



Dogsbody

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The Dog Star, Sirius, is tried for murder by his heavenly peers and found guilty. His sentence: to be reborn on Earth as a dog until such time as he carries out the seemingly impossible mission imposed on him.

In his Earth guise, Sirius, renamed Leo, truly lives a dog's life. Although he is the pet of a girl who loves him, both child and dog are mistreated by the family with whom they live. But the worldly obstacles Leo faces are minor when compared with his chilling encounters with the Dark Powers that are set against him. His quest seems hopeless until at last Sol, Moon, and Earth itself come to his aid.

Dogsbody is a tense, exciting, sciencefiction fantasy, a thriller, and a touching dog story all in one.

Dogsbody Details

Date : Published August 1st 2001 by Greenwillow Books (first published 1975)

ISBN : 9780064410380

Author : Diana Wynne Jones

Format : Paperback 272 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Fiction, Childrens, Animals

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From Reader Review *Dogsbody* for online ebook

Kaethe says

How does one write sympathetically of animals without going all the way over the line and putting them in waistcoats? Or realistically, without killing them off right away? It's tricky, and a little trippy, but a very cool result.

Ellie says

I wolfed it down in a day - pun intended! A nice, light read.

Rebecca McNutt says

Dogsbody has so many strange and magical fantasy elements in its vast realm of a story. I loved the author's quaint writing style, too.

Victoria says

Oh, I REALLY enjoyed this book! Though this is targeted toward the young adult market, I think it is a story for all ages! The premise of a celestial being trapped in the body of a dog on Earth is definitely unique, but the way it is written, though it is a fantasy novel at heart, there are a lot of realistic details about a dog's life. Anyone looking for a unique spin on a dog book would definitely enjoy this! The dog/star's perspective was wonderful and just completely unlike anything else I have ever read. A wonderful, mythic sort of tale... just terrific!

Molly says

I know that Diana Wynne Jones is this big important writer for the fantasy genre. I know that I was supposed to like this and I know that I'm supposed to be grateful to her or something.

Despite this knowledge, I was not super fond of this book.

Dogsbody follows the star Sirius, who in the first chapter is on trial for some bizarre offense involving a Zoi and his companion. It's vague. His judges are other celestial bodies, and his sentence forces him to Earth, where he is to live as a dog and find the mysterious Zoi. Within his dog's body (see what I did there), he has to balance his animal and his celestial natures, he learns about humans, and he comes to view things from a new perspective.

It's not that the novel was particularly bad, I just didn't get it. I'm not extremely familiar with the names of

stars and constellations, so there were a bunch of references that really confused me. I found that I had to jump back and forth to remember who was what and why it mattered. That bothered me a little. Additionally, I found some of the content very upsetting. F bombs, sex scenes, dugs—none of these freak me out. But in the second chapter a new litter of puppies is stuffed into a bag and left to drown in a river. That was almost too much for me to take. Maybe it's because I have a dog. Additionally, the characters were very polarizing. Kathleen, who is the girl who takes Sirius in, is so good that she's difficult to relate to; and Duffie, her sort of surrogate mother (a lot like the evil step mother of Cinderella), was so evil that she was difficult to relate to.

It's a cute story. The ending confused the hell out of me, but it wasn't bad. I think there's some neat symbolic readings available, and the way Sirius changes through the novel is very interesting. It just wasn't my cup of tea.

I don't think I would recommend it to many. I don't even really want to teach it. I feel like I am probably missing something, I know that I was "supposed" to like this book. I just don't.

Warnings:

Drugs: None

Sex: There's reference to a dog in heat, but it's vague enough that I didn't really see a problem with it.

Language: None.

Violence: The animal violence in this book just about did me in. Like I said, I do not handle animal abuse very well. No human violence, however.

Fiona says

Written in the 1970's *Dogsbody* tells a story of a young Irish girl who adopts a dog found half drowned in the river. He is not a dog though - but the Luminary Sirius of the Dogstar who has been banished from his sphere after losing his temper and losing a powerful tool that has become lost in Earth.

