



BROWSE



 **Hippie Chick (review)**

Deborah Stevenson

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

Deborah Stevenson

Moninger, Joseph; *Hippie Chick*. Front Street, 2008; [160p] ISBN 978-1-59078-598-0 \$16.95 Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 9-12

The Florida Keys have been Lolly's lifelong home, and the fifteen-year-old is a confident sailor, regularly taking out her boat, the *Mugwump*, on her own. One evening that reliable pleasure turns into disaster, however, when Lolly's out on the ocean and her boat tips; as she tries to sort the situation, the boom smacks her into unconsciousness, and when she awakens, floating in her life jacket, she's miles away from anywhere. All that stands between her and eventual death by exhaustion and predation is a trio of manatees swimming by. Lolly grabs onto one, and she's towed to an isolated island, where the manatees feed and she tries to alert searchers, but ultimately she realizes that she's beyond rescue there, so she turns once again to **[End Page 89]** the manatees for help. The plot elements are classic survival story, but Monninger, author of *Baby* (BCCB 9/07), transforms the survival narrative into a quiet paean to the joy of existence. Lolly's narration is contemplative yet matter-of-fact, describing her experience from a later vantage point that allows her to disclaim sentimental takes on her animal encounter ("People . . . wanted the Lassie part. The girl and her dog part") but still maintaining a shimmering fluidity, touched with the kind of otherworldly remove that can come from the marginalization of daily realities and solid ground. The book adroitly splices earthbound existence to Lolly's more sublime adventure without losing the special characteristics of either, and Lolly's worried mother and devoted if ostensibly unsuitable boyfriend are solid supporting characters with their own individuality. With an underlying message about the human damage to the ecosystem (the author includes a note about manatees), this is a startlingly vivid depiction of its setting and an evocative tribute to a kind of survival that's more than just knot-tying skills.

begin to realize that the monster is a historic evil that's been seizing young people for centuries, and that soon, if they can't figure out a way to fight back, he'll reel Danny and Howie in to their doom. The classic elements of a good supernatural thriller are all present and accounted for here—the sympathetic protagonist-victim with a haunted past, the evil with a resume dating from time immemorial and the folktales to prove it, and even the lone survivor of a past attack—and the vividly realized winter landscape makes for both a literally and figuratively chilling setting. The plot's architecture is carefully constructed, with even seemingly throwaway details becoming relevant in the high-action climax, and Danny's increasingly passionate relationship with Ash and his grieving for his lost mother provide additional character development and encourage greater reader investment. This will be an easy book to read and a splendidly enjoyable read sure to please those who respond with both hope and dread when things go bump in the night. DS

MILGRIM, DAVID *Santa Duck*; written and illus. by David Milgrim. Putnam, 2008. 32p. ISBN 978-0-399-25018-7 \$16.99 R 5-8 yrs

Clothes apparently make not only the man but the duck: when Nicholas Duck puts on the Santa suit and hat he found at his front door, he's immediately assumed to be Santa by all he meets. After hearing the Christmas requests of a bevy of animals, he tries to get out of the Santa gig but can't manage it; finally he runs into Santa himself and passes along the requests, deciding that being Santa's helper is a pretty nifty Christmas gift in its own right. Though the end is a little murky, it's the loopy details of this goofy comic story, such as the absurd rewrites of "Jingle Bells" (Nicholas sings "Jingle quack" while the cow sings "Jingle moo") and the apropos yet entertaining gift requests (the turtle wants "a really, really fast race car that goes really, really fast," while the squirrel wants several varieties of nuts and a shovel), that provide the Christmas kicks. Author-illustrator Milgrim puts much of the narrative in speech balloons, and the entertaining, sometimes pell-mell dialogue will delight enterprising readers even as it anchors the visual layouts. The figures are Milgrim-familiar, made of wavery but determined line notable for sudden shifts between bulbousness and threadlike slenderness (big heads, teensy necks, pipe-cleaner arms), anchored by calm planes of digital color with tidy shadows and highlights. Between this and Kelley's *The Dog Who Saved Santa*, reviewed above, it's a good Christmas year for animal helpers, and kids looking to ring the changes on the Yuletide bells will find this makes them merry indeed. DS

MONNINGER, JOSEPH *Hippie Chick*. Front Street, 2008. [160p]. ISBN 978-1-59078-598-0 \$16.95
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