

[PDF] The Reading Promise: My Father And The Books We Shared

Alice Ozma - pdf download free book

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Author: Alice Ozma
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Description:

When Alice Ozma was in 4th grade, she and her father decided to see if he could read aloud to her for 100 consecutive nights. On the hundreth night, they shared pancakes to celebrate, but it soon became evident that neither wanted to let go of their storytelling ritual. So they decided to continue what they called "The Streak." Alice's father read aloud to her every night without fail until the day she left for college.

Alice approaches her book as a series of vignettes about her relationship with her father and the life lessons learned from the books he read to her.

Books included in the Streak were: Great Expectations by Charles Dickens, the Oz books by L. Frank Baum, Harry Potter by J. K. Rowling, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll, and Shakespeare's plays.

A Note from the Author

My dad thinks you should buy my book.

And that's not because he's read it. He hasn't, and he never will. I told him it was too mushy. At first, he protested.

"Lovie!" he shrieked, "Not even on my death bed?"

I agreed to let him give it a quick skim if he was terminal, and we dropped the subject. Now he's decided he didn't want to read it anyway. He thinks he'd remember everything differently than I do, which is probably true. But he still thinks you should buy my book.

"There are no car chases, no murders, no romance, people are going to go right off to sleep. Nobody cares about that," he thought when we first discussed the idea of a book, as he explained to a local newspaper. "I didn't know that the subject would interest people, but I have 100 percent faith that (she) can sell a refrigerator to an Eskimo. If she's writing it, I figured somebody's going to want to read it."

He has the utmost confidence in me, and he likes to share it with anyone he meets. When I spoke to a reporter about setting up an interview recently, she'd already spoken to my father. She answered her phone with a cheery, "Alice! Hi! It's so nice to hear from you. Your father told me all about your PSAT scores! Congratulations!"

I took that test six years ago. My father never misses an opportunity to wallow in my achievements. But he also raised me to have unbelievable confidence in myself. I was five years old when the phone rang one Sunday morning, and, upon hanging it up, my father said, "That was the Phillies. Everyone called out sick today. Can you fill in for center-fielder?"

I had absolute no talent for sports whatsoever, so I was a little confused.

"Why do they want me?" I asked, thoughtfully chewing my French toast.

"They saw you at the game last week and thought you looked pretty good. Should we go into the backyard and practice?"

That may be the morning my father first realized how much I would one day dread high-school gym class. As he described it, I stood as still as a tree, a huge grin on my face, letting balls bounce off of my lifeless body and then lifting my arm futilely a few seconds later to cover my face. After about fifteen minutes of this, just as he was about to call it quits to prevent severe bruising, I took my cap off, nodded my head, and gave him a serious look.

"Okay," I said, "I think I'm ready."

I don't have quite this confidence now, as much as it might prove useful. The idea of strangers reading my book still makes my stomach turn. I don't mind if you read it. But my father, on the other hand... well, he thinks you'll love it. Even though he's never read it, and probably never will, he's

sure it's perfect.

"It's about books, and families, and growing up," he often says, to our waiter, or my mailman, or the family sitting next to us, just trying to enjoy the planetarium. "Who can't relate to at least one of those things? And," he whispers, as people near us begin to stare, "I bet it's doggone well-written."

For a moment, I think that this, a full-length book I wrote with my own mind and hands, might finally be the thing that eclipses my past achievements, in his mind. We might be able to put the PSATs behind us. I even think, for a moment, that I might now be judged by some normal, unbiased standard. Then he sighs, and stretches his arms, and smiles.

"Did you know my daughter won the award for best debater in sixth grade?" he begins.

-- Alice Ozma

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Named for two literary characters ("Alice" from Lewis Carroll and "Ozma" from L. Frank Baum), the author is the daughter of a Philadelphia-area elementary school librarian. Father and daughter embarked on a streak of reading-out-loud sessions every night before bed as Ozma was growing up. At first they decided on 100 nights straight of reading before bed—a minimum 10 minutes, before midnight, every night, no exceptions—then it stretched to 1,000, and soon enough the author was headed to college and they had spent eight years straight reading before bedtime, from Oz stories to Shakespeare. Reading with her father offered a comforting continuity in the midst of her mother's disquieting move away from the family, her older sister's absence as a foreign exchange student, and the parsimoniousness of her single father. Ozma's account percolates chronologically through her adolescence, as father and daughter persevered in their streak of nightly reading despite occasional inconveniences such as coming home late, sleepovers (they read over the phone), and a rare case of the father's laryngitis. Ozma's work is humorous, generous, and warmly felt, and with a terrific reading list included, there is no better argument for the benefits of reading to a child than this rich, imaginative work. (May)

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