



Drizzle

By Kathleen Van Cleve

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Eleven-year-old Polly Peabody needs to make it start raining. For her entire life, it has rained at exactly one o'clock every Monday afternoon on her family's magical rhubarb farm, until one Monday, when it stops. And then Polly's brother gets sick, really sick. Polly has to figure out how everything is connected and make it rain before her beloved Aunt Edith sells the farm. She has help from the farm itself, in the form of the plants and insects, including her best friend, Harry, a chocolate-tasting rhubarb plant. They all push Polly to confront her fears. But is it enough, and more importantly - is there enough time?

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 4–6—Polly Peabody, 11, lives on an unusual rhubarb farm where it rains at exactly 1 p.m. every Monday, and some of the plants taste like chocolate. Like her parents and her grandmother before her, Polly loves the farm with all her soul. When Aunt Edith shows her a secret room, a library, filled with writhing ivy and bugs that fly in patterns that spell out words, she is thrilled. But then the weekly rain stops, plants start to die, Polly's older brother becomes ill, and Aunt Edith pressures Polly's dad to sell the property. Now Polly must interpret the farm's signs and symptoms to figure out both the problem and the solution. Why won't those insects just spell out what she needs to do rather than give her vague and puzzling hints? Polly's anxiety and lack of self-confidence—she is reading Emerson's "Self-Reliance"—keep her from making friends and dealing with a bully at school, although for readers, as for Polly, it's the stuff that happens on the farm that is most compelling. In general, Polly's insect and plant acquaintances are more developed than most of the humans, who never quite become convincing characters. However, Polly's gradual discovery of her own strange power and the joy she takes in her ability to help those she loves best is both entertaining and gratifying. Give this whimsical fantasy to fans of Ingrid Law's *Savvy* (Dial, 2008).—*Eva Mitnick, Los Angeles Public Library*

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From Booklist

Eleven-year-old Polly has no friends at school. Her best friend is Harry, a unique rhubarb plant on her family's midwestern farm, where it rains miraculously at the same time every Monday, and tourists come to enjoy a giant, amusement-park umbrella ride that her family has built. Polly and Harry communicate: he nods when he agrees with her and swats her with his leaves when he is angry. And Polly can talk with bugs, as well as plants. Her peaceful life on the farm changes, though, when the rain stops suddenly and her brother gets deathly ill. Does she have the power to save both the farm and her sibling? Polly's wry interaction with Harry and other plants and wild creatures is the best part of this debut fantasy that has an environmental slant. The water conservation message at its core will make young, activist readers cheer for Polly as she works with friends, and sometimes with enemies, to bring back the rain and save the world.

Grades 5–8. --Hazel Rochman

Review

"Magical realism meets Midwestern sensibilities in this charming coming-of-age tale that manages to tackle some sobering issues, including mortality and family betrayal, while maintaining a sense of wonder that will captivate young readers from the first page." *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, starred review

"Van Cleve's debut is emotionally subtle and action packed with a highly memorable setting." *-Publishers Weekly*, starred review

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Douglas Barlow:

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