

Alessia and the Lamb: A Tale of Loss and Acceptance

Lorre Wisham

Jazmyn Mejia, Illustrator

Snout Kiss Press

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Alessia and the Lamb is a succinct picture book about a girl's concern for her rescued animals.

In Lorre Wisham's forthright picture book *Alessia and the Lamb*, a girl loses one of her animals at a sanctuary and learns about grief.

When a lamb, Yodi, is brought to the sanctuary where Alessia lives, she befriends it, feeds it, and grows to love it. But then Yodi dies of copper poisoning. Blaming herself and experiencing sorrow, Alessia loses interest in helping with her usual chores. Once enough time passes, though, she renews her interest in the sanctuary's other animals. She bonds with a new sheep who restores her happiness too.

The cartoon-style illustrations depict the sanctuary's bucolic grassy grounds, its varied animals, and Alessia at work. However, the art is sometimes at odds with what is stated: in one scene, people are said to be waiting "anxiously" for Yodi's arrival but are drawn with smiling faces. Stronger moments include a flower-filled sunset that underscores Alessia's return to wellness.

Alessia is a vague heroine. While much is shared about her circumstances, less is known about what makes her distinctive beyond them. Her experiences with Yodi are fleeting, and her recovery happens in isolation. Her reactions to events are declared, including that she "felt angry," "sick," and "blamed herself," but they are stated in such plain terms that they often feel distant too. The text leaves little room for ambiguity or for the illustrations to convey Alessia's emotions in tandem with what it shares. Further, neither the text nor the art hint at the involvement of adults, suggesting that Alessia has been left to bear her grief on her own—even that she keeps her emotions to herself. This undermines the book's supportive elements, as does its absence of resources concerning grief.

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KAREN RIGBY (September 28, 2023)

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