



Annie Muktuk and Other Stories

Norma Dunning

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Inuit writer Norma Dunning brings a visceral understanding of traditional Inuit ways of knowing and being to her stories. Gritty, harsh, and compelling, they expose how racism, forced assimilation, and the holdovers of colonialism have played out in human lives and hearts caught in the clash between traditional and modern cultures. Through them, we learn of the brutal efforts that were made to destroy Inuit culture, values, communities, and traditional ways of life. She writes of children torn from their families and sent to boarding schools where they were taught to fear a god who would “cover them in fire” for disobedience, where rape and abuse were common, and where speaking their own language would result in torture. She tells of women who fall in love with white men only to be used and betrayed, and of the toll that drink and drugs have taken on lives and relationships.

Dunning’s stories, nuanced and deeply felt, reach deep into the heart of what it means to be Inuit, into the sacred place where the songs of the north are still sung, visions are still seen, and the spirits still speak. From this place, it is possible to laugh at those who come to destroy. From this place, dignity is maintained and the connection to the turning of the seasons is unbroken. Together with grief for what has been lost, there is power and light in these stories. Dunning, in her dedication to the book, affirms that the spirits of the Ancestors can still be heard: “These are your words written from my heart,” she writes.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July/August 2017)

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