Clarion Review

Picture Books

Legend of the Hula Moose
Christine Taylor Sprowl Tetak
BookSurge
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Four Stars (out of Five)

At precisely the right time, if a rainbow appears above a certain Hawaiian volcano, you might just see the hula moose. In *Legend of the Hula Moose*, Christine Taylor Sprowl Tetak spins the story of two moose who find themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time only to end up in paradise. It's a sweet children's tale with a delightful twist that teaches readers about making the best of any situation.

This legend tells of two yearling moose that are accidentally captured with a herd of cattle destined to be a gift for a Hawaiian king. After surviving the journey, the moose escape from the king's herds onto a high mountain, which reminds them of their Canadian home. But when the mountain turns out to be a volcano and erupts, the moose are forced back to the seashore, where other animals teach them about Hawaii's wildlife and environment. They later return to the mountain, where cowboys occasionally spot them. The legend ends with the possibility that moose can still be seen on the mountain from time to time if one looks carefully enough at just the right moment.

Tetak's story provides a creative and unusual twist on the traditional animal tale. Set in Hawaii, it introduces children to island culture, which isn't highlighted often, even in multi-cultural books. And because it features moose rather than more standard cuddly animals, the story will appeal to both boys and girls. The story teaches about island wildlife, a tropical habitat, and the ability of animals to adapt to their surroundings. "Follow the whistles of our friends the birds, Keena," one moose says while escaping the erupting volcano. "They're leading us in the right direction!" In addition, the tale teaches children how to make the best of a difficult or unexpected situation. "The moose worried about what they had gotten themselves into," Tetak writes. "Their mood improved as they saw fresh water in buckets and hay on the floor."

Tetak's understanding of children's needs, honed through years as a first-grade teacher, shines. The vocabulary level remains appropriate, and a glossary in the back of the book defines unusual or new words. Although the plot moves slowly and the ending seems abrupt, the story retains a warm heart. The sweet and simple journey of these moose will charm readers who might never view a rainbow the same way.

Diane Gardner