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The Lion and the Bird

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Not on Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

The illustrations tell the story in this beautiful and eloquent picture book. There is minimal text, but even that is hardly necessary. A lion that lives in a cosy, round, thatched hut finds an injured bird in the garden one day and takes it home to help it recover. The bird's friends have all left on their journey south, this being autumn, and so the two new friends spend the winter together. The lion makes the bird very comfortable, and when they must go out in the cold and snow, he tucks the bird into his warm hat. When spring returns and the birds come back again, the lion understands that his friend must go with them, but he is sad and very lonely all the summer. When the autumn comes round again, the bird returns to the lion's delight, and the winter will be spent together again in the little hut. Such a simple story, and yet the illustrations bring this into the realm of high art. Great use is made of white space, sometimes whole pages of it when the lion is at his loneliest, and at other times the white page is broken by a single small picture, so right in its place. The beauty of the seasons is depicted in stylized trees and flowers and plants and in the interior of the little hut. Small details like the bird sleeping in the lion's slippers and perched on his mane while he brushes his teeth add just a touch of humour to what is a moving and universal story of friendship and what the loss of it can mean, even if that loss is temporary. Questions will be asked. What happens if the bird can't return the next year? How will the lion cope? What happens when friends disappear from our lives? How can two such disparate beings become friends? The best books help us to ask these questions, and while there are no set answers, the very asking of such questions enriches our lives immeasurably. Marianne Dubuc is French Canadian, and this translation of her work deserves the highest praise.

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