



Bound

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YOUNG XING XING IS BOUND. Bound to her father's second wife and daughter after Xing Xing's father has passed away. Bound to a life of servitude as a young girl in ancient China, where the life of a woman is valued less than that of livestock. Bound to be alone and unmarried, with no parents to arrange for a suitable husband. Dubbed "Lazy One" by her stepmother, Xing Xing spends her days taking care of her half sister, Wei Ping, who cannot walk because of her foot bindings, the painful but compulsory tradition for girls who are fit to be married. Even so, Xing Xing is content, for now, to practice her gift for poetry and calligraphy, to tend to the mysterious but beautiful carp in her garden, and to dream of a life unbound by the laws of family and society.

But all of this is about to change as the time for the village's annual festival draws near, and Stepmother, who has spent nearly all of the family's money, grows desperate to find a husband for Wei Ping. Xing Xing soon realizes that this greed and desperation may threaten not only her memories of the past, but also her dreams for the future.

In this searing story, Donna Jo Napoli, acclaimed author of "Beast and Breath, " delves into the roots of the Cinderella myth and unearths a tale as powerful as it is familiar.

Bound Details

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Katherine says

It's funny how opinions change as the years pass. A book you so loved from a few years ago could turn out to be rather disappointing in the future. And unfortunately with this book, that's exactly what happened.

Donna Jo Napoli is a master at fairy-tale retellings. I ate them up when I was an early teen, and I still enjoy most of her work today. Her earlier works are the ones I like best (my favorites being *Zel and Beast*, which are masterful works). However, this retelling of *Cinderella* wasn't one of her better ones. Rather, it limped along with no clear objective in sight.

Erin Cataldi says

A fantastic rendition of the classic *Cinderella* tale. Years ago I took a class on fairy tales and we explored how many different cultures all across the globe have very similar stories and traditions, one of the most common is *Cinderella*. Last month we read *Cinder* which is a futuristic cyborg rendition of the *Cinderella* trope and this book, *Bound*, is a twentieth century Chinese retelling. Xing Xing lives in a cave with her stepmother and her stepsister Wei Ping and due to her feet being unbound is forced to do all the servant work. Xing Xing was educated up until her father's death so her stepmother is convinced that no one will ever want to marry an educated unbound, unattractive girl. Filled with great Chinese elements about family, traditions, calligraphy, and fish, this book compelled me from the get go. Donna Jo Napoli is master at fairy tale re-telling.

Jennifer Smalley says

A book by the name of 'Bound' might not automatically register as a retelling of the age old story of *Cinderella*- but that is exactly what it is. This novel by Donna Jo Napoli follows a girl named Xing Xing tending to her stepmother and stepsister after the death of her father.

'Bound' is set in Ming China, during the time period that foot binding was a popular practice. Xing Xing's stepsister, Wei Ping, has her feet bound throughout the duration of the story and is incredibly vain about it. Beyond this, she is rendered helpless for the sake of beauty. Through the horrible pain of it all, she finds herself beautiful. Wei Ping feels that Xing Xing's unbound feet are ugly and snaps at her that "no one cares about your feet" (5). These are the first words the reader will hear from Wei Ping.

But why does Xing Xing not have bound feet? The reason for this has many layers, one of which being that Stepmother wants her own daughter to be able to find a husband and would rather have Xing Xing stay home and tend to her needs. They are not a rich family and live in what, by modern standards, would be very poor conditions. Mentioned early on in the story, they have a "hole that served as a window" that "Stepmother had rolled the rock from" to cast light into their home (5). Stepmother seems to care about one thing for her daughter, and that is to marry well. It seems to be a theme found commonly in works set or written before feminism was even a thing, because marriage truly was the end goal for women.

Wei Ping has a way out, though, with these mangled lotus feet of hers. She has an attractive quality that few girls of her social standing have. Foot binding immobilizes a person and that often is not practical when that person has to work to survive. But this problem is fixed by Stepmother putting Xing Xing to work for the family.