Diana Wynne Jones creates this universe (well... actually she takes a universe that already exists and gives it some character...) and instantly manages to create this whole world and system with a few strokes of her pen. Somehow despite little introduction you just fall into this world she's created as if it was there waiting for you to trip up into it.

The story is not dated, but is quite notably of its time. Written in a time when instead of the fear of Muslims, ISIS and terrorists - you have the Irish and the IRA. One racism, one fear replaced quickly by another. Maybe younger readers would not get why Kathleen was so hated or discriminated against - but the "joke" that Irish people were stupid was something that even I remember in the 90's as a thing being thrown about in the playground.

As per usual, Diana Wynne Jones doesn't patronise her audience. She grants them some modicum of intelligence and imagination. Her world's are often left feeling as if there is much to be expanded upon - I would not call them unfinished, just that you're only given a small window into a much larger thing that goes far beyond the pages. I got the sense of this in her *Dalemark Quartet* and even in *Howl* - where one feels that there could be so much more. And she doesn't need to write 1000 pages in order to create this endless feeling.

Anyway - what follows is a story that feels real enough to hurt. Sirius - or as Kathleen calls him, Leo, feels like a real dog not some cute affair. There's nothing cartoonish about this story, or really even childish. It is the first book I ever loved at the age of nine, but there is so much you can get out of this book, whether you're under the age of ten, or over the age of thirty.

As a child you see more of the magic and associate perhaps more with Kathleen, as an adult you are more shocked by her terrible mistreatment by the adults - and I wonder what is worse: the outright mistreatment she receives from her Aunt Duffie or the inconsistent, ineffectual and careless guardianship of her Uncle. Who is kind one moment but then entirely absent the next.

Dogsbody is a surprisingly layered children's novel, one that for me has never become less enjoyable since first reading it aged nine. In fact, I could say I probably love it even more now.

(view spoiler)

Steve says

Plucked out of the way-back machine (based upon the compelling recommendation of none other than Neil Gaiman, in his collected non-fiction *View From the Cheap Seats*, which, of course, was originally the introduction to modern version of *Dogsbody* that I read), this short, quick, but more importantly *interesting and different* period piece was a fortuitous find. There's a lot going on here - mostly fantasy, a dabble of sci-fi, a dollop of British-Irish historical tension and ugliness, families, loss, love, hope, longing, and dogs (and even cats)....

There's no question I enjoyed it, and I'm always glad to expand my horizons and welcome new authors and idea and perspectives. At the same time, I didn't love it, and I don't necessarily crave *more* of it, but that doesn't mean I wouldn't recommend it...

In the end, it's an intriguing find and a likely recommendation for *dog lovers* (no, this isn't *Edgar Sawtelle* or *Racing in the Rain* or *Until Tuesday* - no, they're horses of a different color), but don't be quick too quick to lump it with *Red Fern* or *Old Yellar* either, but I digress), *childrens'/young adult readers* (and, more importantly, those of us who have discovered innumerable gems too often ignored because of their young adult genre stigma), and *younger librarians* who've run out of recommendations after that precocious, somewhat nerdy kid they see every weekend has blown through the Bruce Coville shelf, but is bored by the more modern, cookie cutter serial fantasy and sci fi.

I'm a sucker for a satisfying ending, conclusion, wrap up, denouement - and, while I fully appreciate an ear-to-ear grin or a sentimental tear - I'm pretty open to a wide range of resolutions, epilogues, or codas. For me, the final riff, indeed, the last chapter, felt unnecessarily abrupt and truncated. It's not a spoiler and, indeed, Gaiman's introduction warned readers that Wynne Jones doesn't offer a conventional finale, but - like so many things in the book - what she leaves you with is sufficiently unique to be, at a minimum ... satisfying ... enough.

Michael says

Definitely aimed at a younger audience than the others of Jones's books I've read, but that doesn't mean it shies away from intensity: there's plenty here to engage the older reader, including the ending, which I did not expect.

