

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

FARAWAY FATHER

Eva Hill

The Troy Book Makers

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BOOK REVIEW

In this gentle picture book, a family stays connected to Dad while he's deployed overseas during World War II.

On the day Naomi was born, her father was drafted into the Army. Yet even as a baby, she knew that "Love was his gift to me, and I kept it, deep inside." Debut children's author Hill's cheerful watercolor-and-ink images subtly convey the 1940s while her child-friendly story transcends time and place. Quiet humor keeps the overall mood light; when Naomi's parents hug goodbye, for example, she says, "I got a little bit squeezed. I went 'Oof!' and they laughed through their tears." From Naomi's bath in the sink to her first taste of "dribbly applesauce," her mother celebrates milestones in daily letters to her father, and he writes to them about "the blast of a bugle" and how he "missed Mom's cooking." Dad's photograph is often "keeping us company," Naomi says, yet his absence never overwhelms the story. Using that photo, Naomi draws a picture of her father, which her mother sends with her next letter. In a touching two-page illustration, the father and several other soldiers lean against trees, reading letters with dreamy smiles on their faces. Her father writes back, "I'm doing okay. I miss you two! Naomi's drawing is a treasure." After two-and-a-half years, a man with brown eyes and wavy hair appears in Naomi's doorway holding her mother's hand. She recognizes him: "I knew he was my father, home at last!" On the final page, the parents' arms encircle the radiant girl, an image reminiscent of their farewell embrace but featuring smiles instead of tears. Throughout the book, Hill's text emphasizes the love between parents and child, even while delicately acknowledging their sad, lonely feelings. The author artfully rendered faces in soft, bright colors, and they express affection on every page. With better paper quality and a more professional cover, this book would be a long-lasting addition to any family's collection.

A sweet book to share with young children who are separated from someone they love.

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