Trouble with Wishes

Donna Cardon

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Reviewer: Donna Cardon  
Reading Level: Primary  
Rating: Dependable  
Genre: Humorous stories; Fantasy fiction;  
Subject: Statues--Juvenile fiction; Sculptors--Juvenile fiction; Wishes--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;  

Stanley is famous for her stunning nonfiction biographies (e.g. *Michelangelo*, Harper Collins 2000). However, this picture book, which is a retelling of the mythological story of Pygmalion, will likely disappoint Stanley fans. Jane is a Greco-Roman artist who becomes the apprentice to a wonderful sculptor, Pyg. She watches as Pyg creates a beautiful statue of a goddess but is concerned when Pyg starts treating it as if it were alive. When the statue does come to life, the goddess is vane and bossy. Both Jane and Pyg are glad when the goddess decides to leave Pyg and look for a more suitable situation at the local palace.

The story is illustrated with crisp, light hearted watercolors that are less formal than those in Stanley's nonfiction books. The problem with the picture book is that Stanley mixes up time periods. The characters are dressed in togas, and the settings are classical, but when the goddess goes into town, she finds a beauty shop that has a glass storefront where attendants work on her hair with a blow dryer. This jarring break in setting only occurs at the beauty shop. The modernisms are included, presumably, to add humor, but sadly fall short. Stanley ends the book with a note about the Pygmalion myth, mentioning the original version, and the play by Shaw. This book could be useful for a discussion about theme and variation on classical stories, but as a picture book it fails to sparkle.