

its absurdity, considering the qualities of crabgrass and ragweed. The poem ends with the wish:

Maybe I'll be lucky  
and grow up  
like Queen Anne's lace,  
with solid roots, a slender stem,  
a sort of gangling grace.

The images in the poems are vivid and Loughead should be commended to for appealing to all of the senses. The style uses rhyme with ease: nothing jangles, nothing is forced, and the poems hold up well in oral reading. She is not on the level of Dennis Lee — but who is?

Mary Camozzi's illustrations in coloured pencil are witty, like the poems: her rabbit-like dust bunnies are especially droll. Where she excels is in the night scenes, which manage to be scary but not frightening. The poet and illustrator were well matched throughout.

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### **Chloe's Capricious Foul-weather Friend in Nancy Hundal's *Snow Story***

*Snow Story*. Nancy Hundal. Illus. Kasia Charko. HarperCollins, 1997. 32 pp. \$16.00 cloth. ISBN 0-00-224388-1 (bound), ISBN 0-00-648095-0 (pbk).

In *Snow Story* author Nancy Hundal puts a delightful new spin on the classic "dark and stormy night," as she leads her readers through a snowy six-day tempest in a teapot. When an unexpected blizzard descends on Chloe's temperate west-coast Canadian town, Hundal's young protagonist finds herself with a mercurial uninvited guest. The snow quickly takes on a life — and personality — of its own. A frosty shape-shifter, it "flutter(s) in like a secret," upsetting the apple-cart of her everyday existence, putting pay to "a birthday party, Chloe's dentist appointment, school." This white wizard transforms the little girl's garden into a pristine playground, and beckons her out of her snug house to make snowballs and a snow family, while it frost-nips her boot-clad toes. The next morning, the snowy muse offers Chloe an irresistible canvas, "a world that (is) white and still, a smooth piece of drawing paper." She responds by creating (and befriending) a splendid "snow-angel," which she adorns with food-colouring "snow paints," sequins, and glitter.

By the third day into the occupation, Chloe is getting to know her wintry companion pretty well. This snow is a bit like a petulant child: if you make friends with it as does Chloe's mother, who takes off her hat so that the "laughing flakes" can tickle her face, it will reward you with starlit toboggan rides; if you pitch the

snow and “chase it off the stairs and hedges,” like the grumpy old man across the street, the snow will taunt and tease you with *more snow!* On the fourth day home from school, Chloe amuses herself with outdoor visits to see the snow-angel and to trace the tiny avian and feline footprints in the snow. Indoors, warmer bouts of cookie-baking, reading and playing dress-up pass the time. But, by the fifth day, Chloe is ready for her capricious “snow-mate” to go home. “I’m tired of this white world ... But not of my angel. Sneak away snow, but angel, don’t go,” she muses. Drawn to her window in the middle of the night, Chloe witnesses “a sequined shine mounting the cloudy ladder to the sky.” By morning, the snow has grabbed its mantle and flown, leaving in its place “a world of grassy green ... surprised to find its blanket so suddenly missing.” A more beneficent spirit, the snow angel has also transcended its earthly state like a sequined phoenix, and “soared.”

In *Snow Story* Nancy Hundal presents the anatomy of a snowy winter in a child-sized version, magically capturing the poetry and playfulness of the season. In addition to her highly effective use of personification — the snow becomes a character in itself — Hundal laces her prose with onomatopoeia and her own evocative, newly-minted words like “snow-joyed” and “pocket-fumbling.” Chloe’s tale is truly a delight to read aloud. As the mother of two children who hold winter bundling in contempt, I love her repeated winter-weather mantra: “snow suit, mitts, scarf, toque and boots.” Hundal transforms this tiresome necessity into a ritual, a game. Kasia Charko’s richly-detailed illustrations are a perfect companion for the writer’s colourful word painting. As the author shifts the story outdoors and in again, capturing the coziness of winter weather from both perspectives, Charko’s warmly-inviting interiors and downy-blanketed snowscapes deftly complement this textual rhythm. The artist fills each page with exquisitely rendered interiors and exteriors, capturing the architectural grace in both manmade and nature-crafted structures. Whether it is the glowing arched triptych window in Chloe’s third-floor aerie, or the lacy pattern of snow on twisted branches resplendent with crested cardinals, Charko’s paintings are a feast of colour and detail. I particularly enjoy her use of little snow squalls and a tiny “birdfeeder clock” to embellish each printed page.

In *Snow Story*, Nancy Hundal presents both the mischievous and the magical personae of winter as seen through a child’s eye. After reading this beautiful book, my children and I were inspired to create a snow angel of our own; I bet you will be too!

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