

VITALINA'S DOLL

Hal Ames



Vitalina was an only child. She was very happy and loved by her parents. She had many toys in her room and she loved to play with every one of them. However, she had one very special toy. It was a kookla. Her kookla was a handmade doll made of cloth and straw. When Vitalina was very young, it had been given to her as a gift. No one remembers who gave it to her. She named it Anya, and 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 who grew potatoes and raised cows, chickens, and ducks.

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

They had a small house painted in blue, white, and yellow paint.

When children came to Vitalina's house to play, they loved to go to her room and 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 bedtime stories. Her favorite story was about a magic doll that belonged to a little girl just like her.

Her mother told of how the doll protected her 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. Sometimes it was for money, sometimes it was to take them to a faraway place, and sometimes they wished for a new house. It was fun talking about those things with her mother. Then she would fall asleep and dream about making a wish.

As she grew older, she didn't play with her other toys, 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's doing very well, thank you."

One day, during the middle of the winter, a very bad snowstorm came. Vitalina looked out 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 was the coldest winter anyone could remember, and the firewood in the house was gone.

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

Vitalina was worried and began to think, "Maybe he had gotten lost in the snow and couldn't find his way home. Maybe he was trying to come home, but he couldn't because of the deep snow. 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 to heat up the house again.

The room went dark and they fell asleep.

The next morning, the door flew open and standing in the entrance was Vitalina's father. He had returned home, and in his arms, he had a bundle of wood.

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

He dropped the wood, fell to his knees, and held his family as he cried.

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

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

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

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

Suddenly Anya 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 give you your wish!" Anya said.

~ * ~ * ~ * ~ * ~

Vitalina and her mother were sitting in their house. Vitalina was looking out 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. It was getting late and he had not returned.

She began to think, "Maybe he had gotten lost in the snow and couldn't 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 in the fireplace began to burn down. The candle on the table was almost gone.

Just then, the door flew open, and 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 comfortable again.

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

Anya had made Vitalina’s father’s wish come true.

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

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. special _____ | a. fantasy at night |
| 2. bright _____ | b. colorful, brilliant, vivid |
| 3. wish _____ | c. place for a fire in a house |
| 4. belong _____ | d. valuable, unique, one of a kind |
| 5. faraway _____ | e. night light, wax flame |
| 6. dream _____ | f. not close, distant |
| 7. fireplace _____ | g. come back |
| 8. candle _____ | h. a small amount, not a lot |
| 9. return _____ | i. request, asking for something wanted |
| 10. bundle _____ | j. own, 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 her father grow on the farm? _____
 - a) potatoes
 - b) tomatoes
 - c) corn
 - d) all the above

2. What kind of animals did her father raise on the farm? _____
 - a) cows
 - b) chickens
 - c) ducks
 - d) all the above

3. What did Vitalina and her mother fall asleep 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 liked to play in Vitalina's room?

4. Where was Anya when the children played in Vitalina's room?

5. What was Vitalina's favorite bedtime story about?

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

7. Why wasn't Vitalina able to see the lights across the road?

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

9. What was the father's wish?

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