But there's another reason Xing Xing goes without having her feet bound. It gives her mobility and freedom unlike anything her stepsister has. Xing Xing is able to travel- and it at one point made to by Stepmother in order to get medicine for Wei Ping when she fell ill. She still shows compassion for Wei Ping and Stepmother, too, and does not go on this journey begrudgingly. Xing Xing wants to help her stepsister. She doesn't hate either one of them, despite the fact that it is hard not to. During her travels, Xing Xing passes a sign shop and sees a sign reading "Dragon and phoenix manifest good fortune. Marriage celebrations arrive at the house." And imagines that Wei Ping would like something like that on her wall. Another one, one Xing Xing felt Stepmother would enjoy read "Business flourishing as far as the four seas. Riches in abundance reaching the four rivers" (67). Not only does this show Xing Xing to be a thoughtful girl, it shows that she feels Wei Ping is marriage obsessed and Stepmother only cares about wealth.

That's something seen in most all Cinderella stories- from the Brother's Grimm to that laughably awful Hilary Duff movie. Another thing always seen in these stories are a happy ending. This novel is no different. However, Xing Xing marries more for freedom than for love- though that, perhaps, could be up for debate. She does like his personality and excited when she hears he's travelled but it seems fairly clear she wants to escape her home life as the quality of her treatment there has deteriorated greatly over the course of the story.

Xing Xing is a very strong female character. She remains hopeful and optimistic in the face of adversity time and time again. When Stepmother takes away her most beloved possession, it could have broken her but it didn't. She gets stronger and less naive, caring less and less for her abusers to the point of indifference. She grows to feel like a "strong woman in a world that tried to deny the very existence of such a thing" (177). Xing Xing comes to the realization that she wants out. Circumstance gives her opportunity and she steps up and takes it.

With the world against her, Xing Xing remains a strong, feminist figure throughout this book. The story revolves around the importance of beauty but not on the beauty of the main character's. Xing Xing draws the prince in with her beauty, of course, but it is her intellect and snark that keeps him interested. Her desire to be with the prince might make her a 'bad feminist' but she is a feminist no less. She believes in herself and thinks that she can do anything a man can, including reading and writing.

The novel does not take place during any wave of feminism but would have to be tied in to the third wave- though the time frame doesn't add up. It pertains to global awareness and empowerment of women, though, which makes it a feminist work.

Ella Dang says

Bound is a version of the classic Cinderella story about a fourteen year old girl, Xing Xing, who lives with her stepmother and half sister in a cave. Both her parents passed away. Her sister, Wei-Ping has bound feet, in order to have better chances of getting married, all that her and her mother hope for. All that her stepmother wishes is for her daughter to marry a "decent man", while she completely ignores all dreams of

Xing Xing. Throughout the novel Xing Xing tries to prove that she could become successful, as oppose to her family.

Although, I appreciate the twist on the classic Cinderella story, I found it hard to get into the story. It was interesting but definitely had a slow beginning and was hard to stay intrigued in the novel at times. However, being that the novel takes place in China, I did enjoys learning a little about the history. One thing being that I had no idea about how women bound their feet to get married, and how little they were valued compared to men.

Overall, the story was good, but I was not always wanting to read more. I enjoyed Xing Xing's character, being that she was very independent yet determined and innovative. Like I said before I also liked how I could learn a little more about history while it still being a narrative story. I would recommend this to a friend if they were interested in a novel that features Cinderella-like story in a completely different setting, however I would still war to them that the book can be slow at times.

Thomas says

Bound is the story of fourteen-year-old Xing Xing, who lives with her evil stepmother and needy half-sister in a cave. Both of her parents are deceased and these two women are all the family she has left. Her half-sister, Wei-Ping, has bound feet and has high hopes for getting married. Her deceitful step-mom also wants Wei-Ping to get married to a decent man, and completely ignores the hopes and dreams of Xing Xing. In this retelling of a classic tale Xing Xing may be able to prove that she has what it takes to be the one that succeeds, instead of her undeserving family.

Bound was a lukewarm tale. It was interesting, but not intriguing enough to really pull me into the story. I liked all the metaphors and similes, and I also enjoyed the historical aspect of the book. Now I've learned a few facts about China, because my prior knowledge was basically nothing (besides what I've learned in school). Also, the descriptions of bound feet and the horrible deed the stepmother commits were really gruesome. I'm not sure how young children could handle reading those things, unless they just totally flew over their heads.

