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Wishes for One More Day

Melanie Joy Pastor
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Jacqui Grantford, illustrator
Flashlight Press (September 2006)
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When Anna learns that her beloved grandfather has died, she wishes for one more day with him. Her wise mother asks, “What would you do in that one day?” Anna replies that they would play checkers, and her little brother, Joey, says that they would make sculptures with the Matzah balls in their soup. The children start to list how they would spend one more day with their Poppy—dancing around the living room while he played the piano, going camping in the backyard, cooking pancakes. Anna writes their wishes down, and little Joey draws pictures. When they have a stack of papers, Joey squeals, “Poppy would have had such a busy day!”

It’s clear that the author intends this to be an exercise for children to work through grief, but she goes beyond simply modelling the process; she approaches it with depth, inventiveness, and sensitivity. Pastor, who teaches kindergarten and elementary school, has worked on a series of children’s safety pamphlets called Kid Alert, and a children’s video on handwriting. This is her first picture book, and she tells the story and delivers the lesson with tenderness and attention, without lapsing into cliché or sentimentality.

Anna’s Mom, moved by the children’s list, invites them to turn it into a book. She explains that it will fit in with their Jewish custom of lighting a memorial candle and gathering with loved ones to remember Poppy. For the frustrated Anna, though, remembering fun times with her grandfather is not enough: “I just wanted one more day to do them all again,” she pleads, “so Poppy could die remembering.”

Her mother points out that just as the memories are fresh for Anna, so they would have been fresh for Poppy, too. Anna persists: she doesn’t want to call them memories. “I’m still going to call them wishes,” she says. “Wishes feel closer. Memories feel so far away, and I don’t want them far away.” The girl adds a title to her book “Wishes for One More Day With Poppy”) and places it next to her grandfather’s memorial candle.

The illustrator has provided art for several children’s books, including *Jenna’s Pet* and *The Corn that Kay Grew* , and has written and illustrated two books of her own: *Shoes News* and *Various Faerious*. She won the 2003 *Monsalvat Salon des Refuses* People’s Choice Award. Here, her gouache and watercolor pencil illustrations are realistic, with Poppy’s bushy eyebrows and jolly jowls resembling a grandfather type that every child will recognize. Anna and her family are rendered with equal naturalism and subtlety.

This beautiful book will be useful in classrooms, daycare centers, and church groups, to help children understand each other’s grief. It will be invaluable to any child who has lost a loved one

KAREN MCCARTHY (October 5, 2006)

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