Soldier originally did the same thing, keeping quiet not only about his love for the dancer, but never speaking to anyone or standing up for himself (including against the goblin). Cynthia Rylant is a great writer, but I don't know why she couldn't leave well enough alone.

Kathryn says

It's actually been so long since I read the original "Steadfast Tin Soldier" that I don't feel I can speak much to the comparison to Rylant's interpretation. But, I was disappointed in the Rylant version just the same. I usually love her work and feel very connected to several of her stories but I didn't find anything particularly stirring in this telling (even though it was rich material to start with). I suppose the ending was rather clever for bringing about a happy ever after (though a bit farfetched!) but it still felt flat overall. Too bad :-)

Seema Rao says

Lovely visuals and really nice text share the story of the Steadfast Tin Soldier in this arts and crafts-inspired version.

Josiah says

"Now, when two who are meant to be together first find one another, life almost always throws a stone over which they must stumble."

—*The Steadfast Tin Soldier* by Cynthia Rylant

If Hans Christian Andersen and Walt Disney each had success with a story, one can be sure Cynthia Rylant will have something of significance to add to it. Such is the case in this retelling of *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, a beloved classic of undying love and the power of never giving up even when one's situation is so bleak that no happy ending seems possible. Though the steadfast tin soldier is different from the other twenty-four soldiers in his box, having only one leg, he stands no less tall on that one leg as an example of courage to his fellow soldiers. His inner strength does not go unnoticed by a little ballerina figurine who is brought to the playroom one day. She, too, stands on a single leg, molded in a traditional twirling ballet pose, and true love is immediate between these two toys who were born different from their peers, yet brook their personal

irregularities with steady dignity. Theirs would be a love for a lifetime, if it weren't for the bitterly disposed goblin watching from behind his matchbox. The goblin wants to destroy their love while still in bloom, so he pushes the steadfast tin soldier out the open window to the yard below, where surely he will be lost forever.

From being picked up by a couple of curious boys who envy owning such a fine soldier—with or without two whole legs—to a crazy trip through the sewers and into the belly of the leviathan where only the most extraordinary of coincidences can save him, the steadfast tin soldier gains his chance at true love a second time. Can a mean-spirited goblin set on wrecking the happiness of others spoil the joyful homecoming of a brave soldier who has survived so much? Or is the truth of love predestined strong enough to overcome even the wildest little demon, and the steadfast tin soldier was always certain to spend forever with his beloved ballerina?

I like Cynthia Rylant's writing in this book, though I rather wish she had chosen to fashion it as a novel, since her wonderful wisdom flowing through the story in a longer format would have been too good to miss. My favorite part of the book is the quote with which I led this review, about life testing true love with a stumbling block to prove its worth, and if this were a novel instead of a picture book, there undoubtedly would be many more such jewels set within Cynthia Rylant's writing. I would give one and a half stars to this book, and I did like it. I don't think one can go wrong reading a book by Cynthia Rylant.

Christine says

A classic retold with a new and improved ending. I really enjoyed this retelling of the classic story. The ending made me cheer that love and determination had triumphed! There were a few sections in the story that seemed a bit disjointed and needed more details, but this was a delightful read that many would enjoy.

Barbara says

It's terrific to have another version of the classic Hans Christian Andersen story of love between a tin soldier with one leg and a beautiful ballerina. In this version of the story, a jealous goblin pushes the soldier from the window sill where his owner has perched him. From there, he goes on quite an adventure, sailing into a stream, meeting a rat who demands his passport, swept along further until being swallowed by a fish. When he ends up right back where he started from, his ballerina love is thrilled, but the goblin has one more trick up his sleeve. I liked this version just as I have always loved the original one with its heart-breaking ending, but I must confess that I was glad that the author changed the ending. Once in awhile it is very encouraging to see true love triumph over its many obstacles. The watercolor, gouache, acrylic and pen and ink illustrations are a treat for the senses. Although there is quite a lot of text, the story and the illustrations should hold readers' attention.

Jessica says

I wasn't familiar with this story. I did enjoy it though. Not immensely. The illustrations were colorful and detailed but I didn't like them. Story of perseverance.

Rowan Stewart says

When I was little, this was one of my favorite picture books. The traditional tale of the one-legged soldier and the beautiful ballerina is full of twists and turns, frightening falls and love at first sight, beautiful beginnings and happy endings.

The tale begins in the house of a young boy, surrounded by toys. His favorite toys, a set of twenty-five tin soldiers stand dutifully ready for anything. The twenty-fifth soldier stands as tall as the others, but on one leg. The maker ran out of tin before completing the final soldier. One day, the twenty-fifth soldier sees a beautiful ballerina, also on one leg. The two quickly fall in love, but before they can meet, the tin soldier is thrown out the window. There begins his journey back to the home and to the ballerina...

The personification of these toys weaves a very intricate story, as the soldier fights to return to the ballerina. Although the toys are given feelings, they remain regular toys in all other ways - they don't move or talk, the toy soldier goes through his journey without action, and the ballerina waits silently for his return. This rendition of the traditional tale features beautiful images that bleed from page to page, without any sort of border enclosing them. The text is contained in the background space of the images, but fills the negative space on nearly every page. The text is long and fairly dense, making this book much better for reading aloud than for early readers to read on their own, much like other traditional tales.