The characters weren't very developed - it was definitely just a Cinderella retelling. I wish the author twisted the story a little more, because almost all of the characters fit the perfect stereotype that was laid out in the Cinderella story. Another thing that irked me was how the girl on the cover of the book looked so young. She looks like a seven-year-old, not a fourteen-year-old. That confused me at the beginning of the book. An okay read overall.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

It's not even February and I'm already eight reviews behind for the year. There's not gonna be a whole lotta thought thrown in to this one. So basically, it'll be just like all of my other reviews.

Bound was another tale that fell under the criteria for the library challenge "Classics Re-Mixed." The spin this go 'round was on the story of Cinderella. Xing Xing was once a cherished first daughter, but since the death of both of her parents she has been turned into pretty much a servant for her ~~wicked~~ stepmother and

evil half-sister. Basically Xing Xing's life resembles something kinda like this . . .

But Xing Xing doesn't let the situation get her down. She spends as much time as she can sneaking secret enjoyment for herself – like practicing calligraphy and visiting the beautiful fish who lives in the pool where she fetches water for the family. Xing Xing is most definitely the Taylor Swift of orphans

As the village prepares for the annual festival, Xing Xing's stepsister readies herself to finally meet her husband and Xing Xing readies herself for more of the same ol' shit. But when a [really pretty horrible spoilery thing happens] Xing Xing decides SHE will attend the festival as well. Unfortunately before Xing Xing has a chance to really enjoy herself she is spotted and must make a quick break for it

And in the process loses a shoe. Wouldn't you know it, the Prince had attended the festival and has his mind made up that whoever fits the shoe shall be his wife. You know the rest

My lack of enjoyment of this story is most likely my own fault. I've said before I'm not a big fan of the "Disney Princess" stories and this one was a little too like the original for me to totally get on board. I don't know what to say for myself except if I went to the ball I'd want to get my drink on and not have some super creeper who I never even met before occupying all my time on the dance floor. Thanks, but . . .

This selection was chosen as part of my library's Winter Reading Challenge. Only ONE more book and the limited edition coffee mug will be MIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIINE!

Misty says

3.5

This was the first thing I read by Napoli, and though it started strong and had a great sense of place, in some respects it was a letdown. Not completely, and I would still recommend it, but... I'll just get right into it. I thought it had a very strong start. The Cinderella aspects were clear and the sense of place was beautiful. It was reinforced with the language, too, so that it didn't seem like a Western character and sensibilities dropped in an Eastern setting. Everything matched and felt lovingly researched and crafted. I really enjoyed that. There was a beautiful gentleness to it all. Xing Xing and her journey were enjoyable and rootforable. It is a very different take on Cinderella than most of us are used to, but it hits the same notes and explores the well-known version in interesting ways.

For example, (view spoiler)

I loved, too, that even in spite of the Cinderella-ness and the element I mentioned up there in the spoiler, the stepmother and sister, and any "wickedness" that would generally be attached to their names was really understandable. The "wicked" stepmother isn't really wicked -- she's just human, and dealing with things in what she thinks is the best way. They are human and relatable, even when they are doing repugnant things.

What knocked it back for me considerably in the end was the end, but it was so very rushed and almost cheesy with the prince, and I really wanted more development to the ending. Almost felt like a brush-off. It's a short book. There was really no reason that it couldn't have gone on a bit longer and given me some reason to hope that Xing Xing is going to have some kind of a chance at Happily Ever whatnot. It was abrupt, and it kept me from the satisfaction I was looking forward to, and because of that, I feel like any recommendation I give for this super quick read has to come with a large caveat...

Lauren (Shakespeare & Whisky) says

3.5 stars

Finished in a few hours. A unique spin on the Cinderella myth.

Lily says

My high school girls love this book because it retells Cinderella in a different culture and time period, but it's cheesy and stereotyped at best. Most of the novel chronicles the girl's miserable life with her stepmother, and the Cinderella part doesn't really come into play until the very end.

The title itself serves as a metaphor for the bound life that the main character leads, which parallels the symbol of a girl's bound feet in ancient China.

This book does give more complex personalities to its characters than the usual fairytale does; the stepmother and stepsister are not all evil, and the reader is inclined to pity them rather than hate them wholeheartedly. Overall, however, I'm sure there are better retellings of this classic fairytale.

