

from morning golds to evening purples and blues and the endless subtle changes of the snow. Figures and portraiture are rather stiff and consciously naive in style, but change to flowing images of energy, movement and grace in the scenes on ice with their dramatic close-ups and shifting points of view. The type is unfortunately often hard to read when placed against the pointillist background of mottled snow and sky.

The experience of living with a disability is also a major element of Connie Brummel Crook's *Maple Moon*, a First Nations historical tale, illustrated by Scott Cameron. Although the story is fiction, it is based on various native "pourquois" legends of how maple syrup was discovered. Set in the distant past, the story relates how an eight-year-old Missisauga boy lives with the sense of being different and socially isolated because of his injured and disabled leg. Unlike Danny, who is unconcerned by his handicap, the boy remains an outsider, an observer who cannot participate in child play. Stories of the underdog and outcast who saves the people are common in folklore, myth, and in children's literature, from the historical fiction of Rosemary Sutcliff to the Greek myth of Hephaestus. Here, the drama is concentrated to picture-book length, but the tension is strong as the boy saves his people from starvation, observing a squirrel drinking maple sap and bringing it to his people. He receives a new name, a celebration, and a triumphal restoration of place in the social order. The shape of the story is that of a literary fairy tale more than of historical fiction. The writing style has a quiet, understated dramatic tension, using the structure of a folktale or legend, but amplified by the psychological details of emotional realism. The child's pain and the people's hunger are also understated and effectively conveyed. Scott Cameron's rich illustrations appear to be oil paintings. The texture of pigment on canvas, the use of shading and shadow, and the still, posed tableaux give the images an old-fashioned, turn-of-the-century quality of gift-book illustrations by artists such as N.C. Wyeth and others. Cameron's use of varying perspectives, including cinematic close-ups, provides rhythm and monumentality to the images. More than in *The Final Game*, *Maple Moon* conveys the emotional reality of living with a disability, but both attempt to convey the experience within the context of a real story. The strongest book yet with this element is still Nan Gregory's *How Smudge Came* with its sense of authenticity and intimacy.

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### Waking Dream Too Good to be True

*The Dream Collector*. Troon Harrison. Illus. Alan and Lea Daniel. Kids Can, 1999. Unpag. \$15.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55074-437-2.

The premise of Troon Harrison's story is promising. A young boy encounters and is asked to assist a dream collector, who by city ordinance must clear the streets of all "dreams" (actually various characters from dreams) by dawn. While the dream

*Illustration from The  
Dream Collector*



collector repairs the motor on his truck, Zachary, the young boy, helps him by collecting the wandering dream figures before the dawn light makes them become real. Zachary's experience is exciting and rewarding, but has one disturbing flaw.

Alan and Lea Daniel have provided bright, bold pictures, combining realism with the flowing fantasy of the dream figures, whose colours meld at times with those of the background. The dream collector has the face of a benevolent Santa Claus figure, while Zachary's glasses and cowlick add to his inquisitiveness. The one figure that seems out of place is the monkey, whose nearly translucent outlined body appears on several pages. There is no mention of a monkey in the text, and it is the only dream drawn in that manner. Is it an inside joke on the illustrator's part, "a monkey on the back" of the dream collector?

Where this story fails is in its ending. Children are able to do all sorts of things on the pages of storybooks, including — perhaps most importantly — going outside of reality. Reality and fantasy seem to make the best sense, however, when there is some kind of distinction made between the two. Alice has to fall down the rabbit hole to get to Wonderland; Lucy and her brothers must step through the wardrobe to get to Narnia. *The Dream Collector*, however, makes no separation between dreaming and waking. Zachary wakes to find the dream collector at work, but what does not get acknowledged is that he wakes into a fantasy world. The most disturbing transgression in what could be an imaginative story is the tangible evidence that suggests that Zachary's dream was indeed true. The idea that dreams can come true is a wonderful one, and one that should be fostered; but in this story the truth comes a little too easily. The sense that dreams are dreams is lost. Instead of a sign or a mere trinket to suggest that his dream really happened, or that the dream collector really exists, Zachary gets to take a huge shaggy dog from the fantasy world to the "real" world. Had Zachary awakened back in bed to find that his parents had bought him a new dog — his dream dog — the division

would have been stabilized. A wink from the dream collector in the form of a gift from Zachary's parents would be more effective than the story's neglect of the idea of responsibility.

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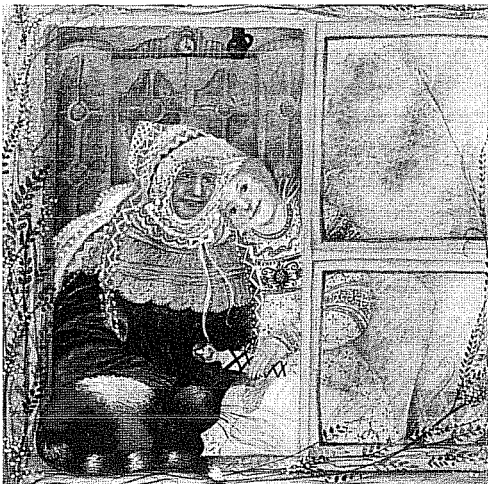
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### **Imaginative Fancies and Historical Forays: Alison Lohans's *Sundog Rescue***

*Sundog Rescue*. Alison Lohans. Illus. Vladlyana Langer Krykorka. Annick, 1999. Unpag. \$15.95, cloth, \$6.95, paper. ISBN 1-55037-571-7, 1-55037-570-9.

Alison Lohans's *Sundog Rescue* explores the relationship, built on matriarchal lines, between the present and the past. Written for a four- to seven-year-old age group, the story features Melissa as its protagonist, a young girl both fearful of and mesmerized by the shadows her fruitful imagination casts on even the most mundane of settings. For Melissa, there is no safe place; she is isolated by an imagination her immediate family dismisses and disdains. The only one who understands Melissa is her grandmother, and it is through their shared sense of fear and fancy that a connection is made. Melissa's grandmother shares tales of her own Granny Babi to help Melissa fit herself into a family history of creative women. The author is not subtle in her gendered choices; Melissa's father and brother cannot understand her or her creativity and are portrayed unsympathetically.

While Lohans's instincts about storytelling lead her into some poetic imagery, her writing does veer into uncertainty. Her constant shifting between time



*Illustration from  
Sundog Rescue*