



Alex the Parrot: No Ordinary Bird

Stephanie Spinner

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In 1977, graduate student Irene Pepperberg walked into a pet store and bought a year-old African grey parrot. Because she was going to study him, she decided to call him Alex--short for Avian Learning EXperiment. At that time, most scientists thought that the bigger the brain, the smarter the creature; they studied great apes and dolphins. African greys, with their walnut-sized "birdbrains," were pretty much ignored--until Alex. His intelligence surprised everyone, including Irene. He learned to count, add, and subtract; to recognize shapes, sizes, and colors; and to speak, and understand, hundreds of words. These were things no other animal could do. Alex wasn't supposed to have the brainpower to do them, either. But he did them anyway. Accompanied by Meilo So's stunning illustrations, Alex and Irene's story is one of groundbreaking discoveries about animal intelligence, hard work, and the loving bonds of a unique friendship.

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