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By Donna Jo Napoli

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YOUNG XING XING IS BOUND.

Bound to her late father's second wife and daughter. Bound to a life of servitude as a young girl in ancient China, where a woman is valued less than livestock. Bound to be alone, with no parents to arrange for a suitable husband. Xing Xing spends her days taking care of her half sister, Wei Ping, who cannot walk because of her foot bindings, the painful tradition for girls who are fit to be married. Even so, Xing Xing is content to practice her gift for poetry and calligraphy, and to dream of a life unbound by the laws of family and society.

But all of this is about to change as 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.

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Bound By Donna Jo Napoli Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #136031 in Books
- Brand: Simon Pulse
- Published on: 2006-08-01
- Released on: 2006-08-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.00" h x .60" w x 4.19" l, .20 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 192 pages

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Starred Review. Grade 5-9—Napoli takes the elements of the traditional Chinese version of "Cinderella" and creates a powerful and moving story. Xing Xing is left to the mercy of her stepmother after the death of her father. Focusing on a good marriage for her own big-footed daughter, the woman binds the poor girl's feet even though she is past the usual age for this painful procedure. Xing Xing's only pleasure is her daily contact with a beautiful white carp in the pond where she draws water. To her, the fish seems to be the spirit of her mother helping her endure her difficult life. When the stepmother kills it, the girl is devastated, but she retrieves the bones from the garbage heap and, in the process of hiding them, discovers a green silk gown and gold slippers that belonged to her mother. Dressed in this rich garb, Xing Xing goes to the festival where she loses one slipper in her effort to escape detection. The slipper is eventually bought by an unconventional prince; when he finally finds its owner, Xing Xing considers her options and decides to marry him. Napoli retains the pattern of the traditional Chinese tale with only a few minor changes: she sets the story in the northern province of Shaanxi during the Ming dynasty rather than in a minority community in southern China. She fleshes out and enriches the story with well-rounded characters and with accurate information about a specific time and place in Chinese history; the result is a dramatic and masterful retelling.—*Barbara Scotto, Michael Driscoll School, Brookline, MA*

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Gr. 7-12. Drawing from traditional Chinese Cinderella stories, Napoli sets this tale in a small village during China's Ming period. Since her beloved father's death, Xing Xing has become "hardly more than a slave," serving her acrimonious stepmother and pitiable stepsister, Wei Ping, whose botched, bloody foot binding has left her perilously unwell. A dangerous trip in search of medicine for Wei Ping brings Xing Xing into the wider world, but she returns to find home more treacherous than before. Napoli creates strong, unforgettable characters--particularly talented, sympathetic Xing Xing--and her haunting, sometimes violent tale amplifies themes from well-known Western Cinderella stories, making them fascinating questions: Could ancestors serve as "fairy godmothers"? In a society that so grossly undervalues females, what does "happily ever after" really mean? Teens and teachers will want to discuss the layered themes of freedom, captivity, love, human rights, and creative endeavor within this powerful survival story, which, like the yin and yang forces Xing Xing thinks about, balances between terror and tenderness, and is both subversive and rooted in tradition. *Gillian Engberg*

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Review

"A dramatic and masterful retelling." -- *School Library Journal*, starred review

"An adventure and a coming-of-age story that will have readers racing to the finish." -- *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"Deliberate and satisfying." -- *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"Strong, unforgettable characters." -- *Booklist*, starred review

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Debbie Luken:

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