



suggest that loss, loneliness and fear will permanently disappear or be conquered, but that there will always be renewed support for dealing with such emotions. The settings of the old, cold city and the coffee farm of Tanzania in Downie and Mollel's books are an added bonus in their ability to take the reader to another world, not imaginatively removed as an escape from the real world, but solidly based in that everyday world, which is magic in itself.

---

---

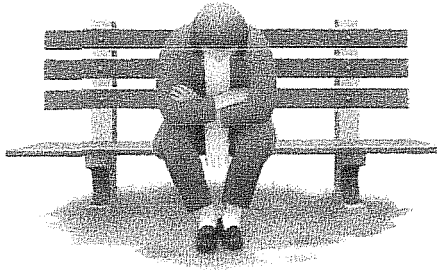
*Margaret Steffler teaches English part-time at Trent University and Sir Sandford Fleming College.*

### **Two Picture Books with Physically and Developmentally Challenged Heroes**

*How Smudge Came.* Nan Gregory. Illus. Ron Lightburn. Red Deer Press, 1995. 32 pp. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88995-143-8. *The Moccasin Goalie.* William Roy Brownridge. Orca Books, 1995. Unpag. \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 1-551-143-042-8.

The publication of *How Smudge Came* and *Moccasin Goalie* fills the gap in the picture book market for stories about developmentally and physically challenged people. These two good books serve as lead-ins to discussions about the special life circumstances that face the heroes of these stories.

In *How Smudge Came* Nan Gregory's developmentally challenged hero lives in a group home and works in an AIDS hospice. The story revolves around Cindy trying to hide a homeless puppy — a suspenseful tale which will fully engage young readers to the end. Although the puppy brings joy to the AIDS patients at the hospice, Smudge finds himself unwelcome in Cindy's strict group home and is removed to the SPCA. To Gregory's credit, Cindy attempts to resolve



the problem herself. She fails and is only reunited with the puppy when the hospice gang surprises her by making Smudge a resident there.

The storyline works, but the writer uses overly simplistic language. Gregory tries to capture Cindy's voice through too short, incomplete sentences. The result is choppy writing. The author's strength lies in the way she shows young readers how Cindy copes with life's challenges. Cindy hums to tune out the people who often treat her with harsh words. She sets off to reclaim Smudge from the SPCA with the address written on a piece of paper, and is wonderfully confident in her ability to "get around." At a time when the world wishes to find out more about the lives of "different" people, a developmentally challenged hero and her cute puppy side-kick constitute a timely pair. Illustrator Ron Lightburn's pencil drawings take them one step further by making them an endearing and *timeless* pair. Lightburn, a previous Governor General's Award winner, eloquently captures the tone of the book. For example, the reader feels the disappointment of losing a puppy in a nearly empty page in contrast to the room of happy glowing faces at the hospice when Smudge is returned.

In *The Moccasin Goalie*, author illustrator William Roy Brownridge uses direct language to give a personal immediacy to his story. This hockey-loving hero has a "crippled leg and foot." Wearing moccasins instead of skates, he becomes a competent goalie who "could slide across the goalmouth really fast." Unfortunately, "Moccasin Danny's" disability precludes him from being chosen to play on a local hockey team. The author reports "it was the saddest moment of my life." This naked sentence carries a lot of impact. The same boldness comes across in the strong colours of Brownridge's impressionistic paintings that capture the vivacity of hockey in a prairie winter setting.

This book was shortlisted for the 1995 Ruth Schwartz Award. Despite a flowing plot, the resolution comes as a disappointment. It seems as if the author waved a magic wand to make things work out when the "real" goalie becomes injured and our hero gets a shot at the job. He excels, of course, and is invited to play for the rest of the season. All is well on the Canadian prairie but what happens at the end of the season? By denying his hero the chance to resolve his problem independently, Brownridge fails to endow Moccasin Danny with the courage that Gregory gave Cindy. However, sometimes, even outside of fiction, pure luck does "solve" things, and the dust-jacket photo suggests that moccasin

goalies can exist. It show a team photo of the Vawn Cougars with the author "wearing rubbers over his moccasins."

Luck may come in handy, but the secondary characters of both books demonstrate the importance of friendship. When the teams are picked in *The Moccasin Goalie* one friend questions the exclusion of Moccasin Danny, a girl named Anita and a small boy name Petou. Later, Moccasin Danny accepts a league position only on the condition that Anita and Petou be allowed to play. The descriptions and actions of the secondary characters also provide spring-boards to discussion in *Smudge*. The near-blind and ill AIDS patients in the hospice become Smudge's rescuers. The challenged heroes in both books have lives enriched by the support and the sense of belonging that their friends give them. Friendship makes a difference to these people in their worlds. More attention is now given to recognizing the contributions of people with disabilities. These books fill a much-needed gap.

---

---

*lian goodall completed her BA in history with some assistance from the Centre for Students with Disabilities at the University of Guelph. She is a freelance writer and book reviewer who lives outside Shelburne. She also has a quarterly publication of kids' writing called Plume.*

### Horses of a Different Colour: Two Horse Stories

*Alice of Wonderfarm Goes to the Races*. Ann Nelles. Illus. author. William Street Press, 1995. 32 pp. \$18.95 cloth. ISBN 0-9695097-4. *To the Mountains by Morning*. Diana Wieler. Illus. Ange Zhang. A Groundwood Book, Douglas & McIntyre, 1995. 32 pp. \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-227-0.

*Alice of Wonderfarm Goes to the Races* and *To the Mountains by Morning* have many similarities, but it's the differences that are notable. Both are about horses whose lives are threatened. Old Bailey, in *To the Mountains by Morning*, knows that the horse trailer will be coming to take her away. Gumper, in *Alice of Wonderfarm Goes to the Races*, has been told he's being sent to the glue factory. There is a huge difference in the way these stories are told. We learn about Old Bailey and her life, and come to care about her, before the crisis occurs. Gumper, on the other hand, runs into problems immediately, and his character is never really developed.

Conversations in *To the Mountains by Morning* flow naturally and the descriptive passages are a pleasure to read. The Rocky Mountain Stables gets a new owner, Mr. Cuthbert. "It soon became clear that Mr. Cuthbert had never owned a riding stable before. He looked at the horses' feet instead of their teeth to see how old they were. He hung onto their tails to keep them still. All the while he was grading them." The language and sentence structure in *Alice of Wonderfarm Goes to the Races* is simpler and more child-like. "One morning, when Alice was sleeping on the cool grass in the early sun, her friend, Painted Dog, came running to find her. Painted Dog was a Dalmatian, who was covered with black and white spots."

Animals speak in both stories. Old Bailey is able to communicate with the other horses, and to understand what humans are saying. Gumper and his animal friends have even more exhaustive talents. All the animals are not only able to