Erin Howard says

Rating: 3.5

Bound is a coming of age story with a Cinderella twist. Most reviews I have seen have put the shoe before the story, but this was truly not about Cinderella at its core. It was about Xing Xing, a not-quite-girl but not-quite-woman being raised by her stepmother in Ming Dynasty China with her older half-sister. Her father and mother had passed away, leaving her at the mercy of the dominant female of the household who had little respect or care for the young Xing Xing.

During this time in China, it was common for young girls to have their feet bound so that they remained dainty enough to fit in the palm of her future husband's hand. This was an extremely painful process, and was even more painful for Xing Xing's half-sister who had started the process late--after her feet had already grown large. This essentially left her bedridden and made Xing Xing her gofer, although neither situation was the girls' fault.

Xing Xing was alone in her home and in her world, but she was able to remember the lessons of her parents, find her mother's spirit, and forge her own path despite the suffocating conditions. Napoli developed her character throughout the book and by the time it was over, Xing Xing had blossomed into her own self. This book wasn't about her finding love, it was about her finding herself.

I enjoyed the writing style and the historical elements in this book, although I would have preferred some sort of index of terms and pronunciations. Napoli did a great job capturing a world that is so foreign to us, my feet cringed at every mention of the binds and what was under the bandages. The attention to detail was wonderfully done and I am looking forward to reading more of her books.

Melissa says

This was a rather short book and i really have nothing to say about it. It was basically Cinderella from an Asian perspective. The only thing different was that Xing Xing never met the prince before she agreed to marry him. Instead she's at a party, accidentally leaves her gold shoe behind, it gets sold, the prince buys the shoe, and the prince wants to marry the woman it belonged too. You still have the evil stepmother. The step sister is actually a half sister and is crippled. the end. Just a nice one time read.

Roxanne Hsu Feldman says

Reading this retelling of the “Chinese Cinderella” story was a painful experience for me. I could not even tell if it is well told, as stories go, because I was so distracted by all the inaccuracies in Napoli’s portrayal of Chinese cultures, customs, characters, and philosophies. Here are some examples of my understanding that does not coincide with Napoli’s text. Granted, I need to do more research and see if maybe my understanding is not universally correct.. A second wife of a man is not the “Stepmother” of his children by the other wife. She is the “auntie-mom” or “second mother.” A stepmother is the wife of a second, separate marriage after the first wife is no longer around.

Napoli’s misunderstanding of Chinese words is glaringly annoying: A Carp (li 3rd tone) and the word Advantage (li the 4th tone) look and sound completely differently — yes, in English, you see them both sound as “Li” — but their tones are different, and thus a Chinese speaker will not confuse these two at all. There is no way that Xing Xing (the main character) can paint/carve one of these two words to set up a “pun” in the ceramics she made. And would a Chinese native speaker say something like this, “‘Ming means ‘bright’ with a second tone. The word for ‘destiny’ sounds the same but with another tone.’”????? If they are speaking Chinese (which they are supposed to be doing in the story,) there will be no need to point out the tonal differences because by SPEAKING them, the different tones are already apparent.

Also — homophones are the most common in Chinese language. All the following are of the same pronunciation (and it’s only 5 out of a possible 20 or so homophones): Ming = bright, Ming = name, Miing = bird call, Ming = remembrance, Ming = hell/world of the spirits. Yes, the Chinese do have word plays, and much of such plays relies on the confusion of homophones... but, the way Napoli wrote it, you can just tell that she does not really GET this language. This is the same throughout the book: reading it feels like reading a Chinese History 101 text, with pieces of a tale stuck uncomfortably on the margins. A most painful experience...

Lacey Louwagie says

It's been so many years since I've read anything by Donna Jo Napoli -- I think more than a decade -- so I was pleased to find that she still "held up" after all this time, especially since I stopped reading her because I seem to have OD'd and found her books not "doing it" for me the same way they used to.

It's clear from Napoli's retellings that she has the utmost respect for her source material, and I admire that. She doesn't try too hard to find a "gimmick" or "twist" to make her retellings sensational; instead, she simply sinks deeply and richly into the source material, particularly the psychology of the characters and the seemingly bizarre choices they make.

This is the first time I've read a Cinderella retelling that harkens back to some of the earliest, Chinese source materials, and I really liked the change of setting. The story is still there -- the stepmother, a half sister, an orphaned and disadvantaged daughter -- but there's a subtly different light cast upon it. At first glance this book seems to be less dark than some of Napoli's other work, but the scenes with the raccoon kittens and the ultimate fate of Xing Xing's fish prove that Napoli still does not shy away from the more disturbing aspects of fairy tales.