Vishy says

I first got to know about Diana Wynne Jones a few years back when I discovered a Diana Wynne Jones event being hosted in the blogosphere. I have never heard of her before and so I made a mental note to explore her works later. Then Diana Wynne Jones started cropping up everywhere – I discovered that a collection of fantasy short stories on my bookshelf had a short story by her and then I discovered that another collection of fantasy stories on my bookshelf was edited by her. Then I heard more bloggers talking about her. So, this year I decided to read my first Diana Wynne Jones book. That is how I read *'Dogsbody'*. This is what I think.

The Dog Star Sirius is tried in a court of his peers and is found guilty of murder. He is sentenced to live as a dog on Earth. He is given an option to redeem himself. If he finds the powerful thing called the Zoi, which he has carelessly lost, he will be reinstated to his former glory. If not, he will continue to live and die as a dog. The punishment is swiftly executed and Sirius is born as a dog. Unfortunately the woman who owns his mother decides to kill Sirius and all his puppy brothers and sisters by drowning them in the river. Sirius somehow manages to escape and float on the river and a girl called Kathleen saves him. Kathleen keeps him as a pet despite stiff opposition at home. She lives in her uncle's home and her aunt dislikes her and so does one of her cousins. They try every trick to send Sirius out but Kathleen's wish prevails. Slowly, Sirius gets to like his new place. He loves his mistress Kathleen. But he also discovers that a dog's life is hard on Earth. Human beings have all the power and even though his mistress Kathleen loves him very much, she can't protect him at all times. Though Sirius thinks that he is a dog, his luminary consciousness is not far behind his doggie mind. He starts to slowly learn the truth about himself and then plans to discover the Zoi. He discovers though that there are some bad folks looking for it too. He also realizes that there is more to it than meets the eye with respect to the crime he had been accused of. Will Sirius be able to work under the limitations of a dog's body and find the Zoi and redeem himself? And if he does find it what will happen then? Will it be easy parting with his mistress and all his friends and people he loves? The answers to all these questions form the rest of the story.

I loved *'Dogsbody'*. From one perspective, it is about a fallen celestial luminary trying to redeem himself. From another perspective – probably the more important one – it is about the love of a dog and a girl for each other. I loved the way Diana Wynne Jones takes us inside the mind of a dog and shows us how it might think. I think Sirius is one of my favourite dog characters ever. I think he is up there with Lynx from Marlen Haushofer's *'The Wall'*. I also loved most of the characters in the book. My favourite characters outside of Sirius and Kathleen were Mrs. Smith (who helps Sirius and Kathleen) and Sirius' friend, the cat Tibbles. I loved the scenes where Sirius yearns for the same kind of freedom that the housecats have and also the scenes which describe how Sirius becomes friends with the cats after the initial hostility and how their friendship grows.

The book also asks an important question – if one’s life changes in a radical way from a position of influence and power to a position of an ordinary person, and if one manages to find joy in the little things in life in the new circumstance and form beautiful friendships and find love, what happens when things change again and one has the chance to get back one’s lost glory? Should one take that chance and lose everything beautiful that one has now, or should one forego that chance and live the everyday beautiful life? Or is there some third choice in which one can have both? It is a hard question to answer and the book has some interesting things to say about that.

The book had an interesting introduction by Neil Gaiman (Gaiman says at the beginning – “*Don’t read this introduction. Read the book first*” – I loved that) which I enjoyed reading.

I will leave you with some of my favourite passages from the book.

He might be stronger than all three cats put together, but he could not use his paws as they did. He saw that this put him further under the power of humans than the cats. Because of their skill, the cats lived a busy and private life outside and inside the house, whereas he had to wait for a human to lead him about.

It was not a creature at all, it was a planet, the most beautiful and kindly he had known. Of course he had talked to Earth. He had done so every time he scoured around the meadow or splashed in the river or sniffed the air. And Earth had talked to him in return, in every living way possible – in scents and sights, in the elegance of Tibbles, the foolish charm of Patchie, in Miss Smith’s brusqueness, in Kathleen’s kindness, in Basil’s roughness and even in Duffie’s coldness. Earth contained half the universe and had taught him everything he knew.

