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Harold Snipperpot's Best Disaster Ever

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

'Some days feel like complete disasters', declares the young narrator of this tale, seven year old Harold Snipperpot. He longs for a proper birthday party but his parents are, in his view, always grumpy and have no interest in organising anything so frivolous. Call Mr Ponzio: 'We will throw Harold a party that will be absolutely extraordinary' he declares on his arrival. And it is 'but not perhaps as expected. As the catalogue of disasters mounts the reader's eyes will grow wider and wider but even disasters don't necessarily turn out to be disastrous, and this will be Harold Snipperpot's Best Disaster Ever.

Here is a picture book in the great tradition of the nonsense story told with great verve and vigour. It is not the fact that the guests to the party are all animals (are they from the zoo? It doesn't matter. They have come for the party), it is what they get up to that creates the atmosphere of horrified hilarity. Nor are we completely divorced from reality ' Beatrice Alemagna cleverly reminds us of the inevitable consequence of animals in a house ' yes, poo. Harold is assured storyteller too; indeed, one could imagine him relating this as a class story, carrying his listeners along with the directness of his prose.

And there's the extra pleasure of Alemagna's illustrations, bringing another dimension to the story, adding colour and detail. Her quirky style with its expressive lines and atmospheric use of soft colour wash is ideally suited to the humour of the story as we move from the chaos in the house to the joyous expanse of the park. Double page spreads alternate with vignettes to bring rhythm, movement and depth as the narrative progresses. The illustrations do not merely illustrate the action they effectively emphasise the arc of Alemagna's tale ' not just a story about a party but a story about changing family relationships, about learning to enjoy life even as an adult. Harold is right, this is the Best Disaster Ever and one to be shared, especially by parents and children.

Source URL (retrieved on Apr '20): <http://savfikh.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/235/childrens-books/reviews/harold-snipperpot%E2%80%99s-best-disaster-ever>

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