



Love from Alfie McPoonst

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Dear Izzy, I'm a Sky Dog now. I live in Dog Heaven, because I died?.

For anyone who feels a little wearied by the allusions and metaphors of some issue-based titles, here's a picturebook using clear and contemporary language to talk about death. Don't expect a pragmatic approach, though - this funny, tender and appealing book invites us to explore a perplexing theme in ways that make imaginative sense.

Written as a series of letters from Alfie McPoonst, newest arrival in Dog Heaven, to the quietly grieving Izzy, this book will help children process and express their feelings about loss. Dog Heaven (as described by Alfie) is a place of endless sticks and parks; where ice cream vans sell to dogs, not people, and roly-polies are allowed in flowerbeds.

'I watch you through a star peep-hole,' says Alfie. 'It makes my tail very waggy', and at last Izzy feels able to write back. 'P.S. I love you forever,' she says, as the final endpapers reveal a new (distinctly dog-shaped) constellation.

With its flower-filled landscapes and dawn-pink palette, Patricia Metola's stunning artwork matches the mood perfectly, then takes us somewhere we didn't expect. Wordless spreads invite contemplation and exploration, and suddenly the line between the here-and-now and Alfie's otherworld begins to feel extremely thin.

Dawn McNiff's lively text is unashamedly emotional. If it's good to cry when you've lost a pet (or even when you haven't) then **Love from Alfie McPoonst** will generate many therapeutic moments and will be particularly appreciated by families experiencing grief and loss - although some may find the references to Heaven challenging. Its wider appeal will depend on the reactions of adult gatekeepers, who may see it solely as a 'bereavement book'. But Alfie has a way of charming his readers, who laugh and wonder and maybe a cry a little, then find themselves thinking about love and loss and change and hope. That kind of book matters, and should - and will - be valued.

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