



Dust of 100 Dogs

A.S. King

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By the 1980s, Emer Morrissey has lived a long and difficult life. During the mid-1600s, in her original incarnation, she watched as her parents fought and died to protect their Irish village from Oliver Cromwell's army. Emer is forced to live with her abusive uncle and his family until her fourteenth birth-day, when he sells her to a Frenchman looking for a wife. Repulsed by the fat man who is meant to be her fiancé, Emer manages to run away.

She hides in Paris until she decides to travel to the Caribbean because signs claim that "...women like Emer would find happiness and husbands..." The reality is that the islanders are no different from the mainlanders. Desperate, she dresses in men's clothes, boards a ship, and works as a sailor until her gender is discovered. She proves her bravery and strength when defending the ship against pirates, so the captain awards her a brig and crew of her own. Before long, Emer becomes a pirate. She is eventually cursed, then killed: "I curse you to one hundred lives as the bitch you are, and hope wild dogs tear your heart into the state you've left mine!" Scene-shift to Emer's life during the 1980s as Saffron, a girl in search of the treasure she hid in Jamaica during her pirate days, and to Emer's life as various types of dogs.

The author studied at the Art Institute of Philadelphia and taught adult literacy in Ireland. Her short fiction has appeared in publications such as *Contrary* and *Quality Women's Fiction* while her books include *Monica Never Shuts Up* and *Christopher's West-ern*. This is her first novel for young adults.

The author's depiction of an autonomous, courageous, and intelligent girl coming of age in the midst of chaos (both historic and contemporary) is compelling. The nonlinear plot will offer more advanced adolescent readers a challenge they do not often get while reading young adult literature. However, making connections between the "Dog Fact" vignettes and the historic and contemporary storylines might prove intimidating even to advanced readers. Adult situations (relationships and fantasies) make this book more suitable for mature adolescents.

KAAPONIA HINTON (December 15, 2008)

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