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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ JUVENILE FICTION

Dr. White

Jane Goodall
Julie Litty, illustrator
North South Books (February 1999)
Unknown $15.95 (36pp)
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Dr. White is a small fluffy dog whose devotion to sick children helps them to heal. Based on true events, the renown Jane Goodall focuses on the conflict of interest between the loving animal and a health inspector who orders the dog removed from the hospital. When the inspector's own daughter becomes critically ill, the head nurse takes it upon herself to let the dog back in. Dr. White performs his "magic" once again, restoring the girl's health and winning over the heart of the health inspector.

This is a feel good story with a one-dimensional goal. The dog is presented strictly as a caregiver, akin to a human doctor: "Dr. White dashed to the hospital. He was late." The adults in the story treat him as an equal partner in healing: "When Mark's mother saw Dr. White enter the room, she smiled with relief 'Look after him or me,'" she said. Readers could benefit by knowing more about the dog itself allowing greater access into the heart of the story. Also, with no sense given as to why the dog's "tail wagging treatment" works, a leap of faith is necessary to accept the miraculous change in the inspector's daughter. In just one night she is transformed from pale and motionless to a ruddy-cheeked, smiling child.

Scenes and characters in the illustrations are created with a sketchy line while pale watercolor washes add texture and depth. The warmth of the dog and people emerges against a stark hospital background. Unfortunately the illustrations are marred by incomplete eraser use, where readers can see one solid object through another. For instance, the girl's arm is seen through the head of the dog. The book's subject is worthwhile and young children will be captured by the dog's cuteness, but older readers may find the presentation too simple, the focus too narrow.
MARTHA TOPOL (March / April 1999)

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