

I, Parrot: A Graphic Novel

Deb Olin Unferth

Elizabeth Haidle, Illustrator

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With her money troubles, an ex-husband, an irresponsible boyfriend, and her young son, Daphne has a lot on her plate. When her boss offers her four weeks' salary for two weeks of caring for forty-two birds, she begins to view her relationships through a feathered lens. Through that work and its unexpected difficulties, Daphne makes a decision that will dramatically impact both the birds and herself.

Deb Olin Unferth's *I, Parrot* weaves an affecting metaphor involving passenger pigeons, and creates a stark contrast between meaningless positive-message mantras, and actual, hard-earned insight. Elizabeth Haidle's art, meanwhile, at times resembles that of a children's book in its appealing simplicity. Characters are made distinctive by their rosy cheeks, indicated by small, shaded, impossibly perfect circles—but her illustrations are fully capable of portraying complicated, adult emotions as well.

Daphne and her boyfriend try to do the best they can for themselves and for Daphne's son, but their decisions are sometimes frustrating. Their ability to adapt is impressive, if fundamentally limited—much like the parrots they attend to. Still, their efforts to cope are enjoyable to read about and, ultimately, are inspiring.

PETER DABBENE (November/December 2017)

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