

The Haunting of Drang Island

Arthur G. Slade

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If you are looking for a book to give you the shivers on a warm night, try *The Haunting of Drang Island*. Slade's first book in the Northern Frights series, *Draugr* was a finalist for the Small Press Book Award for young adult fiction in 1998. His short stories and magazines have been published in magazines in North America and have been broadcast on CBC Radio.

Slade uses his knowledge of Norse mythology to create a suspenseful story. Michael has just completed ninth grade in Missouri with low grades and friend trouble. His father has spent three years writing a book on modern-day Viking tales and wants to spend quality time with his son during a camping trip on Drang Island, located somewhere in the mist north of Vancouver Island. Dad also plans to do some research in the ruins of an Icelandic settlement on the island. As a descendent of the Vikings, Dad has a special interest in passing along Norse mythology and lore to the next generation.

The ominous boat trip to Drang should have been warning enough that the camping trip would not be a restful opportunity for father-son bonding.

Strange markings on the tent and weird noises were other clues. Michael discovers another camper: Fiona, a fifteen-year-old who has run away from home. As Dad looks for the ancient ruins, Michael and Fiona decide to explore part of the desolate island. They find themselves in peril as mythological creatures—a sea serpent, fetches, ghosts, wolves and Bolverk (worker of evil)—conspire against them.

Slade keeps readers wondering if the campers will make it off the island alive, and if there is anyone they can trust. Can they seek help from Harbard, the boatman who “turned his head and glared, his deep-set eyes burning with anger, almost like he was mad that he’d allowed us on the ferry ... He looked as if he hadn’t slept, shaved or had a haircut since the sixties”? Or the ranger who whose face becomes “grumpy” when Michael reports Dad as missing? Or the bulky figure that stepped out from an alcove and tells them with a slurred voice not to be afraid? And what about the strange sacrifices?

The gothic images of Drang Island will continue to haunt readers long after the injured and terrified young campers have found their way to safety and a first kiss.

LINDA SALISBURY (March / April 1999)

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