Napoli's characters are not two-dimensional -- Xing Xing's sister, who suffers the pain of bound feet, is a sympathetic character that Xing Xing genuinely pities and cares for. The stepmother, while dismissive and sometimes cruel to Xing Xing, is also made more believable for the pressure she feels to marry off her daughter so that the family can survive in a culture where three women alone are worth very little. Her cruelty is interspersed with moments of kindness, so that one does not feel the sort of simmering hatred of her that the stepmother usually inspires. It would have been soul-crushing to live under her roof, just the same.

There is a lot of buildup, so that the ending (the "ball," the search for the owner of the shoe, etc.) seems rushed. I never really "bought" the character of the prince, nor did I feel totally confident Xing Xing was heading off to a happily ever after. But since the romance aspect is probably the least alluring to me in the Cinderella story, it didn't bother me too much to have it downplayed here.

Terry says

This retelling of Cinderella is distinguished by Napoli's lyrical prose--her style is both descriptive and spare and the book almost feels like an extended poem. It's a joy to read, and easy to accomplish without stopping. At the same time, she doesn't sacrifice characterization--what's great about Bound is not only how developed the characters are, but also how complex their personalities and motivations are. For example, the stepmother is not completely evil; she is trapped in a difficult situation, and while she makes selfish, often cruel choices, the reader can still understand her motivation as beyond that of a simple sadist. As with most retellings of Cinderella, the heroine, Xing Xing, is also more developed than the typical damsel in distress. She protects the reincarnated spirit of her mother; she goes on a journey to fetch a healer; and she even becomes the parental figure when the stepmother and daughter are too weak to take care of themselves. The ending with the prince is also nicely handled, as Xing Xing both is able to maintain her strong personality, but the tale and the genre are not completely subverted. It's a satisfying conclusion to a well-written book.

One thing I was left wondering--the author's choice to make the sister's feet bound, not Xing Xing's. It's an interesting choice, and makes sense in how the stepmother is grooming her daughter to be married, but I was

left wondering about it nonetheless. It seems to carry added significance with the title, but it is not about the heroine, making one wonder about the author's take on foot-binding. (Of course the title has multiple meanings, too--also nicely done!) I guess I was expecting more of a critique of the tradition of foot-binding, but it's not a bad thing that my expectations were subverted. Not a criticism, for it doesn't distract during the reading of the book, just a reflection upon finishing. Overall, this was a great read!

Kristie says

I thought this was a cute and original retelling of the Cinderella story. It wasn't super special, but it was enjoyable just the same. I loved the ancient China twist to the story. It was a quick story and worth a read.
3.5 stars

Christine says

[originally reviewed on my blog the happily ever after... in February 2009.]

Bound is a stark, realistic retelling of the commonly known Cinderella type fairy tale. The setting of the story in ancient China, along with the historically accurate traditions of ancient Chinese culture help make this story incredibly realistic and offer the reader a stark look into the unfair expectations and treatment of women within the society. While the hardships faced by women during that time seem unjust and demeaning to the modern reader, the author was able to convey normalcy of those hardships during that particular time period for that culture.

In the traditional Western version of Cinderella, the stepmother and stepsisters are wicked, selfish, and ill-intentioned. Yet in Bound, the stepmother's actions are actually understandable and somewhat justified based on the norms of the ancient Chinese culture. This allows the reader to empathize with Stepmother to a certain degree, making the conflicts of the story not entirely black and white, which in turn gives this story more depth and complexity than the typical Cinderella story. No doubt, Stepmother does inevitably act in poor character, but she is driven by the need to literally survive and will stop at nothing to secure Wei Ping's and her own future by finding Wei Ping a husband. It truly is a matter of life or death for her and her daughter, and sadly, there is no obligation to secure Xing Xing's future or even to preserve her life.