...he knew that people would take in a dog more readily than they would take in a fellow human. It was odd, but it was true.

Have you read ‘*Dogsbody*’? What do you think about it?

Fiona says

I first read this book when I was nine and I can't count how many times since that I've read it.

Since acquiring an Amazon account though I've been able to buy more DWJ books and then managed to own my very own copy of *Dogsbody*. I wish I could have the version of book I read as a kid though.

This is the first book I could say I truly loved, adored and became obsessed with. It doesn't matter how many times I've read this, I still enjoy it each time - nothing has diminished.

I guess I was attracted to it because as a kid I adored dogs. I was obsessed and so the cover art attracted me as well as the story. If I ever do get a dog of my own, you can be sure that I will be naming it Sirius - not for Sirius Black - but the first Sirius I loved.

I love this book. Simply and utterly. It is full of DWJ's magic and brilliant characters that come to life and jump off the page at you.

I get lost in this book every time I read it. Quite often I've been reading away and forgot to get off the bus,

off the ferry - let the bus sail right past me at the stop. When I read this book, the world stops. Every time.

Verity Brown says

I'm already a fan of Diana Wynne Jones, and I'd heard this was one of her best books (in spite of being one of her earliest), but neither of those things prepared me for how deeply this story moved me.

I think that part of what gives this story its power is that Jones pulls no punches here. The antagonists and the abuse they deal out are not made "safe for kids" by an over-the-top Roald Dahl treatment (as they often are in Jones' other books). The nasty adults do and threaten to do things that *real* nasty adults do. The nasty children do things that *real* nasty children do. Nor does Jones avoid other subjects that usually aren't "permitted" in books for kids: overt racism (against the Irish--the story takes place at the height of IRA violence), parental death, and mindless mating attraction (among the dog characters; no sex is actually described). Even the solving of the mystery involves the recognition of a painfully adult-level betrayal. There *are* good people in the story, even good adults that are almost too good to be true, if you didn't know that there *are* people that good in the world. This isn't a cynically dark story, but it is a realistically dark one. And yet ultimately a hopeful one. Hopeful enough to bring a tear to my cynical old eyes.

Jenn says

Before there was Rowling, there was Diana Wynne Jones. While I love the Harry Potter series, Jones has been a truly original writer in what could variously be considered YA or Adult fiction (an argument could be made for each). This new edition provides - I hope - the appeal and opportunity to place *Dogsbody* in many more people's hands. I read this several years ago, on my sister's recommendation - she's provided me with some of the best recommendations! - and *Dogsbody* is one of my favorite novels of all time: a beautifully written and inventive story, one of the most original and Jones' stories always resonate with a powerful voice. The main character, Sirius, is the dog star. Literally. It sounds unusual, but he is an especially fantastic character. And, while it may at first seem unusual, this is also a great love story. This new edition was lovingly assembled by Firebird (an awesome imprint) by people who knew and adored Diana Wynne Jones - with an introduction by another favorite author, the fabulous Neil Gaiman! - and it is a fitting and worthy reissue of a novel that everyone who loves fantasy should read.

Nikki says

I've been asking people to look over my list of unread books and pick out one or two, or even a few, that really interest them and talk to me about it. *Dogsbody* is the first of the books I've read picked out for me like that: the clinching factor (apart from it being short and written by Diana Wynne Jones) was that I was told it has an end that is both happy and sad.

That turns out to be true. A lot of the story is very young at heart -- the main character becomes a young puppy and slowly has to grow up and learn about the world, and he's adopted by a young girl who he adores

(and who adores him). He plays and learns and gets in trouble in a very doggish way that I think anyone could enjoy. It's often funny, and Jones seems to have got dogs and cats -- and people -- just right.

