

She: A Celebration of Greatness in Every Woman

Mary Anne Radmacher

Liz Kalloch

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Radmacher and Kalloch hit the mark with this very readable, beautifully written and illustrated meditation on women.

An inspirational, nondenominational pleasure, *She: A Celebration of Greatness in Every Woman* (the SHE stands for “She Harnesses Everything”) is without question everything its title suggests. It’s not rowdy or loud, but calm and only sometimes noisy (in its humor and art). Mary Anne Radmacher and Liz Kalloch have created a meditation upon what SHE means to them and to the writers who are quoted within its covers.

The book is structured around twenty-five phrases based on personal qualities (e.g., “She is a lifelong learner”). Each phrase is contained in its own chapter, delineated by a selection of quotations and a letter to a fictional woman who possesses this quality. The page layout is easy on the eyes and still vibrant in its presentation, with varying fonts for each section in every chapter.

Kalloch’s illustrations envelop the words in an elegant, welcoming style that smoothly connects one chapter to the next. Her artistic creations are effusive and eye-catching, never busy or loud. Kalloch’s artistic scheme here falls between “Gibson Girl” (corseted waists) and Isadora Duncan (loose and flowing), in clothing and hairstyles. They are the elements that make her illustrations work: each illustration has a surface layer (the actual art on the page) and an underlying layer (the meaning of the surface layer’s contents) that adds to the book’s stated purpose (“Here you will connect with the wisdom of dozens of amazing women, just like you.”).

The quotations range widely, from household names to next-door neighbors. Among the famous women quoted here are Madeleine Albright, Mother Teresa, Dorothy Parker, Maya Angelou, and Margaret Cho. Radmacher’s letters in each chapter are suffused with admiration (“She does what is necessary to answer the demands of her calling”), humor (“Sparkling conversation has priority over cleaning dishes after dinner”), and creativity (“She seasons her days with the spice of luscious mystery”). Her inviting and wise words (for example, “She holds observation and learning as a starting place, not an ending”) replace how-to rhetoric with a style akin to actual conversation.

Everything in *She* is based upon love, trust, passion, and intelligence, making it a book well suited for the let-it-fall-open method of reading, as are many inspirational works (the Bible, *A Book of Hours*, etc.). An infusion of mysticism (for example, “The cadence of the sea striking shore ... calls you to remember a primal dance”) is deliberate and quite effective; it engages wishes and dreams, and carries a strong sense of empowerment. Serenity and centering one’s inner balance, in the end, are what Radmacher and Kalloch obviously intended with collaborating on *She*. They hit the mark with this very readable, beautifully written and illustrated book. Women of any age should find reading *She* an uplifting experience.

J. G. STINSON (February 4, 2014)

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