

*Illustration from A Sled
Dog for Moshi*



A Sled Dog for Moshi. Jeanne Bushey. Illus. Germaine Arnaktauyok. Hyperion, 1994. Unpag. \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920534-85-6.

A Sled Dog for Moshi is more than just a story about an Inuit girl's longing for a pet; it is a tribute to sharing, trust, and the importance of friendship. With the aid of Arnaktauyok's cool pastels, Bushey lulls us into Moshi's Arctic, a world where we cannot help but notice "the changing shadows on the ice made by small clouds drifting across the sun." Once here, we meet Moshi, who devalues her family's working sled dogs after she witnesses the fancy tricks done by the small white terrier brought from New York by her new friend Jessica. When one of these sled dogs saves the girls in a sudden spring storm, Moshi decides that usefulness is more valuable than fanciness. Yet for all its clarity of voice, Bushey's prose carries one central flaw. In sharp opposition to the genuine and unromantic portrait of Inuit life, Moshi's companion — Jessica, a Caucasian city-slicker fresh from New York — comes across as wholly one-dimensional, leaving us to wonder whether her cultural heritage extends any further than owning a small white terrier that can do tricks. This discrepancy is most likely a testimony to the book's informational intent — there is, for instance, a glossary at the end that defines terms associated with Inuit experience. While Jessica's lack of substance does not ruin an otherwise purposeful book, the imbalance between the two girls at times tends to reinforce the notion that "culture" is something that belongs only to those who are different from the mainstream.

Morgan Dennis is an MA student in English at the University of Guelph. He is currently writing a novel that explores a Walt Whitman cult that emerged in Eastern Ontario in the early twentieth century.

The Haunting of Drang Island. Arthur G. Slade. Illus. Ljuba Levstek. Orca, 1999. 160 pp. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-111-4.

If *The Haunting of Drang Island* were ever to hit the screen it would surely be a b-movie. With a queasy blend of clichés, shallow characterizations, and Norse myths oddly displaced to the coast of British Columbia, Slade's boy-meets-girl adventure tale comes up dry. Perhaps what is most unfortunate is that the book — with its back cover promise of blending real and invented worlds — sounds so inviting. Even though Slade has done his homework on Icelandic legends and myth, his digressions into these realms often read like a facts sheet, an intrusion which not only fractures the plot but diminishes any chance of the eeriness he seems to be trying so hard to evoke. We learn, in spurts, that the girl has run away from her parents, and that the boy has been labelled by his father as lacking responsibility. While these attempts at characterization carry the potential of deepening the plot, in the end they are left ultimately undeveloped. Instead of encouraging our protagonists along, we end up searching for reasons why they shouldn't be eaten up by the various beasts and ghouls who, at least, find them so appealing.

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