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# My Sneezes Are Perfect

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Editor's Choice:

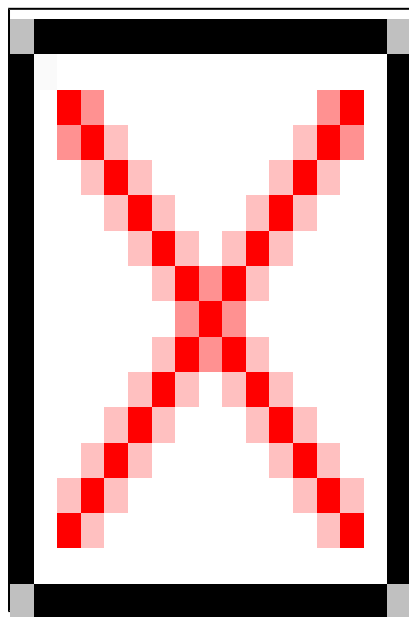
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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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The main interest in this collection is that it is written jointly by an adult, Rakshan Rizwan, and her six-year-old son, Yusuf Samee. The poems, all in Yusuf's voice, are in free verse, so rely on the concision of their language and the significance of the experience they describe rather than the more obvious characteristics of wordplay, rhyme or rhythm. In one sense they are a record of Yusuf's personal experience and aspects of his emotional biography as mediated by the adult poet, but they are also, inevitably, an unacknowledged record of how she perceives Yusuf's life and interests. There is a range of preoccupations here: from Yusuf's distaste of bananas to the singular discomfort of a school 'intruder drill', when the children practice for that moment when a killer roams the corridors. For the most part, Rizwan convinces us that we are meeting and hearing Yusuf himself, telling us about his pet passions and hates, about his move from Holland to California and about the fun and frustrations of life on Zoom in the Covid lockdown. Just occasionally the adult input is rather more obvious with openings like 'Trees are natural storytellers' or 'Squirrels are furry little bandits' but readers of Yusuf's age will probably find in Yusuf not only someone very much like themselves but also someone who has his own personality and take on the world. And that says a great deal for the observation and

perceptiveness of the adult side of this intriguing writing partnership.

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