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The Paper Bag Princess

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Princess Elizabeth is going to marry Prince Ronald; he looks every inch the perfect prince. Then disaster ? a dragon snatches Ronald leaving Elizabeth with nothing but a paper bag to wear ? and a fierce determination to rescue Ronald; except things do not quite turn out as you might expect.

It is always good to welcome back a classic ? and surely there cannot be a classic more in keeping with the times than this. While it was particularly powerful when it first appeared in 1980, its message of female empowerment and independence is just as important today. Its success is not just the message, but the storytelling which is direct, uncluttered, immediate ? the voice of the narrator speaking the words directly to his audience and it is interesting to learn from the afterword by Anna Munsch, that this story started life as one told by Robert to children. Then there is the humour ? and the final, thoroughly enjoyable, twist. While the subverted fairytale may now be an accepted part of children?s literature, this must still rank as one of the best. The focus may be on Elizabeth but the message is not exclusive; everyone has a dragon to face and no one should either make assumptions or be bullied. Michael Martchenko?s illustrations are the ideal match to Munsch?s text, capturing the characters and their emotions - just look at that smug expression on the dragon. They do not merely record the action but extend and enhance each scene adding a lively visual dimension to the narrative. It would be difficult now to imagine the one without the other.

When first published, this book made an impact; this is recorded in the foreword for this anniversary edition by Chelsea Clinton. It will surely continue to do so, and this handsome new edition cannot but help once more bring it to a new audience.

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