Then there's the more complicated layer, the sci-fi/fantasy issue of Sirius' crime, trial, and eventual reinstatement. There's references to the Irish Troubles, and the difficulties of race relations between the Irish and the English. There's the issue of child abuse. And there's the old, Celtic, barely glimpsed (appropriate, because barely remembered) mythology and its strange rituals, Arawn and his hounds...

I think there's a lot there that could be confusing if you expect to get all the answers. What is a Zoi, why Sirius' Companion do what she did, who and what exactly is the Earth's dark child... In that sense, it's unsatisfying, because there aren't that many answers. But this way, you get to keep thinking and wondering long after you've closed the book.

T.L. Bodine says

I checked this book out of the library from a small town I lived in for a short time. I think I was in fifth grade. The book managed to haunt me (in all the right ways) well into my adulthood, but I could never find it again until someone ordered a copy off Amazon and gave it to me my freshman year of college.

The second time I read it, I finished it in a couple of hours.

It made me cry both times.

The plot does fail to explain itself. Something deep and wonderful is going on just beyond the pages, and DWJ sees no need to explain it. Maybe that's what made it so haunting for me. As a child, I completely missed the Irish subtext that made such integral backstory to Kathy's character, but as an adult it was an amazing discovery to make and further proves just what a many-layered, fast read this is.

Lily says

In the universe of *Dogsbody*, stars are ruled by spirits called luminaries. When a nearby star "goes nova" and a device called the Zoi falls to earth, the luminary of Sirius is falsely accused of murder. His punishment is to be born on Earth as a dog and retrieve the Zoi--or die trying.

Yes, it's quite a bizarre book. I normally associate DWJ's stories with whimsy, charm, and magic, and this book is a bit of a departure from those themes. Of all the books by her that I've read, *Dogsbody* stands out as the most fantastical and the most realistic, the most tragic and the most uplifting. After reading it a few years ago, and having since then recommended it to 2404297851 people, I decided it was about time that I re-read it to make sure it was as good as I remembered.

I have to say that there were parts in the first half of the novel that I found somewhat slow, but once it picked up momentum it was thoroughly action-packed and impossible to put down. The personalities of the Sun, Earth, and Moon are wonderful--anthropomorphic, yet clearly not human. (I especially enjoyed Sun's protectiveness of Earth.) Animals' personalities were portrayed equally well, as was Sirius's constant inner battle to get around his dog nature to remember where he came from--or vice versa, when his dog nature

saves his life. There's definitely a fairy-tale element to this story, with some surprising departures from the norm.

At its core, I think this story has a pretty bitter theme--being betrayed, and then being the betrayer--but it's also full of beauty. I closed the book with an immense feeling of awe and gratitude.

j says

The librarians of my childhood failed me. I'm sorry, there isn't a nice way to say it. They let me check out armloads of Goosebumps books week after week, when just a few shelves away, there were a dozen magical, wonderful books by Diana Wynne Jones just aching to be discovered and devoured by a dork like me, who would clearly have loved them. At least I was lucky enough to randomly stumble across Daniel Pinkwater on my own.

Of course, I can't judge the librarians too harshly. The late '80s were a different time -- J.K. Rowling had yet to light up the dollar signs in publisher's eyes, and fantasy books by authors like DWJ went in and out of print haphazardly. In fact it is because of Harry Potter that I found her at all -- fueled by children's wizard lust, many unheralded '80s fantasy books came back into print in the late '90s so bookstores could offer alternate reading selections (no, really, there is a very interesting blog post about it from a buyer at Barnes & Noble here).

I can still resent them though! I have said this before when reviewing DWJ, but many of her books, while perfectly enjoyable for adults, are clearly meant to appeal the weirdly absorbent brains of children, who do not try to cram in a few pages of reading during their lunch breaks while letting their minds wander to unpaid bills and unfinished assignments. Kids, real readers at least, hyper-focus -- they read like the rest of the world has ceased to exist. This is much, much harder to do as an adult, and does a disservice to DWJ, who focuses on character over detailed plotting and relies on her readers to fill in the gaps. Invariably, I finish one of her books scratching my head a bit, but feeling like it isn't the book, it's me. Does this make any sense, or am I idealizing youthful reading again? I don't think I am; it so explains why the epic books of my youth seem so small in the harsh light of adulthood.

