



A Scattered Life

By Karen McQuestion

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“McQuestion writes with a sharp eye and a sure voice, and as a reader, I was willing to go wherever she wanted to take me.” —Carolyn Parkhurst, author of *The Dogs of Babel*

Free spirit Skyla Plinka has found the love and stability she always wanted in her reliable husband, Thomas. Settling into her new family and roles as wife and mother, Skyla finds life in rural Wisconsin satisfying, but she can't seem to quell her growing sense of restlessness. Skyla's only reprieve is her growing friendship with neighbor Roxanne, who has five kids (and counting) and a life in constant disarray—but also a life filled with laughter and love.

Much to the dismay of her intrusive mother-in-law, Audrey, Skyla takes a part-time job at the local bookstore and slowly begins to rediscover her voice, independence, and confidence. Throughout one pivotal year in the life of Skyla, Audrey, and Roxanne, all three very different women will learn what it means to love unconditionally.

With the storytelling ingenuity of Anne Tyler, the writing talent of Jodi Picoult, and the subtlety of Alice Munro, McQuestion offers a satisfying debut that proves she is a gifted portraitist, a natural storyteller, and an author to watch.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Book Description: *"Most people have everything they need to be happy." The words latched onto some part of Skyla's brain. She repeated the phrase to herself while she rang up books and stocked shelves. It had a certain resonance to it, but she doubted it was true.*

Free-spirit Skyla Plinka has found the love and stability she always wanted in her reliable husband Thomas. Settling into her new family and roles as wife and mother, life in rural Wisconsin is satisfying, but can't seem to quell Skyla's growing sense of restlessness. Her only reprieve is her growing friendship with neighbor Roxanne, who has five kids (and counting) and a life in constant disarray – but also a life filled with laughter and love.

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Amazon Exclusive: Carolyn Parkhurst Reviews A Scattered Life

Carolyn Parkhurst is the author of the bestselling novels *The Dogs of Babel* and *Lost and Found*, and recently published the acclaimed novel *The Nobodies Album*. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and their two children. Read her exclusive guest review of Karen McQuestion's *A Scattered Life*:



A Scattered Life is the kind of novel you'll want to recommend to a friend without quite knowing how: as soon as you begin to say what the book is "about," all of the possible descriptions seem either too small or too big for the story contained in those pages.

You might say, "It's about friendship and family dynamics and the unexpected ways our actions influence the trajectories of other people's lives." Or "It's about a woman who's doing her best to make the life she has into the life she wants to live." And it's your 7th grade book report on *The Red Pony* all over again: your description isn't inaccurate, but it doesn't come close to conveying the book's gravity and substance, the

particular pleasure you get from immersing yourself in this novel, as opposed to any other.

So you might try getting more specific: "Okay, the main character is a woman named Skyla Plinka. She's married and lives in the suburbs and has a little girl, and her life is all very ordered and predictable, which she likes, because her childhood was tough and she's always craved stability. She clashes a little bit with her mother-in-law, Audrey, who has different ideas about how a wife and mother should run her home and who would like to be more involved in her life than Skyla is comfortable with. But then a new family moves in next door, and Skyla strikes up a friendship with her new neighbor Roxanne, who's brash and charismatic and has five kids and just loves living in the kind of messy chaos that they create..." And you realize you've gone too far in the other direction, zooming in on the details of an individual tree, while ignoring the vastness and beauty of the forest.

So here's how I'm going to recommend *A Scattered Life*: From the very first sentence--"Skyla's earliest memory of Thomas was linked with the smell of beer and the taste of blood"--Karen McQuestion had me right where she wanted me. Right away, I was there with Skyla, curious about who she was and what choices she'd made, and ready to live her life for a while, instead of my own.

McQuestion has a talent for creating characters who are layered and subtle, flawed and ordinary and exceptional, in the way we all are. The book alternates between the viewpoints of the three women--Skyla, Roxanne and Audrey--and their incomplete and refracted perspectives come together to form a narrative that's fuller and more complex than the story any one of them might tell on her own.

McQuestion writes with a sharp eye and a sure voice, and as a reader, I was willing to go wherever she wanted to take me. After I finished the book, I thought about how I might describe it to a friend, and I settled on a phrase that says a lot without saying very much at all. It's the way these conversations usually end: "You should read this. It's good." --Carolyn Parkhurst

From Booklist

McQuestion's debut novel focuses on three women in a peaceful Wisconsin suburb. Young mother Skyla found stability when she married staid math teacher Thomas, but with their four-year-old daughter, Nora, starting school, Skyla is yearning for friendship and purpose. She finds the latter in a job at a small local bookstore and the former in her new neighbor Roxanne Bear. Roxanne, a boisterous woman in her early thirties who has five children, yearns to expand her brood despite the reservations of her husband, Ted. Skyla's mother-in-law, Audrey, longs to be a bigger part of her granddaughter's life, but Skyla and Thomas hold her at a distance. Pushed to the point of desperation, Audrey starts spying on her daughter-in-law, and finds herself envious of Skyla's friendship with Roxanne, which causes her to commit a serious transgression. A late-in-the-game tragedy feels engineered to invoke tears, but readers looking for a quiet tale about women learning to manage their expectations and find joy in unexpected places will enjoy this sweet read. --Kristine Huntley

Review

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jack Lumpkin:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Yeah, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the Mall. How about open or read a book allowed A Scattered Life? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You recognize beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have different opinion?

Loretta Claybrooks:

Here thing why this A Scattered Life are different and trusted to be yours. First of all looking at a book is good however it depends in the content from it which is the content is as delightful as food or not. A Scattered Life giving you information deeper and in different ways, you can find any guide out there but there is no guide that similar with A Scattered Life. It gives you thrill examining journey, its open up your personal eyes about the thing in which happened in the world which is maybe can be happened around you. You can actually bring everywhere like in playground, café, or even in your technique home by train. Should you be having difficulties in bringing the imprinted book maybe the form of A Scattered Life in e-book can be your substitute.

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