Xing Xing is a lovely character. She is lonely and mourns the loss of her mother and father, both of whom she loved dearly and with whom she shared close relationships, yet despite this sorrow, Xing Xing is an optimistic young girl who through constant reflection of all her parents taught her, manages to maintain a love of life and a hope for a better future. Xing Xing is also insightful and clever, and learns when and where she should expose her skills in the arts where it can work to her advantage. Xing Xing is also empathetic and caring, especially towards Wei Ping and she does what she can to care for her and keep her spirits up. She is even gracious to Stepmother--at least until Stepmother betrays her in the worst way. Upon learning of Stepmother's betrayal, Xing Xing reflects on the following philosophy taught to her by her father. It is one of my favorite passages from Bound:

Learning is not the accumulation of knowledge, but rather, one thing only: understanding. To truly learn, you listened first with you ears, then with your heart, then with your qi.

Note: In traditional Chinese culture, every living thing possesses a qi. While its meaning is varied, it is largely thought of as the "flow of energy" that sustains a living thing.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this story and found it to be a very unique and powerful rendition of the classic tale. At the end of the story, however, I wished it wasn't a retelling of the classic Cinderella, because I felt the lost slipper and Prince ending to be a bit anticlimactic. Through self reflection and self confidence bestowed upon her from her mother and father, Xing Xing grew from a child to an independent, brave young woman, and I wanted her to acquire her freedom being bound on her own, without the help of a Prince. While I understand that the story is bound by the constraints of the classic tale as well as by the realism of a woman's power in this time period, I felt the ending was rather incongruous with the rest of the story. However, it is still a wonderful, thought provoking story that shouldn't be missed.

Bound is a beautifully and poetically written retelling of the classic, familiar fairy tale-- a coming of age story that is enlightening and hopeful.

Lexie says

I freely admit my ignorance in Chinese history. What I do know is mostly gleaned from Disney's Mulan, Katherine Patterson's novel (Rebels of the Heavenly Kingdom) and that which my coworkers at my job taught me for the Chinese New Year. My knowledge of the Cinderella tale, and its incarnations, is vastly larger however, but I had never come upon the Chinese tales (which according to the Postscript are some of the oldest known).

I have mixed feelings for this book; on the one hand the story moves along at a good pace and you can see Xing Xing's life (how she is able to draw small comfort from just being called her name, how strongly she believes in the spirits of her father and mother, her stepmother's disdain) and you are given a very detailed accounting of what life would have been like back then. From Xing Xing's unwavering sense of duty to Wei Ping's selfishness and self-delusions and to Stepmother's (who is given no other name) obvious abuse of Xing Xing as a punishment for her husband caring for her more.

My main concern was the quick way that Xing Xing gains her confidence (in herself and trusting the future). The book isn't very long, but up until the last quarter of the book she accepts her fate, does her best to make the most of things and doesn't resent anyone. Indeed if her Stepmother hadn't done something so heinous, I doubt she would have spoken up for herself at all. Which is a crying shame because Xing Xing in the last five pages is very interesting!

The book however, like Napoli's other fairy tale retellings, offers a different look at what has been done to death. A fish as a 'fairy godmother', bibbity-boppity-boo indeed.

Lucy Lawrenson says

A quirky and original take on the classic Cinderella story, returning to the Chinese origins of this particular tale. This is certainly not the most gripping book I've ever read, but it is sweet and sad and perfectly lovely.

Kris says

4.5 - A Cinderella retelling that takes place in China during the Ming times.

I lucked upon this book when browsing the library. Beautifully written.

Melanti says

A retelling of a VERY old Chinese variant of the Cinderella tale. Ye Xian -- wiki article

I really enjoyed this variant of the story and I thought Napoli did a wonderful job of working in some traditional Chinese beliefs that weren't explicitly part of the Ye Xian tale or at least the versions of Ye Xian that I've found so far don't explicitly link the beliefs, though they might well have been implicitly linked by the people of that era.

I really liked how Napoli pulled in the belief of ancestor veneration with the Koi, and the foot binding in regards to the tiny slipper.

An (admittedly fallible) Wiki search seems to say that foot binding didn't become popularized until around a century after Ye Xian was first recorded. I guess it just goes to show how long small feet have been admired.

Compared to routine foot binding, suddenly Aschenputtel's stepmother cutting off the heel and toes of her daughters doesn't seem quite so gruesome. At least those injuries can heal eventually!

This is either a high 3 star book or a low 4 star... I'll assign it 3 for now because, although I liked it, it was ultimately rather lightweight.
