

**Interview with Amanda Lorenzo**  
**Seattle, WA August 2009**

*Q: Why did you write the Runt Farm books?*

AL: For the love of telling and writing stories, mostly. But the books also happen to offer an inclusive view of family, and insight into the universal nature of family bonds. We need family, we make family wherever we go, whoever we are. And in one way or another, we're all runts. Everyone has quirks. But when we find our true place and our true people, those people are our family. At Runt Farm we embrace the runt in everyone, in every species.

*Q: Tell us about your first new books in the Runt Farm series!*

AL: The *Runt Farm* books are snappy illustrated chapter books for children that feature an upbeat multi-species cast of animal characters, some evil villains, and assorted stories of scrapes and escapes.

*Q: Who are the main characters?*

AL: Oh, there's rebellious but laid-back Kitten and his pal The Peep (a baby duck with some issues). Then there are Cletus and Tooth – two extra-smart refugee mice. Next comes a rambunctious bunny named Beatrice, and then Blossom – a squirrel guy with a flashy style—these two have a healthy dose of sibling rivalry going. And in Book 3 we meet Clovis; she's a mouse cousin to Tooth. Clovis is a sort of nervous and distracted auntie type, a serious artist who delights in capturing the light.

*Q: And the villains?*

AL: You would be referring to the weasels, of course! And the evil agents of NAARF.

*Q: NAARF?*

AL: Oh yes -- the Nightshade Association Animal Research Facility. They will stop at nothing to capture those escapees, Cletus, Tooth and Clovis.

*Q: Where do you get the ideas for the Runt Farm stories?*

AL: Well some of them come from real life. In *Runt Farm Book 2, Beatrice and Blossom*, Beatrice cheats Blossom out of all his marbles using phony rules like "rainbows." She also uses a steelie as a shooter, a questionable tactic if ever there was one. When I was 6 or 7 the Canaday brothers, down the block from me, got all my marbles just like that.

*Q: Were you able to get your marbles back?*

AL: Yes, most of them. Mrs. Canaday got it all straightened out.

*Q: You're known for wearing funny hats. What is it you enjoy most about them?*

AL: You think my hat is funny? Well! Indeed! Actually this particular hat is for special occasions, but the hat I wear most often is a bowler. It was my Dad's hat, and I wear it to remember him. Mostly I just think hats are fun. You can tell a lot about a person by their hat.

*Q: Amanda Lorenzo, aren't you also known as the Seattle Mystery Lady?*

AL: Apparently I am. There seems to be a video of me on YouTube called "Seattle Mystery Lady Spotted." And a Google map showing some of my whereabouts as well. I guess I'm being watched!

*Q: How long does it take you to write a book?*

AL: The writing usually goes pretty quickly, perhaps a few weeks. Getting from there to a real book in your hands takes much longer, though. More like two years!

*Q: Why does it take so long?*

AL: Well, after I write the story, my editor makes suggestions, we argue a little (we're friendly about it). Then I do what she says. Next our illustrator, Mark, does a bunch of tiny little drawings called thumbnails and we all *ooh* and *aah* and give feedback about them (Mark's a really good artist). That leads to more and bigger sketches, and then final artwork. Then the book designer takes it all and mashes it together and there's more *ooh*-ing and *aah*-ing. Then all the pages of the book get printed out and the proofreader marks in red ink where we made mistakes. After that all the mistakes get fixed and the book printer takes it from there (They print and bind the books).

Sometimes when I visit classrooms I show examples of a book in all those stages.

*Q: Are your characters like anyone you know?*

AL: Yes, they sure are. Cletus is a lot like me – he likes cheese and is good with tools. Beatrice and I are pretty similar, too, because I can be kind of bossy (and also brave). Tooth is similar to a famous chef whose name is Julia. Every character is partly created from different people I know and partly just made up.

*Q: Where can we get the Runt Farm books?*

AL: They're available on Amazon or at your favorite bookstore. You can also buy the books at ***RuntFarm.com*** – and you really should visit – there's lots of free fun stuff for kids on our website, and there are learning activities too that parents and teachers can do with children.