

Missuk's Snow Geese

Anne Renaud

Genevieve Cote, Illustrator

Simply Read Books (October 2008)

Hardcover \$16.95 (36pp)

978-1-894965-82-8

Two polar bears snuggle in the snow under the startling green of the Northern Lights. A fairytale-like opening—“This story happened many springs ago”—leads to the introduction of Missuk, a young Inuit girl who prefers soapstone to seal fur.

If only Missuk could carve snow geese as well as her father does! But despite his teaching, she still can't “find the graceful bird in the stone.” She overcomes her frustration by instead imprinting geese in the snow while happily honking to the migrating birds overhead. Her patterns play an unexpected role in a night of gales and snowy spirals.

Author Anne Renaud has lived in Northern Quebec and her experiences there inspired this gentle Arctic tale, her fourth work for children. She pays careful attention to small details, such as the sewing of a seal-fur mitten with a caribou-bone needle, and this gives her story a powerful sense of place.

Genevieve Côté has illustrated several children's books and won a prestigious Governor General's Literary Award in 2007 for her illustration of *La petite rapporteuse de mots*. Her intriguing mixed-media illustrations use a limited range of colors, predominantly blue, lilac, and brown, to capture the essence of the frozen land. The style is simple: noses, for example, are represented by triangles. Yet she portrays a broad range of emotions, such as Missuk's wide-smile experience of serene geese-imprinting joy.

As the tale closes Missuk is bubbling with a newfound confidence, and her delight is contagious. This memorable story of life in the far north will leave

JULIE FALKNER (October 13, 2008)

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