This story tells of an incomplete tin soldier who goes on a great quest for love - while not really going on any quest at all. He goes through gutters and oceans, fires and fish guts, all to get back to his beautiful ballerina. It's a beautiful story to read at bedtime with little ones or in a classroom of traditional tales. I really enjoyed reading this story again.

Manybooks says

I was quite looking forward to Cynthia Rylant's retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's classic tale of love and loss, of toys that come alive and have feelings like everyone, like humans, even experiencing the nasty and destructive envy of potential rivals (especially since I have never much enjoyed the ending of the original Andersen tale, with the tin soldier after his many adventures and misadventures being finally and once and for all tossed by the jealous and I guess ultimately victorious goblin into the stove, into the fire, to perish, just as he had finally managed to make his way back home to the toy ballerina he loves); and this for me always much too unpleasant and saddening ending author/reteller Cynthia Rylant has decided to change, has altered into a much more positive and cheering conclusion (with the toy soldier actually returning to his toy ballerina and keeping her as his lover).

That being said, I actually and sadly, unfortunately consider this here version of The Steadfast Tin Soldier only mildly entertaining and a bit mundanely recounted. I really do not feel all that emotionally involved in Rylant's reimagined text, with the soldier's fate and his journey from the windowsill into the gutter/river and then finally back to the toy ballerina he loves feeling rather banal (even though the basic themes presented are obviously meant to be engaging and even adventurous), as the author's writing style and narrative flow simply do not manage to all that much and successfully mirror that desired sense of adventure, of possible peril, reading more like a dry non fiction account, even reminding me somewhat of a catalogue of lists. And

even the revised ending, the ending which I was very much and eagerly anticipating, well, it kind of falls flat, a deus ex machina of some random wind blowing into the stovepipe and catapulting the tin soldier straight from the inferno of his possible doom into the ballerina's arms so to speak (an alternative ending to Hans Christian Andersen's original that I do very much appreciate, but which conceptualisation and modus operandi I find almost laughable and majorly silly, too run-of-the coincidental mill, too standard).

As to Jen Corace's accompanying illustrations, although by themselves, I would not consider them personal favourites, in conjunction with the narrative, they are a wonderful, descriptive and imaginative compliment (and actually present the danger and adventure, the possible threats the tin soldier faces on his journey back to his lady love, his ballerina, with both more excitement and emotionality than Cynthia Rylant's narrative). Recommended, as even with my personal issues regarding narrative flow and the deus ex machina quality of the ending, I do very much appreciate both text and image, and especially the salient fact that in this version, in this retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's classic tale, the steadfast tin soldier not only returns, but actually manages to both stay alive and get the girl.

Finally, and furthermore, seeing that Cynthia Rylant's retelling does in many ways veer quite sharply and quite far from Hans Christian Andersen's original text, there really should be an author's note included, explaining why the author has chosen to especially provide a very different and much more positive and optimistic ending to her version of The Steadfast Tin Soldier. And while perhaps not absolutely and academically necessary in this particular case, as the original author, as Hans Christian Andersen's name, is indeed mentioned on the book cover, a supplemental author's note would at least for me, be like icing on a proverbial cake, as especially for fairy and folktales, author's notes on the origins of a given tale and why and how a translator or a retailer might have changed and altered the same are as important and as interesting for me and to me as the actual story itself (not to mention that an author's note would also show respect for Hans Christian Andersen and his literary legacy).

Margaret Chind says

In the last year I read the story of *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* in a collection of Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales. I'll have to go check to be certain, but I think it was in a book selection from Sonlight P3/4. I was not that crazy about the story and thought it was pretty sad, but then it seems typical fairy tales from times gone are a bit more morose than the happily ever after we all crave now. Also recently I've been more aware of books by Cynthia Rylant as I keep finding her on my lists that I look at for suggestions for school. As a matter of fact, it was through Memoria Press' Jr. K that I first heard her name and I have found that I have enjoyed those suggestions so far so she is an author to consider. Now, in the same mindset of looking at those lists, I have added The Brave Tin Soldier specifically the American Antiquarian Society version to my wishlist for Memoria Press' Third Grade Curriculum. While I have a few years to get to that (as we are finishing of Jr. K and starting Kindergarten in the fall!) when I saw that this year Abram Books for Young Readers was publishing a new picture book version of *Hans Christian Andersen's The Steadfast Tin Soldier* written by Cynthia Rylant I was excited. Then when I found a copy in the local bookstore, I couldn't help but snatch it up for a bargain!

This version retold by Cynthia Rylant is illustrated by Jen Corace and it is lovely, definitely very attractive to view. The light characters are visually very light and bright, while the darker characters are literally dark brown and green tones. Then there is the retelling. While overall the story does follow back along with the classic I know it has a pleasant ending that in it's own way is a happily ever after. In rating this one I'm actually pretty caught between four or five stars. While the general story doesn't impress me, this specific

version does. I'm glad I snatched it up. While I'm still curious to see the AAS version, I do like this one from Cynthia Rylant.