Dogsbody! This book is hard to find these days, and has been out of print for at least 10 years. I can kind of see why. For one thing, the story is very strange, which makes it hard to classify, which makes it hard to sell, probably -- you see, there are these supernatural beings who live in/control the stars and planets. One of them, the Dog Star Sirius, is accused of a crime and sentenced to live out his punishment in the earthbound body of a dog. He has a chance at redemption, but if he doesn't complete his mission in time, he'll die when his dog body dies. There are a few other luminaries of dark purpose who wouldn't mind seeing that happen. Just a warning: there is a puppy drowning scene.

Right? You can see why this one is more of a hard sell post-Potter than "Oh yeah, Chrestomanci, these books also have a Wizard School." Also, there are elements that read strangely today, to children in the U.S. at least -- Sirius, in dog form, is taken care of by a sweet little girl named Kathy. Kathy has to live with her clueless uncle and his horrid wife because her father, a member of the IRA, is in jail. Kathy's Aunt Duffie and cousin treat her like dirt and she is constantly picked on by neighborhood kids... because she's Irish. I honestly have no idea how much of this still goes on in the U.K., but if I am any indication, American schoolchildren are taught next to nothing about Ireland's tortured political history, nor would many of them think to bother hating on a classmate for being Irish (I mean, as long as you're white, right?).

Then there's the fact that few publishers have managed to produce cover art that isn't off-putting or unspeakably childish or obtuse. Which, I mean... yeah. It's a high bar.

But it's a *wonderful* book. The creativity of the premise extends throughout, and I loved the scenes in which Sirius, in dog form, carries on snarky conversations with the sun, who gets no respect from the other luminaries, and the Earth, which is decidedly miffed about all these stars getting up in its business. There's the gentle sadness in Kathy's story, and lonely kids (which is most kids at one time or another) will find real truth in her struggles. Most of all, this is a book about animals that can talk to one another, but it is never cutesy. Sirius has to work to overcome his innate dog nature, which is (let's face it), dumbness and excitability (I love any scene where he talks to another dog, because all they want to do is keep saying "HI!"). If you are correct in your preference for cats, this book also has excellent and dignified cats. Anyone who realizes that cats aren't the villains gets a gold star.

Diana Wynne Jones died last week. Even though I came to her books late in life, it was a very sad author death for me. It also made me stop and really consider the ending of this book, which reminds us that present pain need not be permanent, you'll find friends and family where you make them, and it's always worth holding on to hope.

Luke Taylor says

Wow! What an outstanding book! Perfect for dog or cat owners, or anyone who likes a magical adventure, *Dogsbody* is everything you hope it could be and more. Topsy-turvy and whip smart, fun and engaging, faced-paced and well-detailed, deep and heartwarming, *Dogsbody* is a wonderful example of a gifted storyteller weaving her unforgettable magic and hitting every color and flavor in the spectrum along the way. If Diana Wynne Jones isn't one of your favorite authors, I must ask...why not? Many thanks to the wonderful Sveta for this lovely book and for introducing me to Diana Wynne Jones and her awesome stories. Recommended for all ages.

Melissa McShane says

I didn't find out what a "dogsbody" was (a drudge or menial worker, in case you didn't know either) until years after I'd read this book, so the double meaning passed me by--Sirius being in the body of a dog/Sirius losing his position of power to become a humble and powerless creature. Fortunately, it doesn't matter at all. This is a delightful story on so many levels.

Since Sirius the luminary star-denizen doesn't have any more idea about Earth life or humans than Sirius the abandoned puppy does, everything he learns is filtered through the dog's perceptions. This is something DWJ is amazing at, being able to look at some ordinary thing like a telephone cord and describe it the way someone would who'd not only never seen a telephone cord before, but didn't even understand the concept of telephones. (It just occurred to me that kids today might not know what a telephone cord is either. Now I feel old.) I love working out what Sirius is seeing. I also like the path Sirius takes from being an arrogant, powerful being with anger management issues to becoming someone who cares about others and puts their needs first. It could all be down to how very helpless he is, even when he's a full-grown dog, but I figure someone truly irredeemable wouldn't have changed no matter how helpless he became.

