

VITALINA'S DOLL

by
Hal Ames



Vitalina was a happy child. She had many toys in her room and she loved to play with each and every one of them. She had one very special toy. It was a kookla. Her kookla was a handmade doll made of cloth and straw. When she was very young, it was given to her as a gift. No one remembers who gave it to her. She named it Anya. Every night she slept with her special doll. It made her feel safe.

Her family lived in a small village in the Ural Mountains in the central part of Russia. Her father was a farmer. He grew potatoes and raised cows, chickens, and ducks.

Her mother loved to make bright clothing she would sell to other families. The people of her village loved the clothes she made for them, and they used them only for special holidays.

They had a small house painted in blue, white, and yellow paint. In the back of the house, they had a banya. People from the village paid her family to use the sauna in the winter. When they came, their children would play with Vitalina. They loved to play with her toys, but she did not let them play with Anya. She would put her doll on her bed and then play with her other toys with her friends.

At night, as she was going to sleep, her mother would tell her stories. Her favorite was the story of a magic doll that belonged to a little girl just like her.

The story told of how the doll protected her owner when she was frightened. The doll gave her wishes she could use only for good. Every time her mother told her the story, they would talk about the wishes they would make if her doll gave her wishes.

Sometimes it was for money, sometimes it was to take them to a faraway place, and sometimes they wished for snow. It was fun to talk about those things with her mother. Then she would fall asleep dreaming about making a wish.

As she grew older, her other toys were left alone, but Anya was still very special for her. Just about everywhere Vitalina would go, Anya was there.

When people would ask Vitalina how her doll was doing, she would say, "She is doing very well, thank you."

One day, during the middle of the winter, a very bad snowstorm came. Vitalina looked out of the window of her house, but she could not see a thing. The snow was so thick she could not see the lights from the house across the road.

Her mother was home with her, but her father had gone out to cut more wood for the fireplace. It had been a very cold winter and the firewood in the house had run out.

Outside it was getting darker and darker and Vitalina was afraid for her father. He had never been gone so long before. It was the coldest day ever.

Vitalina was worried and began to think, "Maybe he had gotten lost in the snow and could not find his way home. Maybe he was trying to come home but he could not. Maybe something terrible had happened to him."

These thoughts ran through her mind as she watched for him to return.

Vitalina and her mother began to get scared. Where was he?

The house was becoming colder and colder. The fire was going down and the candle on the table was almost gone. Vitalina and her mother took the big blanket from the bed and sat on the floor next to the fireplace watching the door, waiting for her father to walk in and build a new fire.

The room went dark and they fell asleep.

The next day, the door flew open and standing in the entrance was her father. He

had made it home, and in his arms, he had a bundle of wood.

The house was cold and dark. In the middle of the floor, under the big blanket, he found his wife and Vitalina. They were not breathing and their skin was cold.

He dropped the wood and held his family as he cried.

Not knowing what to do, he just sat on the floor looking at his wife and daughter.

In Vitalina's arms, she had her doll, Anya.

Her father took the doll and held it close. He knew how special she had been to Vitalina.

"Why did I have to get lost? I wish I had gotten here sooner. Then they would not have died," he said with big tears in his eyes.

Suddenly the doll began to move.

This was a big surprise to the father.

Then the doll spoke, which was an even bigger surprise.

"You've made a wish and it's for good. I'll grant you your wish!" the doll said.

~ * ~ * ~ * ~ * ~

Vitalina and her mother were sitting in their house. Vitalina was looking out of the window at the snow falling so hard she could not see the lights from the house across the road.

The wood for the fireplace was gone, so her father had gone out to get more wood. It was getting late and he had not returned.

She began to think, "Maybe he had gotten lost in the snow and could not find his way home. Maybe he was trying to come home but he could not. Maybe something terrible had happened to him."

Vitalina and her mother began to get scared. Where was he?

The house was getting colder as the fire began to burn down. The candle on the table was almost gone.

Just then, the door flew open. Standing in the doorway was Vitalina's father holding a bundle of wood.

He put the wood on the fire and the house became warm and cozy again.

Vitalina held Anya close to her chest. She was happy that her father had returned safely.



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VOCABULARY: (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. special _____ | a. fantasy, wish |
| 2. bright _____ | b. colorful, brilliant, vivid |
| 3. sauna _____ | c. place to build a fire |
| 4. belong _____ | d. valuable, unique |
| 5. faraway _____ | e. night light, wax covered flame |
| 6. dream _____ | f. not close, distant |
| 7. fireplace _____ | g. give, allow |
| 8. candle _____ | h. small pile, bunch |
| 9. grant _____ | i. very hot room |
| 10. bundle _____ | j. owned, possession |

TRUE / FALSE:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Vitalina had many sisters. | T / F |
| 2. Her father was a farmer. | T / F |
| 3. Her doll's name was Anya. | T / F |
| 4. Her mother told her bedtime stories. | T / F |
| 5. Her father worked in the city. | T / F |
| 6. A rainstorm washed the house away. | T / F |
| 7. Vitalina's father died in the snow. | T / F |
| 8. The doll granted her father a wish. | T / F |
| 9. Vitalina and her mother died at the end of the story. | T / F |
| 10. Vitalina loved her kookla. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. What did people pay money to use at Vitalina's house? _____
 - a) potatoes
 - b) sauna
 - c) snow
 - d) her doll

2. What kind of animals did her father raise on the farm? _____
 - a) cows
 - b) pigs
 - c) sheep
 - d) geese

3. What did Vitalina and her mother sleep under? _____
 - a) a rug
 - b) a sofa
 - c) a bed
 - d) a blanket

4. Who granted a wish for the father? _____
 - a) Anya
 - b) Vitalina
 - c) His wife
 - d) Morozko

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. Where did the family live?

2. What colors was the house painted?

3. Who played in Vitalina's room?

4. Where was Anya when the children played in her room?

5. What was the story Vitalina loved the most from her mother?

6. Why did her father go out of the house?

7. Why couldn't Vitalina see the lights across the road?

8. Where did the father find Vitalina and her mother?

9. What did the father wish for?

10. Who was in the doorway with a bundle of wood?
