



FArTHER

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[Jana Novotny Hunter](#) [3]

News/Choice:

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Media type:

Book

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A father is so obsessed with dreams of flying that when he doesn't return from the war his son carries out the dream, hoping to hand down the magic to his own son.

The beginning of this story is cleverly symbolic, underscoring immediately the conflict between reality and fantasy, and acting as a portent to the unfolding tale. We know there will be sadness, without being told. For, with lyrical language and surreal images we are drawn into the mystical world of impossible dreams ? dreams that while beautifully described and hauntingly evocative are tinged with a deep despair.

As the story develops we learn that although unrealistic, this dream won't go away since it is ?such a busy bossy dream?. (And the juxtaposition of these two adjectives is pure brilliance.) So the father continues working on his fantastical flying machines, until he is called up for the First World War.

This is a clever book on many levels, dealing with loss and how enduring love has the power to realise impossible dreams. As such it is a well-intentioned portrayal of pain and hope. But while the images are undeniably lovely, the use of photo collage and the limited palette, gives this book an other-worldly, distant feel, which is somehow disquieting. This is added to by the immobility of the characters, which seem to detract from the theme of flying. The boy does have some expression but his robot-like father stares impassively out of the pictures. No surprise then that the boy has to hang around waiting for this dad to remember his existence! Father?s wooden face does underscore that to the narrator his parent is a remote memory, which is an important point but the end effect is still slightly creepy. And while the father?s remoteness is a poignant reminder to any child who feels ignored, the anguish of both man and boy overwhelms the message.

This is indeed a beautiful book, but for all its bold invention and airy atmosphere, I feel it is far too oblique for many young readers and will be much more enjoyed by adults.

Running Order:

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