The characterization is just superb, as usual, and once again DWJ gives us a dysfunctional family that is maybe too realistic for comfort. Kathleen is the poor relation who's in the same situation Sirius is, dependent on a family in which the adults are unreliable. Basil's the oldest son, kind of a jerk because he's bigger and a bully; Robin's the middle child, too weak to stand up to Basil even though he likes Kathleen. Mr. Duffield, Kathleen's uncle, is the distant father who doesn't notice anything that isn't important to him. And Duffy, his wife, is a nasty shrew whose laziness and viciousness is most obvious when she blackmails Kathleen into doing all the cooking and household chores to keep Sirius (Leo, as Kathleen names him) from being thrown out or killed. I don't know how old Kathleen is, but she can't be older than 11, and the thought of a healthy grown woman standing by while a child struggles with responsibilities she's not ready for makes me sick. One of the things I love most about this book is when Miss Smith, a kind and intelligent old lady who knows "Leo" is more than he appears, adopts Kathleen to get her out of the Duffields' house and give her a real home. I don't care that that was probably unrealistic even for 1975; I want to believe that a horrible biological family is not a life sentence.

Finally, I'm fascinated by the mythology of the story, both the invented mythos of the star-denizens and the Celtic myth elements of the cold dogs and the Hunt. Most of the story is set on Earth, so the bits about the denizens are sort of in the background, but DWJ never lets anything go to waste. Polaris is a variable star? Its denizen must be a stammerer! I get the impression that DWJ had thought the background through enough that she could have written a second book just based on that material. It's the sort of thing that gives depth to a story, and I'd admire *Dogsbody* for it even if I didn't love it.

Kusaimamekirai says

A short and beautifully written story about a celestial being falsely accused of murder who is sentenced to live on earth in the body of a dog.

Yet this is so much more than a murder mystery where the main character tries to return to his previous life. It's about someone sensing for the first time the natural world around him with all of its sights and smells (the latter particularly vivid and wonderfully written).

Most of all it's a touching story of the bond between a young girl who is mistreated by almost everyone around her and the dog who starts to wonder if going home is better than the life he has on earth.

Very moving, and reminds you that what you have in the here and now, no matter how simple is sometimes the best.

Ken says

Dogsbody is a Young Adult book, written in 1975 and now out of print. I would never have known about it, except that Jeri Smith-Ready, an author whose work I really enjoy, recalled loving this book herself. I found a copy in the library (there are also lots of used copies for sale all over the place).

Sirius, the Dog Star, has a fiery temper and has been convicted of a crime of passion that resulted in the death of a luminary, and the loss of the mysterious zoi -- a powerful and dangerous artifact. Sirius is sentenced to living out his years as a dog on Earth, only to be returned to his original form if he finds and recovers the zoi.

Born as a puppy on earth, helpless and confused, his adventures begin with a scrappy struggle for survival

and take him to a rather dysfunctional family, where he becomes the pet and companion of Kathleen, a young, lonely girl. Although they cannot speak to each other, perhaps they can somehow help each other.

I had fun with this one and know that I'd have enjoyed it even more in my tween/early teen years. Sirius makes an engaging protagonist and his character is well-developed despite being, uh, a star and a dog. The humans around him tend to be broadly drawn, which actually works out fine in this tale: subtleties of personality emerge when appropriate, mostly with Kathleen.

Occasionally, the nature of the zoi and of some of the beings that Sirius encounters were a little too abstract for me, and I wasn't sure quite what was at stake. Perhaps Sirius's world and its rules were a little bit underdeveloped. Still, I'm glad I read *Dogsbody*, and wish I'd discovered it when I was younger.
