

One Puppy, Three Tales: Alexandra Rambles On Series, Book 1

Karen Salmansohn

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On quickly perusing the marker-and-pen mélange of hand-lettered narrative and silly drawings that make up this book, an adult might ask, “Is this a book or a thick greeting card?”

Charmed into buying the thing anyway, that adult might think, “What a fun piece of fluff for my eleven-year-old.” On reaching the last page just thirty minutes later, the reader will find that some essential questions of adolescence have been examined here in smart, funny, unexpected ways. The tales are told by twelve-year-old Alexandra. Her “not-normal” mom wears zebra-print outfits and offers yoga lessons at the school fundraiser, rather than baked goods like other moms. Her father is a marketing executive too busy to answer her questions. She has a sketchily drawn brother and a wise and gutsy best friend.

The events that move the story could come from any pre-teen’s life. Alexandra shows up in costume for a Halloween party, a day late. A popular girl who seems to be a friend turns out not to be. Out to dinner with her father, Alexandra doesn’t know what to talk about.

It is Alexandra’s telling—full of sidetracks that end up going somewhere—that makes her stories memorable. She sprinkles it with questions, ranging from the serious (“Is it good to be so many different people?”) to the goofy (“Shouldn’t ‘termite’ be spelled ‘termight?’”). Alexandra thinks she might want to be a veterinarian, and some of the most incisive pages draw parallels between human and animal behavior. A group of normal moms is compared to a colony of ants: “There are no unique thinkers or doers in the group. No one ant is capable of thinking or doing something unique, like yoga or sitting on top of pianos crooning.”

Salmansohn, a television consultant and author of a book of similar format for single adults, has found a voice with warmth and authenticity. Like a good pop song, her prose walks the line between the colloquial and the poetic, stepping off on both sides. The intended reader of this book won’t worry about whether it’s a “real” book. She’ll just enjoy it, and get some good insight into questions that many people ask.

LYNNE RAE PERKINS (November / December 2001)

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