

Picture Books

Heaven is Having You

Giles Andreae

Tiger Tales

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Heaven on Earth is described in simple rhymes and everyday happenings in this joyful and joyfully illustrated book about bears. When Little Bear goes to visit his grandparents, Grandma Bear tells the cub, “It’s heaven to see you!” Little Bear then asks, “What’s heaven?” Grandma Bear goes on to describe all the heavenly things that make up their day together, telling Little Bear, “Heaven is so many things.”

In calm rhyming couplets, the author describes heaven as “hearing the stories you tell us / and thinking that you’re ever so clever. / It’s something we do that we made up ourselves, / like rubbing our noses together.” Andreae is the creator of Purple Ronnie, a popular British cartoon character. His previous books include *Rumble in the Jungle* and *Pants*, which won the U.K.’s Red House Picture Book Award and the Stockport Picture Book Award. All together, his children’s books have sold more than 1.5 million copies.

The illustrator, who currently lives in England but grew up in several countries ranging from Belgium to Zaire, has been short listed for the Sheffield Children’s Book Award, for *The Magic Donkey Ride*, written by Andreae. Here, the pictures are bright and warm, similar to Cabban’s golden illustrations for *Love is a Handful of Honey*, an earlier collaboration of the author and illustrator.

This book depicts a whole day that is heaven, including the bears climbing on each other, feeding the ducks, playing with friends, and snuggling in a thick towel after a bath. Little Bear sinks into an overstuffed armchair at one point, while Grandma Bear says that heaven is “having cookies with milk for an afternoon snack / and getting some crumbs on our faces. / It’s having our own little secrets to keep / And going to our own special places.”

At the end of the day, after the bath and the fluffy towel and the bedtime stories, Grandma Bear says: “Heaven is always around us / In so many things that we do. / But one thing is true above all, Little Bear ... / Heaven is just having you.”

Children under six, especially those going to stay with their grandparents for a few days, will enjoy the fun and love that envelops Little Bear. Without getting into any specific theology or spirituality, this charming book gives a comforting, everyday description of heaven.

Jodee Taylor