



The Glassblower's Children

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Klara and her little brother Klas enjoy a loving protected childhood despite the poverty of the family. Though they are poor and their father is a failure as a salesman, it is always a treat though to go to the fair as a family. But it is at the fair that the children attract the attention of the childless Lord and Lady of All Wishes Town - and a devastating chain of events is set in motion. Will the wise woman, Flutter Merryweather be able to restore everything?

First published in 1964, *The Glassblower's Children* is a literary fairytale very much in the tradition of Hans Christian Andersen. However, Gripe also references other fairytale traditions including Norse myth - the One-eyed raven Wise Wit, is surely a nod to one-eyed Odin himself. As is traditional the children are central to the story, yet they have little agency. It is Flutter Merryweather, the Wise Woman, who predicts the kidnapping of the children, who is the active protagonist and who must come to their rescue, facing down her monstrous sister and engineering a wish that cannot be granted to bring about the happy ending. The rhythms of the storyteller come across in the excellent translation by Sheila La Forge, while the original illustrations - black and white scraperboard - by Harold Gripe capture the background out of which the story arises. This is not a 'contemporary' story. The cadences, the style are 'old fashioned'. However, the themes are as contemporary and universal as in all fairytales. Here we see the power - and futility of wishes, the destructive nature of love as well as its redemptive power, the importance of family. As in all good stories these are presented neatly packaged, plenty of jeopardy with a vein of the surreal and the humorous. A welcome reprint to be rediscovered for the curiously imaginative.

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