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Mary?s Penny

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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In this stylish fable, an Amish-type farmer with two brawny sons (and one brainy daughter) frets about who will take over his farm. Ignoring his daughter (as was their wont in those ?golden olden days?) the farmer challenges his sons to buy something which will fill the whole house.

He gives them each a penny and tells them the winner will inherit the farm. Off they go. But when the dullards? efforts with straw and feathers fail, the quiet daughter begs for her chance to meet the challenge. This goes against the grain, but in despair, the farmer overlooks her lowly female status and lets her try.

Of course the girl wins, because she?s got brains, and that?s all well and good. But there?s an old-fangled feel to this folk tale, not only because it?s set in the past, but also because feminist fables like this were so ?right on? in the seventies. Of course, there?s every reason why new generations should be exposed to the concept of girls as clever leaders, but it would probably make more of an impact presented in a newer way. Perhaps the message was given like this because although slower, sporty boys might chafe under the implied insult, the folk tale presentation creates enough the distance to soften the blow.

Visually, the skilled use of pattern and photo collage on clean open backgrounds is both effective and witty, while the facial expressions of the characters are full of humour and variety. But there?s a danger in the use of computer graphics if they are to be reproduced over and over, which is they must ?read? exactly right. Most do in this book, except the bundles of straw which look more like rolled-up bamboo blinds than anything else. Despite this, the overall impact of this presentation is good, not least because of the quality paper and printing but also because of the cleverly considered use of type on every page.

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