



Footpath Flowers

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Reviewer:

[Jill Bennett](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

I revisited this exquisite wordless book today as I showed it to a friend and fell in love with it all over again as I discovered things I'd missed on previous readings. It is the result of collaboration between Canadian poet, JonArno Lawson, who supplied the storyline, and Sydney Smith who has translated it into visual poetry using minimal colour for much of the narrative.

Hand in hand, a little girl wearing a red hooded top and a man walk through an urban landscape apparently in silence. The adult's attentions are for much of the time on his mobile phone, the shopping and the whole business of getting home. The child in contrast notices the small things around her, in particular the wild flowers that are growing in seemingly unlikely places such as pavement cracks, a subway wall, between flagstones. She stops to pick them and drink in their scent, and before long, has collected a bunch. As the two cross the park, the girl notices a dead bird on the path and stooping down, reverently places a floral offering on its unturned breast, then runs to catch up her father.

Together they pass a man sleeping on a bench; he too is given a floral gift; so too a dog behind whose collar the child tucks several of her flowers and on arriving home she adorns her mother and siblings with the rest of the bunch, all except a single flower. That remains in her hand as she continues walking ?

This poignant story is so rich in visual detail that words would be completely superfluous and full colour, a distraction. What is key here is that what we are shown in both whole page scenes and smaller frames, is always from the child's perspective; that and the fact that the father allows the child sufficient space and time to stop and pay close attention to the small wonders around her (as is the way of young children), stopping with outstretched hand to wait at appropriate times.

This is a real gem; I cannot recommend it too highly.

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