

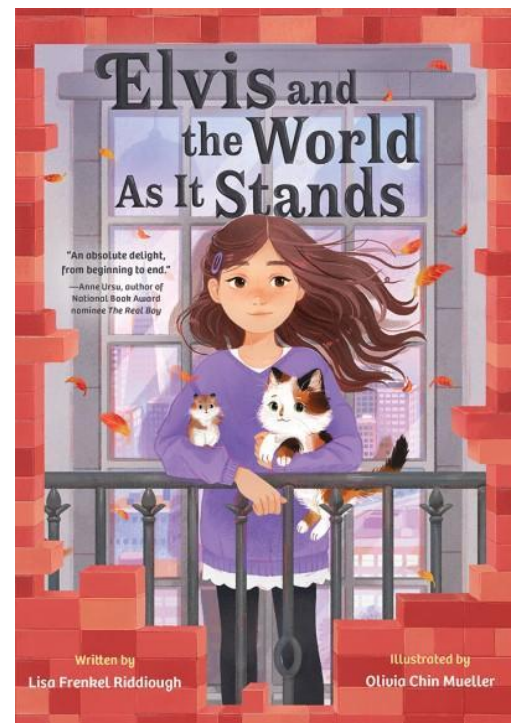
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Elvis and the World As It Stands
by Lisa Frenkel Riddiough
Illustrated by Olivia Chin Mueller

A poignant middle-grade story about loss and finding family from the point of view of a newly adopted kitten.

Most shelter animals dream of going home with a forever family. But for Elvis, being chosen by Mrs. Pemberton is a nightmare. He's been separated from his sister, Etta, and is determined to get back to the shelter to find her. In spite of himself, Elvis becomes curious about ten-year-old Georgina Pemberton, who builds LEGO skyscrapers in her bedroom while navigating her parents' separation. The longer he's in his new home, the more he starts recognizing new feelings: admiration for Georgina's creations, affection for the other pets, and even empathy for the Pembertons—despite their inability to listen.

As Georgina sets out to build her most important skyscrapers yet—the Twin Towers—Elvis realizes that maybe both humans and animals can take a page from Georgina's *Big Book of American Architecture* and “build a world of their own choosing,” even if the choices aren't what they'd initially expected.



Praise

****STARRED REVIEW****

"Riddiough has lovingly crafted a group of fully realized animal characters—even a fish—as well as three sometimes-mystifying humans, all of whom share their hopes and tribulations and demonstrate that not all happy families look alike. . .This gentle effort will leave engaged readers purring contentedly."

-Kirkus Reviews

"Riddiough's debut doesn't shy away from sadness or struggle, including a thoughtful discussion of 9/11, with the animal antics providing a lighter framework for tough topics. A playful and poignant exploration of family, in all its forms."

-Booklist

"Readers will race to find out how everything ends, with character growth and plenty of failed escape attempts before the satisfying conclusion."

-School Library Journal

"An absolute delight, from beginning to end." -Anne Ursu, author of National Book Award Nominee *The Real Boy*

"Elvis's journey is sweet and funny and profound." —Eliot Schrefer, National Book Award finalist

Elvis and the World As It Stands

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Middle Grade (ages 8-12) | 256 pages

Black and White Spot Illustrations



Lisa Frenkel Riddiough is a Northern California-based writer whose projects include picture books, middle grade, grown-up short stories, and personal essays. She earned her MFA in writing for Children and Young Adults from Hamline University. Lisa is a former sales executive, an avid squirrel watcher, a frequent baker of chocolate pound cake, and an exclamation point enthusiast! *Elvis and the World As It Stands* is her debut novel!!

An interview with

Lisa Frenkel Riddiough

1. What inspired you to write this story?

When my daughter, Julia, read an early draft of this book, she said, “This is our whole life.” In many ways, it is. Julia and I volunteered for years at the East Bay SPCA in the feline department, where we often wondered how the cats felt about having no control over their lives and where they would end up. As humans, there are a plethora of times when we might feel that we have no agency in our own lives. Kids, especially, feel this way, and I wanted to look at how we move forward, even when we feel like life is spinning out of control. A cat might feel this way upon arriving at their new forever home. A child might feel this way when their parents split up. The whole world might feel this way when a terrorist attack like 9/11 comes from seemingly out of nowhere. How do we move forward? Hopefully, with the support of friends and family and a strong sense of purpose.

2. When did you start writing?

I used to write stories and poems as a child. But I was a slow reader and struggled with concentrating. Soon, I gave it all up for “easier” things, like math. But the stories kept circling in my head, and I eventually started to write them down. In my mid-forties, I began taking creative writing classes through UC Berkeley Extension. When I began, I didn’t know anything about craft. Ten years later, I am beginning to understand how to make a story work, how to draft and revise, and how to make a “practice” of writing. I wish I’d known earlier that the writing life was open to me. Better late than never is for real!

3. What advice would you give to young or beginning writers?

Your writing matters! What you have to say matters! Your stories matter! You are making something from nothing. That is miraculous. You are learning how to say what you have to say, and the more you write the easier it will become. One day, someone who you don’t know will read one of your stories. It will affect them in a personal way. That day might be years from now, but the wait will be worth it. Believe me when I say that it is never too late to start.

4. Why did you choose to write a middle grade novel?

All of the questions that we have in life can be found in middle grade novels. Sometimes, there are even answers. I wish that reading and writing hadn't felt like a burden to me when I was younger. Sometimes it just felt too hard. Today, I am making up for it by writing for children and young adults. I hope to be able to write stories in a way that makes them accessible to young readers who may feel like I did. Talking animal stories have the magical ability to invite reluctant readers in. And so, I am starting there.

5. What do you do when you're not writing?

I plant pansies. I drink half-caf iced mochas. I dance to seventies music. I bake desserts topped with rainbow sprinkles. And, apparently, I collect books!