



# The Squirrel's Birthday and Other Parties | Letters to Anyone and Everyone

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Reviewer:

[Annabel Gibb](#) [4]

Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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These two beautifully produced little books, translated from Dutch, feature animals large and small, and explore their thoughts, interests and fears in short, seemingly inconsequential, sometimes surreal, thought-provoking episodes. Birthdays, parties and cakes feature in many of the stories, along with conflicts between what one wants to do and what one should.

Ahlberg's illustrations, influenced by Quentin Blake, Emma Chichester Clark and by her mother, Janet Ahlberg, don't always have the self-assurance of her established colleagues; a **Baby's Catalogue** style page of cakes seems poorly arranged and without coherence, and some of the tiny pictures are fussy, or sprinkled too liberally over the page. However, at her best she has a beautiful touch. A chain of tiny animals dance and loop delightfully through one party; an indecisive squirrel is shown in series, wrestling with temptation across the page, squirming expressively; a seagull decorates the beach with delicate festoons of beautifully observed seaweed.

The tales are simply told in short, uncomplicated sentences which leave plenty of room for pondering the imponderable - a surreal version of Arnold Lobel's 'Frog and Toad', perhaps. I loved the story of the squirrel who tries too hard to create a realistic fancy dress, finally gaining admittance to the party because no-one recognises him dressed as himself, and the one about the ant who keeps days he has enjoyed in a box, one creeping out now and then to be dreamily relished once more. And the letters which are carried on the wind, or which deliver themselves, making suggestions to writer and recipient.

Not books for everyone perhaps, but a fascinating and delicious treat for dreamy, introspective readers of all ages.

Running Order:

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